<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear Prospective School Developer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Vision for the Future</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Sense</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Faith</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Vision Statement</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Mission Statement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Philosophy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Methods</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs Students</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Outcomes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Student Assessment</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Evaluation and Improvement</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Development</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Family/Community/Church Partnership</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Policies Manual</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability Instruments</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Student Handbook</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueprints</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance with Local Codes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Guidelines and Routes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations/Marketing</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Demographics</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Tools</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Policies/Manual</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for Purchasing Materials and Equipment</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current/Projected Budget</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Flowchart</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Minutes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants Used</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Prospective School Developer

First, we would like to commend you for taking the first step in changing the lives of the children around you. By establishing a new Christ-centered school, you are making a loud statement to these children that you care. Starting a school is a major undertaking, and ACSI is committed to assisting you every step of the way.

The success of your school depends largely on good planning. To start a program that not only appears excellent but actually is excellent in curriculum, instruction, and delivery requires months and months of planning. The ACSI New School Program is an 8-step process that will assist you in effectively planning the start-up of your school. The amount of time it takes to complete the process is totally dependent on you.

During this time you will have one-on-one consulting with the staff of the Urban School Services Department (USSD) by phone and in person. We can offer guidance on how to organize your board of directors and how to devise a fund-raising and development plan. We can even network you with other individuals and organizations in your area that have started schools or are in the process of doing so.

This is just a short list of the services we offer. Please visit our website at www.acsi.org to find out all the services ACSI offers to member schools. Our goal is to help make quality education available and accessible for all children. We believe that a Christ-centered education prepares children to succeed in their present lives and for all eternity.

We have put together a checklist of items to ensure that your school will have a successful beginning. What is not included is information on the issues specific to your school, and we can work on those together. If you find you need the assistance of Urban School Services, please don't hesitate to call, write, or email us. We are here for you. We are looking forward to co-laboring with you to make your school a success!
A Vision for the Future

One of the most exciting things the Holy Spirit is causing to happen in the Body of Christ today is the rapid rise and expansion of Christ-centered elementary and secondary schools. Perhaps the Lord is leading you to establish a Christian school as part of the ministry of your church, or perhaps to start an independent Christian school. Our association has guided the development of hundreds of Christian schools over the past twenty years. Please allow us to suggest several basic steps:

Step One:
A Christian school is usually born in the heart of one person. From that point on, the idea should be nurtured in prayer. The academic education and spiritual welfare of young lives is a serious responsibility and should be entered into only after definite direction from the Lord. Prayer and complete dependence on the Lord are important throughout the entire enterprise.

Step Two:
Appoint a study committee of five to seven responsible persons. They should be of such caliber that they could become the members of the first school board after the school gets under way. The study committee should visit at least three other established Christian schools. Contact your ACSI regional office (see enclosed listing) for the names of schools in your area. Make an appointment with the principals of the Christian schools you plan to visit. During each visit be sure to ask about student performance, parental satisfaction, and any other questions your group may raise. It’s a good idea to have a list of questions prior to each visit. Additionally, ask if you can call on them for support and encouragement as needed.

Step Three:
Be sure to take all necessary legal steps. If yours is to be a church-sponsored school, present the idea to your church board and church body. If they approve the concept, an amendment to the church by-laws is necessary. If your school is going to rely heavily on charitable contributions, we strongly recommend that you establish a federal tax ID number separate from the church’s. You should do that and begin the process of creating a non-profit organization very early. By doing so, you will allow foundations and individuals to grant or loan you money.

Step Four:
A clear statement of the school’s philosophy identifying the target population, along with a statement of faith, a vision statement, and a mission statement should be prepared at the outset. (See our manual How to Start an Urban Christian School for sample forms.) The board of directors should develop the Christian philosophy of education...
and make it a part of the Policy Manual. Each employee and parent should know and understand the school’s philosophy because it is the basis for all the school does.

**Step Five:**
After the sponsoring group has approved the plan for your school, you are ready to take several very important steps. Begin by selecting your school administrator and faculty. Your Christian school, like any other institution, will be a credit to the cause of Christ and Christian education in direct proportion to the quality of people you bring together as your administration, faculty, and staff. It is helpful if you select as principal someone with a wide range of administrative abilities. He or she should be a strong spiritual leader, be competent in finance, understand school curriculum, be proficient in advertising and public relations, and be a wise counselor to teachers, parents, and students. All these and more are characteristics of the principal you need to make your Christian school a success. For a job description of each faculty and staff position, please see our manual *Necessary Tools to Run a School*.

The teachers you select should be outstanding Christian professionals who understand the spiritual needs of children, are true scholars, and have enough personal charisma to inspire learning. They should inspire the confidence of parents, and they should work well with fellow teachers. Carefully check as many references as possible for all applicants you consider selecting for a position in your school. (For information on the availability of Christian school administrators or teachers, see the ACSI *Christian Administrator and Teacher Employment Opportunities*.)

**Step Six:**
Analyze your options for school facilities. Many schools are established in church educational buildings. One reason the Christian school movement has flourished so rapidly is that, in developing their Sunday schools, churches have built excellent educational buildings. Usually, with a few changes, Sunday school rooms can easily serve as classrooms for your Christian school. The parking lot or other property often serves well as a playground area.

In some states it is necessary to obtain approval from a building inspector to ensure that your facility meets all applicable health, fire, and safety codes. Know the legal requirements in your community before starting a Christian school. Questions in this area can be answered by your ACSI regional director or the leadership of other Christian schools in your area. Included in *How to Start an Urban Christian School* are specific regulations for your state.
**Step Seven:**

Begin promoting your school approximately nine months before the opening day. As you begin your enrollment campaign, prepare a brochure describing your school’s ministry, a school calendar of events for the first year, a parent and student handbook, and a registration form. Samples of these forms and many others are available separately and are included in our manual.

Do not be overzealous about building a large student enrollment for your first year. Be more concerned about bringing together a quality group of parents, students, and teachers who will help your school establish a positive, Christ-honoring reputation in your community. If you develop a bad reputation your first year, it will take years to recoup your losses. It is better to enjoy a modest success than to experience a colossal failure.

**Step Eight:**

Follow sound financial policies. Simply stated, your income must be commensurate with your expenses. Be realistic regarding the amount of tuition you charge and the number of persons you employ. The momentum of a new school is greatly impaired if a large deficit is incurred the first year. The school board should monitor carefully the monthly financial reports to evaluate the school’s financial progress. As a rule of thumb, your school should have a minimum of twenty students per teacher. Check with other Christian schools in your area regarding the typical rates for student tuition, or contact your ACSI regional office for the latest tuition and salary survey for your region. Set the date of your school’s opening, prepare your facility, and meet the legal requirements, remaining constant in prayer.

We pray God’s blessing on you as you consider this vital ministry.
Common Sense

1. Don’t attempt to do too much, too fast. For example, it might be best to start with K–3 or K–6 and add one grade a year.

2. Don’t launch an expensive building program/lease agreement until after you’ve been in operation for a few years, unless you are fortunate enough to be funded by a generous donor.

3. It’s a mistake to start your high school too soon. Wait a few years. When you start, it’s better to “grow your own” high school students by adding high school grades one at a time.

4. Operating a Christian school will require adequate resources. You can’t run a school without charging some tuition/fees. Don’t spend money you don’t have. You must solicit donations and actively raise funds.

5. Don’t promise financial aid to students unless you are certain it is going to be available.

6. For the first year or two, depending on how fast your school grows, a head teacher should also serve as principal.

7. Don’t be discouraged by the lack of pastor/church enthusiasm and support for your Christian school. Not all Christians have caught the vision.
Checklist

School strategy
- School vision statement
- School mission statement
- School philosophy

Education plan
- Learning goals
- Instructional methods used
- Program for special needs students

School accountability
- Methods of student assessment (testing)
- School evaluation and improvement
- Accountability instruments

Faculty/Staff development plan
- Professional development processes (for teachers)
- Personnel policies/Manual

School/Family/Community/Church partnership
- School/Family/Community/Church Partnership
- Safety policies/Manual
- School handbook

Facilities development plan
- Blueprints for facilities
- Compliance with local codes
- Documents
- Fire safety
- Zoning
- Traffic guidelines and routes
- Safety policies/Manual

Marketing plan
- Publications
- School abstract
- Public relations/Marketing materials
- School demographics (target and real)

Financial plan
- Current budget
- Projected budget
- Criteria for purchasing materials and equipment

Governance plan
- Nonprofit operating procedures
- Organizational bylaws
- Board minutes

Business plan/Business accountability
- Business policies/Manual
- Organizational flowchart
- Consultants used (when and what for)

Included within all sections
- Communication tools
  - Parents
  - Staff
  - Other

Some information contained in this booklet has been adapted from and expanded beyond that of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning, Milwaukee, WI.
**Statement of Faith**

The statement of faith should answer such questions as what the school stands for spiritually, what is taught, and the spiritual background of the school. You may want to include your statement of faith in information provided for parents to sign, indicating that they have read it and agree to have their children taught according to those beliefs.

**Example:**

1. We believe the Bible to be inspired, the only infallible, authoritative, inerrant Word of God (2 Timothy 3:15, 2 Peter 1:21).

2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1, Matthew 28:19, John 10:30).

3. We believe in the deity of Christ (John 10:33), His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:35), His sinless life (Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 7:26), His miracles (John 2:11), His vicarious and atoning death (1 Corinthians 15:3, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 2:9), His resurrection (John 11:25, 1 Corinthians 15:4), His ascension to the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19), and His personal return in power and glory (Acts 1:11, Revelation 19:11).

4. We believe in the absolute necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit for salvation because of the exceeding sinfulness of human nature and that people are justified on the single ground of faith in the shed blood of Christ and that only by God’s grace and through faith are we saved (John 3:16-21; John 5:24; Romans 3:23, 5:8-9; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5).

5. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; the saved to the resurrection of life, and the lost to the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

6. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Galatians 3:26-28).

7. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life (Romans 8:13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:16, 6:19-20; Ephesians 4:30, 5:18).

**Note**

*Local churches supporting the school usually have statements of faith for their churches that could be used as samples to develop the school’s statement of faith. If a local church sponsors the school, it is not usual to use the local church’s statement of faith.*

**School Vision Statement**

The school’s vision statement is designed to inspire the future efforts of those within the organization. It is a brief, compelling statement that
motivates the community to produce the highest quality program using the most effective processes.

Example:
The ABC school believes that all students are to be valued and challenged to be top performers and community leaders.

School Mission Statement
The school mission statement explains what the school exists to do and how it will carry out its roles and tasks to accomplish the mission. This is the process the school will use to fulfill the vision.

Example:
To create a Christ-centered learning atmosphere conducive to the academic excellence, social growth, and spiritual development that will encourage and prepare students for successful, productive lives.

School Philosophy
The school philosophy statement expresses the beliefs of the school community about children and about learning. Sometimes the school philosophy statement contains a commitment to a definite plan of action for the school.

Example:
Because we believe that every child can learn, we are committed to excellence in education. We will provide an education that will pave the way to a future of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Instructional Methods
Instructional methodology includes the techniques that teachers use to present course content. Many schools adopt a schoolwide methodology for all classes in certain subjects. In addition, individual teachers use consistent methodology in their own classrooms. Each school and each class will have to address this subject according to the needs of its students. It is very important to remember, however, that children have different learning styles. We must also remember that teachers have different teaching styles. We suggest not hindering your faculty by requiring certain methods. God has given them a special ministry through their teaching that should be nurtured, developed, and encouraged.

Special Needs Students
The school program for special needs students should include two main components: methods used to identify students with special needs and measures used to meet the needs of students identified.
Common Examples of Special Needs:
- Dyslexia
- Attention deficit disorder
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

If your school cannot meet the special needs of a particular child, be honest with the parents so they can find a facility that can.

If you have a student you believe may have an educational disability, check with your local school district for the proper procedures to have the child professionally diagnosed.

Student Outcomes
Student outcomes are general statements of intent or purpose that guide students and school staff in carrying out the mission of the school. These statements are goals or benchmarks for student achievement.

Example:
All students will acquire the basic skills necessary to be socially and economically competent. Indicators are as follows:
- Students will be able to read, comprehend, and assimilate written materials.
- Students will acquire necessary computational skills through the use of computers.
- Students will make the arithmetical calculations essential to their job and to daily living.

Methods of Student Assessment
Students are assessed formally and informally, individually and by class. The strategic planning documents should include evidence of formal and informal assessment methods and results.

School Evaluation and Improvement
The school's strategic plan should include school evaluation documents. The school is in place to meet the needs of children, and so it is necessary to evaluate its success in that endeavor.

Some typical areas of evaluation include:
- Vision, mission, philosophy, and goals statements
- Students with special needs
- Curriculum/Instruction
- Personnel/Financial management
- Governance structure and function
- Communication and public relations

Professional Development Processes
The professional development processes are the ways in which teachers and staff are recruited, hired, oriented, supervised, and evaluated. Here are some things to consider as these processes are developed:
Recruitment
- Nondiscrimination policy
- Methods of recruitment
- Application process

Hiring
- Members of interviewing team
- Interview questions
- Contractual documents
- Salary and benefits
- Offer and acceptance process

Orientation
- Timeline for orientation
- Orientation topics
- Supervision and evaluation
- Probationary period/evaluation process
- Methods and standards of evaluation
- Contract renewal and termination process

Include all operating procedures such as mailing, student discipline, contacting parents, etc. These are very important items that can easily be overlooked. By the time you finish jotting things down that need to be included in orientation, you will have a long list. Don’t worry. That is expected at orientation.

Faculty Development
In addition to supervision and evaluation plans for individual teachers, a plan should be in place for the development of the faculty as a whole. This professional development can be linked with school evaluation and improvement.

School/Family/Community/Church Partnership
Schools may form specific partnerships with community organizations for services or participation in the school programs in some fashion. Documents should be used to describe how the persons are involved in the school, what services are rendered, or how the school participates in the community activity.

Examples:
- Drug-free programs
- Mentoring programs
- Tutoring

Personnel Policies Manual
The personnel manual sets forth expected policies and procedures for the school staff. It is important that policies and procedures be clearly understood. Some handbooks include only items of actual policy relating to personnel. Others include procedures that the school expects personnel to follow.

Accountability Instruments
Accountability instruments consist of documentation in various areas of school operations used in compliance with expectations of various publics. Accountability documents may fall into several categories depending on the expectations of the school community and the accountability agent.
Parent/Student Handbook
The parent/student handbook contains some of the same information as the personnel manual with some obvious variants.

Examples:
• Attendance
• Athletics
• Academic performance
• Admission
• Cancellation of school
• Dress code
• Course selections
• Schedule/Calendar
• Discipline
• Safety
• Fees/Fines
• Field trips
• Health/Records/Immunization
• Homework
• Leaving school grounds
• Lost and found
• Lunch program
• Personal data changes

Blueprints
The blueprints for the school facility should clearly indicate learning areas, exits, emergency exits, electrical boxes, water controls, etc. Sizes of rooms and dimensions of the overall structure should be included.

The purpose for studying school facilities is to determine their safety and their adequacy for learning.

Compliance with Local Codes
Local codes and ordinances require proper documentation of compliance. Local authorities often provide forms. Local codes vary from community to community and from state to state.

Traffic Guidelines and Routes
Transportation guidelines and routes are important to the smooth operation of a school. Policies for transportation should be set by the board of directors and should be in compliance with standards set by the local public school district. Routes are usually set by the local bus company and should be communicated clearly to parents at the beginning of the school year and included in the parent/student handbook.

Public Relations/Marketing Materials
The school usually uses its public relations and marketing materials to advertise the school to its various publics. Usually these are print materials, although they may include radio announcements and/or videotapes as well.

School Demographics
School demographics describe the characteristics of the school community and the student population. Statistics usually include nationality, race, age, and gender of students, locality description, religious
background, student enrollment, income levels, educational level of parents, and marital status. Each of these should be expanded as necessary to meet the needs of your school.

This information is easy to acquire by requiring certain fields on the child’s school application. (Please see school application in our manual How to Start an Urban Christian School)

**Communication Tools**

Communication tools include the various means used by the school to communicate with its various publics. Included are internal and external written, oral, and multimedia means of communication.

**Business Policies/Manual**

Business policies ensure the smooth financial operation of the school. Some schools maintain a separate handbook to be used by school personnel who are involved in financial matters, but whether there is a separate handbook or not, clear policies for the financial operations of the school should be in place, and these policies must be followed to the letter.

**Criteria for Purchasing Materials and Equipment**

Materials and equipment should be purchased according to a set of criteria established by the administrator and the governing body. Besides being within fiscal constraints, the criteria for purchasing materials and equipment should be in accordance with guidelines developed by your school board.

**Current/Projected Budget**

The school budget clearly defines school priorities. The budget should define expected sources of income and approved areas of expenditure, and it should paint a clear picture of the school’s cash flow. Based on expected enrollment and sources of income as well as expenditures, the budget should be projected at least three years from the current year.

Budgeting can be a difficult task; if you are uncertain about any aspect of your budget, you would be wise to retain an accountant. Accountability and good bookkeeping can make a positive difference in obtaining funds from grant funding or a lending institution.
Organizational Flowchart

An organizational flowchart not only describes who is responsible to whom but also provides a key to communication among staff, board members, faculty, and outsiders.

Typically schools function in a top-down fashion with the board of education or directors at the top, followed by administrator, principal, and staff. Of course, your flowchart will depend on your staffing and funding. Your staffing is directly related to funding, which in turn is related to enrollment.

It is important to establish the organizational flowchart carefully so that roles are clearly defined and are not overlapping.

Board Minutes

Copies of minutes of the board are included in the strategic plan. These minutes tell when and how often the board met, who was present, and what business was discussed in the meetings. In the interest of good public relations, a summary of board proceedings is sometimes distributed to parents and/or other interested stakeholders.

Consultants Used

This is another aspect of accountability. If you used an attorney, accountant, or any other professional service for which you paid, it is important to document the service rendered, the date of the service, and its cost. Remember, good bookkeeping will help encourage grantors and lenders to fund your project.

Conclusion

We hope this information has been helpful. Please note that the Urban School Services Department is here to assist you. For more information on our direct services and materials, feel free to give us a call or send us an email or letter.

Our goal is to help create accessible, quality, Christ-centered education for all children. We have included a basic outline of information you will need to get started in the development of your new school. Urban School Services also has a complete resource series that will further help you with new school development, running your school, resourcing your school and preparing your school for ACSI’s nationally recognized accreditation. We encourage you to contact us for information to obtain this very comprehensive program.

We pray the Lord’s blessing upon your endeavors.

In His Glory,

Urban School Services