

Koraes Elementary School Board Plan

Fall 2018-Spring 2020
Presented: March 2018

One School One Heart: Faith, Knowledge and Friendship



Why Plan?

One of the responsibilities of the School Board is to not only ensure stability and value for each of you as attending families but to also make decisions that will benefit the school past your children's graduation. Our over 100 year legacy speaks to the continuity demonstrated across generations. For example, our school today would be having much more difficulty if boards in the 1980s did not decide that a school endowment fund would be helpful. This was not a short term decision. We are using funds from this endowment currently to fund our deficits.

Creating operating plans gives us the opportunity to create longer-term initiatives that will benefit our school now and well into the future.

Building Upon our Recent Improvements and Stability

New educational leadership and significant investment in upgraded curriculum, Google Chromebooks, additional Greek Teacher, MAP testing, & significant investment in professional development over the past two school years, has brought about ***growth in enrollment for Koraes this school year. First time in over a decade.***

We are beginning to see a greater interest in Koraes from new families as well as from returning families. All of this has helped bring about a much more stable and improved environment for your children to thrive in.

We now have some positive momentum!



Where is Koraes Today?

- 1) Enrollment is starting to increase.
- 2) Curriculum and educational offerings have been upgraded.
- 3) Our Greek program is improving. Additional teacher added this year.
- 4) The annual GALA in the spring has improved fundraising over the past couple of years.
- 5) Our operating budget is approaching \$1 million dollars.
- 6) The outside world doesn't know much about us.
- 7) Our only full-time paid management staff member is our principal.
- 8) Our parent population is no longer predominantly immigrant but rather are mostly 2nd-4th generation Greek & Non Greek speaking families with more mixed marriage families attending our school.
- 9) We are a school who is still running annual operating deficits of over (\$150K) per year.

Our Preschool is Special!

Our program includes: handwriting instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, math, hands-on science, library corner, daily Greek Language instruction, religious instruction, fine and motor skills, library corner, technology, structured free play, weekly prayer/liturgy, physical education.

Half day & full day options available.

(3 & 4 year olds)



Our K-8 Program Rocks!

MAP testing, classroom leveled reading libraries, differentiated instruction, Google classroom, Google Chromebooks 1:1 for grades 3-8, powerschool, handwriting curriculum, dedicated computer lab, improving Greek language instruction (across all grades) that is differentiated for both Greek speaking & non-Greek speaking families, technology - religion - music - art taught weekly, physical education (4 days/week), holiday classroom parties, community service projects and individual service requirements, Beyond the Bell after school extra-curricular programs, and academic competitions for students in grades 5-8.

Before and after school care available (7:30am-8:30am & 3:30pm-4:30pm).

Students participate in both holiday and ethnic programs throughout the year.

The Result of All of This?

It's a different school than even a decade ago.

Our curriculum is stronger, more data driven, & differentiated.

Our Greek language program is improving.

It's much more than simply another "Church school".

But how many people outside of our current school families know this?

(More children should be attending!)



Does the School Have Enough Funds to Survive?

YES

The School Board is quite confident of this.

Can Koraes Balance its Budget in 3-4 years?

YES!

This plan will put organizational changes in place for the School Board & staff to work more productively to increase enrollment and fundraising revenues so that it can eliminate its deficits within the next three to four years.

We don't see our school closing.

But we will need your help.



What is the Focus of this School Board Plan?

Marketing - Clarifying the why of our school and how we accomplish it for future marketing communication campaigns.

Organizational Management Structure - Running a million dollar operation with one paid management staff member and volunteers is unsustainable.

Increased Revenue Streams - Looking at enrollment options, fundraising opportunities, grant writing, and changes for next fall.

Continued Educational Growth & Quality - Advanced-ed.org.

(The Business Side of the School)



What About Educational Concerns?

Our principal is the educational leader of our school. She is tasked with overseeing all of our educational programs that occur throughout the school day. As a school board we have delegated this task to her.

We are now a member of Advanced-ed.org (North Central Association) who will provide some board governance training as well as staff development in the near future. There will be an assessment made by them on our school progress (later this year) as we aspire to be independently accredited by their association in the next few years. This gives the School Board an objective way to both improve and ensure educational quality on a regular basis.

Our first two years under Mrs. Lind's educational leadership the board has focused on short term needs that we have highlighted. We will continue to address short-term needs as they arise.



Why Marketing?

We need more children attending our school.

We need more donors to support the school through our fundraising efforts.

For these to occur, you need to first build awareness and trust. Then interest and engagement follows. Which then leads to personal conversations that can then lead to the desired results stated above. None of this occurs overnight. You must earn people's attention over time before they will be interested enough to participate.

What also is needed is **focus and time to do these things regularly and consistently throughout the year** in a way that will lead to successful long term results.

(The School Board used Simon Sinek's model of the circles of why, how and what and

Seth Godin's approach to marketing as being a change agent towards those that don't

believe what we do.)



Why Organizational Management Structure?

The School Board used a model called the **Business Model Canvas** to assess what is needed to operate the school successfully. What it learned from completing its ten areas of focus, is that there are many aspects to running a school that go far beyond simply providing books, computers, a principal and teachers (key resources, key activities).

There needs to be thought given to develop customer acquisition strategies, value proposition clarity, identifying our target customer, how/where do you reach prospective new families & donors, cultivating key partner relationships with alumni and other potential fundraising sources.

We realized that Koraes can survive but will need more and varied skills to manage the details and follow through on what is needed to succeed. **Times have changed, where more detail and sophistication are needed to continue improving** and evolving to support and help fund an organization that has a budget of nearly \$1 million dollars.



Why Increased Revenue Streams? (Hint: Our Deficits!)

The three primary ways our school gets revenue is through tuition, fundraising, and grants. What this board has learned is that grants can only be used for new programs or initiatives. No granting organization will fund everyday operating expenses.

So we are left with tuition and fundraising to eliminate our deficits long-term.

Enrollment is the largest driver of revenue for the school. ***More kids in our classes, over time, will wipe out our deficits and keep our tuition affordable. It's as simple as that.***

Successful fundraising requires regular communication and engagement with donors. A \$25 annual donation can become \$100 a year over a 2-3 year period with structured follow through. Both from alumni and others who identify and want to support our school.



Why is Enrollment So Important to Increased Revenues?

All traditional schools that offer education in classrooms, have high fixed costs. You need to have a building, teachers for all grades, principal, books, etc...

The more students that attend, the lower the cost to educate each student. The more tuition revenue you collect to pay your monthly bills. The lower the deficits.

The less students that attend, the higher the cost to educate each student. You collect less tuition revenue and the higher the deficits.

Our current deficits run about \$1,000 (or more) per student.

We need more children.



Our Challenge

How do we get more children to attend
while continuing to offer our current depth of
Greek and Orthodox Religious Education?

**The School Board strongly agreed that these two programs should not
change regardless of growth in enrollment strategy chosen.**

Our hope is that these two programs become stronger over time.



How do we get more children to attend?

More people need to be made aware of what Koræes offers today.

Who are we looking to attract? Families with young children ages 1-5 years old.

Then we come to the polarizing question? Do we open the school to all Christian faiths? On the surface, this argument seems compelling because we would be able to market to a much larger market segment. (Strictly a numbers play.)

Before deciding, the School Board chose to ignore opinions (everyone has one) and do a deep dive on assumptions and risks associated with continuing enrollment of Orthodox families of all ethnicities versus opening up the school to also enroll families who are Christian but not of the Orthodox faith.

By assumptions we mean what do you believe to be true for a given student population choice.



Assumptions - Continue with Orthodox Population

With similar backgrounds there will be similar values & heritage. Our current parent population does not want the school to open. Concentrated marketing to Orthodox within a 5-10 mile radius will provide us enough new families to meet enrollment pressures. Remaining an Orthodox school keeps us unique. Nothing changes with our Greek & Religious programs. The fascination with public schools is diminishing, as public norms splinter, with private schools becoming more appealing. There is a sufficient Orthodox area population to maintain enough enrollment where tuition will cover expenses. We have a close knit community. Kids can celebrate their religion and culture freely. There is greater safety when parents know other attending families personally. Small class size appeals to current base. Maintain history of school. Silence skeptics of the accusation that we are changing the school they signed up for. Kids with common backgrounds have less sociological problems. This niche market can support annual fundraising efforts of \$150,000-\$200,000. Parish wants to continue to support the school and maintain and fund capital improvements. No significant cost to curriculum or staff. We can continue to get high quality teachers. Increase in quality of education (recent improvements) enough to attract more parents. Our new proposed organization structure will on its own bring us more kids and dollars. We won't run out of money. Retention of students will be high this year.

Risks - Continue with Orthodox Population

Not enough students sign up. Orthodox pool not large enough to meet enrollment needs. Local geography does not produce enough interested new families. New families don't want to drive 5-10 miles to send their children to an Orthodox school. We miss an opportunity to increase enrollment by not deciding to open the school. We continue to lose money. Fundraising limitation because niche is too small and we are always calling on the same few people. School could eventually close with small numbers. School becomes less inclusive with continued emphasis on ethnicity. Alienate parents who want more inclusion. Lack of diversity a risk of promoting narrow mindedness. Diversified world where new prospective families may not want to send their children to a school that does not have a diverse student population. Offend non-Greek parents by not opening the school up. Harder to higher qualified staff. Our assumptions are wrong. Limits parental involvement because pool is too small. As new prospective parents are 2nd & 3rd generation, less of population sees religion and Greek as being important. We attract too many families that need financial aid (not enough additional Orthodox families that can afford tuition). Too many Orthodox families live too far away. If the school ever closes, no child will receive an Orthodox focused day school education. Violates the "great commission" of exposing all to our Orthodox faith. Perceived focus on ethnocentric thinking will not attract many new students.

Assumptions - Open Enrollment to all Christian Faiths

Will generate sufficient student population to cover school expenses. There will be no changes to our Greek/Religious education and programs. Better teachers and more fundraising will appeal to more people in a “faith based” school setting. More appealing to those who want exposure to diversity in a Christian setting. There is a market for safe Christian based education that families find appealing. More families who live close to school can attend. Market is much larger. Programs get better with more students. We become good Christian hosts. Increase in volunteers. More people to share with who we are (stronger and wider word of mouth marketing). More students. Lower costs of programs. More fellowship amongst students outside of faith. More carpooling opportunities. Korae identity is a positive. Students get to know more people. Richer conversation about religion amongst kids as they converse about their Churches. Non Orthodox families readily embrace learning Greek and the Orthodox faith. Korae can compete successfully with other faith based schools in area. You could bring more talent as far as parents and staff. We already serve mixed marriage families successfully -- this will work too. We assume that there is a market for non-Orthodox to attend. Assume that all current parents will remain open minded. If there is disappointment with opening the school and some families leave, there will be plenty of new non-Orthodox families to “replace” them. No viable alternative to avoid shutdown at some point in the future. Non-Orthodox families will value our safe environment.

Risks - Opening the School to all Christian Faiths

We have trouble assimilating non-Orthodox students at the outset leaving them feeling not welcome. Current parent population does not accept their presence making matters worse. Alienate those current families that believe in our Orthodox only population and will pull their kids from Koraes negating any gains in non-Orthodox enrollment. Dumbing down both our Greek and Religious Education. Fear of change will destabilize school creating instability. Koraes will resemble more of a public school making it less attractive to current and future parents. Can't deliver on incoming non-Orthodox expectations. Public relations problem with alumni and casual observer. Declaring this enrollment approach does not guarantee that any non-Orthodox will enroll in the school. Marketing costs will have to be much higher to get the word out about Koraes to non-Orthodox (may have limited results). Are we prepared? May lose some stakeholders. Increased parent frustration in providing programs for both constituencies. Lose current volunteer base. Less school board engagement if deciding to open the school -- thinking they have "solved" the enrollment problem simply by declaring it. Church community becomes disinterested and unattached. The Orthodox "brand" is too weak (as compared to the Catholic school "brand") to attract many new families. Cash still runs out. Once this is done, we can never go back. Programs not set up for diversity of this type. Work of transition will be left in the hands of few. Parents may feel they have no part in the decision. Introduce potentially more social problems that will require increased staff to navigate. Fundraising may actually go down. Koraes faces an identity crisis since we view the current identity as being positive. Non-Orthodox don't find learning Greek and our Orthodox faith appealing.

Financial Simulations Don't Care about Ideologies

The primary grades that drive overall enrollment growth are preK and K.

The School Board looked at enrollment in these two grades at 24, 26, 28 and 30 students in each incoming class. We chose a 6 year horizon. They then organically move into the next grade over time.

We also looked at retention scenarios (K-8) for each class size of: 98%, 95%, 92%, 90%, and 85%.

We ran simulations using all of these possibilities.

Long term thinking requires looking at financial impact over a number of years. Looking only one year into the future is not sufficient.



Here is What We Learned!

1. **Financial performance over an extended time period is highly sensitive to retention rate.** The higher the retention rate (year over year) the better the overall financial performance (regardless of beginning class size).

Current parents play a major role in retention.

Believing in the school strengthens it. Abandoning the school (by leaving it) weakens it.

Supporting the school during conversations at informal gatherings strengthens it.

Always complaining about the school at informal gatherings weakens it.

You do play a big role in the future of our school by your everyday actions.

[We also recognize that the school must continue to perform at a high level.]



Here is What We Learned (Cont.)!

1. No matter what starting class size we choose, the school will continue to run deficits for the next 2-4 years.
 - a. **No enrollment option will eliminate our deficit in the next 2-3 years.**
 - b. *Why? Because we are dependent on strong enrollment in preK and K over a number of years to increase the population of the school.*
2. **24 incoming students into preK and K are too few to make this work.** It appears we need a minimum of 26 incoming students (in each preK and K) to have a chance at financial stability over this 6 year period.
3. **At 30 kids in an incoming class, as the retention rate drops, the financial benefits of these large incoming classes is quickly negated.** This demonstrates that this scenario is much more risky.

What Else Did We Consider?

A third option would be to open the preK and K enrollment to non-Orthodox to test whether or not our Greek/Orthodox faith programs are appealing to them. To see if Koraeas generates any interest with non-Orthodox families.

This would protect our current parent population in the upper grades from seeing any changes to the school.

Giving us time to focus on the problems associated with assimilation, expectations, inclusion, and marketing.



Our Decision

The School Board has decided to keep our Orthodox family population identity.

We are looking for a minimum of 26 children in preK and 26 children in K. We need high retention for this scenario to financially work.

Our enrollment has grown from 144 (first year under Mrs. Lind's leadership) to 158 this year. We have had families return to the school. We expect enrollment to continue to increase organically (graduating class this year has only 7 students). Many more families visited our school during Open House week than the year before which is very encouraging.

Parents, we said we need your help.

You need to help convince more families to attend.

We will also need to make a few adjustments for next fall.

Tuition Will Be Increased

For the next 2 years, tuition will increase by \$120 per student each year.

The short term deficits of over (\$150,000) force us to do this.

This increase will generate about \$20,000 more for the school each year.

- **Over half of this increase each year will go to staff raises each year.**
- **The balance will go to offset increases in prices of supplies/services.**
- A way to offset this increase it to refer a family to Koraes and get them to register. This program will give you a \$500 credit/student off of your tuition for that specific new school year.

Every Family Must be a Steward of an Orthodox Parish to Benefit from Our Lower Tuition Rate.

The last strategic plan created a tuition scale for those Orthodox families that were not stewards of any community. Single child rate = \$6,000. **We will strictly enforce this beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.**

All families will be initially invoiced based on this higher dollar amount schedule.

You have until December 15th, 2018 to present a letter from your Parish that you are a member in good standing for the 2018 calendar year. **If no letter is presented by then, you will pay the higher tuition amount for the entire year.**

We will then issue a credit to your account for the difference.

Your FACTS monthly payment amounts will be adjusted AFTER you present this letter.

No adjustments will be made to monthly payments already made.



What About the New Organization Structure?

Our school currently has only one management staff member -- our principal who is our educational leader. To achieve and sustain our growth goals we need to build out our management organization.

The proposed new organization structure has two parts to it.

1> The hiring of a full time development officer. Their salary will be paid by the endowment fund for the next 2-3 years. **(The Parish Council Approved this new position at its March 13th, 2018 meeting.)**

2> An expansion of our School Board to 9 voting members. Creation of identified roles that each board member must agree to fulfill prior to being nominated to the School Board and be members in good standing of our Parish.

(Part 2 will require both Parish Council Approval & a change to our Parish by-laws.)



Full Time Development Officer

Reports to the School Board. Works under the supervision of our principal.

Will work in the areas of communication, marketing, alumni development and fundraising. Creating awareness and engagement with family prospects & constituencies both internal & external to our school. Person needs to be a good communicator, a writer, understand how to use social media platforms, has spreadsheet and database skills, has experience with email & direct mail campaigns, be an extrovert, self-starter that can work well both individually and in a team.

Will help follow through on work being done in the areas of our website, social media, marketing, email list creation, and fundraising activities. They will work with both the principal & volunteer chairman to help get things done throughout the year.

Must have at least one year of non-profit experience.

With Parish Council approval, interviews to begin late spring 2018.



Proposed New School Board Structure

> **9 voting member board.** 3 board members from the Parish Council (one being required to be Chairman/President). KPTA president (1 member).

> 5 members at large from the community. Roles that they must agree to fill are:

- Fundraising Chairman
- Alumni Chairman
- Accounting Oversight/Budget/Finance/Revenue Projections
- Educator
- Marketing Chairman

They must either have **demonstrated professional skills in a given area** &/or have the interest, passion and time to fulfill the role responsibility during their 2 year term.

Outside Legal Counsel: Odelson & Sterk (pay per incident/no monthly retainer)

Ex officio members: Pastor, Parish Council President, Principal, Development Officer and up to 3 mentor advisors.



Nominating Committee for 5 At Large Members

The outgoing board will form a nominating committee prior to the end of their term to solicit, interview, and vet potential appointees and make their recommendations for the 5 at large member candidates to serve during the next school board term.

This will help provide for time to find truly talented and interested individuals who would like to contribute to the continued success of our beloved school. As membership on our School Board will require a greater commitment of work going forward.

Our new development officer will also work with the fundraising, alumni, and marketing chairmen.

This will also need Parish Council Approval & changes to our Parish By-Laws.



Impact of New Structure?

- > More defined roles for School Board members.
- > Leverage skill sets that community has that are untapped.
- > Higher productivity for School Board.
- > Gives us an understood structure for better accountability and follow thru by volunteers.
- > School Board service will demand more of a member's time.



Let's Review: Why Koraes Exists & Its Mission

Koraes exists to provide a rich, educational environment that gives children a spiritual & moral compass to live a good Orthodox Christian life.

Its mission is to prepare students with the necessary academic freedom that allows them to reach their highest level of academic success. And to provide spiritual and moral guidance from an Orthodox Christian perspective that focuses on values and instills a feeling of confidence, respect, and well-being in every child.

How does Koraes Accomplish its Mission?

1. By providing a safe, family environment that fosters lifelong friendships between students and families who attend Koraes and share the same values.
2. By teaching at school, the same values that are taught in the home.
3. By focusing on developing a child's moral and spiritual character throughout their school day by teaching them to be respectful, disciplined, engaged, and mindful of God's presence in their lives while providing them with a good education.
4. By offering daily morning prayer at the start of each school day, providing weekly religion classes and attending Church services on a regular basis.

Fall Registration for 2018-2019

This year it will occur beginning on:

March 30th through May 4th.

We need to know our numbers earlier so that we can plan properly for the fall.

The logo for KORAES Elementary School is located in the bottom right corner. It features the school's name in a blue-bordered box with a white background. The word "KORAES" is written in a large, bold, blue serif font, and "Elementary School" is written in a smaller, blue, cursive font below it.

KORAES
Elementary School

Bottom Line

Positive momentum is building!

Koraes has a BRIGHT FUTURE.

Our Parents Continue to be a Big Part of Our Success!

Bring us more new families!

And please support our Gala.

It's for the benefit of your children.



Questions?

????????????????????

