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Over the past four years Heritage Classical Christian Academy has undergone tremendous change both in enrollment, scope of program and philosophy. When I first came into the position of Headmaster in 2012 we had a declining enrollment of 31 students, a poor reputation in the community and we were on the verge of closing our doors. On my first day of work I was handed two documents. The first was a full copy of the budget which included projections for the year-end shortfall and a letter from the church that we were renting from asking us to leave at the end of that current academic year in order for them to renovate the space for their children's ministry.

In many ways Heritage Academy was a sinking ship. However, I believed the school could flourish because of two clear reasons. First, when I interviewed for the position you could see and feel the Christ-centered nature of the School Board. They were unified, faithful, humble and passionate people that wanted to see the school grow. Second, the culture of the school was clearly a grace-based, loving environment where teachers really knew and cared for the students. So I jumped on this sinking ship to see what could be done.

The next year we implemented a clear strategic plan that would completely change the school from a block style, university model school into a traditional academy. The plan would address everything from student discipline, to curriculum, to learning outcomes and finally a new permanent location. The culmination of this plan was the purchase of a new building and our host church graciously extended our lease to provide time for us to leave. As these changes took hold in the school our enrollment began to grow and our budget solidified. At the end of last year we were in good position to begin the process of finding a new building.

That summer when we started the process of development and building fund, I attended the first Van Lunen Institute. It seemed fitting that my project would revolve around the funding, purchase and renovation of our new home for the school. My project has focused on the process of fundraising, institutional change and developing volunteer teams to move the school forward with strategic initiatives. Since the school was so small and our administrative team consisted of myself as Headmaster and two other part-time administrators, it would be vital to involve the School Board and members of the community to see this project through to the end.

The Development Phase:

In the Spring of 2015 we started the silent phase for a 1.3 million dollar campaign to raise money for the purchase of an abandoned school building renovation project in Fenton, Missouri. The first step was to develop a list of faithful donors that have given to the school in the past and share with them our vision for a permanent location. I met with 25 families and

we were able to raise \$500,000.00 before going public to the community. This was a great start but it was only about 1/3 of what we really needed to make the purchase happen.

The Marketing Team:

Once we were confident with the process of fundraising we hired a company to help with the branding of the public phase of the process. Conflux met with our administrative team on a weekly basis to rework our vision, mission and core values so that our message was consistent and clear. Through this process we created a series of videos that could be used on the website to show the history of the school, our vision for the school and encourage participation in the capital campaign. As we went public with the campaign I organized meetings with each family from the school and others from the community to talk with them about their potential contribution to the endeavor. Through this process we raised another \$250,000.00. This gave us the confidence to move forward with the purchase of the building.

The Building Committee:

At the same time we were developing the fundraising for the building we also had a building committee working through the details of the renovation, purchase and permitting process for the new location. The purpose of this committee was to determine how much money would be needed to complete the process and to navigate our wonderful government system in St. Louis County. In this process we hired a real estate lawyer that helped us through the purchase. In November of 2015 we purchased the new campus for \$825,000.00 with an estimated renovation cost of \$340,000.00. We then entered a six month process with St. Louis County for the permitting and zoning changes that needed to be made. In order to complete the purchase we borrowed the remaining money from our gracious banking institution Cass Bank. They provided the funding that we needed to get the building purchased and renovated through the final stages.

How this will Impact our School:

We are excited that in the Fall of 2016 we will begin classes for 6th through 12th Grade. We now are able to provide classrooms that are developed for a high school student. In the past when we were renting from the church we would convert nursery rooms into classrooms and although the students never complained the new classrooms will have a distinct educational impact upon their experience.

In addition to classrooms geared for high school students, we will also be able to provide locker space for these students for the first time. In the past the church prevented us from having lockers on campus and so with the generous donation from one of our parents we are able to have a locker for each student next year. This will be a big morale boost for our students and will communicate to our families that we are a real high school environment.

Also we will be able to offer a more robust athletic program. In the past we did not have access to a field and we had to rent on a limited basis the gym space needed for athletics. Now we will be able to organize our own gym usage and allow our student priority access to the facility. This

will be a great impact for the coaches and teachers that serve in our athletic program of the school.

Not only will this be a great blessing for our students but it will be a wonderful attraction for families looking to move their child into a mid-sized Christian School. The permanent location will communicate that our school has a long term focus and that are looking to grow as a school. The location of the school is ideal as it sits in an area that does not have Christian High School nearby and will be attractive to families in the West County and South County areas of St. Louis. It is my belief that we will quickly fill the school and will soon be at the stated capacity for our school.

What I have Learned:

There are several lessons that I have learned through the process of raising money, purchasing a campus and working through the renovation of the building.. I am grateful for the Van Lunen Fellowship as it came at the right time for our school to develop. Many of the things that I learned from the summer and winter institutes were used in the development of our game plan to move the school forward. I believe that the Lord orchestrated those details for the benefit of our school and for my personal benefit as a young administrator. So many of our conversations at the Board meetings would be seasoned with what I had learned at the fellowship.

First, I have learned how institutional change takes place. When you look at the school four years ago as compared to the present it is clear that we have a completely different approach. The process of change for a school can only happen when a clear and consistent strategic plan is properly communicated to all constituents of the community. The most important thing that I did was to talk with each family individually about the direction of the school. Although many could not give to the school they were bought into the process of changing. They were sold on the idea of change and that gave our community momentum and energy to complete the needed steps of change. Now by word of mouth, others in the St. Louis area are starting to hear about Heritage Academy as a viable educational option in the landscape of Christian schools. Institutional change is slow and deliberate process of communication to your community and execution of your stated plan. Throughout the last four years our retention rate has remained high around the 95% rate which indicates that our parents clearly understand and appreciate the institutional change that has occurred.

Second, I learned how to motivate volunteers. It is clear to me that with a small administrative staff and limited manpower in the office our reliance on volunteers was key. I learned how to provide a clear objective that was not overwhelming for a volunteer to handle. Often I would match the gifts of the person volunteering with the tasks that were asked of them so that we were not asking anyone to do something that they were not good at. Our volunteers needed goals that were broken down into small, realistic parts that could be accomplished quickly and easily. In the end, I learned that volunteers will do a lot more than you ask them if you provide encouragement and communication. As soon as they think what they are doing is not helpful or is a waste of time they will be done helping. But if they understand the big picture enough and are encouraged along the way they will serve with a willing heart.

Third, I learned how to inspire donors. Zack Clark is the Zen master at developing the relationships needed to raise money and through his seminars I learned a great deal. I worked on my development message and although we did not get a good opportunity to talk through my project I do believe that his influence helped me in the process of raising money. My last task in this process will be to pay off the remainder of the loan so that we are not carrying any debt. Through the help of Zach I have already raised \$25,000.00 towards paying down the loan and I am hopeful that by the end of next year we will have this project paid off.

Fourth, I learned how to navigate government processes. I think the hardest part of the entire process was dealing with the zoning and permitting issues that we faced with the county. Although they were very kind and always happy to help, it seemed like everything took another month to be completed. We waited a solid six months after the purchase to even start the work because of issues that we faced with the policies of our government. However, I now know how to navigate that world with public hearings, filing for exemptions, and getting plans approved. Although I hope to never go through it again I have at least developed the confidence to work with them in the future.

Fifth, I learned how God is faithful for the entire process. It is clear to me that the entire process we experienced was orchestrated by a sovereign God. I had the privilege to walk through the steps of the experience and did a lot of work to make it happen but a several points along the way I could clearly see the Hand of God in the details of the situation. For some reason God wants this little school to thrive and I believe He has some great purpose for us. Our teachers are faithful to educate our students and equip them for world that does know or understand God. Our School Board is a faithful, humble and prayerful group that care deeply about Christian Classical education, and our students are a bunch of quirky, lovable misfits that only fit at Heritage Academy. So God is faithful despite my shortfalls and it is clear that He has a plan for our school because for all practical purposes we should be out of business. And yet, we have new building that we don't deserve and that He has graciously provided. He is faithful! To God be the Glory!