



March 2008

State of the School Report

by Principal Dan Gehrke

Dear DLHS Family,

From Deuteronomy 6 – God’s words to the people of Israel:

5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

During the time of Moses, God called for his people to impress His Word upon their children. ***I thank God every day that you realize that impressing God’s Word on your children does not end at age 13***, and that you have partnered with DLHS to continue to educate your children with Jesus Christ.

I am writing this report two months earlier than I did last year. I feel as if it is important for our DLHS family to hear now about the good that the Lord is accomplishing at our school. I also think the time is now for you to hear what we are planning for the future. I hope this report can also give prospective students and parents a sense of what the future holds for DLHS so that they too can be excited about sending their children to our school.

First, the updates from this school year:

Websites and email communication

The majority of our website redesign is finished. www.denverlhs.org is sporting a new look and purpose. The main page was designed strictly for marketing purposes and is for the customer who needs more information about DLHS. It also includes email capture and automatic response emails to gather information about prospective students and parents. The website has captured email addresses of over 20 people who are interested in DLHS. We

hope to find clever ways to market our URL and drive people to our website.

Our new website also has an “inside DLHS” link that leads to a site for our current students and parents that we are able to update in a more timely and useful fashion. **I envision that the inside site will continue to expand and become a dynamic resource for our students and parents.** Our new web-based email server is being used to email newsletters and other information to current students and parents. I am able to track “bounces” for each email and am happy to report that our newsletters are getting to parents at a 100% rate. Interestingly, only about 55% of our parents open those emails and download the newsletter.

Spanish Department

Mr. Zoeller has been a welcome addition to our Spanish Department – bringing a nice blend of teaching skill and humor to a department that needed expertise. I now consider that department to be in good hands and am excited about how well-prepared DLHS graduates will be in their ability to speak, read, and write Spanish. Mr. Zoeller also took a group of ten students to a Hispanic Lutheran church in November to experience worship in Spanish.

School safety

We continue to keep an eye on our emergency response plan. Students partook in both evacuation and lockdown drills and some slight adjustments were made to the ER plan. Using money raised from last year’s auction, I purchased another security camera for the building and had a front door security system installed. No one should be able to enter the building during the school day without first being “buzzed” into the building after being seen on a video monitor. While we have not had any problems with neighborhood situations spilling onto campus, it is good to know that someone cannot run into our building during school hours.

Technology

With the discontinuation of the HOPE program at DLHS, we had to give up over 20 computers that were the property of HOPE Online. While we

replaced some of them, we are still in need of more computers for the media center, counseling office, and classrooms (more on that later in this report). We did convert room 402 (formerly the HOPE lab) into a classroom with six computers, and it is being used for our video editing class. This room is also being used as a film room for athletic teams. I envision that room becoming a fully functioning second lab, outfitted with 15+ computers for use with our online courses and other classes next year. Money was donated at last year's association auction for new chairs for the computer lab. I am currently holding off buying those chairs since we will need to outfit two labs with chairs for next year. We will then decide on a suitable long-term option.

Mr. Andrew Hellmers has instituted some changes in technology that may have gone unnoticed, but are nevertheless important to note. Our firewall and server security have been updated. Our teachers now can make use of a web-based program to check student work for plagiarism. Students and staff now have access to Ebsco host – an online database that can be used for research. We will add United Streaming Video for teacher use next year.

Music and Drama

The DLHS Concert Choir and Light Brigade (over 60 kids!) are anxiously looking forward to their upcoming tour to New York over Spring Break. They will be performing four times in six days and will be attending a music workshop at Concordia Bronxville, led by Professor Jason Thoms. Mrs. Linda Cusimano continues to do an excellent job with both the Choir and the Light Brigade. Please do not miss out on any opportunity to hear our Light Brigade sing – they are fantastic and represent our school better than anything I could ever say or do. The Christmas concert in December was phenomenal (I do not believe that I will ever forget Rueben Hollenbeck singing “the Grinch”).

The Drama department created the largest man-eating puppet I have ever seen for their production of *Little Shop of Horrors* in the fall. It was an enjoyable show that made use of a “pit band” showing off the fine guitar talents of our students. They also built “sky box” seating – allowing patrons to have a birds-eye view of the show. This April will

bring a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* on the 24th, 25th, and 26th.

Gymnasium & Athletics

Our gym certainly looks better with the addition of new banners, new scoreboards, and a new scorer's table. These items were purchased with Booster Club funds and donations. Special thanks should go out to Mr. Ryan Bredow for his hard work in designing and purchasing the new banners. Several new pieces of equipment were donated to the weight room, and while still undersized, it does not lack for equipment. Our athletes continue to make use of our Athlete PE program, which allows them to train during 8th hour in their off-seasons.

I am continually impressed with our ability to produce winning seasons in the majority of our sports, despite our enrollment and the fact that we play in the toughest 3A league in the state. Softball and volleyball produced winning records in the fall while the football team beat Denver Christian for the first time in 26 years. Soccer and cross-country improved from their previous years' performances. Our boys' basketball team produced a 16-3 regular season record and is gearing up for the district and regional playoffs. Our wrestling team had two state qualifiers. Our cheerleading program has grown and was quite impressive this year. Girls' basketball was young and exciting to watch. The baseball, track, and tennis programs should be strong this spring. It should be noted that this spring marks the second season of the return of girls' soccer – a program that I hope will continue to build, grow, and improve.

This year also marked the beginning of the DLHS/LHSP Basketball Shootout. It was indeed an exciting night of basketball that was featured on FOX sports and was covered by Marcia Neville.

I am most excited about the Fellowship of Christian Athletes coaches' ministry that has begun at DLHS. Our coaches have participated weekly in a Bible study that centers on what it means to be a “Christian coach.” Led by Mr. Bredow in conjunction with Rod Olsen's Coaches Ministry, I believe it has had a positive impact on the way in which our coaches are impacting our players. I am excited that this ministry seems to be expanding to some grade school coaches as well.

2008-2009 Tuition

By now you know that tuition has gone up next year. Along with the tuition raise, we created a unique opportunity to receive tuition discounts by providing us with contacts for prospective students. Details about the program can be found on our website.

Curriculum

In an effort to be as transparent as possible, we are working toward having course outlines and objectives viewable from our website. While current course outlines are available at all times, the DLHS faculty is in the process of review and update for course objectives and standards.

As this process has moved forward, I am continually confirmed that when we deliberately compare our curriculum versus our public school counter-parts, our quality is better. The few instances where that may not be the case will be fixed soon.

Other “Did you know?” items from the school year so far

- The faculty instituted an ACT/SAT improvement plan for second semester which has students in certain classes using practice exam questions on unit tests.
- Mr. Mark Hollenbeck won “best of show” for the Denver Street Art Contest for the 3rd year in row.
- Two of our students, JP Jensen and Andrew Saenz received substantial music scholarships to Concordia Seward.
- DLHS has been hosting fencing tournaments on select weekends throughout the school year (Mr. Von Rentzell and Mr. Hellmers are both accomplished fencers).
- Our Advanced Science class has a record 17 students in it.
- The majority of our freshmen took “Intro to Art” this year, a new challenging art class designed to give each student a comprehensive base knowledge in art!
- 22 students took online high school courses through our OLO (Orange County Online) program – those courses were Economics, Writing Experience, Contemporary Math, and Music Appreciation.
- Mr. Troy Stelling took a group of fourteen current and former students to New Orleans for a week last June to do mission work in the city.
- The shuttle van that brings students down and back up to the north part of the city every day is a moving billboard with our school advertised on it.
- Mr. Randy Lowe (CEO of the CLHSA), Mrs. Julie Jacoby (Marketing Director for the CLHSA), and myself are sectional presenters at the ALSS (Association of Lutheran Secondary School) conference on March 13-16.
- DLHS was renewed full accreditation for both NLSA (National Lutheran Schools Accreditation) and NCA (North Central Accreditation) for the 2007-2008 school year.
- Cross Play, a small student drama group, will give chapel at eight different Lutheran grade schools this semester.
- Light Brigade has been a part of Sunday worship at eight of the Lutheran churches within the Colorado Lutheran High School Association.
- Every teacher at DLHS either coaches a sport or is a sponsor for an extra-curricular activity.
- Mr. Craig Parrott, DLHS Spiritual Director, leads the DLHS faculty in an in-depth Bible study (that he wrote!) all year long.
- English students were able to take two new electives this year, *Christian Literature* and *Short Stories*.

- The DLHS Science Department received \$24,000 worth of science equipment from a research lab that recently closed.
- AP Calculus and Advanced Science students took a field trip to the Colorado School of Mines to hear a presentation on oil use and engineering in the global economy.
- The Advanced Science/Aquatics Research class continues to conduct original research projects using a 2500 gallon pond and a 400 gallon tide pool.
- The DLHS art department has added a sandblaster and two new studio spaces to the art room.

Principal's Plan Year 2 Update

My 08-09 school year goals remain as follows:

1. **To continue the year 1 improvement plan.** This included a revamping of the discipline system, a concentrated effort to be in the Word, improvement in communication, and improving our look. I believe that we have added to the improvements made last year in those areas this year as well.
2. **Teacher development and observation** – Mr. Dave Renquest and I have done formal observations and evaluations of all teachers during this school year. Teachers have also been thoroughly evaluated by both department heads and students. Teachers were required to set instructional goals for the school year and those will be reviewed at the end of the year. I instituted a teacher-mentoring program to aid our three new teachers in getting adjusted to teaching at DLHS.
3. **Student retention and inclusion** – We continue to place emphasis on students “being involved” during their time at DLHS. While we do not force students to become involved, it has been a point of mine to encourage involvement at every opportunity. As for retention, I was disappointed that three students decided to

leave DLHS during the school year, but eight have transferred in during the year! My goal remains that at the end of the school year we will retain every student next year unless they move out of town.

4. **Develop marketing content to target Christian families that do not value Christian education.** The work that has gone into this endeavor has shown up primarily on our website (go to “The Case for Christian Education” link), but I’ve used that material to target prospective students and parents who have objections to sending their kids to DLHS. We have also used this material in our email marketing and direct mail campaigns as well. I’ve had considerable fun with this goal – I have a huge passion for preaching the importance of Christian education. Whether this effort will yield results in netting more students remains to be seen, but I value being able to outline what makes a DLHS education special.
5. **Comprehensive improvements in the athletic program.** I mentioned the improvements to the gymnasium and the coaches Bible study earlier in this report. A DLHS coaches’ handbook is in the works, and I hope to work with Mr. Loren Larrabee to expand the detail of our team websites for next year.

I believe that the points outlined in this plan last May have been addressed and implemented during this school year. I am grateful for a faculty and staff that continue to heed my suggestions and changes and look for ways to improve their craft. I am also thankful for the helpful suggestions and criticism that parents share on a regular basis. That was not sarcasm – nothing bothers me worse than not knowing about a problem. I value “complaints” greatly because it usually provides opportunity for improvement or provides an opportunity to clarify a misunderstood situation.

An Eye on the Future

I would encourage you to be on the lookout for the next *Hi-Light*, set to be published some time this

March. In it, you will find details about the *Gemstone Initiative*, a unique opportunity to donate to the ministry of both Denver Lutheran High School and Lutheran High School Parker. I would invite you to prayerfully consider becoming a *Gemstone* donor.

10% of every dollar that is donated through this initiative will be used for technology development. 10% will be used for a “student success” program, which will help address both the needs of our gifted/talented students and our low-achieving students. 10% will be used for other program development, while the remaining 70% will be used to service debt.

This initiative will fit nicely with what I want DLHS to look like in 3-5 years. I dream of a DLHS that will:

1. **Continue to have the best Theology department in the nation.** I want to provide our Bible teachers with exciting, interactive, and multi-media resources that will make God’s Word come alive in the classroom. I want our graduates to have the skills and knowledge to “give a reason for the hope that they have” and be disciples to their peers in college. I want our school to be known for developing spiritual champions for the world.
2. **Be a school that truly does *nurture* academic excellence for all students, whether they excel academically or need tutoring and assistance.** I want to be able to provide more specialized and professional help and assistance through our resource program. I also want to continue to develop and add to our honors programs to challenge our gifted students even more. This goal is already being worked toward as we examine our course objectives and standards.
3. **Smartly integrate technology throughout the building and the curriculum.** This starts with the addition of hardware to our building. I would love to find a way to add 24 new computers to our building next year. We also need a new server. Once those needs are met, I want us to find the right technology for use in the classroom – both as a teaching tool and for student use. I would value input and suggestions of any kind as we plan what direction to take in that regard.
4. **Have an outstanding career and college guidance program.** I already consider this to be

one of our strengths at DLHS. I think our students get quality guidance and counseling. But I want to ramp up every aspect of our current program and provide more knowledge to parents, more resources to students, and more concentration on testing, scholarships, and career strength identification.

5. **Dominate at extra-curricular activities.** I know that statement will scare some people. I don’t value activities higher than academics. Yet, I dream of a DLHS that has athletic teams that win state titles, drama productions that rival other schools’, and music programs that attract the best and the brightest. I don’t want DLHS to just *have* a wide range of activities; I want us to *be excellent* at those activities. I want our kids to graduate knowing how to be passionate and dedicated to being the best at what they do.

So that’s the vision. I think it is extremely doable through proper planning, hard work, and funding. I’m looking forward to working with others to implement it.

I believe it’s an exciting time to be at Denver Lutheran High School. I believe every cent of tuition paid for an education at DLHS is worth it not only in the academic and social development of our students, but in their spiritual development as well.

I want us to do as God wanted the children of Israel to do – impress the command to love God with all of our heart, soul, and strength upon our children at all times.

I dream of a world where our church body of believers views Lutheran high school education as **the primary ministry to our youth. I believe it is.**

Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any concerns, suggestions, or expertise – your input is always welcome.

In Christ,

Dan Gehrke
Principal, Denver Lutheran High School
Nurturing Academic Excellence
Encouraging Growth in Christ
Dan.gehrke@denverlutheranhighschool.org
303-934-2345 x 3103