



ECHOES

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Strategic planning isn't just talking – it's getting things done

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

Our school has been busy with formal strategic planning since 2004. We are now on our third five-year plan, and the current board of directors is taking strategic planning very seriously.

Each five-year plan is developed with help from a professional facilitator and with input from stakeholders, including students, staff and community supporters. The themes of each plan (usually four or five main topics) are further divided into key result areas, and then broken down into a series of specific tasks to be accomplished by certain people by certain dates.

Our strategic planning coordinator is Cynthia Buist, and her role is to remind people of the tasks, research and reports that are due. The

board and administration evaluate the reports and recommendations that are produced, and then decide when and how to implement the changes. Cynthia Buist has been keeping us on task and on schedule. She does not go easy on us, but she is wonderful.

It is very interesting to look back on all these years of planning and see all the little and not-so-little things we have been blessed to accomplish. Let me give you that opportunity as we share

Continued on page 2 ...



Cynthia Buist, strategic planning coordinator, delivers an update at a recent membership meeting.

Continued from page 1 ...

some lists. Below is a list of what we're working on this year, followed by a list of some of the things we've planned – and accomplished – since 2004.

Smithville Christian students are reaping the benefit of a decade of strategic planning results.

Items on the “To-Do” List in the 2015-2016 Smithville Christian Strategic Plan

- Development of a plan to investigate and adopt a series of 21st century learning strategies
- Development of a long range financial plan
- The review and exploration of a common capstone experience for grade 12 students
- Development of a plan for a diversification of international student enrolment
- Development of plan for enhanced multi-cultural student experiences
- Development of a long range facility review and upgrade plan

The little and not-so-little things accomplished because of strategic planning (more or less in chronological order):

- Investigation of an enhanced music program with a vibrant choir program
- Development of the first of many three-year computer technology plans
- Investigation of enhanced lunch-hour activities for students
- Development of a formal spiritual life program
- Adoption of a debt elimination campaign, a.k.a. Gateway Campaign
- Development of a curriculum review plan
- Development of a new website
- Development of a new promotion plan
- Adoption of a fully-implemented policy governance leadership model
- Development of a facility



Top: Grade 12 students, Caleb Buys and Emma VandenBurg, wearing their Class of 2016 grad sweaters; all Grade 12 students present an overview of their achievements at an annual portfolio day, held in May. Middle: Students Ayden Beck and Jared Jackson benefitting from Smithville Christian's computer technology plan. Bottom: Students watching intramural sports in the gym at lunch time.

Page 3 Top to bottom: Intramural ball hockey at lunch time, Spiritual Life Director Gord Park speaks at a weekly chapel, choir director Dawne Warkentin and the choir on tour and the Smithville Christian badminton club. Page 3 far right: lunch-time intramural basketball.





enhancement plan

- Adoption of school uniforms
- Adoption of portfolios and a Grade 12 portfolio interview program
- Appointment of a spiritual life director
- Hiring of a director of communications and admissions
- Development of an alumni database plan
- Development and adoption of a new school constitution
- Development of a revised sexuality education program
- Development of a fundraising policy
- Development of a school marketing plan
- Adoption of a board recruitment strategy
- Development of a new staff professional development policy
- Adoption of a plan for an annual special "Blue Echoes" edition for financial and development accountability and awareness (you're reading it!)
- Development of an administrator evaluation policy
- Adoption of a cost-based tuition and an updated tuition structure
- Development of a formalized international student program



*Gord Park,
Spiritual Life
Director*



*Marlene Bergsma,
Director of
Communications &
Admissions*

- Development of a parent partnership plan for student lifestyle choices
- Development of a partner schools and home-school communication plan



- Adoption of a campaign for a major renovation and bursary fund, a.k.a. *In Motion* Campaign
- Development of a plan to ignite the passion for Christian education in local Christian Reformed churches
- Development of a crisis communications plan
- Adoption of a plan to review school operations in cooperation with the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools



Members of the In Motion campaign cabinet.

May we ever remain true to our mission to train students to live as responsible disciples of Jesus Christ, and may our plans be continually inspired by the Holy Spirit and bathed in prayer.

(Please keep in mind that this list is not comprehensive and does not include the things we did not, in the end, accomplish.)

to live as responsible disciples of Jesus Christ, and may our plans be continually inspired by the Holy Spirit and bathed in prayer.

It is amazing what can happen when an organization makes careful plans and is held accountable for action on those plans. We have been blessed with strong board and committee leadership over the years, and we are grateful for how the Lord has used this leadership to bring about many things.

May we ever remain true to our mission to



Students watching lunchtime intramural sports in the gym.



Students load up the results of student council's Christmas shoebox campaign for Rose City Kids in Welland.

Computer ownership delivers accountability and protection

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

When Smithville Christian High School rolls out its 1:1 computer program in September 2016, by giving each incoming Grade 9 student a new MacBook laptop, the computer will belong to the student, not the school.

That also means students and their families will be paying an annual fee under the school's lease-to-own plan – in addition to the tuition fees they're already paying. Why would the school do that, when things such as textbooks or other school supplies are not currently invoiced separately?

One reason is the accountability that owning – and paying – confers. When students know how much that MacBook costs, or how much it would cost to replace it, they are more likely to treat it with the care it deserves, said Principal Ted Harris. But there is another advantage to personal ownership: protection.

Steve DeHaan, an account executive at Meester Insurance, whose firm provides the school's insurance coverage, says the most dangerous place for an electronic device to be is at home, or travelling back and forth between home and school. If a student owns it, it can be covered under a family's homeowner's insurance policy – coverage that is not available if the school owns it.

"If your house burns to the ground" with the computer in it, the computer's replacement will be covered by homeowners' contents insurance, DeHaan said.

If it's damaged or destroyed in an automobile accident, the family's auto



Stuart Bender, tech services co-ordinator, in the new tech services office at Smithville Christian High School. Mr. Bender will be the first point of contact for students who need tech support for their new MacBook laptops, starting in September 2016.

insurance coverage would determine the terms of coverage.

If it's stolen or accidentally broken, a homeowner's deductible applies – which, depending on the details of a family's policy and what else is being claimed, may or may not make it worth claiming, DeHaan said. But at least there is the possibility of coverage. Families can also choose to schedule the computer separately with zero deductible, which might be worth it, in some circumstances.

Many people decide that electronic devices, which are constantly being

marketed with more expensive or more updated models, are not worth insuring separately, but personal ownership means that at least some options, and some coverage, are available.

"For families, there is no hard or fast answer on what is the best way to go," DeHaan said, "but it's definitely not worth it for the school to own or insure student computers, because the risk is not when they are at school, it's when they are in the students' possession."



Bricks and bursaries – students enjoy the blessings of the *In Motion* campaign

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

We are pleased to say that we are settled into the renovated spaces of our building. We are reminded how beautiful our surroundings are every time a school supporter who hasn't visited us in a while walks in. We love giving people tours and telling them the story of the renovation. It is also great that supporters of our school have seen fit to respect our students and future learners to the point of blessing them with bright and beautiful surroundings at school. In short, everyone loves what's happened to our school! Our architect and builders did a wonderful job.

For me, the beautiful space is a daily reminder of the wonderful encouragement our school receives from our supporting community. There are people praying for us every day, and there are hundreds who support us financially. We are so grateful. Given the fact that these supporters also faithfully read our *Echoes* magazine, let me share with all of you something of a final report on how the campaign ended up.

The Campaign: After the feasibility study was conducted in the fall of 2013, it was decided that a \$1.4-million campaign would be launched to fund both a major renovation and a major investment in our bursary fund. Early on, the campaign target amount was increased – based on improvements to the renovation plans and an extremely positive donor response. After a full year of effort, the campaign yielded \$1,622,848. To this total was added \$46,022 from other funds held

by the school. Thus the total funding made available during our *In Motion* Campaign was \$1,668,870. These results obviously brought delight to the hearts of the campaign team and they say so much about our support community. The other good news is that almost 100% of the pledges made in our last two campaigns translated into donations, easily overtaken by additional donations during the collection phase. This would be astounding in other fundraising circles



but is less surprising to us.

The Renovation:

When the renovation was brainstormed, our initial expectation was that we would spend around \$1,000,000 on the renovation project. Over the course of the campaign, and after 28 change orders (paperwork that indicates additional anticipated scope and expense), the project changed in both what we set out to accomplish and in what it cost. In the end, the renovation was accomplished for \$1,308,607. These adjustments were, of course, a standing agenda item at board meetings, and the details of any change orders were carefully and constantly reviewed by the renovation team. Though I suppose it could be said that such an increase in spending is of concern, we are nevertheless very pleased with the

results of our project, even though the campaign funds did not cover the entire job. At present the school has a mortgage on the books with a principal of \$0; this mortgage is to be reactivated to cover the difference between what was pledged and what was spent. After the pledge period is complete, this mortgage should be no higher than \$150,000.

The Bursary Fund: One of the goals of the campaign was to raise \$325,000 for our bursary fund. This bursary fund has one use: to make our school accessible to those who could otherwise not afford to send their kids to our school. This amount will cover all bursary expenditures for approximately two years (the current year included). With previous amounts carried forward, additional donations and Foundation funds, the bursary will meet annual needs until the fall of 2017. Thus it is our plan to resume our Spring Drive, which was interrupted from 2013 to 2016 by the *In Motion* Campaign, in April of 2017.

If there are questions about how the finances of the campaign have been conducted, I would welcome a conversation about it. Please contact me by phone at 905.957.3255 or by email at tharris@smithvillechristian.ca.

Once again, we humbly thank the supporters of our school for their contributions to the success of our *In Motion* Campaign and all that it has enabled at our school. We thank God for your amazing support.



Annual Spring Drive succeeds with personal touch

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

For the past three years, no one has received a phone call or visit from the school asking for a contribution to our Spring Drive. This coincides with the time over which many of our supporters have pledged support for the In Motion Campaign. The campaign raised \$325,000 for our bursary fund, and our Spring Drives exist to build up that bursary fund. Thus the campaign and our Spring Drive would have overlapped in both timing and purpose, and we certainly do not want our requests for donor support to overlap. For this reason we are waiting until April 2017 to have our next Spring Drive.

The big question is whether our community will be out of practice when April 2017 comes. We tend to get used to routines in our giving, and it is our hope that our supporters will be able to get back into a routine of annual support for our Spring Drive. Let me offer a few thoughts on this big question:

The Spring Drive is vitally important to our school. It has normally raised more than \$140,000 annually for our bursary fund. Therefore a lot is at stake when we resume our practice of annual Spring Drives next year.

Drives are far more successful when there is actual contact with supporters in addition to any literature they may have received beforehand. Calls and visits provide supporters with a connection to the school and an opportunity to give. Most who are called consider it a blessing to be involved and included.

The drive needs many volunteers to work well. The following roles are critical to the success of the drive:

Chair or co-chairs: one or two key leaders are needed to manage the campaign with administration and the bookkeeper.

Regional captains: each corner of our constituency (by geography) needs a captain to pull together a crew of canvassers and manage the drive in that area.

Canvassers: because we choose to visit or at least call supporters of our school during

Smithville Christian High School Bursary Program 2016/2017																																					
<p><i>Paying for Christian education represents a sacrifice for most families. Many families give up things of great value in order to fund their children's Christian education.</i></p> <p><i>In Christ's Kingdom we believe a family deserves Christian education for their children but recognize that it is not available to all. Available Christian "high school" offers the following scholarship and bursaries. The average cost of Christian secondary programs is \$2000 per year.</i></p> <p><i>At making a Christian high school education accessible for all students who desire it.</i></p> <p><i>In tabulating the program's finances and transparency with regard for financial goals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) keeping families experience the difficult task of paying for Christian education as low as possible (2) ensuring the program is self-sustaining 																																					
<p>Bursary and Financial Assistance Options</p> <p>\$1 New Student Scholarship \$2,000 – awarded a maximum of two times per student. Awarded to a student or apprentice submitted by a referee who is new to Christian Education and will be attending Smithville Christian High School. Complete the application for your child or grandchild who is new to the church community.</p> <p>\$2 Discover the Missing Bursary \$2,000 – grants to families who are able to pay for their child's Christian education but find themselves unable to do so because of financial hardship. This bursary is given to students attending school full-time for the first time.</p> <p>\$3 Bridge Bursary \$2,000 – for families who are able to pay for their child's Christian education but find themselves unable to do so because of financial hardship. This bursary is given to students attending school part-time for the first time.</p>																																					
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<p>A) Additional Financial Aid – awarded through a bursary program which includes compensating a more distant application from Division 27, and a standard full follow-up meeting with the administrative. Bursaries are made available to families in amount of monetary need to the school from the annual spring drive. With the careful management for its maintenance, donors seek to bless the subject by placing families who desire Christian education but find it a struggle unable to meet the cost.</p>																																					
<p align="center">SECTION 1: FAMILY INFORMATION</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">TITLE _____</td> <td>CN _____ CNr _____ CNPr _____ CNP _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">NAME(S) _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">ADDRESS I _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">ADDRESS II _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">CITY/COUNTY _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">POLITICAL CODE _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">FAMILY OF STUDENT(S) _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">TELEPHONE HOME _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">TELEPHONE MOBILE _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">TELEPHONE CELL _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">TELEPHONE FAX _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">TELEPHONE OTHER _____</td> </tr> </table>		TITLE _____		CN _____ CNr _____ CNPr _____ CNP _____	NAME(S) _____			ADDRESS I _____			ADDRESS II _____			CITY/COUNTY _____			POLITICAL CODE _____			FAMILY OF STUDENT(S) _____			TELEPHONE HOME _____			TELEPHONE MOBILE _____			TELEPHONE CELL _____			TELEPHONE FAX _____			TELEPHONE OTHER _____		
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this short campaign, we need plenty of canvassers in order to make the load for each manageable.

We strongly encourage you to consider the fact that we need many helpers before you are contacted next winter to help us get back into the routine of Spring Drives. In fact, if you are willing to serve as a drive chair or regional captain, we would be very grateful to talk to you much sooner than next winter. Feel free to give me a call about this.

Let me finish by saying that if any of our donors are not in a period of pledging to Smithville Christian High School, then we

would be thrilled to accept your support for our bursary fund this year. The fund has given our school an opportunity to bless, single parents and families of meager to moderate income with an opportunity to send their children to our school. One of the most beautiful aspects of my work is the moment when a family realizes that they can actually do this! And why can they do this? Because so many supporters of our school consider it important to extend the blessing of Christian education to others by giving to our bursary fund. We praise God for their generosity.

Serving on the board at Smithville Christian – experiencing God’s hand at work

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Kirk Weaver, past president of the Smithville Christian High School board of directors, took some time recently to reflect on the blessings of having a hand in shaping the direction of the school. Weaver joined the board in 2011, as a representative from the Beacon community and as part of the transition to merging the two high schools. Weaver said being a board member was a rewarding and joy-filled experience.

“I had the privilege of serving on the board during a very positive period of the school history,” Weaver said, with a highlight for him being the completion of the In Motion capital campaign and the subsequent renovations.

“The board wrestled with the decision to embark on what seemed like a very ambitious campaign,” Weaver recalled. “But once we decided to move forward in faith it was amazing to see the community response, and we quickly exceeded our goal. What an amazing experience to see God’s hand in mobilizing the community to action in so many ways.”

A board member’s main job is big-picture thinking, he said. “The main function is governance. It involves setting overall strategic directions, and creating a sound policy framework for the administration to implement.”

Weaver’s oldest daughter, Kirsten, was just starting Grade 9 when he joined the board, and although being involved in daily issues is not part of a board member’s job description, he found “being aware of the day to day happenings in the school can help with policy decision making.”

While he served, Weaver was moved by the many ways he saw God’s hand at work in the Smithville Christian High School community. “There are so many examples over my four-year term, that it would be impossible to list them all,” he said, but a few examples include:

God turning a difficult situation in the St. Catharines community into a positive, community-building situation for the broader Niagara Christian school community.

God moving many hands to contribute time, prayer and money to our capital renovation.

God working wonders among students, faculty and parents, bringing them

together in prayerful support of each other in times of grief or illness, such as the death of alumna Chelsea Feddema or the cancer diagnosis of student Harrison Exelby.

Other highlights for Weaver were participating in strategic planning to shape the school for future students, including his other daughters Sara and Meagan, and participating in the graduation ceremonies of the Class of 2015 and giving his daughter, Kirsten, a handshake and a hug.



Smithville Christian High School Board Chair Lorraine Vermeer at a recent membership meeting.



Former Board Chair Kirk Weaver with daughter Kirsten at the graduation of the Class of 2015.

A leader for the next generation

The roots are established, new growth has emerged, and now the Christian School Foundation is ready to expand into the next phase – growth for its member schools and growth for itself as an organization.

A search is wrapping up for a leader whose gifts, experience and relationships will be able to expand the impact of the Foundation to ensure the vibrancy and long-term strength of Christian schools.

Since its founding in July 2014, under the leadership of interim CEO Michael Van Pelt, the Foundation has hired staff, established an office in a central location and grown to include 26 schools across the province. A board of directors with representatives from every member school provides stable leadership and direction, while an exciting partnership with the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools is creating opportunity for special projects having tangible impact in classrooms across the province.

“We are looking for somebody with the right combination of relational skills and expertise and connections,” said Sandy Brunsting, chair of the search committee and board representative for Quinte Christian High School in Belleville. “The Foundation’s organizational framework is in place – we have

“The Foundation’s organizational framework is in place – we have to think of growth now. We need someone who will take it and run with it and bring it to its full potential.”

to think of growth now. We need someone who will take it and run with it and bring it to its full potential.”

To assist with the search, a professional investigative consulting company was hired.

Brian Verheul, of Verheul and Associates, said his task was to ensure the process is conducted in the most professional way, so that the schools and the donors served by



Michael Van Pelt



Brian Verheul

the Foundation can have confidence in the process and in the result.

Verheul said his goal is to complete the search within a framework that is marked by "prayer, integrity, confidentiality and kindness." He said the Foundation Board has put in place an excellent search committee with broad representation, whose members have carefully created a profile of the necessary skills, experience and vision for the job.

The successful candidate will be appointed to the position effective July 1.

For more information about the position and the search process, see the Opportunity Profile on the Foundation website at www.christianschoolfoundation.ca.

**The Fundraising Committee of
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Saturday, May 28 | 4:30 - 7:00 pm

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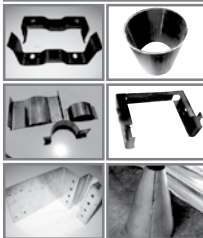
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