

Discovering God's Plan for our Schools

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The Challenge

Due to a pattern of seeking immediate fixes to regular crises, NACE had gone without a strategic plan for years. This project presented the opportunity and resources to draw a longer term plan together.

Necessary groundwork / Setting the Stage

Consulting with Van Lunen faculty and a wide variety of educational and management resources, it became apparent that a necessary step in the process to completing the plan was to re-affirm and commit to our schools' mission and vision. Striking a small sub-committee to ponder new vision and mission statements and recommend new words to guide our schools was an exciting and invigorating project involving a wide variety of stakeholders reviewing input from hundreds of responses from our students, parents, staff and supporters. The strategic planning process took some initial preparation of the board including a historical review as well as affirming the new mission and vision statements that would ultimately guide us in our work. The formal process began with developing a list of individuals in our community who would be committed and competent to stand on our strategic planning task force. Together, we were ready to begin the work of discovering God's plan for NACE.

Discovering God's plan for our Schools

Following Dr. Alan Pue's book "Rethinking Strategic Planning for Christian Schools", twenty-four highly committed and equipped individuals agreed to invest deeply over a short time period. Diligently bathing the process in both prayer and praise, we began to study and learn together what our schools' unique strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were, as well as the current environment in which they operate. From our work, four themes emerged ready to be developed into specific initiatives. Smaller groups met to develop multiple ways in which to move forward on each theme. The NACE strategic plan has four focus areas: 1) Build Clarity, 2) Grow Deeper, 3) Grow Further, and 4) Equip Staff, Families, and Schools. These areas collectively have 33 initiatives that are to be pursued over the next five years.

What I learned during the process

School supporters are honoured to be asked to complete tasks specific to their gifts. A deep and analytical look at who you are as an organization with your board and invested stakeholders is a gift. I also learned the incredible value of selecting the right people. Being able to respectfully dialogue, discuss, and disagree is essential to the smooth and successful development of a strategic plan.

The difference this project made at NACE

The work invested in setting the stage has provided a great deal of clarity for not only the board but for my work. Our new mission statement works well and provides a focus where there wasn't.

The most salient difference this project has made is the injection of confidence and encouragement to set in motion a plan with realistic goals, timelines and means to move forward and to become what God has intended us to be.