How to Start a Christian School
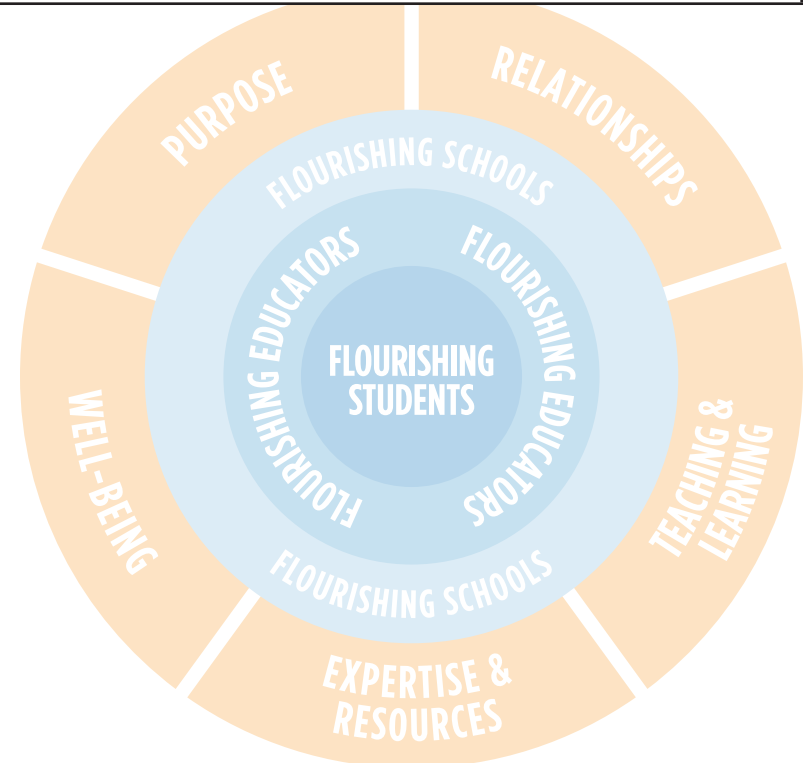
A Flourishing Framework for Developing Your School

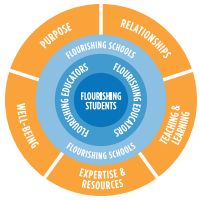| DOMAIN	DEFINITION	REQUIRED ACTION ITEMS

Purpose	**A commitment on the part of all school constituencies to the central purposes of Christian education—such as holistic teaching, integrated worldview, spiritual formation, discipleship, and family-school partnership—are strongly predictive of flourishing outcomes.**	• Create a development/planning team to establish the school and its purposes.
		• Determine the type of governance model you will follow and develop bylaws and a board policy manual consistent with that model. Include the following:
		   o Mission Statement
		   o Statement of Faith
		   o Core Values
		   o Expected Student Outcomes
		• Create a clear admissions policy and process that aligns with the school's mission and vision.

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QUICK REFERENCE CHECKLIST

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Expertise & Resources	**Flourishing is connected to excellence in educational and school management practices. Educationally, this includes hiring qualified staff and responding effectively to special needs. Sufficient school resources—as well as board-level strengths in resource planning—are predictive of school flourishing, as are (conversely) resource constraints that hinder schools from engaging in improvement processes.**	• Secure an attorney to assist with the following tasks:
		
		   o Applying to the IRS for a 501c3 status (if you choose a non-profit structure). Church schools can operate under the church status or create an auxiliary organization status with the IRS.
		
		   o Registering with the state and secure a tax ID number.
		
		   o Determine if there are other national/state/province requirements necessary to operate legally in your location.
		
		• Consider this list of legal requirements and determine how you will secure or develop these documents.
		• Hire a qualified, devoted follower of Christ, as the Head of School (HOS) and empower the HOS to hire all other staff members including faculty.
		• Develop handbooks, policies and guidelines for an Employee Handbook and Parent/Student Handbook, which include an Emergency Crisis Plan.
		• Appoint a qualified financial/business specialist and establish a finance committee and policies within the governing board that reflect biblical stewardship principles.
		• Develop a Financial Plan for the first three years, reflective of a school's core expense and revenue components, including but not limited to:
		   o Start-up cash
		   o Tuition projections
		   o Financial assistance allocations
		• Agree upon whether the option of utilizing State and Federal entitlement funding will be an option for your school (including vouchers and tax credits).
		• Investigate vendors for supplies, insurance, etc. (ACSI Strategic Partners)
		• Utilize local resources and state guidelines to guide you in providing a safe, secure, and well-maintained environment that is organized and developmentally appropriate for the students it serves.
		   o Fire Department
		   o Police Department
		   o Health and Human Services Department
		   o Education Department

RESOURCES

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DOMAIN	DEFINITION	REQUIRED ACTION ITEMS
Teaching & Learning	A school culture in which educators are committed to ongoing learning and improvement is predictive of flourishing not only for the school and educators, but also for students. For teachers, this includes best practices in feedback and collaboration, high quality professional development, individualized instruction, and providing effective and orderly classroom environments where students are deeply engaged in learning. For school leadership, this entails using systems thinking to develop a culture of improvement, which is both focused on student outcomes and is data driven.	• Determine educational delivery model (Future Ready) and research-based instructional strategies. • Implement a systematic and collaborative process for evaluation of the Head of School. • Provide plenty of lead time in the hiring of the Head of School to allow him/her to prepare for the first instructional year, utilizing ACSI's more comprehensive program for "How to Start a Christian School"- this will provide additional guidance in the area of teaching and learning and other important areas of school development.
Relationships	Trust-filled, supportive, and authentic relationships between all school constituencies, as well as with the surrounding community, are key to flourishing outcomes.	• Develop policies and systems that enable students to be known and supported by adult advocates who are aware of their academic, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical needs. • Establish a written policy and process, based upon biblical principles, for resolving conflicts.
Well-Being	For both leaders and teachers at Christian schools, stress is a key factor that impacts flourishing; likewise, healthy living and developing resilience is predictive of student flourishing. This domain and related constructs demonstrate that the well-being of educators and students is not a secondary concern—but rather is predictively linked—to flourishing outcomes.	• Develop a written security and crisis management plan with routine practice times and a schedule for regular review. The plan should include a strategy for communication with legal authorities and stakeholders in the event of a crisis. • Create policies and procedures which promote social/emotional health and safety that both prevents and addresses situations including harassment, intimidation, and bullying, with clearly defined conduct expectations for students, staff, parents, and volunteers. • Adopt child safety policies and training for staff that address child abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, as well as legal reporting responsibilities for staff and volunteers. • Define the appropriate number of instructional and support staff that are needed to fulfill the mission and scope of the school. • Design policies and practices regarding employee well-being, setting healthy and realistic expectations focused on work-life balance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
- Personnel Resources for Christian Schools; Purposeful Design Publications
- Rethinking Strategic Planning for Christian Schools; Alan Pue
- Rethinking Sustainability; A Financial Model for the Christian Schools; Alan Pue