

Summer Bridging Activities

Developing summer activities to engage Christ Lutheran School families

The goal of this Van Lunen applied project was to research, develop, and implement a summer program at Christ Lutheran School. The intent of developing a summer program was to provide additional opportunities for Christ Lutheran School students to be on the school's campus throughout the summer months.

As research for the potential of starting of a summer program at Christ Lutheran School started, it became obvious through parent surveys, investigation of other local summer programs, a staff/parents think tank, and completing a budget analysis that a traditional 9-week summer program/camp would not be a good fit for Christ Lutheran School. The focus of the applied project changed from starting a traditional summer program/camp to creating "summer bridging activities." In lieu of organizing and implementing a traditional summer program/camp Christ Lutheran School started three new summer time events: "Meet & Greet" for new kindergarten families held in early June, "Kick-Off to Summer Fun" for preschool – 2nd grade families held the end of June, and Vacation Bible School for kindergarten – 7th grade students which will be held the first week of August. The first two bridging events were well attended and incredibly successful at "bridging" the time between the conclusion of one school year and the start of another. By using these bridging events Christ Lutheran School is hoping to retain every student that was enrolled in May through the start of the new school year.

Xavria Schwarz, Principal
Christ Lutheran School
7929 La Mesa Blvd.
La Mesa, CA 91942
xschwarz@lutherschool.org
619.462.5211, ext. 3

Summer Bridging Activities

Developing summer activities to engage Christ Lutheran School families

Ms. Xavria Schwarz, Principal

Project Focus

Christ Lutheran School's beautiful and new, state-of-the-art facility seemed the perfect location to begin a traditional summer program/camp. Focused on capitalizing the use of a new facility and providing opportunities to engage Christ Lutheran School families throughout the summer months the project began with the intent to research, develop, and implement a summer program.

As research started to unfold it became obvious that a tradition summer program/camp would not be a good fit for Christ Lutheran School. With a focus to still work on building and bridging key school/family relationships (especially in the younger grades) the project focus shifted from a traditional summer program/camp to developing "summer bridging activities."

Project Process

The project started with research, research, and more research! Parent surveys, interviews with local summer program/camp directors, gathering of sample schedules from local programs, development of a parent and staff "think tank" to generate input and ideas, attendance at workshops for summer camp leaders, and budget analysis led to the conclusion that a traditional summer program/camp would not generate the necessary participation or revenue.

Revisiting the project's focus helped to create movement in a new direction. The goal was to develop additional opportunities for Christ Lutheran School families to be on the campus throughout the summer months. Building key school/family relationships still needed summer time attention. Initially the plan was to create these opportunities through a traditional summer program/camp. Since a traditional summer program/camp was not feasible the idea of "summer bridging activities" became the project's new focus.

The development and maintenance of relationships with families fairly new to Christ Lutheran School became the primary focus as ideas for "summer bridging activities" were generated. Making families feel connected to and a part of the culture at Christ Lutheran School required getting them on the school's campus multiple times throughout the summer months.

Project Results

As a result of investigating traditional summer programs/camps and determining that it would not be a positive fit for Christ Lutheran School the development of “summer bridging activities” was chosen as an alternative strategy.

Each “bridging activity” would include:

- Activity on Christ Lutheran School’s campus
- A setting where students could connect and reconnect with school classmates and friends
- A setting where parents could connect with each other and school staff
- Low cost experiences (for the school and participating families)
- Quality

Three “summer bridging activities” were planned:

- *Meet & Greet* for kindergarten families. This event took place in early June and connected 2011-2012 kindergarten families to each other and to the kindergarten teacher. The setting was informal. Simple breakfast foods were served. Kids played on the playground while parents visited with each other. Great connections were made. It was a positive event with a specific purpose.
- *Kick-Off to Summer Fun!* for Preschool – 2nd grade families. This event took place the end of June and connected preschool – 2nd grade families with each other and school staff. Live music, carnival games, and free food were the highlights of the event. Attendance was good, but the event could have been better publicized. The event has already been added to the school calendar for next year and plans have been tweaked to improve the event.
- *Vacation Bible School* for students entering kindergarten – 7th grade. Christ Lutheran Church Ministries has not hosted Vacation Bible School on its campus for the last several years. With the intent to “bridge” school families Christ Lutheran School launched the return to Vacation Bible School for the summer of 2011. Vacation Bible School will take place the week of August 1 – 5. Plans are moving in a positive direction and student registration has already been strong.

Project Analysis

At first glance it appears as if the initial vision for my Van Lunen applied project was a failure. What I thought the summer of 2011 would look like on Christ Lutheran School’s campus and the actual outcome were quite different.

The reality is that starting a traditional summer program/camp on Christ Lutheran School’s campus would have had a negative impact on our staff, facilities, and budget. It became

necessary to research and pursue alternative summer plans to achieve the goal of getting Christ Lutheran School students on Christ Lutheran School's campus and continue connection points throughout the summer months.

The development and execution of "Summer Bridging Activities" has had a positive impact on connection opportunities thus far. The kindergarten "Meet & Greet" was one of the year's best events! And to think that it ultimately was developed because of the failure to make a traditional summer program/camp a reality. God be praised!

The Van Lunen applied project will continue to have a positive and lasting impact on Christ Lutheran School's ministry and commitment to connecting school families for years to come. Christ Lutheran School will continue pursuing "summer bridging activities" with both event additions and improvements. It has changed the face of summertime at Christ Lutheran School!