

Tim Lehman, Head of School
Bethany Christian Schools, Goshen, IN
Project Title: The Awesome Grant That Wasn't
Date: June 1, 2017
Consultant: Dave Hahn



School Background: Established in 1955 by the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Bethany Christian Schools serves students in grades 4th through 12th grade.

The Plan: The Awesome Grant Program is an initiative designed to:

- enhance internal marketing efforts to build a “vibrant” school culture,
- engage young alumni in the school and to develop a habit of philanthropy,
- help students appreciate and demonstrate creativity and artistic expression



How it works: The school collaborates with young alumni (under 30) to raise money for and administer a grant program for students. Only alumni under 30 can contribute to the program. Students can apply for grants to fund activities or projects that will bring joy to the school community. Members of the founding committee helped determine the award criteria and chose the kicking donkey image (above) as an emblematic representation of the program. (because they believe the term “Awesome Grant” is lame. I promised we would change the name to... something)

Why it didn't happen - yet:

- The overestimation factor. I overestimated young alumni capacity to give “free” time to the project. For this to work long term there will have to be some sort of compensation woven into the program for one or two people that do the organizing. It is also possible I overestimated student capacity to develop creative ideas and envision what it would take to carry out. If this project gets off the ground I will have to have students and teachers collaborate on the grants. Not a bad thing.
- Necessary endings development. As I was trying to get the Awesome Grant proposal up and running, it became clear that as a school we were lacking energy and proficiency in other areas of development. It didn't make sense to push through a new initiative when we were having difficulty meeting basic standards. The end result is that we reconfigured the administrative team combining enrollment and development into one advancement position. The new Advancement Director has the right aptitudes and vision but lacks experience. The books *Necessary Endings* and *Crucial Conversations* are particularly relevant for navigating the sensitive personnel issues.

What happened instead: Reconfiguring the advancement office and the school's administrative structure, meant we would need to delete, delegate, or defer some responsibilities and initiatives. The Awesome Grant program was deferred to be reconsidered once we finished a land and facilities use strategic plan, started in the fall 2016. This strategic initiative is progressing well. We have completed the athletic complex phase and will begin the facilities plan in the fall. Concurrently the administrative team is developing a comprehensive campaign fundraising strategy that will combine annual giving with capital projects giving.