

Envisioning For the Future: The Strategic Planning Process at Delta Christian School

Van Lunen Fellows Program

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[Link to Video Presentation \(YouTube\)](#)

[Link to Strategic Plan 2020-2023 \(PDF\)](#)

What did you do?

Entering into my third year as Principal of Delta Christian School, I along with the Board of Trustees determined that this would be an optimal time to engage in the development of a strategic plan (Appendix 1). The process was well-supported by the Society of Christian Schools British Columbia, specifically Executive Director, Ed Noot, and Director of Development, Cathy Kits. In reviewing the school's last strategic plan from 2013, it is evident that the main goal for the school community at that time was to ensure school survival due to low enrollment. The focus of the new plan is to build on the past four years of sustained growth towards being a thriving school community with renewed purpose and vision. The plan supports the direction that school has already been on, which is to grow enrolment to become a fully dual-tracked school by 2024-2025 and to determine a clear pathway for continuation in Christian education for our grade 7 graduates by 2024-2025

The 2020–2023 Strategic Plan describes a faith-driven and wisdom-led direction undertaken by the Delta Christian School Board, Leadership Team, Staff and Community. Delta Christian School has identified areas of focus that will promote understanding of commonly held goals that will enable the school to enhance its ability to meet its mission and vision. Together, the board and leadership staff have crafted a document that endeavours to respond to the call that they have received. Through its strategic priorities, Delta Christian School has articulated how it seeks to develop over the next three years. The school's mission/vision and core values have driven the priorities that follow in this plan. From beginning to end, the process took approximately a year and a half and can be broken down into the following stages:

1. SCSBC leadership met with the Delta Christian School Board of Trustees to provide an overview of the process, but also to gain information to provide school-specific context and direction for strategic planning.
2. The priorities that were expressed by the Board were then summarized and turned into questions to be responded to by the broader community through an online survey. Parents, staff, and alumni participated in the survey.
3. The results of the survey were then synthesized by SCSBC into key strategic growth areas and shared with the Board prior to the strategic visioning sessions.
4. SCSBC facilitated two evening strategic visioning sessions for those in attendance to respond to the results of the survey and further expand on ideas. The Board was also given the opportunity to collaborate and agree upon a statement on an envisioned future for the school.

5. The results of the strategic planning sessions were then captured and summarized in a draft strategic plan and shared with the Board and Principal. The Board then tasked the Principal to prepare a final copy of the strategic plan that was presented to the Board for approval before being presented to the Society at the Spring General Meeting in June 2020.

As a result of the collaboration that took place at the visioning sessions, an Envisioned Future statement and a list of Strategic Priorities were produced as follows:

DCS Envisioned Future

To be a thriving school operating at capacity, where excellent Christ-centered education empowers students to live transformed lives of service, leadership, and Godly character.

Strategic Priorities

Educational Program: To enhance collaboration among all students, parents, partners and educators by creating a robust program with niche learning opportunities that align with Delta Christian School's mission and core values.

Growth & Infrastructure: To develop a dual-track K-7 program with modern facilities through increased enrollment from Christian families in Delta and surrounding communities.

Fiscal Responsibility & Giving: To establish ongoing streams of revenue that enable for increased debt reduction and the support of future growth.

Community Relations: To form strong relationships with the broader community built on mutual generosity and goodwill with a focus service and leadership development for students. Deepening relations and strengthening community.

What did you learn?

From this experience, I learned that competent leadership continually invites and embraces the voice of the community into the conversation. Going through each stage of the development process was invaluable in hearing the stories and hopes and dreams of the community. I learned to overcome initial hesitations and nerves with high levels of parent and staff engagement in speaking to the future of the school. Through this, a

light was shone on our areas of strength, but also into the areas of necessary growth and potential blind spots. Furthermore, I have become more honest and accepting of my own leadership, including my strengths and weaknesses. All too often, I have borne the weight of leadership responsibility solely on my shoulders; however, I am learning to let go out of necessity with the realization that the responsibility is for all of us to share. When leaders are willing to open ourselves up to the vulnerability of critique, and this is received as an opportunity for growth, the overall health of the organization will then be freed to flourish.

I also gained first-hand experience at the helm of driving the strategic plan forward into areas I had previously not delved into. The Board placed significant trust into my hands to allow me to articulate my vision for the school and to bring this to life. Such areas included meeting with construction companies to understand the cost of building expansion and working with web designers on the design of a new website. The scope of the strategic plan has helped me to grow in my understanding of what my role is as head of school and to engage in more strategic growth thinking. As a result, I have found my thoughts and actions to be even more vision and mission-driven and strategically-directed.

I learned through this process that clearly communicated goals engender confidence and clarity for our staff and committees. Practically, the ability to review goals on a regular basis creates a greater sense of accountability. The staff and volunteers are grateful for the clarity in which the goals were communicated and they are enthusiastic to get behind the vision to continue growing together. A sense of excitement is palpable from all members of the organization as we are more united than ever in seeing these goals come to fruition.

What difference did it make?

The plan has galvanized our efforts by providing directly actionable items towards the management and allocation of resources (staff, finances, time). All too often, school leadership can become overwhelmed with all the areas we believe are urgent that should be addressed immediately. The strategic plan allows us to prioritize our energies and accept the reality that we are limited in our resources and what can realistically be accomplished. As an immediate outcome, changes will be seen in the academic program and the overall student experience as we see increased investments being made into curriculum resource purchases and staff training. This is viewed not only as an investment into our students, but also into the professional growth of our teachers and strengthening the school's overall academic program and identity.

By opening up the opportunity for parents to give direct input, a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the community is established. We can look back now and see that the bonds of the community were strengthened. Members of the community who were not as engaged in the past were connected with opportunities to contribute and serve. An example of this is the formation of the Strategic Growth Committee to explore and provide guidance to the Board. As a growing K-7 community, the Strategic Growth Committee will be exploring the question of whether the school should be expanding, and if so, in what way. The actual results are yet to be seen, but the pieces to mobilize the plan forward are starting to take shape. The findings and recommendations of the Strategic Growth Committee are crucial in setting the stage for the school's trajectory for years to come.

The impact of the strategic planning process hits deeper than what appears on the surface. It caused the school community to re-examine and move beyond entrenched beliefs and ways of being. This included a necessary change of mindset that was established from one of survival to becoming a thriving school community. In retrospect, this shift may very well be the most significant difference-maker in the long run, as we recalibrate how we view ourselves today and who we believe we can become in the future. With this, comes opportunities to push forward in the areas of our strengths, but also call for crucial and sometimes difficult decisions to redirect our path. With the strategic plan in place, we enter into the coming years with renewed optimism. We are ready to take action and deploy resources; yet, at the same time, we wait in humble anticipation of what God has in store for us.

Appendix 1 - DCS Strategic Plan 2020-2023

JUNE 2020

STRATEGIC PLAN



2020-2023

DELTA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

EQUIPPING CHILDREN FOR LIFE

Prepared by: Delta Christian School Board of Directors

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BACKGROUND

The 2020–2023 Strategic Plan describes a faith-driven and wisdom-led direction undertaken by the Delta Christian School Board, Leadership Team, Staff and Community. Delta Christian School has identified areas of focus which will promote understanding of commonly held goals that will enable the school to enhance its ability to meet its mission and vision. Together, the board and leadership staff have crafted a document that endeavours to respond to the call that they have received. Through its strategic priorities, Delta Christian School has articulated how it seeks to develop over the next three years. The school's mission/vision and core values have driven the priorities that follow in this plan.

MISSION & VISION

Equipping children for life through Christ-centered curriculum that promotes intellectual, social, physical and spiritual excellence for the purpose of training our children to serve God and to become faithful stewards of His world.

STRATEGIC PLAN

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JUNE 2020

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CORE VALUES

Honour
Enthusiasm
Achievement
Responsibility
Teamwork
Servanthood

Psalm 19:14

ENVISIONED FUTURE

To be a thriving school operating at capacity, where excellent Christ-centered education empowers students to live transformed lives of service, leadership, and Godly character.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Educational Program | To deliver a robust educational program with authentic learning experiences that nurtures the spiritual formation of students and equips them for a fast-changing world.

Growth & Infrastructure | To develop a dual-track, K-7 program with modern facilities through increased enrollment, while establishing a direct pathway to Christian education for future graduates.

Fiscal Responsibility & Giving | To establish ongoing streams of revenue that enable for increased debt reduction and the support of future growth.

Community Relations | To form meaningful relationships with all stakeholders and the broader community established on mutual generosity and goodwill.

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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Target	Action	Champion	Date
Explore distinctive learning opportunities for the Intermediate/Middle School program (4-7).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options in field studies, outdoor education, project-based learning, cross-curricular integration, applied skills, technology-rich environments Identify opportunities to connect with the local community for practical, hands-on learning opportunities (farming, First Nations, etc.) Evaluate the effectiveness of a 1:1 device to student Chromebook program for grades 6-7 students Hire specialist teachers, including a Physical and Health education instructor and coach 	Vice Principal, Learning Leaders	2021-2022
Integrate common curricular resources in the core areas of reading, writing, math, and inquiry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate and adopt resources that reflect the BC Curriculum Train staff to effectively implement programs 	Learning Leaders, Department Heads	2020-2021
Provide a range of support to all learners through the Educational Support Services department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase ratio of annual budget allocated towards Special Education and Learning Assistance Increase staffing and services to reflect growing population of diverse learners 	Principal, ESS Coordinators	Ongoing
Increase capacity and opportunities for leadership growth and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nurture the growth of Vice-Principal, Department Heads, Learning Leaders Increase allocation of budget and time for administrative purposes Participate in professional development leadership programs 	Principal	Ongoing
Identify opportunities for student leadership and community service involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in community events like May Days, senior-student interactions, Christmas hampers Support local and international missions groups Establish partnerships with local business that can provide unique service opportunities 	Learning Leaders, Department Heads	Ongoing
Implement a school-wide approach to behaviour, social responsibility and academic achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with schools and SCSBC who have already implemented this approach Engage the staff on what positive behaviour looks like at DCS 	Vice-Principal, Department Heads, ESS Coordinators	2020-2021

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GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE

Target	Action	Champion	Date
Increase student enrolment to 240 students by 2022-2023 school year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add two kindergarten classes annually for a fully dual-tracked K-7 program Improve parent engagement from initial interest, to admissions, to onboarding 	Admissions Committee, Development	2022-2023
Form a Strategic Growth Committee to explore the plans for future grade expansion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify standing agreement with Richmond Christian School and discuss potential partnerships for high school Increase facility space to accommodate 240 K-7 students by 2022-2023 Explore the potential of a 8-12 program to start by 2024-2025 (2012 birth year students) Explore opportunities for joint partnerships for future expansion projects with other Christian schools/churches 	Strategic Growth Committee	2020-2021
Maintain and improve the existing facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a maintenance schedule for the next three years to address existing and projected needs 	Maintenance Committee	Ongoing
Establish a giving campaign to raise funds for facility upgrade/ expansion projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be implemented after direction of growth has been determined by SGC Consult with SCSBC Business & Development specialists for guidance 	Strategic Growth Committee, Development Committee	2022-2023
Hire a part-time Development Coordinator (0.4 FTE) to manage capital campaigns for growth & infrastructure projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be hired after plans for growth have been determined by SGC 	Strategic Growth Committee	2022-2023

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FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY & GIVING

Target	Action	Champion	Date
Review options for a more aggressive debt reduction plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with the Mennonite Conference to discuss financing options Include in the annual giving campaign a portion for debt reduction Refinance mortgage with the potential expansion Manage total debt with an ideal debt to equity ratio Create a long-term financial forecast to manage the repayment of debt 	Finance Committee	2020-2021
Implement a comprehensive legacy giving program by September 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with Christian Stewardship Services Identify and approach potential donors 	Development Committee	2020-2021
Review tuition assistance policy and procedures with the support of SCSBC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with SCSBC Business & Development specialists and other Christian schools Explore options for the allocation of a percentage of annual funds towards tuition assistance 	Finance Committee	2020-2021
Work toward generating a 5% cash flow reserve within two years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Principal to establish a budget that allows for a cash flow reserve 	Finance Committee	2021-2022
Establish an ongoing Tuition Assistance Benevolent Fund for temporary relief.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate annual donation from Ladner Christian Reformed Church towards a Tuition Assistance Benevolent Fund 	Finance Committee	2020-2021

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Target	Action	Champion	Date
Engage with alumni and donors through ongoing, scheduled communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage donors through <i>DonorPerfect</i> Release an annual newsletter to alumni Host donor appreciation events 	Business Office, Development Committee	2020-2021
Build awareness of Delta Christian School to potential new families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise in local newspapers and on radio Attend private school and Christian fairs 	Development Committee	2020-2021
Strengthen relationships with key supporting churches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate through church bulletins and newsletter Re-establish church liaison system Visit churches 	Development Committee	2020-2021
Refine DCS brand and digital communications presence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a new website and consistent branding of communication materials Increase social media presence 	Development, Digital Comm. Coordinator	2020-2021
Participate in community events or run DCS-hosted events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Ladner May Days Parade, Deltassist (Christmas Hamper, etc.) Host events surrounding holidays open to the public/friends of DCS 	Parent Action Committee, Development Committee	2020-2021