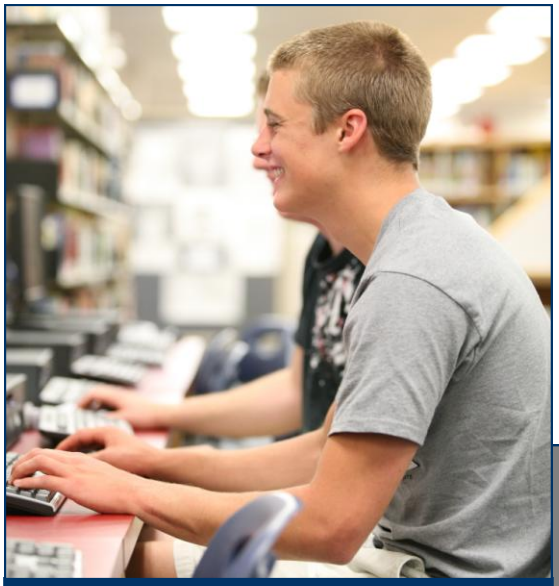
Abbotsford Christian School

Strategic Plan – 2014

Society



Learning

Operational Effectiveness

Parent/Community Engagement

OCTOBER 2009

MISSION STATEMENT

Abbotsford Christian School, operated by Abbotsford Christian School Society members, seeks to serve Christian families by providing a secure learning environment in which God's children can continue to explore, experience and evaluate all of life under God.
We aim to nurture students in the discovery and development of their abilities and unique gifts so that they are enabled to be faithful, discerning, obedient and creative servants of God and of neighbour, and stewards of His creation.

CORE BELIEFS

- **TRUTH**
  -Learning, living and teaching in obedience to God's truth; discerning, engaging and influencing culture with the hope of Christ's redemption.

- **RESPECT**
  -Regarding each person as an image bearer of Christ, in love, integrity and openness.

- **EXCELLENCE**
  -Encouraging creativity and a pursuit of excellence in every aspect of life.

- **SERVICE**
  -Fostering servant-hood and leadership development, modeling the compassion of Christ in all we do.

- **STEWARDSHIP**
  -Actively pursuing and teaching stewardship of time, resources and abilities.

- **CELEBRATION**
  -Celebrating creation, the life we have in Jesus Christ, and the life we share in our community.

VISION STATEMENTS

- **Education** – *"All ACS students will achieve maximum potential through a learning process that is appropriate to the students' abilities. Each student will feel valued, secure and challenged to explore God, His creation and their place in it."*

- **Staff -** "*ACS will attract, retain and develop staff members who are dedicated, creative, passionate, and who model Christ in their actions. Individually and collectively, staff will feel engaged, valued and respected. ACS will be an employer of choice."*

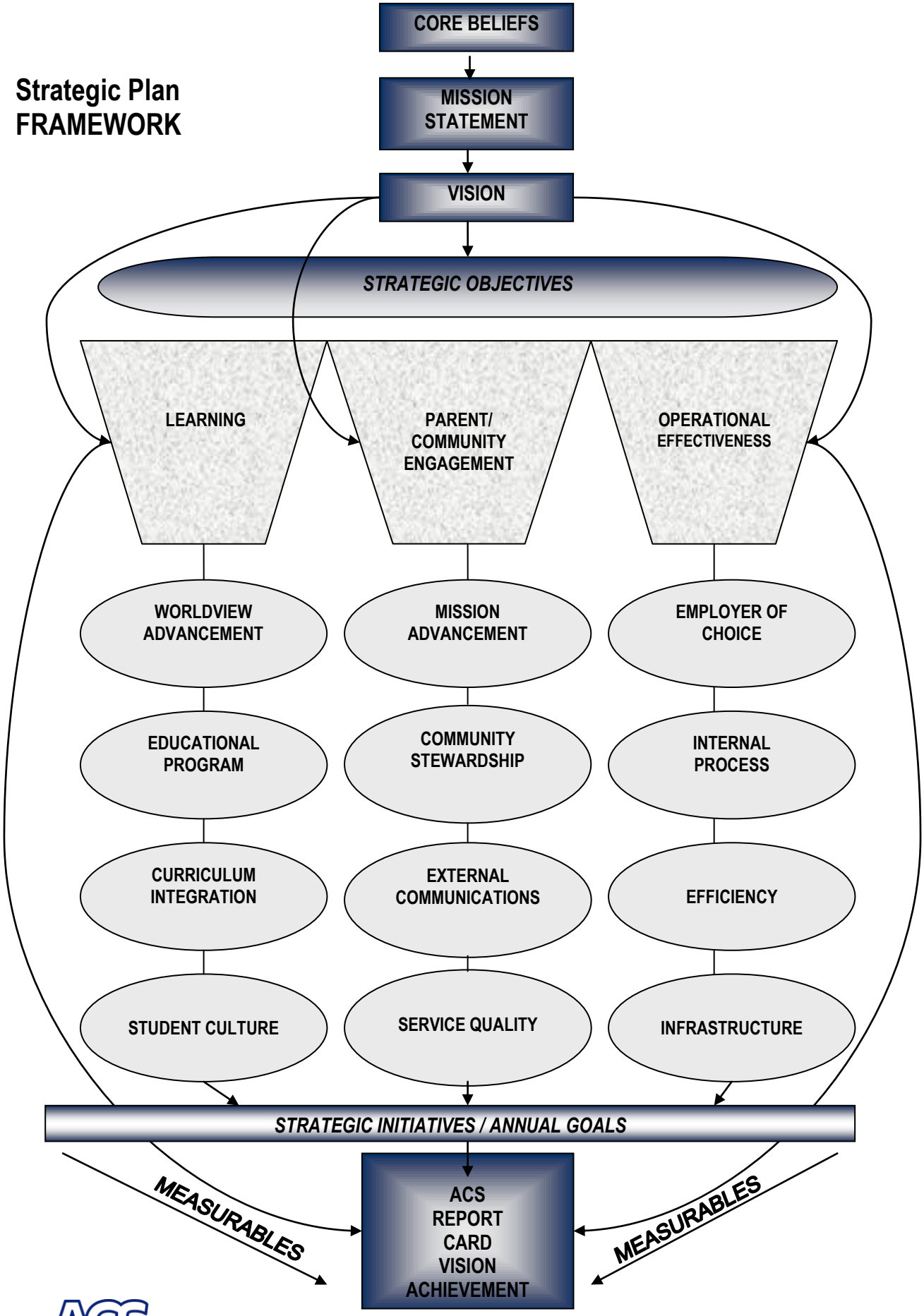
- **Finances –** "*ACS will have an innovative, multi-faceted funding structure that provides financial strength and stability to support our annual and long-term objectives, in a stewardly manner that honors God."*

- **Community –** *"ACS will be known as a school that fosters a culture of Christian service and character in our community. Our supporting community will be ambassadors for the school and be able to articulate our Mission so that we will be a sought after educational environment for Christian families."*

- **Christian Worldview –** *"All life and learning at ACS will celebrate and explore the truth that 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.' Students will learn to discern the culture in which they live and how they can positively influence it for God's kingdom."*

- **Infrastructure –** "*ACS will invest in attractive, effective and stewardly facilities that support optimal enrollment, contribute towards our sense of identity and support our Vision for Christian education."*

Strategic Plan FRAMEWORK



PLAN SUMMARY

Since September 1953, Abbotsford Christian School has been providing Christian education in partnership with Christian families. God has blessed that partnership in ways that our founders never imagined possible, and we have faith that He will continue to bless our best and imperfect efforts well into the future.

With God as our guide, we are called to put forth our best efforts to ensure the Mission and Vision of ACS are reflected in all of our activities, while our Core Beliefs provide a guide for how we conduct ourselves in carrying out those activities. This plan represents our intentions to live faithfully to that call, to provide the highest value to parents with whom we are in partnership, and to offer a truly engaging and enriching learning experience for students that trains for character and competence in the Christian life. It is both a plan for change and one that reaffirms and builds on existing practice.

ACS faces new and different challenges and opportunities today. We recognize that the traditional support and the uncompromising commitment to Christian education is no longer a given. We live in a culture of "choice" and "value propositions". Christian education is not immune to that pressure and is now just one of many choices available to Christian parents. Furthermore, today's parents often require considerable convincing that Christian education is different and that ACS is the school for them. Additionally, a passion for Christian education doesn't usually develop until some time after they have already joined the school and they come to understand, over time, the importance of Christian worldview in a school setting.

We believe that this plan will play a vital role in ensuring sustainable growth in enrollment and increased relevance in the broader Christian community, which will also serve to improve the degree of diversity we currently enjoy.

In order to do that, however, we need to change our emphasis from being a Christian place of learning, to being a place of learning that is Christian. The overall quality of our education matters greatly as does the culture that we create and foster for students, particularly at the Secondary level, where an increasing number of students are permitted to choose which school they wish to attend.

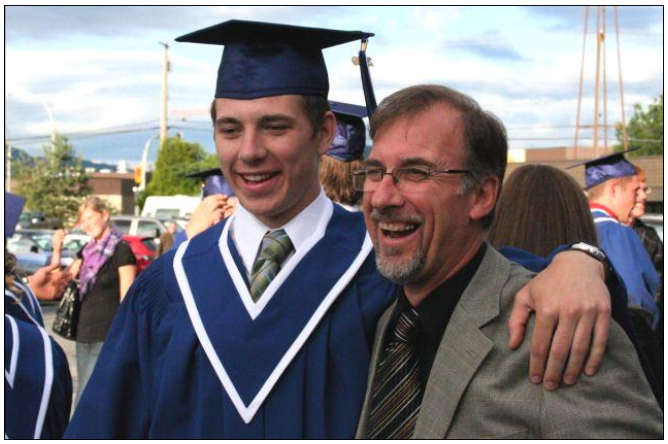
This plan is also about engaging or re-engaging parents. Strategies in this plan are designed to get our supporting and broader Christian community as excited about what happens here as we are.

We also want our staff to be deeply engaged in the Mission of ACS. Without their passion for learning, it would be difficult, if not impossible to achieve the required degree of engagement with students or parents.

This plan is to be the catalyst for change within ACS. Through the over 150 specific initiatives it seeks to align the things we do with the Mission and Vision set our by the Board, within the context of an operating model which has empowered school leadership to drive forward and effect real change.

We fully recognize that the future is in His hands, but we are also responsible to set high expectations for students, staff and parents. In doing so, we are confident that this plan will meet and exceed the long term goals established through the Vision Statements set in place by the ACS Board of Directors.

ACS Leadership Team



I LEARNING

Learning is foundational to our existence. Everything that happens at ACS must be on a trajectory that supports, enhances and complements learning.

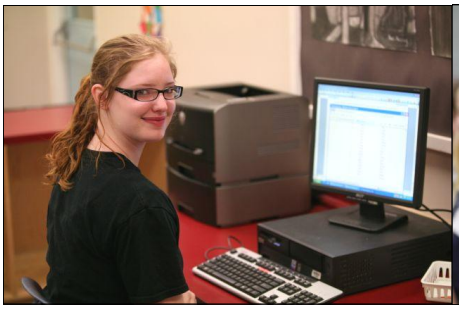
Learning at ACS originates in the Bible's command to parents to raise their children in the fear and knowledge of our God. Consequently, the learning that takes place at ACS becomes an extension of the home, resulting in an important partnership with Christian parents.

Originally the primary focus of learning at ACS had, at its root, a desire to ensure consistency between church, home and school. That need for consistency, at times, overshadowed the opportunities for teaching discernment, and may have impaired the prospect for all students to achieve maximum academic potential within the context of a solid Christian worldview footing. Much has changed within the school and within the Christian community. Consequently, this plan will seek to move far beyond the paradigms of the past, without impairing the rich heritage associated with it.

In short, our desire is to foster a Biblical learning community that adopts leading edge learning practices to serve as a catalyst for being more effective at training students in character and leadership for life beyond our walls. Our graduates will be prepared, both academically and spiritually, to be imitators of Christ and influencers of our culture, regardless of where God may choose to place them in the future.

Our Vision for learning at ACS includes four Strategic Priorities supported by Strategic Objectives and numerous Strategic Initiatives. They include:

1. **Worldview Advancement**
2. **Educational Program**
3. **Curriculum Integration**
4. **Student Culture**



1. Worldview Advancement

Worldview advancement is concerned with developing an understanding of faith and finding tangible ways of applying it to all areas of learning and life. Strategies in this area will be aimed at developing broad, but common understandings of Biblical worldview and intentionally bringing it to bear on all aspects of school activities. This is as much a field of enquiry for staff as it is for students. It is essential that staff is given the opportunity and responsibility of advancing worldview understanding in order to guide students in developing understanding and application of the same. It is in this area that the distinctiveness of ACS as a learning community is grounded and demonstrated.

Develop consistency and understanding in Christian Worldview Perspective

- Provide staff with Professional Development opportunities aimed at deepening a Christian worldview perspective that is consistent with the spirit of the ACS Mission and Worldview Vision Statements

Develop specific and comprehensive worldview instruction/integration

- Create campus themes aimed at unpacking aspects of the Mission and/or Vision Statements and/or Core Beliefs at age-appropriate levels
- Develop a K-12 scope and sequence for Bible curriculum
- Teach media awareness to help students understand the messages that media presents

1. Worldview Advancement (cont'd)

Develop a global awareness

- Ensure Bible curriculum has church history component and examines the experience of Christians in various parts of the world
- Expand our International program to represent and engage more areas of the globe
- Integrate cultural studies into curriculum to deepen a global understanding of the relationship between the Christian faith and cultural expression

2. Educational Program

Educational program refers to the course of studies that has been approved for use in the school. This refers not only to the content, skills and attitudes to be taught, but also the best pedagogical strategies to make the program accessible and meaningful for as many students as possible. At ACS, it is our aim that all content be taught from a Biblical worldview that acknowledges that "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." We also understand that, while all students are image-bearers of God, they have different characteristics, different learning styles and different gifts. An educational program must seek to engage all students in learning so that they can reach their maximum potential. In this learning, students must have opportunities to put their learning into practice so they can serve God in a developmentally appropriate level.

Enhance current program offerings

- Review library program to ensure a relevant, holistic and comprehensive experience for students
- Review the French Program to ensure we are maximizing opportunities for students at the right age levels
- Examine the use subject/program specialists at various age levels
- Enhance technology instruction to include media studies, video production, film making, graphic design, Sibelius, composition, etc.
- Improve chapel relevance and direction
- Explore the possibility of an "Academy" approach to certain programs such as P.E. or fine arts
- Adopt new strategies for diversifying the International Student Program
- Develop an International Student Program Policy Manual
- Develop a 5 year, K-12 Athletics Program plan
- Design and implement minimum standards for regular review and auditing of established program
- Review the merits and priority of full time kindergarten
- Review the College and Career program to ensure maximum potential for all students

Ensure educational best practice is implemented in all programs

- Adopt new strategies and provide tools for changing traditional teaching styles from "deliverers of knowledge" to "mentors in learning" in age appropriate ways
- Develop strategies that increase the level of collaborative learning/teaching
- Develop and support strategies for greater flexibility in terms of classroom based learning to "anytime, anywhere" learning
- Develop and implement a program for Standards Based Assessment for all grade levels
- Develop standards for Project Based Learning and Presentations of Learning as essential pieces of the learning process
- Develop strategies to increase student to student learning across campuses
- Explore opportunities to partner with other schools to offer programs jointly

Promote differentiated learning

- Implement regular reviews of our Extracurricular Program to ensure it is balanced, driven by high standards and supported
- Review current programs and practices in Special Education and Learning Assistance
- Designate resources for an Enrichment Coordinator
- Develop an Enrichment Program with a K-12 scope

2. Educational Program (cont'd)

Explore non brick and mortar education (non-traditional ways of delivery of learning)

- Conduct a needs analysis specific to Distributed Learning
- Conduct an opportunity analysis specific to expanding our existing relationship with homeschoolers

Education for parents and community members

- Develop an adult education program for select program offerings

3. Curriculum Integration

Curriculum Integration refers to the various ways in which we bring connections within learning. The structures of school in the teaching of disciplines or subjects, often removes relevance from everyday life. Over the years integration has been enhanced through the use of thematic studies, especially in the elementary and middle school years. The strategies in this area will give teachers tools to help students see the connections among the various subjects in school, between learning and life, give students more purpose and meaning in their learning, and enlarge their sense of the interconnectedness that God has created in this world.

Increase integration of Christian worldview into all curriculum

- Develop a professional development schedule for staff to do lesson and unit analysis and development
- Establish "essential questions" at all levels so that they permeate all unit and/or course overviews (Understanding by Design)

Increase integration of disciplines for meaningful learning

- Implement overarching themes that provide meaningful connections between units and disciplines (avoid forced integration)
- Create innovative block scheduling to allow for more creativity for teachers
- Develop a consistent scope & sequence (K-12) in all disciplines

Develop real-world connections to make curriculum more relevant

- Tie specific real world problems/issues/topics to curriculum that touch multiple academic disciplines
- Increase service learning opportunities that connect to the curriculum
- Increase opportunities to learn outside of the school
- Increase the number of specialists and professionals brought into the classroom
- Connect relevant current/global events to curriculum and student lives

4. Student Culture

Student Culture can best be described as the ethos that dominates the lives of students at ACS. Strategies within this category will be aimed at cultivating an environment committed to rigor and relevance in engaging students, listening and responding to students and their desires, pursuing healthy interpersonal relationships, respecting all people in the community, providing age appropriate tools for leadership, and fostering servant hearts. These will become hallmarks of ACS culture.

Increase Student Engagement in Learning

- *Experiential and Collaborative*

  - Facilitate increased opportunities to take students off campus for learning
  - Provide seamless access to technology for students towards a Web 2.0 (interactive) learning environment
  - Create a model for collaborative learning

Increase Student Engagement in Learning (cont'd)

- *Student Voice*
  - Create a model for involving students in the development of essential questions, enduring understandings and assessment
  - Provide ongoing opportunities for student input in determining what kind of technology will be used for learning

- *Technology*
  - Develop a secure internal system of online interaction for students and staff
  - Leverage student expertise in technology for cross training parents

Build a Vibrant Student Community

- *Student Voice*
  - Provide opportunities for celebrating student initiatives in public settings (chapels, groups, front lobby monitor, daily announcements, school community, newspapers, etc)
  - Develop a student satisfaction survey for Secondary students
  - Create a formal process for engaging students in the development of rules, guidelines, and policies, (including discipline) at appropriate levels through student teams
  - Create a formal process for involving students in the hiring of teaching staff (at age appropriate levels)

- *Student Discipline and Support*
  - Establish benchmarks for discipline
  - Set specific accountabilities for student behavior and lifestyle choices at all grade levels
  - Implement a restorative justice process where students take ownership for conduct

- *Student Assimilation and Inclusion*
  - Develop a formal "buddy" system for all students new to ACS
  - Review our extra-curricular programs to ensure a high degree of "student pride" in ACS
  - Intentionally cross denominational and ethnic lines in setting up of student groups for gatherings, activities and projects

Develop a culture of Christian Character, Leadership and Service

- Have students direct regular cleanliness/ beautification audits of campuses and grounds
- Build service components into all projects and presentations of learning
- Expand global missions opportunities
- Redefine and expand opportunities for student leadership at age appropriate levels
- Investigate formal Christian character development programs for k-12 implementation (eg. PAC's school wide devotionals)
- Involve students in visible displays of student learning, character development and leadership attributes in all three campuses

II PARENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Historically, ACS has had a very strong supporting community that understood the Mission and Vision of the school and worked together. It was close knit and heavily engaged with the school and supported ACS in prayer, with financial gifts and by making the school a top priority.

While some of that remains true today, the landscape has also changed dramatically. There are several Christian and traditional schools in the area, and close to half of our students come from churches other than Christian Reformed. Enrollment is no longer the default decision that it used to be. Today's parents are much more focused on their child's learning. They are consumers of education who do research and have options. They are just as capable of having the strong loyalty we desire, but it doesn't necessarily come from upbringing anymore. Today, loyalty must be earned. This plan will help us become much more intentional about how we engage our community.

There are so many things that ACS does well, but some of our processes are not efficient because they developed primarily as a reaction to circumstances. Everything we do will be purposefully linked back to our Mission and Vision.

To attain our stated Visions for Parent/Community Engagement we have set the following four priorities, each with their own unique objectives and initiatives.

1. **Mission Advancement**
2. **Community Stewardship**
3. **External Communications**
4. **Service Quality**

1. Mission Advancement

Our goal in this category is to raise the profile of our Mission Statement and focus on creating a new perception about ACS in the Christian community that is consistent with our Mission. The Community needs to know what our Mission is, and our Mission must be visible in everything we do.

Raise the profile of ACS in the broader Christian community

- Develop an active recruitment strategy that establishes strategic partnerships with non-CRC churches
- Develop a kindergarten recruitment strategy
- Develop a parent ambassador program

Engage parents and supporters in the Mission / Vision of ACS

- Establish an effective and mandatory new parent orientation
- Create an alumni association
- Investigate "value added" programs such as continuing education and /or before and after school care
- Develop an interactive website including a parent portal

Advance the Mission of ACS through an effective Admission/re-admission process

- Develop a new, centralized Admissions funnel from initial lead to matriculation to assimilation
- Enhance the re-Admissions process to ensure greater Mission appropriateness of families
- Develop a follow-up/assimilation strategy for new students and parents
- Hire an Admissions/Community Relations Coordinator

2. Community Stewardship

Perhaps one of the best ways to measure how engaged our community is with the Mission & Vision of ACS will be through the growth in our annual donations. One of the areas that will naturally benefit the most from the implementation of a strategic plan is fundraising. As people become more aware of the Mission and Vision of the school and see us living it out in all we do, they will become more passionately engaged and consequently, more financially supportive.

Community Stewardship is also about the way we use the resources we have, to further the cause of Christian education locally and around the world.

Foster a culture of giving among supporting community

- Expand on annual fundraising drive to include key donor strategies
- Build stewardship information/education into the Admissions process
- Create another event equal in profile to the auction
- Develop a centralized volunteer pool
- Purchase data base management software
- Develop a planned giving program for Endowment
- Complete audit on all fundraising activities/centralization to maximize effectiveness

Explore non-traditional revenue opportunities

- Prepare a comprehensive business case for development of group insurance company
- Develop a program for rental contracts and value-added programs to improve engagement

Develop new partnerships

- Create a corporate sponsorship program
- Provide opportunities to engage and support businesses, institutions, churches in our support community (advertising, fair trade, etc.)

Develop a global stewardship prospective

- Develop and enhance policy/program specific to our stewardship responsibilities for aiding the cause of Christian education

3. External Communications

In some ways, External Communications could be thought of as more of an approach to engaging our parents and community rather than being a strategic priority. It is a priority because there are so many ways in which we communicate with the world beyond our walls.

Improve the ACS "brand"

- Create a "brand standards" guide
- Re-brand the ACS newsletter
- Develop electronic communications strategy
- Replace the school's telephone system making better use of automation/direct dial/ voicemail and on-hold messaging
- Create a new Admissions package
- Develop a comprehensive Marketing strategy
- Produce a promotional DVD story of ACS
- Create new promotional brochures

3. External Communications (cont'd)

Promote the ACS Mission in all external communications

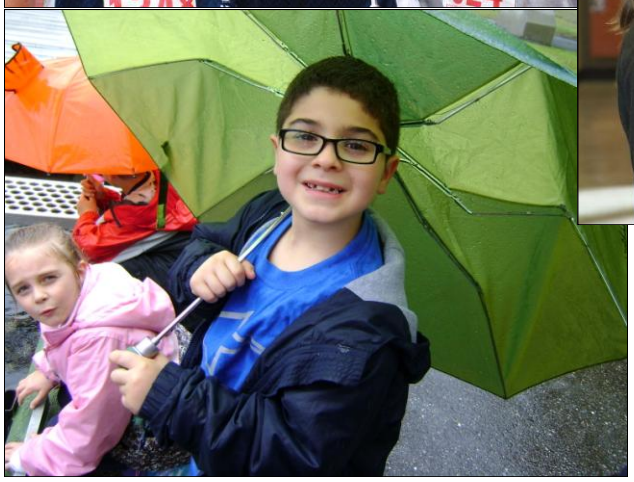
- Establish Mission focus in the Messenger through intentional themes
- Establish content champions for web content to insure information is current and useful
- Establish appropriate approval levels for all outgoing communication
- Develop Press Release Program /Standards

4. Service Quality

Any organization can have a wonderful product with great sales and marketing departments, but the heart of delivery lives in the customer service department. This is where a happy customer becomes an ecstatic one, or an unhappy customer becomes an ex-customer.

Develop standards for managing and improving touch points

- Provide telephone etiquette/training
- Provide nametags for staff
- Develop "invited guest" first impression strategy for each campus
- Create response time standards
- Develop a parent satisfaction survey



III OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Operational Effectiveness helps provide a mechanism to ensure alignment in both Learning and Parent/ Community Engagement with the Mission and Vision of the school. The central priority of Operational Effectiveness is that everything that happens within the school supports learning and gives the utmost opportunity for continuous improvement.

Support functions have been in place since the inception of the school. Over time, however, many functions have evolved without direct linkage to the central objectives of the school, in part, because the school's primary objectives were not clearly defined. Since this strategic plan seeks to provide clarity in terms of long term direction, Operational Effectiveness has the task of ensuring that all areas of operations work to facilitate excellence in the delivery of Christian education to students and parents. Additionally, success in this area will mean achievement of the related Vision statements listed above.

1. **Employer of Choice**
2. **Internal Process & Efficiency**
3. **Infrastructure**

1. Employer of Choice

In many organizations, leaders refer to the staff as the greatest assets the organization possesses. In practice, however, staffing is often little more than a line item on the expense sheet. ACS has always valued its staff but given the limitations of the previous operating model, *how* to value staff was not given a great deal of consideration.

Select, nurture and engagement

- Develop recruitment practices that involve targeted hiring
- Develop a wellness program for staff
- Develop a salary strategy to reach market conditions
- Conduct yearly reviews of staff benefit programs
- Purchase a Human Resources software tool
- Bring new staff into the Mission and Vision of ACS through a new staff orientation
- Develop an employee satisfaction survey
- Schedule events aimed at promoting teamwork and fun in the workplace

Foster a culture of accountability

- Develop and conduct exit interviews for all departing staff members
- Audit the existing staff evaluation program with a view to simplifying/improving effectiveness
- Implement Differentiated Evaluation
- Investigate the Career Ladder model for compensation

Improve internal communications

- Develop a common calendar of events to be high lighted at each campus
- Develop and promote online collaboration through the Intranet

Increase commitment to professional development

- Allocate professional development time to new initiatives to assist in staff adoption
- Increase professional development funding for leadership development
- Implement a "late start" program to increase professional development and collaboration

2. Internal Process and Efficiency

In many ways, these two strategic priorities are related. The over-arching role of both priorities is to ensure that scarce resource allocation is maximized where it is needed most—improving the quality of learning.

Develop effective policy

- Establish regular reviews of operational policies to ensure they remain current
- Develop written procedures to accompany operational policies
- Develop a streamlined accounting solution for campus internal accounts
- Implement the Youth Safe Outdoors Program at all campuses

Continuous process improvement

- Implement a process improvement project aimed at reducing administrative cost
- Conduct an enterprise wide risk assessment
- Develop an online centralized repository for documents

Develop effective cost control measures

- Develop separate cost models for each campus
- Establish benchmarks for significant cost items
- Conduct annual reviews of supplier contracts
- Explore centralized stationary management
- Reduce cost by making better use of electronic communications

Environmental responsibility

- Create a “green” plan for all campuses resulting in significantly less power/resource consumption

3. Infrastructure

ACS has been blessed with excellent facilities. A school building is much more than simply a place to engage and educate students. It is a key touch point with the supporting community and it is also an important attribute for attracting new families to the school.

Increasingly, students are given the choice as to where they would like to attend school. In recognizing this new reality, it is also important that our facilities be “student centric” in terms of contributing to a positive experience for students and supporting new methods and designs for teaching and reaching students into the future. Our facilities can also be leveraged to teach ownership and environmental stewardship to students.

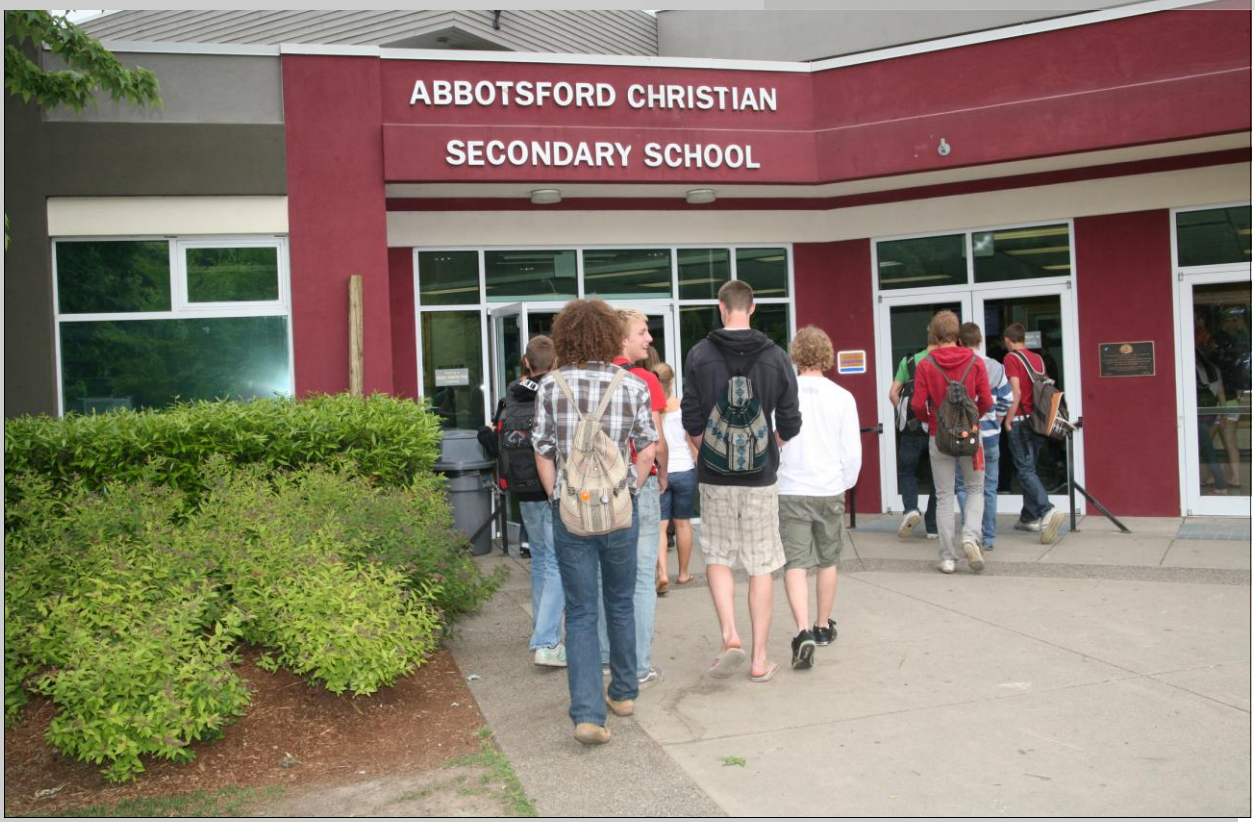
Maintain and update buildings, grounds and equipment to a standard of excellence

- Develop a long term capital replacement plan
- Develop quarterly facility cleanliness and appearance audits
- Create a “student centric” renovation plan for the Secondary/Middle building
- Conduct a storage space review

Plan for the future

- Develop a long term strategy for the McConnell Road property
- Investigate current usage opportunities for the McConnell Road property

3. Infrastructure (cont'd)

Transportation

- Develop a wider bussing strategy for the school in conjunction with the Bus Society
- Increase bussing opportunities to facilitate external student learning