

The Pursuit of Christian School Sustainability

Steve Hall, Head of School
Van Lunen Fellow 2015/2016

Westminster Christian School, Elgin, Illinois
www.westminsterchristian.org



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What Did I Do?

As the newly hired head of school at Westminster Christian School, it was important to identify the reasons this school had not experienced growth in the past 5-10 years. Even more concerning was the decrease in enrollment being experienced in recent years. Multiple factors contributed to this school's overall lack of growth and, therefore, multiple initiatives needed to be implemented. My project centered on changing mindsets and building a foundation for school sustainability at Westminster Christian School. This began by establishing a collaborative and shared school vision with the Board and addressing our financial assumptions and practices relative to tuition, fees, discounts, and tuition assistance. These changes necessitated taking steps to change the way we approached advancement, admissions, and our educational commitments to Westminster families.

What Did I Learn?

Foundationally, I learned that a school community must know and fully embrace its purpose and identity. This begins at the leadership level and must be communicated systematically, repetitively, and graciously. Additionally, it became abundantly clear that Christian schools must transparently grapple with the desire to serve all Christian families and the responsibility to be financially sustainable as a ministry. Through it all I learned that a leader must be willing to propose hard changes, think and plan with a 10-year view in mind, and be patient, compassionate, resilient, and resolved in pursuing a vision that will take time.

What Difference Is It Making?

There is a long way to go. We are far from seeing the full results of our work. Yet, there are some encouraging firstfruits. Though we raised tuition substantially, we have kept 92% of our families, our advancement efforts have raised more money this year than in past years, our Board is unified and committed to a bold future, our families are seeing and commenting on our commitment to excellence, our student culture is becoming more positive, a clear Strategic Plan has been developed, and our school recognition and reputation in the outside community has grown this past year. A great deal has yet to be accomplished; but God has shown Himself faithful in these important first steps. Lord willing, the best is yet to come!