

The Van Lunen Project 2012-13

Strategic Planning



Introduction:

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What I did:

Maple Ridge Christian School is a PK3-12 Christian school serving 300 students in Maple Ridge, British Columbia. The school was founded by the Christian Reformed Church almost 60 years ago but is now a parent society run school that is non-denominational. MRCS needed a plan to address the future of the school. The school was in process of selling a large section of land that would positively impact the school's finances, and possibly change the trajectory of the school. By creating and implementing a long-term strategic plan the school would be well prepared for the changes ahead.

We developed a comprehensive plan that addressed six strategic goal areas with specific objectives to meet the goals and fulfill the plan. The following is the actual MRCS strategic plan as developed.

Maple Ridge Christian School

Five-Year Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018

Mission:

To educate and equip students to engage God's world through biblical thought and action.

Vision:

To be an exceptional pre-K to grade 12 Christian school immersed in a biblical worldview that nurtures students in a respectful and loving community;

A multi-purpose facility that enhances academic, fine arts and athletic programs, equipped with the appropriate resources and infrastructure;

And a school with a professional staff that challenges students to reach their full potential as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

We will direct all of our resources under the principles of biblical stewardship and financial responsibility as we develop and fulfill the following strategic goals:

Strategic Goals:

- A) To provide an educational program that is delivered with instructional excellence grounded in biblical understanding.
- B) To disciple students in biblical thought, respect and service.
- C) To employ, retain and develop highly skilled Christ-minded staff.
- D) To maintain and nurture a strong, caring and respectful community.
- E) To maintain, improve and develop effective, multi-functioning and durable facilities.
- F) To increase enrollment through an effective marketing strategy.

Objectives:

A. Instructional Objectives:

- Develop personalized learning plans for more students.
- Increase early admission to post-secondary schools.
- Expand awareness of post-secondary scholarships.
- Develop cross-grade learning opportunities to take advantage of our unique Pre-K to Grade 12 school.

B. Biblical Worldview and Student Character Development

- Promote our biblical worldview to our stakeholders and to the greater community of Maple Ridge.
- Communicate and enhance the “Biblical Through-lines” and the “Transformation for Education” plan.
- Disciple our students and provide service opportunities within our local community and world.

C. Teacher and Staff Development

- Initiate a mentor program for staff.
- Promote on-going professional development.
- Ensure all staff development includes a Christian perspective.

- Meet SCSBC pay and benefit levels.
- Employ highly qualified and versatile staff members that thrive in a small school.
- Encourage staff to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

D. Community Building

- Support annual student events sponsored by staff.
- Develop a compulsory volunteer plan for parents.
- Create a mentorship program for new families.
- Increase the number of community events.
- Build alumni involvement in school activities.

E. Facility Objectives

- Provide multi-use facilities that are available for school wide activities.
- Improve the appearance of the interior and exterior of the school.
- Build additional classroom space and remove portables.
- Upgrade the playing field.
- Upgrade building infrastructure and security.

F. Marketing and Promotion Objectives

- Expand and enhance an interactive school Internet presence.
- Promote the International Student Program.
- Communicate our mission, vision and legacy to our students, parents, alumni, local churches and the greater community of Maple Ridge.
- Generate awareness of our school's academic, fine arts and athletic programs to rebuild enrollment.

What Was The Process?

In beginning the process, the administrative team created a survey for key stakeholders in the school to be complete. Those stakeholders included parents, students, teachers, staff, administration and the board of directors. Once the surveys were completed, the data was compiled and categorized into the school's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for growth. A Strategic Planning Committee was then struck with a representation from a variety of interest groups: alumni, parents, teachers, administration and the school board. At the first committee meeting, a power point presentation was made explaining the purpose, process and goal of the committee's work. Over the next five months, the committee worked in conjunction with the board directors to create a new, concise, clear and functional strategic long-term plan for the school. The process was successful and a three-page document complete with vision,

mission, goals and objectives was accepted by the board of directors to be implemented over the next five years.

What Did I learn?

Over the years, the school has seen itself get into financial debt that has burdened the present operations of the school. Investigation showed that our present challenges were created by an outdated but still influential, long-term strategic plan. The school's present debt initiated the sale of unused school land to create an influx of capital. With this cash infusion, it was imperative that an effective, clear and responsible strategic plan be in place. Vision and mission needed to be clear and well communicated, goals need to be stated, and functional objectives needed to be created in order for the strategic plan to achieve success.

The strategic plan was a huge undertaking and I knew that I had a school with an active and strong community represented by people with skills and strengths. I also knew that for an important document such as this one, I needed to have a successful buy-in. Therefore, I wanted to create this plan with a skilled, committed group of stakeholders. I learned quickly that our school's strength is in the commitment of the community, and therefore, it was best to involve them.

The process of creating a strategic plan was one that could go wrong very quickly when there are a number of people working on the plan. It was critical that strong leadership needed to take place with a clear plan laid out to the committee. The first meeting laid out expectations, purpose, procedure and a timeline. I learned that great preparation created a successful project.

This project is ultimately the work of the principal as approved by the Board of Directors. As I went through the leadership role of creating a strategic plan with a seven member committee, I learned that each step of development needed the input and approval of the board. I was concerned that the goals did not address the critical aspect of financial accountability and stewardship. When I expressed my concern to the board, they contributed an introduction to the document that stressed the school's strong position on its future budgeting and expenditures. I found that the board and I are united in our vision for the school. That was a very rewarding experience.

What Difference Did It Make?

- Created a five year, long term strategic plan for the school to be carried out by the Board of Directors and the principal
- Included all stakeholder groups to produce a unified vision for the school's future
- Ensured the fiscal responsibility of spending newly created capital (\$3.2 million)
- Established defined objectives to allow the school to flourish and grow

How Has Our School Changed Due To The Project?

The project has strengthened our resolve to secure the future of Christian Education in Maple Ridge through the work at MRCS. The strategic plan is a road map for our success if it is followed and carried out. However, it is a living document. Meaning that it needs to be read, discussed and adapted as the school moves forward. While the spirit of the plan needs to be maintained, the wording of the plan may change, especially as circumstances in our school, our community and our world change.

MRCS has a renewed sense of purpose and a hope for the future. The project has clarified our vision and mission and has set a plan in place to help meet strategic goals that will prevent overspending or poor use of resources. It has strengthened our resolve to NOT repeat the mistakes that the last strategic plan produced causing great hardship on the school. It has given us important issues to resolve, such as how to greater involve our alumni, strengthen our high school academics, improve our facilities, and increase our volunteerism.

Summary:

As a school society that is vital and strong because of its community, the work of the board will be accomplished by its various committees: Education, Facilities, Finance, Human Resources, Marketing and Fund Raising. While it is true that the project was a lot of work, the execution of the plan will be exponentially more. It is also true that creating and completing the project was a very positive process, a great experience and produced a successful sense of accomplishment. Now the work begins of carrying out the directives of the project, and needless to say, that will be a challenge accompanied with a call to hard work.