

Setting Course as a Christian School

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As a Christian School administrator, your responsibilities often outweigh the hours offered to you each day. Your greatest assets often get buried under a downpour of forced reactionary measures to keep the educational machine operating with greatest effectiveness and efficiency.

And then it happens.

You come to the board meeting, parent engagement meeting, or staff wide development meeting where you are tasked with eloquently addressing the directional drive and focus of your school—a good ol' fashion pep talk. Being an accomplished speaker, you politicize your way through the opportunity, and quietly continue down the path you've already been traveling.

We've all been given the responsibility to set course. However, all-too-often we experience an obligation to carry the mission, vision, and school goals by ourselves. And at the very minimum, we feel an ownership to our position, the board, and our teachers to make sure we are all heading down the right path.

Free yourself from the pressure of creating, carrying, and communicating that alone. Instead, let me introduce you to Body Life Vision. Simply stated, it allows the stakeholders in your school to speak into, guide, and contribute to the directional vision of your school. Through intentionally listening and embracing how God is leading those around you, you begin to more clearly discern where he may be going. God's vision for your school is created and fulfilled by the people – not the strategic marketing plan. Engaging in quality conversations, personal meetings, focus groups, and even town hall meetings you will begin to see things in a collaborative sense.

The barriers to such an idea are thick and daunting: your own release of power, people may potentially see you as weak, you will hear varying (and sometimes conflicting) opinions, and you will be forced into a messy process of combining and translating the shared vision. And this may be enough to stop you. Sometimes phrases like “visionary leadership,” “God's vision for our school” and “God spoke to me” block the opportunity for us to engage the Body of Christ. Instead of empowering others, we unintentionally put ourselves on a pedestal, and undervalue their contributions.

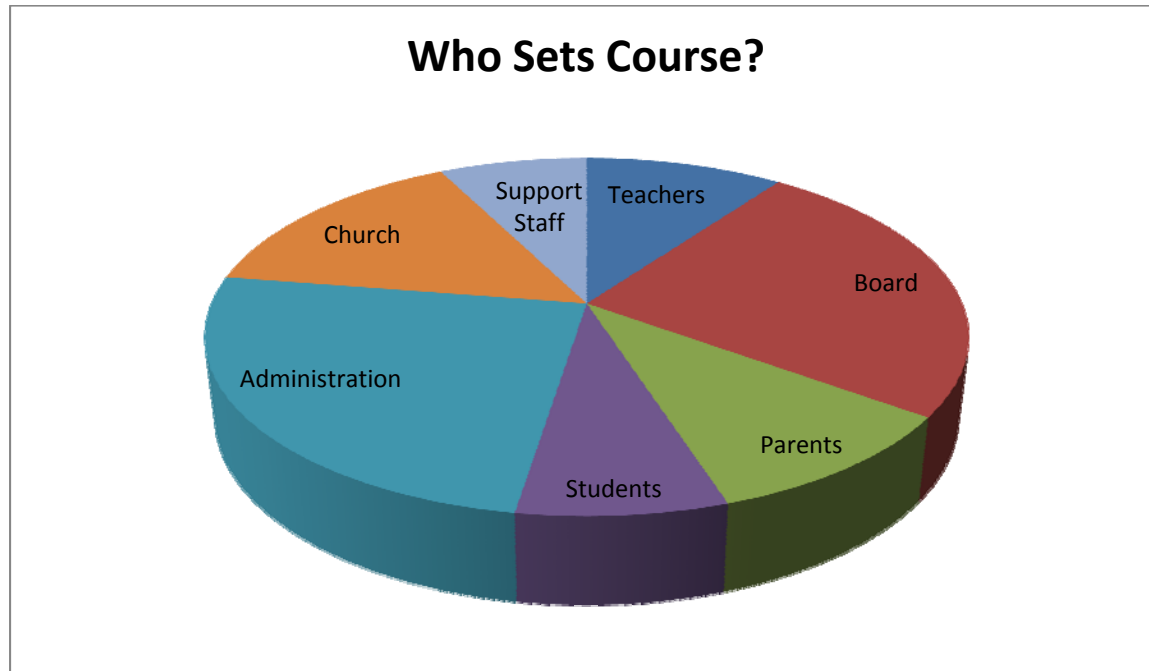
Don't be fooled, though. Body Life Vision provides you the opportunity to embrace “two heads is better than one.” It gives you the chance to listen to the key demographics daily impacted by your school. Don't forget that it will probably address your blindspots and own biases.

And then there is one simple concept which should never escape you as an administrator: Ownership. The ability to allow others to participate in the process engages ownership in powerful ways. If your best advertisement is your clientele, their feedback and their ability to be heard should be of utmost importance to you.

God provided you with the right people to accomplish His purposes and plans. Therefore, instead of posturing your own significance, create opportunities for Body Life Vision to jointly set

course for your school. If we are truly being built together (Eph 2:22), how we listen and share together even in setting course will create a place for God to dwell among us.

And the reactionary driven pressures of the day might weigh a little less with the Body of Christ supporting your shared Body Life Vision.



Note: The numbers would be defined by you as the administrator. “Right” or “wrong” percentages do not exist. Rather, a simple understanding that each of these groups of stakeholders is intimately involved in the impact of the directional discussion. If you choose not to engage in listening, you will potentially leave them behind creating communication and trust gaps.

Questions to ask yourself as a school administrator:

How are you intentionally listening as a school to your customers & stakeholders?

What have you learned in your listening process?

Who would each of these groups identify as setting the course for the school?

How can you communicate more clearly surrounding the course of the school?

What strategies have emerged because of the course or directional focus of your school?

How have you evaluated them for their effectiveness and lasting impact?

Which demographic is easiest for you to engage with? Hardest?

Who needs to be involved in the evaluation of this process and its enforcement?

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