

Santiam Christian Schools Organizational Assessment Consultant Summary

Russ Crabtree of Holy Cow! Consulting conducted an organizational assessment for Santiam Christian Schools during June, 2011. 195 persons responded to the assessment. 32 percent responded from the perspective of the Elementary School; 9 percent from the Middle School, and 48 percent from the High School. Respondent roles included faculty, parent, parent of a former student, administration, and board member. The report from the assessment provides a snapshot of the present, priorities for the future, and guidance for the selection of the next Superintendent. A summary of the report generated for the school and its subgroups is found below.

Snapshot of the Present

Respondents indicated an unusually high level of overall satisfaction and energy at Santiam compared to a peer group of similar organizations. A large majority of respondents (79 percent) were clearly positive regarding the school's effectiveness in fulfilling its overall mission. These levels of school performance were consistent across parent and faculty responses. Notable in the Santiam data was the high level of satisfaction on the part of the faculty compared to other private schools and colleges.

Overall, the combination of high energy with high satisfaction suggests a school climate that is transformational both for those who work there and those who are served. It may be important for leaders to identify the underlying strengths that are driving this positive climate so that it can be sustained across the transition to the next Superintendent and into the future. Currently, the factors that appear to be making the greatest contribution to satisfaction and energy include

1. The degree to which leaders show a genuine concern to know what people are thinking when decisions need to be made.
2. The readiness of the school to make necessary changes to meet the changing needs of parents and students.
3. The positive development of the spiritual climate of the school over the past three years.
4. The school's effectiveness in making full use of the gifts and abilities of the persons who work at the school.

Operationally, respondents indicated that the school performs best in the areas of spiritual vitality, collegiality, decision making, utilization of individual giftings, communication, conflict management, and flexibility. The areas in which the school is challenged appear to be related to resources. Respondents gave significantly lower scores to the adequacy of finances. There were also lower scores for faculty and administrative workload where more than half of respondents agreed, to one degree or another, that these groups were overworked. Nevertheless, none of these challenges appears to be negatively impacting morale at present.

Future Priorities

While respondents gave the school high marks on achieving its mission, the score on spiritual progress (47% clearly agreeing) was somewhat lower. The commitment to the spiritual component of the school in the minds of respondents is clearly reflected in the future priorities section of the report where it is ranked as the highest priority. This could either mean that additional work needs to be done in this area or that it is an idealized value that will be ranked high no matter how well the school is perceived to be doing in that area.

Rank	Priority	Mean Score
First	Strengthen the spiritual development of our students.	7.2
Second	Improve the academic performance of our students.	6.4
Third	Improve the financial health of our school through fundraising and philanthropic giving.	5.5

The top three priorities were shared by parents and faculty.

Overall, respondents do not believe that a large amount of change will be required to achieve their vision for the school. With regard to leadership focus, neither parents nor faculty give a high rank to developing a new vision or strategic plan for the school; they are more concerned with prioritizing existing programs and increasing efficiency. Respondents are also overwhelmingly positive regarding the current theological perspective of the school. The present high level of satisfaction with the performance of the school and the low indication of necessary change would suggest that any changes made by a future leader must be carefully managed.

Leader Qualities

The assessment probed the desired qualities of the next leader along two dimensions: personal characteristics and gifts/experiences.

The top priorities for personal characteristics were an ability to bring out the best in people, an outgoing and engaging personality, and someone focused on excellence by working behind the scenes. The fact that these were ranked higher than visible success or using tried and true approaches suggests that respondents prefer someone who is authentic and willing to take some occasional risks.

The top priorities for gifts/experiences were an ability to build a team, a capacity to provide decisive leadership, and an ability to recruit and retain high quality staff. Respondents ranked effectiveness higher than credentials (earned doctorate) or visibility in the field of secondary education. There is remarkable agreement between parents and faculty on these priorities. The top six are identical for these two groups.

Theologically respondents prefer a Superintendent with a more conservative/evangelical perspective (65 percent). Only 2 percent indicated a preference for a theologically liberal perspective.

Finally, the next Superintendent may discover some untapped potential among the respondents in this assessment. 27 percent of respondents agreed, to one degree or another, that they often felt that they had something to give the school but did not know how to give it.