

Prince Avenue Christian School



Strategic Plan
2019-2023



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“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . .”

Romans 12:2

MISSION, PHILOSOPHY AND VISION

OUR MISSION

"To partner with Christian families to provide scripturally based discipleship while pursuing excellence in academics, fine arts, and athletics from a biblical worldview."

The school remains dedicated to its founding principles of partnering in a covenantal relationship with families to provide a wholesome, Christ centered environment that is a physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually safe place for students to explore and develop their gifts, talents, and skills.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Prince Avenue seeks to partner with Christian families to provide biblically based discipleship, scholastic and co-curricular excellence, freedom of expression, diversity of viewpoints guided by Christian principles, and critical thinking in a *distinctly* Christian environment.

Now in its fortieth year, the school continues to embrace the belief that “a cord of three strands is not easily broken” (Ecc 4:12) with families, their churches, and the school yoked together to provide a biblical worldview that creates the foundation from which our students receive a challenging, college preparatory education.

OUR VISION

“Guided by God’s Word as our foundation, we aspire to be the preferred choice for Christian families in the greater Athens area by providing a premier college preparatory education while discipling students to grow in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

The school seeks to develop Christ followers who are excited about learning, understand and embrace the value of participating in co-curricular programs, and seek to influence the greater community outside the school for the glory of Christ.

Dear Prince Avenue School Community,

What a wonderful time to be a part of the Prince Avenue Christian School Family! God has truly blessed us with wonderful families, friendships, and facilities. We are very excited about the days ahead. Continued success requires continued planning, so we are pleased to present this five-year strategic plan.

This is our first strategic plan, and it is based on our 2017 School Improvement Plan developed by the faculty and staff as part of our most recent reaccreditation. This accreditation by Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) / Southern Association of Colleges (SACS) / AdvancEd was our first after years of accreditation by the Association of Christian Schools International. At the time of our accreditation, we were only the second ACSI school in the Southeast to successfully achieve this most rigorous of accreditations.

The school's administrative leadership team will work diligently over the next five years to implement and refine the strategies and recommendations in this plan in compliance with the Board's strategic planning guidance.

On behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, we would like to thank the parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and students who contributed to the strategic planning process and the creation of this important document.

It's a great day to be a Wolverine!



Brian Elrod
Chair, Board of Trustees

Dear Prince Family,

We have been blessed beyond measure with continued success and growth over our school's forty-year history. From shared Sunday school classrooms and the *Minuteman* mascot in downtown Athens to a spacious, debt-free, sixty-acre campus for *Wolverines* in Oconee County, our school has traversed a broad spectrum of changes since its birth. And while buildings, students, and teachers have changed over time, the values, beliefs, and decision-making processes from which we continue to operate remain anchored to a foundation that never changes - God's word.

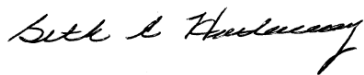
Our mission statement is prominently displayed around campus and speaks to the broader, strategic purpose for our school's existence, and routine internal and external assessments serve to ensure we stay on course to avoid mission drift. Teachers are at the heart of any school's success, thus we hire, train, and cultivate talented faculty and staff who are not only subject matter experts in their respective disciplines, but moreover are professing believers in Jesus Christ. We encourage innovation from our students, thus requiring them to take risks, which requires trust. Our teachers not only understand the importance of building trust with students, but they are committed to creating intellectual, social, and emotional safe harbors to promote student exploration and learning.

The leadership required to preserve and grow a Christian covenant school today must be more deliberate in its governance and planning than ever before in the wake of our nation's rapidly changing moral culture, and we must think strategically and innovatively in order to remain competitive. Innovation requires a calculated level of risk, and schools who fail to embrace that mindset become obsolete. We are committed to continuously seek self-improvement and embrace deliberate yet moderate change to ensure our students are ready to meet the demands tomorrow will bring.

Our standardized test scores, collection of fine arts awards, and multiple region athletic championships meet or surpass those of schools in our service area with tuition costs almost twice ours, but we understand that these are *temporal* accomplishments and therefore simply a means to an end, and that the end itself is a personal and *eternal* relationship with Jesus Christ. We are on the road less traveled, but our path provides a holistic, comprehensive journey that not only educates our students' minds with knowledge but it does so from a biblical worldview that infuses *wisdom*, which will continue to serve them long after they leave the safety of our campus.

The goals, objectives, and challenges for our school contained within this plan directly align with our mission and vision statements. I am thankful for the hard work of the board of trustees, parents, faculty and staff, students, and alumni who helped contribute to this important plan. Fixating our focus on Christ, the master teacher, remains critical to our continued success. To Him be the glory!

In His service,



Seth Hathaway
Head of School



“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

Mark 10:14

THE WOLVERINE WAY

WHAT WE STRIVE TO DO...

- Educate the public on the benefits of a Christian covenant education to attract families who share our Christian values, ethics, and morals.
- Partner with Christian families to teach students eternal life is freely given by God’s grace through their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Recruit and retain highly qualified and engaging faculty who are *dedicated* Christ followers.
- Provide students meaningful, effective instruction across all content areas, and do so from a biblical worldview.
- Stimulate students’ imaginations and promote critical thinking through instruction in the visual, musical, and theatrical arts.
- Promote physical fitness; inculcate the virtues of teamwork, sportsmanship, commitment, and school institutional self-esteem through athletics.
- Provide students with a rigorous, college preparatory education and assist them in gaining acceptance to a college or university consistent with their aptitude and ability levels.
- Enhance confidence levels with *all* our stakeholders to increase annual giving and assist with strategic development goals.
- Sustain financial stability through sound fiscal policies that balance expenditures and revenues.



SITUATIONAL

ANALYSIS



EXTERNAL

- We live in a post-Christian era with a national culture influenced by changing societal norms that have removed the Christian faith from the public square.
- A student's physical and emotional safety are parents' number one priority.
- Since the great recession in 2008, nationwide trends show private school applications, particularly in lower school grades, are down.
- Technology is changing at an unprecedented rate, and children of all ages are exposed to different forms of technology.
- Christian schools nationwide are closing at an estimated 300 per year, and the Christian covenant model presents a more restrictive admissions process than the evangelical model. ⁽¹⁾
- Competitive college and university standards are consistently increasing.
- Increased levels of anxiety, stress, and depression in today's students are attributed, in part, to heightened scholastic and co-curricular competition in addition to the psychological impact of 24/7 social media.
- Millennial parents exceed Boomers in number; they have earned more bachelor degrees per person than their Gen-X parents; they have fewer religious associations, and they are more discerning school shoppers than any generation before them. ⁽²⁾

(1) ACSI: WEBSITE acsi.org; (2) Barna Group, Ventura, CA: Commissioned by ACSI 2017

INTERNAL

- Since relocating to its present campus twelve years ago, Prince Avenue has established an excellent reputation as a quality college preparatory school with robust co-curricular programs built on biblical principles.
- Prince Avenue continues to place a strong emphasis on partnering with Christian families who are active in a local church through the use of a covenant agreement.
- The school remains committed to limiting the hiring of teachers to self-professing Christ followers who are active in local Bible teaching churches.
- A strong emphasis has been placed on increasing the qualifications of faculty with the majority now holding advanced degrees.
- In twelve years, the school has built an impressive new campus with some of the finest athletic facilities of any single (A) school in Northeast Georgia.
- The school has emphasized its interpersonal approach to religious programming, and in middle and high school it has incorporated the use of small discussion groups, community outreach programs, and a student honor code.
- Lower school enrollment has trended lower over the past five years, which is consistent with national private school norms.
- Lower school standardized test scores have risen “significantly” in the past three years in response to changes in leadership, curriculum, and instructional techniques.
- Prince Avenue is the only school in its service area, public or private, that offers on campus dual high school and college credit courses taught by its own highly qualified faculty through its partnership with two Christian universities (33 credit hours are currently offered).
- Tuition is competitive with other local private schools; however, the school is undervalued when one compares the scope and depth of programming with other local private Christian school competitors.
- The number of admitted students has trended positively over the past two years.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR PRINCE

- Remaining Christ-centered in a society growing increasingly pluralistic.
- Sustaining applications and enrollment, particularly in the lower grades, while continuing to uphold the selective standards of the Christian covenant model.
- Teachers' salaries remain below local public-school averages for similar credentials and years of experience; however, teachers' benefits packages remain robust in comparison to other local private Christian schools.
- The population of students with diagnosed learning differences continues to grow, which has increased parent requests for Educational Support Services (ESS).
- Continuing to advance the quality of scholastic and co-curricular programs to meet rising college and university admission standards while balancing the workload, stress, and quality of life for students and faculty.
- Providing innovative and engaging biblical instruction to students that is relevant, meaningful, and tailored to students' ages and spiritual maturity levels.
- The need to leverage all constituents from students to grandparents in developing a "giving culture" within the school's community to help support operational needs and strategic goals.
- Increase the demographic diversity within the student body, and the faculty and staff, to more closely reflect the Kingdom of God.
- Increase the amount of academic instructional space to replace aging modular facilities that are nearing the end of their life cycle.
- Increase the amount of fine arts instructional space to include a new band room and black box theater.
- Build a second indoor gymnasium and a visitor's locker room to accommodate current athletic needs.
- Effectively increase and improve marketing strategies to include creating a robust and mature marketing and communication plan to increase public awareness of the school's programs and highlight student and faculty accomplishments.
- Increase the amount of financial aid to enable more like minded Christian families to share in the Prince experience.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Prince Avenue Christian School remains on a strong trajectory, and no significant changes in its governance and operations should be expected. However, several improvements are contingent upon the construction of new academic and co-curricular spaces, which are addressed in the recommendations below. Quantitative and qualitative assessments taken by the board of trustees, parents, faculty and staff, students, and alumni as a part of the school's reaccreditation self-study were consulted in the formulation of recommendations for this strategic plan. Those assessments reflect strong approval ratings regarding the school's leadership, faculty, and staff's ability to provide excellent instruction in discipleship, academics, fine arts, and athletics to its students. The specific recommendations that follow are crucial to Prince's continued advancement.

FACULTY AND STAFF

- Maintain current hiring standards to ensure all faculty and staff are professing, dedicated Christ followers who are active in a local Bible teaching church.
- Ensure fair and equitable treatment of all faculty and staff to include compensation, benefits, rules and accountability, and in the assignment of instructional and co-curricular duties and responsibilities.
- Maintain a lifestyle consistent with the tenants of our Christian faith as documented in our Statement of Belief, Biblical Morality Statement, and Christian Life Commitment Statement to promote continued personal growth and set excellent examples for our students.
- Continue to remain lifelong learners seeking new opportunities for professional development by pursuing advanced degrees, membership in the Georgia Master Teacher program, and achieve and maintain teaching certification through the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) to acquire and sustain teaching techniques that promote content delivery from a biblical worldview.

DISCIPLESHIP

- Maintain a Christ centered culture that promotes interpersonal relationships with all members within our family-school community with an emphasis on teacher and student relationships.

- Cultivate an atmosphere that promotes *innovative* ministry programs, especially in high school, designed to meet the unique needs of today’s students that balances truth and accountability with encouragement and compassion while rejecting legalism.
- Continue the practice of holding off-campus overnight spiritual retreats for high school juniors and seniors, and expand this program to sophomores and freshman.
- Initiate the practice of promoting a school-wide Christian life theme throughout the school year to promote unity across campus.



ACADEMICS

- Continue to uphold a culture of continuous process improvement by conducting annual, cyclic curriculum reviews to ensure the purchase and use of materials are aligned with content area learning standards.
- Continue conducting an annual analysis of standardized testing data to identify strengths and challenges and make changes to curriculum, instructional techniques, and teacher assignments to best meet the needs of students.
- Identify and nurture the diverse learning preferences of students while providing tailored instruction to optimize individual student learning.
- Create formal Bible learning standards for grades 6-12 and devise an *engaging*, interlaced Bible curriculum that progressively moves students from a knowledge to an application-based method of learning.
- Improve parent education by providing more opportunities to learn about social and emotional issues facing student’s today through parent presentations and written correspondence.
- Increase the amount of instructional space for the learning center to better serve the growing population of students who utilize Educational Support Services (ESS).

- Expand and improve parent education and involvement in the college selection process to include leveraging technology through the use of the Naviance program and increase student participation in school organized college visits.

FINE ARTS

- Ensure all students in PreK-12 are exposed to the arts to explore God given creative abilities and participate in core and co-curricular visual, musical, and performing arts programs.
- Invest more financial resources into the fine arts program to build a new band room and a black box theater to increase instructional space.
- Seek new opportunities to release the creativity within each student and foster critical thinking and stimulate their imaginations while addressing students' different learning styles.
- Continue to teach and perform theatrical works whose themes and content are consistent with our mission statement while providing an appreciation of the elements of order, discipline, beauty and relativity, and how conflict and resolution are a part of God's plan.



ATHLETICS

- Continue to seek innovative ways to promote physical fitness, teamwork, sportsmanship, and commitment to further the school's Christian mission.
- Continue to upgrade existing athletic facilities to provide the finest environment to train and compete while enhancing opportunities for post high school competition.
- Sustain the robust lower school athletic program using technically proficient community coaches who are professing Christ followers that place an emphasis on teamwork and equal playing time for students.
- Update the athletic portion of the campus master plan to identify the best location for a second gymnasium, future tennis courts, and a new visitor locker room.



"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:13

DEVELOPMENT

- Improve efforts to educate all members of our family-school community on our financial needs and the different types of giving opportunities and philanthropic vehicles.
- Initiate annual fund discussions with new families upon enrollment to educate them on the purpose and importance of contributing to the school's annual fund.
- Plan for and initiate a capital campaign for new academic facility to replace aging modular buildings that are nearing the end of their life cycle.
- Create a *planned giving program* for alumni and other prospective donors, and pursue increased levels of private foundation grants.
- Continue to increase gifts to support financial aid allowing more like minded Christian families the opportunity to receive a Prince education.
- Increase the base of support for the school by increasing the involvement and participation by alumni and friends of the school through improved outreach initiatives and communications.



FACILITIES AND SECURITY

- Maintain the excellent appearance and cleanliness standards of the school's buildings and grounds to attract new students, promote school pride and spirit, and encourage greater stewardship.
- Initiate annual inspections of capital assets to identify appropriate future maintenance costs based upon the life cycle of the campus' infrastructure.
- Assist in the planning and coordination of a new capital campaign to ensure alignment with the campus master plan.
- Continue to refresh the campus' security systems with emerging technology, remain innovative in the education and training for active intruder drills, and

conduct annual updates to the school's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) using members of the school's administrative leadership team and local law enforcement.

TECHNOLOGY

- Conduct continuous research on emerging education related technologies and optimize infrastructure and student laptop replacements within budget resources.
- Continue to expand the use of cloud-based technology and applications in the middle and high schools to best prepare students for tomorrow's college environment.
- Expand the scope and depth of teacher training on and off campus to integrate new and emerging technologies that have a positive impact on student learning.
- Research best practices for the use of selective technologies for lower school students knowing that technology has positive and negative impacts on the brain development of young learners.

ADMISSIONS, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- Create a robust, comprehensive, well designed master communications plan that effectively targets prospective like-minded families, particularly in the lower grades, who are aligned with our core principles and mission statement.
- Evaluate and expand networking opportunities with daycare, preschool, and other providers to identify Christian families who are seeking a Christian covenant school experience for their children.
- Assess and strengthen the relationship and coordination with the Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF) in welcoming all new families to Prince, and expand the strong lower school program currently in place.



- Increase the diversity of the student body through *new initiatives* specifically designed to attract Christian, minority families to shape the student body's demographics to more accurately reflect the Kingdom of God.
- Utilize more financial aid to increase enrollment with families who are professing Christ followers committed to educating their children in a Christian covenant school.
- Conduct population growth analysis, focusing on new housing subdivisions, and seek to leverage the busing program to target neighborhoods with likely Prince Avenue families.
- Continue to partner and network with existing Prince parents to identify prospective like-minded families who are willing to learn about Prince Avenue's Christ-centered, holistic educational experience.

FINANCES

- Maintain the school's 100% debt free status and ensure that annual expenditures do not exceed revenue.
- Assess and improve our zero-based budgeting approach that requires each expense to be reevaluated annually to justify its existence and alignment with the school's mission statement.
- Increase the budget allocation for future maintenance reserves to more closely align with depreciation values and capital asset life cycles.
- Ensure the composition of the school board possesses the financial acumen necessary to provide sound strategic guidance to the school's senior leadership.
- Maintain a predictable, modest rate of tuition growth that ensures the school remains financially viable yet competitive when compared to other schools.