



**PROVIDENCE**  
A SANTA BARBARA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

# **FIXER★UPPER**

## **Fixer Upper: Attempting An Extreme Makeover of A Christian School**

**Providence, A Santa Barbara Christian School**

**Dr. R. Scott Lisea, Head of School**

**Consultants Employed:**

**Steen Hudson, Hudson Consulting—CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

**Chuck Evans, Better Schools—FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

**Jim McKenzie—MARKETING**

**Coatney West—HUMAN RESOURCES**

Providence, A Santa Barbara Christian School is the result of a recent merger between Providence Hall (Grades 7-12) and Santa Barbara Christian School (Grades PK-8). Providence Hall is only eleven years old, our preschool is in its second year, while the Lower School has been around since 1959. Neither of the schools have ever been on a permanent campus, and the merge was an attempt for both schools to strengthen, and, at least for the Lower School, avoid being dissolved.

I was hired two years ago to be the first Head of School over the joint campuses. While it was clear that my main duties would include a property search and capital campaign, what was not evident was the need for an entire restructuring of the financial model of the school. Each of these initiatives has its own challenges. Property in Santa Barbara is at a prime, and is extremely expensive. But the financial viability of the school has become the greatest priority, and it became evident to me during last year's Van Lunen summer session that we were structured to fail.

My primary focus during this year was to create a new model for financial sustainability, which would work along with our comprehensive campaign to purchase and develop 1-2 new campuses. The two work together, as the campaign allows us to survive the financial gap we are in. Our plan entails raising tuition, reducing aid, constructing and adopting sound financial policies, communicating the school's plan, and reinforcing the board of directors to carry out our mission.

As of the writing of this paper, we are in escrow and permitting process on a campus for our Upper School, but are at the mercy of municipal government as to its acceptance. We are negotiating with the church that hosts our Lower School campus, but have made no significant headway. We are in the quiet phase of a \$25M campaign, and have raised \$5.7M in cash and pledges to this point, and are waiting for more significant requests after securing properties. The longer that those properties are not identified the more eminent the threat to our financial plan and survival. Our projected 2017-18 enrollment is down 10%, but the tuition revenue is up by \$400,000. We are pursuing the only path toward sustainability, but the jury is still out whether we can make it out of the trough that the school structured itself into in time.