

Messiah Lutheran School
Strategic Improvement Plan
2009-2014

Messiah Lutheran Church and School recently completed a general strategic plan to help guide and unify our various ministries. My project develops a Strategic Improvement Plan that flows from the ministry wide plan with specific goals for Messiah School.

Messiah School is a ministry of Messiah Lutheran Church, serving families of over 300 Preschool through Fifth Grade students in Lincoln, Nebraska. Messiah is a major feeder school for Lincoln Lutheran Middle and Senior High School. Our customer base has traditionally been members of our own church. Messiah church and school have a strong symbiotic history, having been planted together as a mission site to the eastern edge of Lincoln in the early 1970s.

Strategic Planning data was collected over the past 18 months via church surveys, school surveys, focus groups, demographic studies, and leadership development conferences.

Vision

Messiah is committed to our core values of **Christian discipleship** and **whole child development**. We also celebrate **excellence**, **21st century** learning skills, empowering successful **parents**, and **stewardship** development.

Goals

EXCELLENCE

We are the school of choice and excellent service to our community and Messiah families.

Philippians 4:8, 2 Corinthians 8:7

PROGRAM

Students experience a comprehensive 21st century educational program and facilities.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

PARENTS

Parents experience success as they lead and serve their family.

Deuteronomy 11:18-19

STEWARDSHIP

We are good stewards of the gifts with which God has blessed us.

1 Corinthians 8:6

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Why a *school specific* plan?

The expectation in many Lutheran church/school settings is that the ministry planning is unified. While there is a need to be consistent across ministry areas, a strategic plan specific to school ministry provides a narrow focus that is easier to implement and celebrate than a ministry wide strategic plan.

Communications and planning have lost some focus at Messiah raising the value of this planning process. My tenure as Principal at Messiah School is two years - enough to build the relationships and trust needed to begin this important work.

The repetition of surveys over a period of time helped us to gauge our current successes and then build on that momentum. Detailed demographic studies are invaluable tools for focused growth.

The Process - An Executive Summary

Making sense of the mountain of information available in planning efforts requires focus, multiple perspectives, and time. Consultant Kiki Johnson (Carney, Sandoe & Associates) provided an excellent Executive Summary template that made data distillation a manageable undertaking.

Messiah has collected data in recent years in an effort to enter into strategic ministry planning. To date, the efforts have been at the macro-level, but the data collected is quite useful and can be used for more in-depth study. Messiah has experienced three years without a senior executive pastor in place. This has made specific planning efforts difficult to undertake. Nevertheless, after two years as principal of the Day School, I feel it is prudent to press forward with a school specific strategic plan that reflects the general Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the Messiah ministry at large. For this executive summary data has been collected from a variety of sources.

In late 2007 Cornerstone Stewardship Ministry (Tom Grunow, consultant) guided the development of a general strategic ministry plan for Messiah Lutheran Church and School. This document guides the flavor of school specific strategic plan's Mission, Vision and Core Values, though these must adapted to provide a more specific direction for the school ministry.

A detailed demographic study has been completed by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund PRIZM service. The data used for this summary comes from the May 2009 report prepared for Messiah. Additional surveys and focus groups have taken place in 2008 and 2009 focusing specifically on school planning needs. The following is the introduction to my Executive Summary.

Supporting data topics include:

- What type of people are we at Messiah?
- How do we compare to the people around us in Lincoln?
- What do the social groups who live around us expect of us?
- Where did current Messiah members come from?
- What are other significant population trends in our 3-mile radius (growth, income, occupation, education, housing, ancestry, household size, presence of children, and single/married parents)?
- What are the general impressions of Messiah Lutheran School (asked of Messiah church membership)?
- What are current school parent peak expectations with school?
- What do parents dream of for Messiah 2012?
- What was parent's initial attraction to Messiah Lutheran School?
- Financial Aid Trends
- What are the current levels of satisfaction of parents?

Other artifacts included for the executive summary include:

- Messiah Lutheran Church and School Strategic Ministry Plan
- Messiah Lutheran School Mission, Vision, and Learner Focused Mission Statement
- Population Growth Projection Map
- Current Messiah Church Membership Household GeoPlot Map

Product Commentary

Is it appropriate to call a *plan* a *product*? I believe that this *product* will enable us to focus our *service* as we move forward. I am very excited about the level of detail and focus we have achieved. The vision and strategic goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.

The process (outlined above) provides our Business Planning and Marketing ministry teams valuable trend data and helps establish a dashboard to measure and celebrate our success.

Messiah Lutheran School STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2009-2014

Mission:

Messiah Lutheran School exists to **invite** students and families into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ, to **equip** them for life in the world, and to **send** them to share their knowledge and faith with others.

The invite - equip - send mission has served the ministries of Messiah well over her twenty years of service to the Lincoln community. God has blessed the ministry of Messiah Lutheran School with dedicated Christian parents and teachers who are committed to meeting the needs of the whole child and instilling a Christian worldview in our children.

Vision:

Messiah is committed to our core values of **Christian discipleship** and **whole child development**. We also celebrate **excellence**, **21st century** learning skills, empowering successful **parents**, and **stewardship** development.

Goals:

EXCELLENCE: We are the school of choice and excellent service to our community and Messiah families. *Philippians 4:8, 2 Corinthians 8:7*

Rationale: Messiah's reputation for excellent service to families has been well established within the confines of our church membership. Enrollment growth has paralleled the quick growth of Messiah Lutheran Church. In order to share Messiah's school with a greater segment of the Lincoln community, it is important to create an excellent experience for the community at large and to develop deeper relationships with Christian community leaders who have a heart for Christian education.

- Students achieve academic excellence as measured by annual achievement tests.
- Lincoln community leaders know and share the excellence of Messiah School.
- An excellent service experience is provided to families.
- Church members celebrate value of Messiah School.
- Staff are recognized by parents and the community for providing safety, care, character education, curricular expertise, academic rigor, and individual attention.
- Family forums remind parents and friends of the value of their school choice, celebration of benchmarks, and to communication of new initiatives.
- The first impression of Messiah School; including campus facilities, printed/electronic material, and service; engages community families.

PROGRAM: Students experience a comprehensive 21st century educational program and facilities. *Ecclesiastes 1:9*

Rationale: Much of what Messiah has always offered is what 21st century learners require: a focus on the whole child (intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, and emotional), collaboration between teachers, collaboration among students, and open architecture classrooms. While maintaining this core of who we are, we also embrace new tools for guiding learning in children who will work in professions that don't exist yet today.

- Staff implements a variety of student assessment tools to evaluate mastery levels and individual student needs.
- Students experience a collaborative classroom environment that encourages creativity and higher order thinking skills.
- Children learn from physically experiencing their environment.
- Messiah celebrates student and staff health and wellness.
- Staff development is centered around collaborative learning, technology, and e-resources.
- Instructional spaces and equipment support collaboration, creativity and movement.
- The school staff and facility provides a secure environment for children.
- Campus facilities allow for excellent student and community educational opportunities, including flexible classroom spaces, resource rooms, and natural green spaces sufficient for formal athletics and informal play.

PARENTS: Parents experience success as they lead and serve their family.

Deuteronomy 11:18-19

Rationale: Through survey data we find that "family" is a significant factor for parents continuing to make Messiah their school of choice. Demographic studies indicate a market for family focused services. Messiah already provides excellent ministry opportunities for men, women, and children as individuals and to small groups who are active church members. Adding parenting resources is an important new opportunity that the school can provide for both the Messiah church population, which is quite young, and the Lincoln community in general.

- Year-round full day childcare for preschool age children and for ages 3-10 provides an excellent Christian care for children of working parents.
- Staff members are well prepared for their internal marketing role.
- Families receive immediate care and attention.

- Messiah offers parent friendly seminars to the community: parenting, marriage, divorce care, parenting your parents, and single parents.
- Parents have a variety of opportunities to be involved in the life of their school, including activities that do not take place during the school day.
- Messiah partners with parents to instill a Christian worldview in 21st century children.

STEWARDSHIP: We are good stewards of the gifts with which God has blessed us.

1 Corinthians 8:6

Rationale: The operation of an excellent school requires significant support. This support comes from an increasing number of resources. The complexity of school funding and the interests of school supporters demand a focus on stewardship.

- The school revenue stream is consistently growing (e.g. increased enrollment, expanded donor participation, broader third source funding) to ensure adequate financial resources for a dynamic, effective pursuit of the Messiah mission.
- Dashboard indicators provide clear reporting and celebration of progress in: enrollment index, tuition dependence, income sources, funding blend, staff development investment, financial aid sources, cash reserve, and staff benefits.
- Messiah models good stewardship in ministry and business practices and develops faithful stewards who support Messiah's efforts with their prayer, time, talents, and treasure.
- Students, staff and families are engaged in acts of service to one another, in their community, and around the world.
- Stakeholders embrace the vision of Messiah School and support it.
- Regular communication celebrates the vision of Messiah School and invites support through prayer, time, talents, and treasure.
- School communication and experiences provide continuous validation of the reasons that parents and students choose Messiah.
- Staff is recognized as leaders and celebrated as assets in the Messiah and Lincoln community.
- Scholarships and Financial Aid programs provide an accessible day school choice for Lincoln families.