

“Vision-Casting for ACS”

Brian Koetje, Van Lunen Fellow 2015-2016
Principal, Allendale Christian School
Allendale, Michigan



What did I do?

When I came to Allendale Christian School four years ago, I saw that the Mission Statement was widely publicized, and I found a Faith Statement on the website, along with different statements about the Christian environment. What I did not find was a clear vision statement. In the past year, we have completed the Accreditation process with Christian Schools International. In order to create an effective School Improvement Plan, I felt like we needed a clear vision statement that would help drive our decisions. As I begin the process to create a vision statement for ACS, I decided that I wanted to add substance to the Core Values by adding an explanation and Biblical ties. I also wanted a clear list of characteristics that we desired in an eighth grade graduate. The process in completing these Foundational Statements involved the entire Board of Directors and staff. I participated in interviews, group discussions, and surveys to get a strong sense of the hopes and goals of our educational community. After we approved the new Vision Statements and Characteristics of a Graduate, as well as bringing clarity to the Core Values, I revisited and made changes to the Mission Statement.

What did I learn?

One of the most important lessons I learned was how significant these foundational statements are when leading a school. Once I had clear vision statements (for students, staff, and community), as well as a picture of what we wanted a graduate to look like, it became easier to organize a School Improvement Plan. With a clear goal, decisions and procedures had direction, a focused direction that defines who we are and what we are doing. Already, these statements have been critical in helping me create job descriptions for teachers, in making decisions about the integration of faith in the classroom, and middle school structure that helps prepare students to embody the characteristics that we hold as an end goal. I also learned more about the value of a team. It took great feedback from the Board and staff to make these changes. The team will continue to work together to bring these statements to life.

What difference did it make?

My hope is that this project will help Allendale Christian School long term. I want to provide direction that will benefit the students, staff, and the community. I believe that a unified focus that comes with a clear set of vision statements will drive decision-making going forward. A by-product of the process to create a clear vision and characteristics of a graduate was to watch the passion that Board and staff have in their roles. They would share their hope for students who are eager to know more about Jesus, who love to learn, and who are unique in their potential as children of God. Beyond vision-casting, it became a time to dream and hope and pray and get excited about the potential impact that we can have in kids' lives. I hope, in some way, that this process can continue to invigorate our community to unite in a common vision for how we see our students, staff, and community.