



Who We Are: St. Lawrence Academy's Path to Discovery

Patrick Macy, Head of School

History. St. Lawrence Academy has been in existence as a small parochial school for over 25 years. It is a ministry of St. Lawrence Orthodox Christian Church in Felton, CA.

Purpose. The focus of my project was to clarify and articulate our school identity. This was the first step we needed to accomplish in preparation for launching a strategic planning process.

Elements of the study. In our effort to clarify and articulate our school identity, we selected two main areas of focus for our study: institutional attributes and student outcomes. Institutional attributes included our beliefs, history, culture, traditions, ministry status, core values, mission, philosophy of education, and curricula and instructional methods. Student outcomes included our vision, as expressed in our portrait of a graduate, and our expected school-wide learning results.

Participants. Participants in the study included a committee (the "Vision Team"), an Orthodox Christian education consultant, our board of trustees, teachers, parents, alumni, students, parish members, and local community members.

Process and tools. The Vision Team examined our institutional attributes and student outcomes through dialogue with the participants and reviewing school-related documents. This committee also conducted interviews, surveys, and research comparing findings to other Orthodox Christian schools.

Results. Results showed that the primary reason students were enrolled in the school was for the purpose of spiritual formation, which was consistent with the intent of the founders of the school and the direction the school has taken throughout its 25 year history. This was followed by character development and academics. The results also revealed our close connection with the life of the parish community, showing that we are not merely a "church-sponsored school", but rather a ministry of the Church itself.

Implications and future goals. This study has provided us a clear picture of who we are as a school and direction toward approaching the school's design, culture, marketing communications, and financial support. To achieve our future goals, we are changing in ways that align us more with the teachings of the Church, provide our students with opportunities for integrating more fully into the life of the parish community, and prepare them to enter confidently into the world beyond their home, the school, and the church. We have discovered that there is a creative and innovative aspect to being a small church-sponsored school, which will allow us to more strategically approach the fulfillment of our mission over the next 25 years.

