



Developing a Strategic Planning Process

2012-13 Van Lunen Fellows Project - Summary

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Overview:

For 30 years, the board of directors of Saskatoon Society for Christian Education Inc. (the "Board") has operated Saskatoon Christian School ("SCS") without a formal strategic plan. Consequently, the school's Principal and Executive Director are making decisions which can influence vision, mission and organizational values. Strategic leadership is a function of governance so the Board should be the only ones entrusted with shaping the school's vision, mission and values.

What did I do?

After first helping the Board understand what a strategic plan was and the concern for operating SCS without such a plan, I worked with the Van Lunen consultant to design a strategic planning process that, if followed, should result in a plan that reinforces the fundamental reason SCS exists and creates its ideal future by genuinely considering the wishes and desires of the school's stakeholders. Although the Board may have been capable of creating a strategic plan on its own, an independent and skilled facilitator would be far more timely and effective. I sought and evaluated 3 different planning facilitators and presented my findings to the Board.

What did I learn?

- The school is successful by conventional standards so the need for strategic planning was not inherently obvious to the Board.
- The Board was comfortable allowing the Executive Director to create the strategic plan; not simply lead the strategic planning process.
- The Board preferred a Christian facilitator who was familiar with our local educational landscape.
- The local university is home to the Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit ("SELU"), a professional leadership development agency with extensive experience performing "school effectiveness reviews", an educational organization's version of a SWOT analysis.
- Like a SWOT analysis, the school effectiveness review will form the basis for strategic planning, both in terms of managing change and helping to create the best possible future.
- One of the SELU consultants is a declarative Christian who specializes in strategic planning and is willing to conduct the effectiveness review and facilitate the succeeding strategic planning process over the long term.

What difference is it making to SCS?

As of this report, I am finalizing the contract with SELU for a School Effectiveness Review to commence September 2013 with the results available within 90 days of completion. These results will be incorporated into the ensuing strategic planning phase, facilitated by Dr. Keith Walker. The Board, management and membership are all very excited at the prospect of a professional review of the effectiveness of the school and the subsequent strategic planning phase.