

Cornerstone Christian School

Strategic Planning Document 2017



Overview

In 1994, parents within the American Reformed Church in Lynden formed the American Reformed School Society with an elected Board. This marked a significant milestone in a journey that had already begun years earlier. In the years leading up to that time, members of the Lynden congregation may have heard Mr. Nicolaas Bronsema or Mr. Martin Bron express their deeply held conviction that we needed an American Reformed School in Lynden, a place where children from Lynden could be educated in the Fear of the Lord. That vision was realized when the school opened its doors in August of 2002 in a rented facility in Everson. Much work, thought and effort had gone into articulating the purpose of our school, and into developing a Mission Statement, which was approved unanimously by the school society. How thrilled we were on that first day of school, when students could attend class right here in Whatcom County, and not have to travel over the border to John Calvin School in Yarrow!

That first staff was small in number - comprised of our first principal, Otto Bouwman, along with teachers Janet Faber, Hilda Meester, and Kevin VanDelden. What this staff lacked in number, it made up for in energy and enthusiasm! Those first years were marked by the sense that something great was happening at Cornerstone Christian School, and it showed in everything about this place!

Prior to opening the school in 2002, the society had managed to purchase several acres of property, right behind the church, in eager anticipation of building our own building. Previously, one could see horses or cows grazing when we left church on Sundays. There was also the occasional dirt track race, which saw some of our neighbors hurtling around what is now our soccer field, in old pickups, throwing up huge clouds of dust. In fact, if memory serves well, the checkered flag would have been waved right at the very spot where the staff room is right now!

Somewhere in our archives, there is a terrific picture that captured a very significant event in our school's history..... on that day (probably in 2002) on the field that is now our school, 4 dignitaries posed for a picture with their feet poised purposefully over 4 golden shovels in the official groundbreaking ceremony for construction of our new building. Those 4 dignitaries? Mr. Martin Bron, Mrs. Theresa Meester, Mr. Martin Vreugdenhil, and the Whatcom County Executive, Pete Kremen. This significant event was also attended by Cal Bratt, the reporter for the Lynden Tribune!

And what followed was significant too.... the construction of the wonderful facility that we still enjoy using each day!

Although Cornerstone started as a 1-8 school, it didn't stay that way for long. Each year after our start, an additional grade was added, and several years later, ours was a complete 1-12 school. The Lord has indeed blessed our community!

Now, in our 15th year of operation, the Lord continues to bless Cornerstone Christian School, and a new generation of parents are sending their children to this fine establishment. Many things have changed, yet the very basics of our school, its purpose, have not changed.

In the spring of 2016, the school board appointed a Strategic Planning Committee to carefully evaluate how our school is doing relative to its original goals and vision, and to recommend to the board a strategic plan with specific steps to ensure we stay on the right path for many years to come, along with specific steps to make sure that we stay on track.



After 15 years of operation, it seems like a good time to take a step back from the day to day busyness of our school, and to take stock of how things are going at Cornerstone Christian School. Are the goals that we established in the years leading up to 2002 still valid and important today? Have we stayed true to that original plan? Is that the same direction in which we wish to continue? Do today's parents see Reformed Christian Education in the same way as the founders did in 2002? (we have included the original mission and vision statements immediately after this introductory letter)

An important part of this task for the Strategic Planning Committee was to inquire of the society membership what their perspective was regarding our school. This inquiry was made in the form of a survey, which was conducted in the early summer of 2016, when all members of the society were polled regarding a wide range of topics related to the operation of Cornerstone Christian School. A second round of surveys distributed in the fall of 2016 sought to query more specific groups within our membership, such as alumni, staff members, and members of specific committees within our society, to learn what we could.

Sorting, categorizing and interpreting the responses to these surveys was a significant, but rewarding and very informative task. In a nutshell, these surveys were overwhelmingly positive, which the committee sees as great reason for thankfulness, and a very positive affirmation that things are going well at Cornerstone Christian School, and that the membership is pleased with our school, and that we ARE in fact, headed in the right direction!

Parents, Teachers, Alumni, Volunteers and Committee members alike, declared their appreciation for our school, our staff, our community and the mission that was established when the school was started 15 years ago.

- a wonderful Reformed, Christian Perspective is being taught at our school
- we have an excellent, dedicated staff and principal that care deeply about our students
- Cornerstone Graduates leave this place with a solid education, and equipped for much more
- we enjoy tremendous support from the parents in our society (and from many more as well)
- we have been blessed with a wonderful facility

Nonetheless, there were some areas at CCS that merited a closer look and improvement. It would be a rare endeavor that couldn't be improved, and our school is no exception! The areas that the strategic plan focuses on are important, but not mission critical. In other words, there is almost unanimous agreement amongst our constituents about "the big things", which is something we can be very thankful for. The things that need attention, while important, are comparatively minor, but still, they merit attention. Those areas have been incorporated into the committee's recommendation.

So, where do we go from here? Attached, you will find a copy of the committee's recommendation to the board. It includes a summary of the feedback we received from the membership, which has been categorized into a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). This feedback has been incorporated into 6 overarching goals, each with a distinct category and with specific action steps. You can see that it also describes what it will look like when we achieve that goal. These goals and this document have been established with a 5-year window in mind. This document and the goals associated with it will be reviewed by the board on a regular basis throughout the year, and is intended to provide a bit of a 'compass' in some areas. Every five years or so, this document can be re-evaluated to make sure that 'the compass' is still pointing in the right direction.

In conclusion, the committee thanks the society for its participation in this endeavor.... thank you for offering your input. We are thankful for the unity and harmony it showed. We offer this information to the board for its use, and wish them wisdom and strength in their work.



We hope that the contents of this strategic plan will help to preserve and strengthen what has been so great about Cornerstone Christian School for the past 15 years, and ensure that it stays that way for years to come!

We thank our Heavenly Father for His boundless grace and mercy, and for what He has blessed us with in Cornerstone Christian School. To Him be the Glory!

Cornerstone's original Purpose and Mission Statement

Our Purpose

The purpose of Cornerstone Christian School is to assist parents in their calling to educate their children as members of the covenant. We strive to equip the children with further knowledge and skills in specific subject areas so that they may learn how to be faithful stewards and so glorify the name of the LORD in all of life. Each student is challenged and encouraged to develop a love for learning as they develop their God-given talents.

Mission Statement

The purpose of our school is to assist parents in educating the children of the covenant as a part of their preparation for a life of Christ-centered service and stewardship in the kingdom and Church of God.

Beneficiaries & Stakeholders

In preparing our Strategic Plan we are mindful that we need effective relationships with our beneficiaries and other stakeholders. BENEFICIARIES are those who benefit from our facilities and services. STAKEHOLDERS are those whose support we need to provide the services.

Beneficiaries	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Parents+ Students+ Covenant Community+ Wider Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Members+ Donors+ Parents+ Students+ Staff+ Volunteers+ School Board+ Committee for Building Maintenance+ Information Technology Committee+ Education Committee+ Ladies Aid+ Alumni

Implementation and Review

Implementation

The aims and actions of this Strategic Plan will be implemented and managed via an annual Action Plan. The Action Plan will prioritize and align resources accordingly, and provide for Key Performance Indicators. Each subsequent Action Plan will also audit the activity of the previous period, having regard for the desired outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

Review

As part of the annual audit of each yearly Action Plan, the performance of the Strategic Plan will also be reviewed in terms of its relevance and currency, and amended if required.

The Strategic Plan has a 5-year horizon, and will be reviewed every 5 years. The next major review is due to commence mid-2022, for adoption early 2023.

Summary SWOT Matrix

SWOT is an acronym for *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities*, and *threats* and is a structured planning method that evaluates those four elements of an organization. In the case of an organization like Cornerstone Christian School it involves specifying the objective of the society and then identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective.

Ultimately the better the match between the objectives of the school (as expressed in their vision and mission) and reality (how things are actually going) the better the strategic fit.

- ❖ **Strengths:** characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others
- ❖ **Weaknesses:** characteristics of the business that place the business or project at a disadvantage relative to others
- ❖ **Opportunities:** elements in the environment that the business or project could exploit to its advantage
- ❖ **Threats:** elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project

The main membership survey included an inventory of ninety-four (94) items and seventy-four (74) members completed the survey over a one month span. The main survey was broken down into thirteen different categories or topics, namely:

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|----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| ➤ Mission & Vision | ➤ Events | ➤ Staff |
| ➤ Governance | ➤ Instruction | ➤ Students |
| ➤ Finances | ➤ Library | ➤ Transportation |
| ➤ Building & Grounds | ➤ Parents | |
| ➤ Communications | ➤ Sports | |

Based on the feedback we received from this survey we identified an additional eight (8) target groups that should be surveyed on topics specifically relating to their role. Here again we had a very high response rate, of specific note were the Alumni (students who had graduated from CCS to date) where fifty of the potential eighty responded! Others included:

- Information Technology Committee
- Education Committee
- Staff
- Alumni
- Committee for Building Maintenance
- Finance Committee
- School Board
- Ladies Aid

Overwhelmingly the responses were positive and there was a lot of good information to be gleaned from them. Each of those items were added to the SWOT Matrix as either a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, or Threat. What we discovered was a long list of strengths but also a healthy number of Weaknesses and Opportunities as well. In order to give you a sense of what we gleaned from these survey responses we have included the more commonly reoccurring ones below. Note that it doesn't make sense to include the entire list of items but below is a good sampling.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Beautiful Building and Grounds currently serve our needs very well. ✚ Fundraising efforts offer great opportunities for fellowship and bonding in addition to much needed revenue. ✚ Staff and Board are encouraging a strong Reformed culture. ✚ Excellent education. ✚ Academic rigor – prepares students well for the work force or post-secondary education. ✚ Teachers are amazing! ✚ Cornerstone does a good job teaching a Christian-centric view of the world and the student's role in it. ✚ Principal does a good job of curtailing bad behavior and bringing it back to scripture. ✚ Parent volunteers feel appreciated. ✚ Sports leagues a big positive for our community and the broader (Lynden) community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Maintenance needs increase as facilities age. ✚ Library has struggled to find a home. ✚ Parent-Teacher Interview are ineffective. ✚ Regular School-Parent communication is lacking. ✚ High tuition rates might drive both parents to work or force them out and this would negatively impact both the home and the volunteering contributions from those moms. ✚ There is not enough focus on defending/articulating our faith stance on issues; they need more opportunity to debate/defend position. ✚ The Library is underused by high school students in particular. ✚ There's a perception that in some cases classroom standards are too high for students with lower abilities! ✚ We need to do a better job developing a post-high school plan for each student

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ We have room to expand our building if necessary. ✚ Educate the membership on the value and importance of reformed education and the priority position it should hold in a family's budget? ✚ Teachers need more professional development opportunities to learn about current educational research and incorporate these things in their classrooms. ✚ Formal educational involvement with Credo High. ✚ Establish a playing time policy with the coaches. ✚ Staff to provide a range of teaching strategies in planning documentation that caters for different learning styles. ✚ Consider industrial/business/trades training for high school students. ✚ Have someone deal more specifically with future goals after high school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Only a few more students and we would outgrow our current facility. ✚ Reducing staff salaries to balance the budget will undermine our ability to attract and retain quality teachers. ✚ An erosion of quality reformed education will undermine a commitment to maintaining the school. ✚ We could add stress to staff and undermine school mission & vision by allowing ungodly and unruly student behavior. ✚ Poor behavior by community spectators, players, and coaches.

Goals & Action

Goal 1: Governance and Administration

Ensuring our mission is carried out; serving effectively and efficiently

How this will look when fully met:

1. The Board interacts with the Strategic Plan as a “living” document and works to reach its recommended goals over the next 10 years to further CCS’s mission.
 2. The Parent Handbook has an updated introduction, including a new vision statement and revised goals.
 3. The Board and its subcommittees each have a new handbook to guide orientations, assist in hand-overs and ensure accountability for all committee members.
 4. New members of the Board and its sub-committees receive an orientation at the beginning of their term.
 5. The work load for Board members and administration staff is manageable.
 6. Teaching staff are qualified, Reformed teachers who are ideally already qualified to work in the USA.
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Goal 2: Infrastructure and Campus Resources

Maintaining a functional campus and learning environment: where our mission happens

How this will look when fully met:

1. A Building Report assists in planning for future space needs in the school building.
 2. A Depreciation Report assists in planning for the repair and replacement of major infrastructure and equipment.
 3. A Technology Inventory Report and tracking system assists in monitoring the lifespan of all technology equipment.
 4. A Maintenance Procedure Manual assists in keeping track of regular maintenance needs.
 5. A Land Utilization Report assists in choosing the best plan for the land parcel next door.
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Goal 3: Membership and Community Engagement

Communicating and promoting our mission and vision

How this will look when fully met:

1. Parents fully support CCS’s vision, mission and goals and are familiar with the Parent Handbook.
2. Alumni are informed and involved members of the school community.
3. Donors are informed about how their funds are used in fulfilling CCS’s mission.
4. The school’s online presence is visually appealing and informative.
5. The LINK newsletter is an attractive and purposeful publication that exhibits CCS’s mission in action.
6. CCS’s Parent Information Evenings are promoted and followed up on.
7. Enrollment from the local Reformed Community is increased, especially in the High School.

Goal 4: Educational Program and Student Enrichment

Integrating all curriculum and extracurricular activities with a biblical worldview. Striving for excellence as we seek to fulfill our mission.

How this will look when fully met:

1. High school course offerings are diverse and include several hands-on/applied choices.
2. Classes involve a greater variety of instructional and evaluation strategies to enhance student engagement in their learning.
3. Students' responsibility for their own learning is actively promoted in each area of school life.
4. A comprehensive CCS Graduate Profile sketches a well-rounded picture of what we aspire for students to grow towards after 12 years of CCS education.
5. Guidance is available to senior students for post-secondary planning.
6. A school-wide Fine Arts program is part of the curriculum.
7. A Learning Assistance/Remedial program is available for all students who need help.
8. Teacher-to-parent updates on student progress are meaningful and enlightening.
9. The library is used by students, staff and parents to its full potential.
10. A comprehensive Athletic Code gives guidance to players and coaches.
11. Meaningful service and leadership opportunities are available to students both in and outside of school.
12. Interaction with Canadian Reformed sister schools provides opportunities for relationship building and mutual edification with others in the communion of saints beyond CCS.
13. Assemblies are purposeful, participatory events that build on the school's mission.
14. An organized, aligned curriculum with an integrated Biblical worldview is taught and documented in all grade levels.
15. Multi-disciplinary units or school-wide themes are taught to promote an understanding of the interconnectedness of knowledge in God's world.
16. The school culture reinforces that each student is valued as a unique individual that belongs to a community of learners and a supporting covenantal community.
17. Feedback is sought after each school year for parent/student ideas on improvement.

Goal 5: Capable and Committed Staff

Growing in the craft of teaching as lifelong learners; modeling the mission

How this will look when fully met:

1. Teachers will be proficient in the technological tools available to them.
2. Teachers will have a Professional Development Plan.
3. Teachers will have professional development opportunities pertaining to their plan.
4. Teachers will plan courses in CCS's adopted curriculum document format.
5. New teachers will be mentored by an experienced colleague.
6. Volunteers will continue to be a valued asset in school life.

Goal 6: Financial Stewardship

Managing resources wisely; planning for the future fulfillment of our mission

How this will look when fully met:

1. CCS is in a solid financial position each year.
2. CCS Society members are well-informed about the current financial status of the school.
3. CCS has a coordinated, comprehensive fundraising approach.
4. CCS has a Long Term Giving Program to help ensure future financial sustainability.