

NECESSARY ENDINGS AND NEW BEGINNINGS

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Project background – Too many issues not enough solutions

Initially, I was conflicted regarding where to focus my attention for the Van Lunen Fellows Project:

- ❖ Low teacher retention for the past two years and the overall impact it was having on the school culture. Low salaries, with no pension or benefits being the major cause. Additionally, changing state laws regarding wages are forcing the GLS executive team to reexamine the school's pay structure and policies or begin paying overtime.
- ❖ Long-term planning has been halted. The public school district the school site is leased from is in financial crisis and hasn't provided a long-term lease to GLS for three years.
- ❖ Junior kindergarten and kindergarten enrollment is declining for the second straight year. As a result, overall student enrollment is down by twenty percent.
- ❖ The ultimate viability of the school due to the serious impact student recruitment, teacher retention and the lack of a lease agreement will have on the school

What I Did - Consultant: Jim McKenzie

- ❖ I focused on recruitment and retention of students at the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten levels.
- ❖ The school website was reviewed and determined to be antiquated and laden with too much information. There was no need for prospective families to come to the campus for a tour.
- ❖ The new GLS website will be aligned with the Church's website to focus on providing appropriate information to inspire prospective families to contact the school directly for information and to schedule tours.
- ❖ Under Jim's guidance, GLS has begun using various methods of technology and social media to advertise to target markets.

What I Learned

- ❖ Consulting with experts streamlines the process of growth and change. Be clear about your brand. Staying current is essential to survival. When advertising, know and understand your target market.
- ❖ A study of demographics of the area determined there is a decline in the number of young students in Huntington Beach area. These findings support the importance of using effective strategies in marketing to prospective parents.
- ❖ Pay attention to those unrelentingly nagging thoughts. Teachers retention, long term planning, student recruitment, sustainability of the school all still seemed like insurmountable issues to me.

Necessary Endings

- ❖ I became aware of a growing sense of frustration, which led to feelings of hopelessness. Because of frustrations related to the school, coupled with concerns about my aging parents and my father's advanced dementia, I was running out of hope. And so, after 21 years at Grace, I resigned.
- ❖ I have laid my burden down. I feel optimistic about the new principal, and will be available to her as needed. More importantly, I feel filled with hope that the school will not only survive, it will thrive once again!