

*Genesis Project
Feasibility and Readiness Study*

Prepared for

*Bethel Lutheran
Church Morton, Illinois
Steering Committee*

***Genesis Feasibility
Report***

*April 2021
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Introduction

Missouri Synod Lutherans have long seen a need for integrating all learning with faith in Jesus Christ. They have listened to the mandate of Holy Scriptures in Matthew 28:19-20 "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" (NIV)

Lutherans understand that their duty as parents and members of the Body of Christ is clearly stated in Proverbs 22:6 . . .

. . . "Train up a child in the right way, and when old they will not stray" (NRSV). The Lutheran School Feasibility Study is provided as help for Bethel Lutheran Church to explore the opportunity to start a Lutheran High School.

The services provided consist of work by trained and experienced Lutheran School professionals. Consultants are trained to help conduct surveys, review demographic data and conduct interviews. Consultants summarize information received and offer recommendations based on the consultant's best judgment as professional educators.

The role of the consultant is to recommend and advise. Consultants do not make decisions for congregations. **The Feasibility Study is intended to serve as a guide for the committees, boards, and the congregation.** *The primary goal of this project is to help make a decision.* Therefore, recommendations not to open a Lutheran school or to delay opening a school are considered as productive and successful as studies that recommend opening a school. This report is intended to summarize some of the data and various elements that must be considered regarding the feasibility of starting a Lutheran High School. After review of the data, recommendations, and discussion with the Steering Committee, the congregation and/or governing body will need to determine whether or not it is the right time and if they are ready to move ahead with the more advanced phase of establishing a Lutheran High School. You are commended for the decision to undergo this project as a resource for considering the feasibility of a Lutheran High School. We trust that the summaries and recommendations will help you as you seek God's will and minister to His children and their families.

The Feasibility Study Process

In 2021 a study to test the feasibility and readiness of starting a Lutheran High School, grades 9 – 12, in Morton, Illinois was begun with the help of a Genesis Project consultant. This study report has included: the Vision Statement or a Case for a Lutheran High School, the Demographic Study Summary, a summary of many interviews conducted by the consultant, February 23-35, 2021, research of area school programs and recommendations. The purpose of the Feasibility Study was to

- Assess the interest of congregations a Lutheran High School
- Assess the interest and the ability of parents in sending their children to a Lutheran High School
- Assess the market for potential students
- Assess attitudes toward the potential location of the facility
- Provide data and information from which interested parties can decide the establishment of a new Lutheran High School

The Feasibility study included gathering of hard and soft data based upon the following:

- LCEF demographic study
- Individual and small group interviews
- 69 community surveys
- 153 Parent surveys
- 160 surveys from Bethel congregation members
- 4 Lutheran principal surveys
- An analysis of data gathered by researching the following schools:
 - **Morton Public High School**
 - **Illinois Central Christian**
 - **Peoria Christian**
 - **Peoria Notre Dame**

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are appropriate and should be extended to members of the Steering Committee who, in addition to the regular business associated with the congregation and personal working responsibilities assumed the challenging task of researching the opening of a Lutheran High School.

The information on the following pages includes the findings of the surveys and interviews. The summaries of attitudes, together with quotations, are intended to assist in clarifying not only the spirit if the respondents but also to help the committee understand the points of view and needs of the people from the interviewees' perspective. All quotes remain anonymous to assure confidentiality. Thanks are also extended to those who took time to be interviewed. The Lutheran Church Extension Fund of the Missouri Synod provided demographic information. As with any successful effort of God's Church on earth, many people with varying abilities and spiritual gifts are working together on common goals.

Steering Committee

Karen Remmele (Member, Bethel Parent)

Joe Greenwood (Member, Bethel Parent)

Dana Bisping (Bethel Member)

Jennifer Gingerich (Member, Bethel Parent)

Amanda Cross (Member, Bethel Parent)

Katie VandenBerg (Non-Member, Bethel Parent)

Mailee Smith (Non-Member, School Board, Bethel Parent)

Peg Rumbold (Non-Member, Bethel Parent)

Jennifer Schmidgall, Vice Chair (Member, Bethel Parent)

Pastor Greg Moyer

Pastor Jeff Anderson

John Jacob, Principal (Bethel Member, Educator, Former Bethel Parent) Janice

Kinsinger, Chair (Member, School Board, Educator, Former Bethel Parent)

Case – Vision Statement

Our Mission:

We, as believers and disciples of Jesus Christ and members of His Body here at Bethel Lutheran Ministries, in response to His Commission to make disciples of all peoples and in awareness of our unique, collective gifts, clearly see the mission before us to worship, to grow, and to serve.

Bethel Lutheran School offers a Christian education for the whole child. Students in the school find identity, purpose, and power for their lives by living in God's grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. The education is well rounded and provides *spiritual instruction, intellectual achievement, social interaction, emotional development, physical education, and aesthetic experiences.*

Continuing our mission, to worship, to grow and to serve, through the high school years are a natural progression in our ministry to educate the whole child to be a contributing member of society: spiritually, intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, and aesthetically. The high school years foster the growth of strong Christian leaders, building on the foundation of faith established in the preschool through junior high school years.

Ownership of the Proposed High School:

The high school is a natural progression of our preschool and elementary school and will be owned and operated by Bethel Lutheran Ministries, Morton, IL, under the guidance, direction, and blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Community Impact:

Bethel Lutheran School has a reputation of excellence, producing students who excel in the areas of academic achievement and leadership while displaying spiritual development through their actions. As an extension, Bethel Lutheran High School would provide parents an option to educate their high school students in a Christian environment within the Morton community. The quality education will provide *spiritual instruction and application, intellectual achievement, social interaction, emotional development, physical education, aesthetic experiences, leadership development, and community involvement. Students in nearby communities would be encouraged to attend.*

Bethel Lutheran High School would admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

The Proposed High School Program:

Bethel Lutheran High School would begin as an “integrated cooperative learning community” with students working in person, individually, and in small groups. The curriculum will be offered by traditional face-to-face instruction, online with a supervising teacher, and variations of

this mix. Structured online curricula, online resources, texts, content experts, community outreach experiences, and supervising teachers will be utilized throughout the school day. Illinois Central College (ICC) will be a resource for dual credit courses that junior and senior students may elect to study to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously. Math, science, and vocational/technical courses may be taken from ICC to further strengthen a student's educational options.

Current administration will serve as the initial administration of the high school. An additional full-time supervising teacher will be required with additional part-time teachers hired as needed. Extracurricular activities, music and band, and athletics will grow depending on the students' needs. Options to work with area high schools and community resources will be researched.

Enrollment Projections:

We hope to begin with at least 10 students (Grades 9 – 12) and grow by 5 to 10 students annually for the first five years. Area Christian Elementary Schools would be recruited and invited to join us each year. Recent survey results are being analyzed to project a refined and more realistic estimate.

Projected Enrollment

	<i>2021-2022</i>	<i>2022-2023</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>
<i>Grade 9</i>	8	8	8	10	10
<i>Grade 10</i>	2	7	7	9	10
<i>Grade 11</i>		2	7	7	9
<i>Grade 12</i>		1	3	6	7
<i>Total Stu</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>36</i>

High School Program Location:

The high school students would utilize rooms within Bethel Lutheran School and the two newer multi-purpose rooms nearest the School Library. Rooms within Bethel Lutheran Church may be utilized with growth in enrollment. No additional construction is needed to begin the high school.

Estimated Tuition

At this time, we are projecting an annual tuition in the range of \$6,550 - \$8,250 per student. In comparison, Peoria Christian has an annual tuition of \$8,064. While Morton, being a public school, does not charge a tuition, the cost of education per child in the K-12 district is \$9,881 per year. Our current Bethel elementary tuition is \$4,972.

Endorsements of Bethel Lutheran High School:

The congregation of Bethel Lutheran Ministries will endorse the proposed high school through the Voters Assembly upon the recommendation of Bethel Lutheran's School Board. The pastors of Bethel Lutheran Ministries endorse the program as proposed. The Elders of Bethel Lutheran Church will be asked to endorse the program. Community support will continue to be garnered throughout the HS Feasibility Committee's work.

Demographic Report

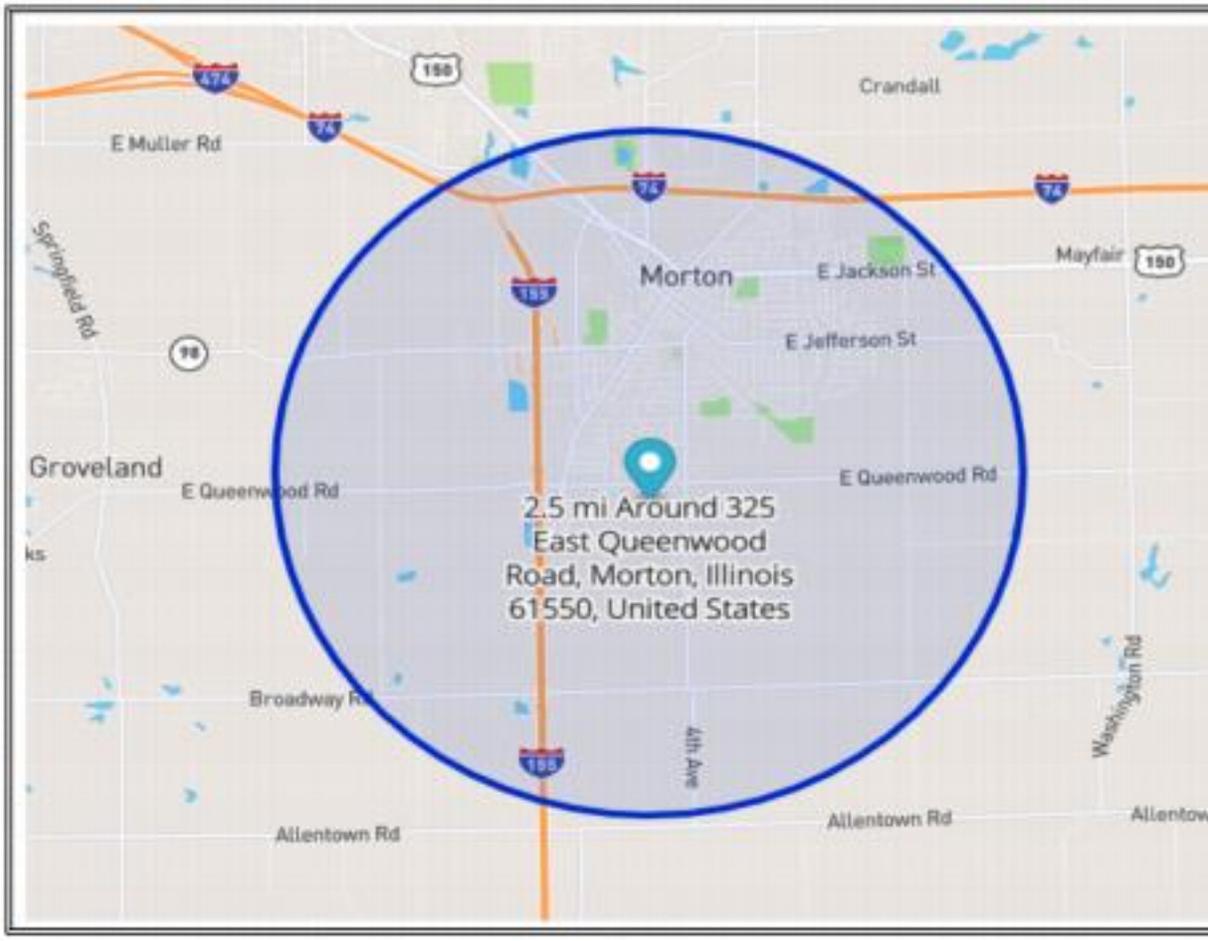
Introduction

This document is the LCEF Demographic Report for the three study areas identified around 325 East Queenwood Rd; Morton, IL 61550:

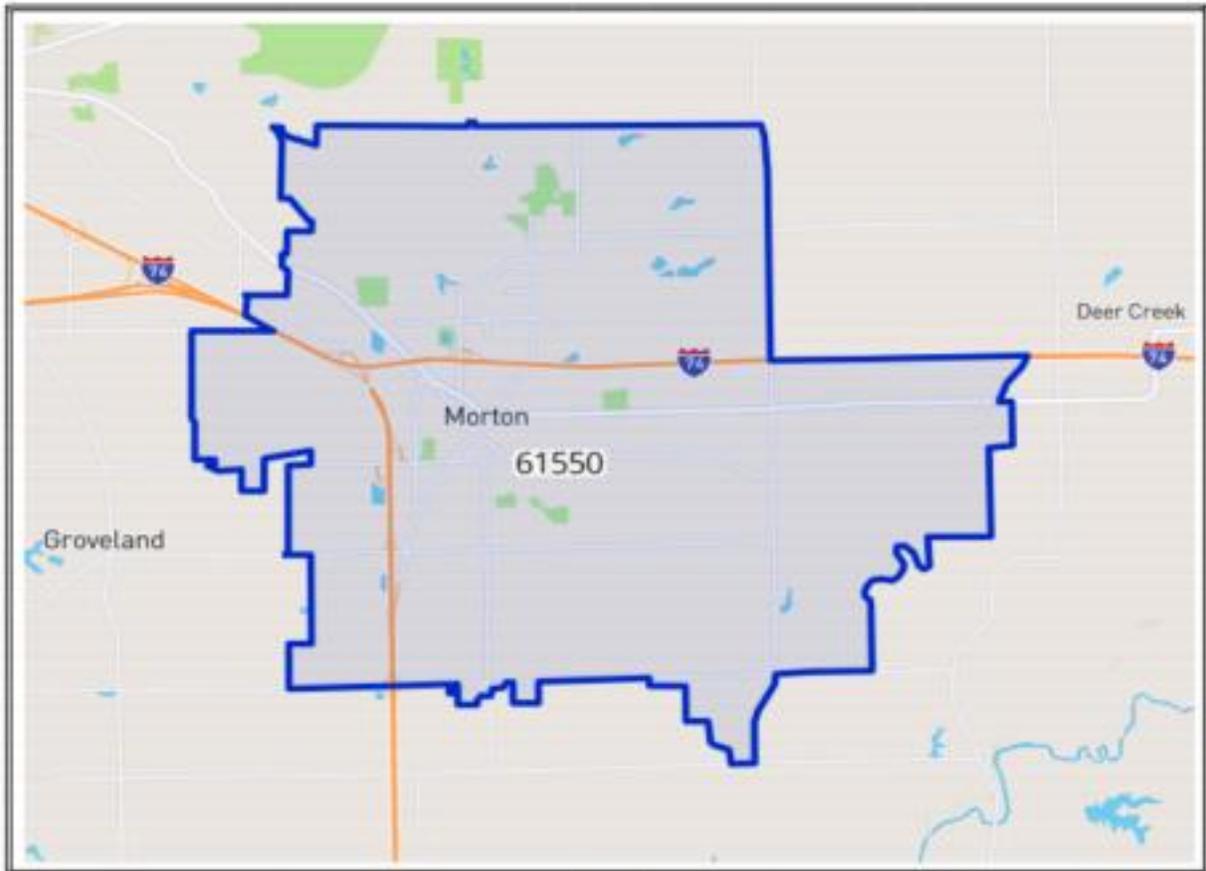
Study area one (1) was a Polygon, with designated geographic borders around 325 Queenwood Rd.



Study area number two (2) was a 2.5 mile radius around 325 East Queenwood Rd.



Study area number three (3) was the Zip code area 61550.



The study was completed with the use of the LCEF demographic study, The QuickInsite Report data that reflected information from 2019 and subsequent years while also projecting data based on trends into the year 2029. In some instances, information for 2029 was not available. The data gathered reflected information from three specific areas around 325 East Queenwood Rd Morton, Illinois.

The collective data provided by LCEF gives a total picture of the area being studied not only for a high school but also for multiple ministry possibilities. While all the data in different areas of the QuickInsite report are important, reviewed and studied, this report will focus on what was determined as helpful information to establishing a high school with grades 9-12.

OBSERVATIONS

Population Trends:

The population projection for the study area shows a steady population through 2029 with some decrease in Study Area 1 and an increase in Study Areas 2 and 3.

The average age in the Study Areas range from 38 to 42. This age category is significant as it usually indicates family raising years with children ages 0-17. The percent of the population under thirty-five ranges from forty-two to forty-five percent across all three study areas. The population of individuals ages 0-4 are most numerous in Study Area 1 because the area takes in an overall greater population. In Study Areas 2 and 3 the number of individuals from 0-4 project an increase from 2019 to 2029.

The population of individuals ages 5-17 project a slight decline from 2,112 to 1,983 in Study Area 2, and from 2,965 to 2,712 during the 2019 to 2029 years in Study Area 3. Study Area 1, which includes Peoria shows the population for ages 5-17 goes from 19,086 in 2019 to a projected 19,241 in 2029.

Households with Children

When looking at the history and projections for family structures in the study area it is worth noting that of the three family categories, married-couple, single mother and single father the data reflects the highest percentage of households with children are the married-couple. It is projected that by 2024, that eighty percent of all households with children will be with the married-couple category. There is an increase in the single mother category of households with children.

Phase of Life – Age Trends:

Reviewing the Phase of Life Trends provides insight into the age distribution of a population. The indication from the data shows the Before Formal Schooling, ages 0-4, and Required Formal Schooling, ages 5 to 17 decreasing as a percentage of the total population through 2029. From 2010 to 2029 the actual number of children in the two categories reflected on the charts show fluctuating population, with some increase and decrease, as an individual group or category but not as a part of the total population. The category of Before Formal Schooling, ages 0-4, and Required Formal Schooling: 5 to 17 reflects the following population numbers:

Population Ages 0-4

Population---% of pop.	Study Area 1 Polygon/Peoria	Study Area 2 2.5 mile radius	Study Area 3 Zip code 61550
2019	11,436-----6.3%	763----6.0%	1,035-----5.8%
2024	11,072-----6.2%	750----5.9%	1,041-----5.7%
2029	10,747-----6.0%	766----5.9%	1,071-----5.8%

Population Ages 5-17

Population---% of pop.	Study Area 1 Polygon/Peoria	Study Area 2 2.5 mile radius	Study Area 3 Zip code 61550
2019	30,185-----16.7%	2,112-----16.7%	2,965-----16.6%
2024	29,143-----16.3%	2,047-----15.9%	2,812-----15.5%
2029	28,235-----15.8%	1,983-----15.3%	2,712-----15.5%

Household and Family Income Trends

Income trends are important to review. As the committee or board reviews the cost of education the fees or tuition that will be needed must be set to meet expenses. The data will also be important to review for the potential outside support that may be needed to assist with tuition and fees.

The average household income data gives a two-year projection.

Financial Resources

Average Household Income

	Study Area 1 Polygon/Peoria	Study Area 2 2.5 mile radius	Study Area 3 Zip code 61550
2019	\$68,705	\$94,731	\$99,512
2024	\$76,408	\$106,109	\$111,509

Median Family Income

	Study Area 1 Polygon/Peoria	Study Area 2 2.5 mile radius	Study Area 3 Zip code 61550
2019	\$52,026	\$80,862	\$79,801
2024	\$58,734	\$89,786	\$89,519

Summary

The information provided by the LCEF demographic Study Areas for the feasibility study gives needed information, which helps to develop reasonable goals and ideas but can also provide challenges for which the Steering Committee may need to seek answers or solutions.

The data reflects a population growth around 325 East Queenwood, an eighty percent household family structure of married couples with children and a decreasing population of children ages 5-17 that would be the target group for a high school program in the study areas.

Finances and support are another area that the feasibility study and Steering Committee will need to flush out. It will be important to consider the cost of not only start-up of a program for students in grades 9-12 but the affordability for families while meeting expenses. Online programs and staff salaries usually comprise 80-85 percent of program budgets.

Location is a primary consideration for the location of a Lutheran high school. Once a program has developed a quality reputation which is Christ centered, student focused, educationally successful with a caring staff, parents will travel out of their way to have their children attend such a unique Lutheran High School where students are challenged, supported and experience care, and success.

Finally, the Steering Committee and Congregations will want to be committed to WHY? WHY start a Lutheran High School? There are reported non-public high schools with small enrollments already in the area. So another high school? Why? The clarity of understanding the answer to that beginning question by the Steering Committee, Congregational members and eventually administrators, and staff will serve to direct the ministry of such a program. WHY must be the starting point that will ensure lasting support. Families won't come and stay with you because of WHAT you do or HOW you do it but they will come and stay with you because of WHY you do it! You win hearts before you win minds.

The consultant continues to lift up the possibility of this program in prayer.

Researching Area High Schools

Researching community area schools helps a Steering Committee to benefit from information about the elements, trends and experiences of schools already in operation for the purpose of planning and decision making. Time was spent gathering information and data from area schools.

Illinois Central Christian

22648 Grosenbach Rd, Washington, IL 61517

16 miles from Bethel

Tuition and Fees: One payment for all of school year: tuition, fees, texts, competitions, etc.

\$465/month x 10 month for 1 student;

\$770/ month x 10 months for 2 students;

\$1025/month x 10 months for 3 students;

add \$60/month for each additional student

High School Enrollment: 27

Number of Full time HS faculty: 2, part time 4

Profile of students served:

- About 60% of students are members of Bayview Baptist Church, the school's sponsor and home congregation.
- Serve most academic levels
- No special needs students accepted or special resources provided other than what the classroom teachers can provide. No tutors or resource teachers on staff.

Program of Studies:

Bible, Academics, Fine Arts, Sports (Volleyball and Basketball), Field Trips

Unique Program Attractions:

Fine Arts: Music and Symphony

Prepare for Baptist Christian Colleges

Facility:

School is part of the Bayview Baptist Church, East Peoria campus: school arm of campus with a high school wing of classrooms and a computer lab. Gym available.

Area Served:

Broad area: Peoria, East Peoria, Washington, Germantown Hills, Varna, Lincoln, Kewanee, Morton

Major Changes Anticipated in the Next Five Years:

None anticipated, but hope to be back to enrollments close to 90 – 100 as usual, post COVID.

Funding of the Program: (What percentage of the annual budget comes from Fees, Gifts, Congregational or other support?)

Tuition, Congregational Support (did not know%), and usual Fund-Raising

Other: Curriculum

- Mainly use Abeka Curriculum for High School.
- They do not use Illinois Central College, even though just across Route 24. They prefer to keep a close hold on curriculum and prepare students for Baptist-Sponsored Christian Colleges.

Has Enrollment Increased or Declined in the Past Five Years

No real change in past 5 years: steady around 90-100 until COVID came.

Peoria Christian School

3506 N. California, Peoria, 61603

Tuition and Fees: \$8064

HS Enrollment 205

Full time faculty 14 Part- time – 8

Profile of students served: Must have one parent that professes Christ as Savior; academically above the 40th percentile.

Program of Study: AP, Dual Credit

Program attractions: Mandarin Chinese, Marketing class with Clothing store on campus, Distinguished Scholar Diploma

Annual amount of student financial assistance provided: up to 40%

Facilities: Two campuses. California campus has PK-4th grade and 9th - 12th. Monroe campus 5th - 8th grade. 3 gymnasiums, practice soccer field

Area or region school serves: Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties

Funding Sources: PCS families, Alumni, Alumni parents, and outside donors

Enrollment has declined over the last 5 years

Major changes anticipated: With all of the changes in Illinois and the public schools, I anticipate that Christian education would be much more attractive to Christian families.

Peoria Notre Dame

5105 N. Sheridan Rd., Peoria, Illinois, 13 Miles from Bethel

Tuition/Fees

Tuition is \$7,600 for Affiliated Parish students, \$11,350 for Non-Affiliated

Students Registration Fee - \$150.00

Book/Lab Fee - \$435

Graduation Fee for Seniors - \$100

Laptop Fee - \$1,425

HS Enrollment: 777

Full time Faculty 61

Programs of Study offered: Academic pathways offered in Business Administration, Fine Arts, Social Studies and Theological Studies. STEM Programs and Project Lead the Way also available.

Unique programs attractions:

Notre Dame is well known for its sports programs, especially soccer, which is nationally ranked.

It also has an extensive array of clubs and arts offerings as well as a Christian Service program to send students out into the community.

Student financial assistance offered:

\$626,377 was awarded in financial assistance in 2020

Facilities:

Notre Dame is housed in a facility built in 1964, originally founded as Bergen Catholic High school. This is a full facility with multiple classrooms, gymnasium, and athletic fields Areas school serves

PND serves students across 4 counties and 36 Catholic parishes in Central Illinois Enrollment has declined in the last 5 years.

Morton High School

350 N.Illinois Ave

Tuition and Fees; registration fees emailed \$1251 depending ---

Textbook rental and supply fee \$180

Technology fee \$45

I.D. Replacement \$6

Marching band fee \$650 / Instrument main. Fee \$50, Percussion fee \$50

/semester User Supply fee, co-curricular activities \$95

Student parking, student athletic gate fees, driver ed fees, summer school driver ed.

\$\$\$\$ \$75 \$15 season \$75 \$75

HS Enrollment 1,1007

Full time faculty: 73, Part-time 2, Teacher aides 8

Programs of Study offered:

Business, Math, Science, Social Studies, Family Consumer Science, Industrial Tech, Graphic Design, Engineering, Modern Language, PE, Driver Education, Language Arts, Fine Arts

Unique program attractions:

Project Lead the Way (engineering), Auto Tech, Culinary Arts, Computer Science, Welding, college credit earning pathways senior year (EMS/EMT, Fire Science, CNA, Construction, Welding), work program senior year

Student financial assistance:

144 students or 14% of students provided assistance

Facilities:

Bertha auditorium, 2 gyms, 3 floors to our building, cafeteria

Area or Region Served:

Communities of Groveland and Morton

Enrollment has increased the last 5 years.

Surveys

Surveys help planners to develop a basic understanding of issues by asking for the opinions of individuals that may have influence on a decision or how a plan or program may be implemented. Questions are asked for the purpose of soliciting specific responses needed for thorough planning. Surveys also help to communicate potential school programs and events. A wise planner always seeks the counsel, wisdom, and advice of others to insure planning accuracy and soundness. “An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.” Proverbs 18:15.

Individual, Bethel Lutheran Church Members, School Parents, Community and Administrator surveys were conducted seeking information and reaction relating to the possibility for a potential startup of a Lutheran High School. Surveys were received from seven of the nine congregations listed on the Genesis Application that were “Pursuing the Exploration of a Classical Lutheran High School.”

A total of 386 surveys with comments were received from the following:

- 69 community surveys
- 153 Parent surveys
- 160 surveys from Bethel congregation members
- 4 Lutheran principal surveys

69 responses Bethel High School Community Surveys

1. Do you feel there is a need for a Christian High School in our area (Central/Morton,

IL)? 69 responses

Yes No Maybe

53.6% 29% 17.4%

Yes 37

No 20

Maybe 12

Please explain (Optional) 20 responses

World needs more Christian worldview, but only if genuine

Parochial schools aren't required to teach all subjects as our government deems “appropriate”.

Sadly, public school students are taught these things.

We have a perfectly great local high school in town. There are other Christian, established high school options in Peoria.

I feel we need good Christian education whenever possible

Why compete with PND and Peoria Christian?

I believe the secular HS are teaching too much socialism and not teaching true values. An environment where a Christian, biblical worldview is not only upheld but celebrated is vital. There is already an option in Peoria.

We only have the option of public schools. I really wanted my kids to go to a Christian school, but there was no option, sadly.

Morton High School is one of the best in the state. I see no reason to put a large amount of money into a school that would never have the same amount of resources available as the local high school. There are other areas of greater need that money could be used for.

The only Christian options for high school are in Peoria. I would rather my kids have friends that live closer. My mom lived in Morton and went to high school in Peoria. She chose Morton High School for us, but I think had there been a Christian option, she would have sent us there.

As a high schooler myself here in Morton, I feel like sometimes I hide my faith so I am not judged for it. And I know I am not the only one that does this. But students should be free to share what they believe without the criticism.

Only if you all pay for it. Don't raise my taxes to pay for it.

We have a wonderful school. PND is always an option.

It will add God's word to renew the minds of students.

There are a few schools already that are not too far away.

I'm not sure if there is an actual need based on over-crowding or general student populations at area schools, but I do feel that a Christian high school would be considered by many in Morton and the surrounding communities as another option for their children. As of now the only option is Peoria Notre Dame or Peoria Christian High School.

I live outside the area at present. Projection #s seem attainable. Will it "water down" the pillars of preschool and grade school in the building? To me, this quality needs to be upheld. MHS is a high bar to hurdle, tired of liberal agenda being pushed in public schools.

I am not in favor of common core curriculum and it is the main reason we homeschool. We also like to be able to incorporate Christian education as well.

Please explain (Optional) 8 responses

Limited resources could be used more effectively to seek and save the lost.

I am not a member of your congregation but I would still support this in any way I could. Can you be price competitive?

I'm not a member but had to answer to continue with survey.

We are not members, but have grandchildren in Bethel Grade School.

Would this option be available for non members?

a greater emphasis on true history of our country and constitution.

Not a member of your church but would support and send kids there.

2. If you have children approaching high school age, please indicate number of children in each grade.

	1	2	3
5th Grade	11	1	0
6th Grade	8	0	0
7th Grade	5	0	0
8th Grade	8	0	0
N/A	29	0	1

3. If so, would you consider sending them to a Lutheran High School? 55 responses

Yes No Maybe
36.4% 36.4% 27.3%

Yes 20

No 20

Maybe 15

Please explain (Optional) 14 responses

HS students need a broad range of activities and students to interact with to be successful I have experience with Peoria Christian and I feel the short commute is worth the product. Bethel should be heavily suggesting PCS to bethel Lutheran families.

I am considering sending my now 2nd grader there in years to come.

Students need to be included in the social and emotional state of public school with larger class sizes to prepare for the future for jobs and/or if students decide to continue their education post college.

The small class sizes and the same students going through bethel I do not believe would be helpful for these students once they graduate. They need to develop social skills and establish working with different people to be successful.

Our district schools are top notch.

Mine are currently juniors

We currently go to Blessed Sacrament. A Lutheran school isn't that far off from a Catholic school. I might consider an alternative experience, non public school... especially depending on changes that could come in curriculum with government shifts

Catholic

Let me first state that I no longer live in Morton but rather California and I do not have children. That said I attended Blessed Sacrament for all eight years and then Morton High School. If I did live in Morton and had school age kids I would send them to Blessed Sacrament and I would definitely consider Lutheran High School. One reason would be simply that the school is in Morton and not Peoria. While I would ideally like my kids to continue at a Catholic school (Notre Dame) I would be more focused on a Christian school in general. Also, Lutheran and Catholic teachings are so similar that I would have no concerns from a belief

perspective. My focus would be on academics, values, community involvement and of course cost. I know one reason I decided to go to Morton High School (parents gave me a choice) as oppose to Spaulding/Notre Dame was simply that most of my friends and after school activities would be in Peoria and not Morton (wanted to stay close to home I guess).

I'd actually prefer to give them a "bigger" high school experience before college, while still in the home. A gradual expansion of wings and growing their faith as they mature.

No diversity or inclusion. Too sheltered in today's world. Children need to deal with issues in a changing world and experience other cultures- not just middle class and white.

Cost. We attended Bethel Lutheran for kindergarten, then switched to Morton public schools since then and have had a fantastic experience in our grade school. Our experience at Bethel was mediocre after hearing rave reviews about what a great "family" it was to be a part of. In the end we decided our church and home is the best place for us to teach Jesus and Morton public schools is the best place for academic education. Our daughter is in 3rd grade. We would love to have a local Christian high school to send her to.

4. What are the most important factors to consider for establishing a new Lutheran High School? Please rank your top five factors in order of importance with 1 being most important.

Curriculum College/Career Preparation, Location, Tuition/Fees, Enrollment, Facilities, Technology, Strong Christian Emphasis, Faculty, Safety, Extra Curric. Other

	1	2	3	4	5
Curriculum	23	10	5	2	5
College/Career Preparation	8	8	8	7	6
Location	0	1	3	1	1
Tuition/Fees	1	7	7	8	3
Enrollment	2	2	2	3	1
Facilities	0	1	1	1	4
Technology	1	3	6	7	2
Strong Christian Emphasis	18	10	4	1	1
Faculty	1	3	7	5	5
Safety	1	4	4	4	0
Extra-Curricular Activities (Sports, Band, Music, Drama, Speech)	0	6	8	8	11
Other (Please Explain Below)	1	0	0	0	1

Please explain (Optional) 5 responses

A curriculum that includes an independent study with an external mentor, a "mini internship" each semester, would help students develop critical thinking skills along with real life learning applications. I would highly recommend such a plan.

All are important.

Hard to pick a top 5 considering many are important and could be lumped together like curriculum/faculty/college career preparation (we all want our children to have a good education and be prepared for the next stage in life whether that be college or not). Obviously strong Christian emphasis needs to rank high considering it is a Christian school so I almost rank that as an automatic given. Cost will always be a factor as most people should be living on a budget but location for me would trump cost. I would be more willing if it was in Morton or very close by.

Diversity- not just Morton values

5. Would you as an individual, be willing to financially support a high school at Bethel

Lutheran Church?⁶⁹ responses

Yes	No	Maybe
14.5%	47.8%	37.7%

Yes 10

No 33

Maybe 26

Other ³ responses

As a member of this church, I would not. There are two great Christian high schools in Peoria to go to with larger class sizes and established curriculums. We have other needs to support at this church. I'd only financially support building it if I choose to send my student there

I say no since I don't have children, don't live in the area and provide tuition support at Blessed Sacrament. If I was a member or former member of Bethel Lutheran Church I would most likely support the high school even from a geographical distance.

Would you encourage others to enroll their children?⁶⁹ responses

Yes	No	Maybe
40.6%	30.4%	29%

Yes 28

No 21

Maybe 20

Please explain (Optional)⁵ responses

Absolutely not. We have a wonderful high school located in town.

You will need to differentiate why you are the school of choice in the area.

I took advantage of the wonderful schools available in Morton and were paid for by our tax dollars and used my other resources to provide enrichment activities and religious education and experiences. Once I knew more about the curriculum and general teachings then I would be able to make a concrete yes or no. If 'maybe' would not an option I would lean more towards 'yes'.

If they were specifically looking for a private or Christian education, yes I would recommend Bethel. But Morton public schools are fantastic and I will always recommend them first.

160 responses Bethel High School Bethel Congregational Surveys

1. Do you feel there is a need for a Christian High School in our area (Central/Morton,

IL)? 160 responses

Yes	No	Maybe
63.7%	21.3%	15%

Yes 102

No 34

Maybe 24

Please explain (Optional) 70 responses

Obviously duh!! I feel with all the rubbish going in this world that this should be a must!!!!!!!!!!!!!! There's already Peoria Christian or Norte Dame. Or a perfectly good education at Morton High school The feasibility of such an undertaking has been enhanced by technology and the secular schools are only getting worse due to adverse governmental influences.

It's my understanding there is only one school local to our area. It would be beneficial to provide another school option, especially for our existing school families.

Awesome school in Morton. If you live in the wrong town MOVE. No need to start a school here! Local High Schools are awesome!

All children of this would need to have a Christian upbringing! They need to know who Jesus Christ is, they need to learn of Him!

There are Cristian H. S choice available in our area which we can support

Peoria Christian and Notre Dame are in area

I'm aware of families that want the Lutheran high school for their kid's education, so it is worth looking into.

Parents are concerned about what the students will be exposed to as the government begins to incorporate its requirements in public education. "If we don't teach our children to follow Christ, the world will teach them not to"

I don't feel there is a need for a school similar to PND or PCS, but i do think there is a need for a alternative model HS in the area.

Absolutely Not

A consolidated high school supported by at least 3-4 churches.

Central, IL, Morton has a strong Christian community with limited options to enroll in a faith-based high school.

There is one available at Peoria Christian but I do wish there was another Lutheran high school given as an option for people in our area.

We are seeing a decrease in freedom of speech, expression, and religion in terms of student's rights within the public school. If that continues, there will be a need to expand Christian education for high schoolers in our area.

There are some options now with PCS, PND and others I may not be familiar with. Not sure what the trends are with those. Some needs may be growing due to trends in curriculum etc. being pushed on public education.

Great Christian High Schools in Peoria, right across the river!

Our closest option is driving to Peoria. We would probably draw from Pekin and East Peoria. Public schools are forced to teach things that I don't want my kids forced to learn. Morton, being centrally located to many communities, is a great location for an added option of a Christian based high school! There are other local, private schools to attend. As a church, we have other areas of greater need for expenditures. There are established private schools for Bethel students to attend for high school or go to our wonderful public schools to get more exposure to different people.

I believe Christian schools insulate children from the world to their detriment.

Our children are our future. It is more important than ever to have education that teaches history correctly and not the newly state mandated agenda. I think that is what the community needs. A large Christian high school already exists in central Illinois.

Please define "High School" Remote learning is not High School that's closer to home schooling. With the environment of today's world; Christian Ed is greatly needed to all ages.

In a progressive development of young people.

As our school systems are being more secular there is a need for more & more need for a further education led by Christian authority.

We have a large conservative population in this area and public schools are leaning more towards liberal teachings.

I think another option for the area would be good. Several families have shown interest in leading their children through High School with continued pouring in of Jesus love as an alternate to public school. Also governmentally the public schools continue to push an anti-Christ agenda onto and into kids minds. MHS is a good school and there are other Christian high schools near

It's so important since public education now espouses such anti-biblical ideas such as LGBT dogma. Peoria Christian and Notre Dame are already well established and I feel it would be hard to equal the education level of Morton High School

I used to say no, but parents need an option this side of the river if they feel the public schools are becoming too "in-conservative" in their teachings.

I'm sure there are folks with school age children who need an alternative option rather than public school. Existing high school is excellent on its own

I believe this would be a good option.

There is a lack of options on the east side of the river.

Why start a High School for a handful of families? We are blessed to have a wonderful High School in Morton with high ratings!

Students can share the love of Jesus, whether they go to a public school or a Christian - specific school. However, there are definitely benefits to having a Christian school where students can be more open to share their faith. It's important to keep in mind that, with students coming from many different backgrounds and life experiences, there's a need for understanding, patience, and openness to those who may have different perspectives and core values. I like the saying, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." I hope that, when taking the high school into consideration, you'll take the whole student into consideration - whether it's differences in race, sex, socioeconomic status, special needs (disabilities/mental health/gifted/etc.), those facing home difficulties, etc. Some parents want this option and it should be provide for them. Especially since secular teachers are becoming more liberal and influencing kids toward atheist ideas.

I think it would be very popular in this area.

I think there could be a need in Tazewell County for a Christian High School.

High School is such a important part of a student's life. The excellent extension of Bethel Lutheran school is NEEDED!!!!

Moved here after children out of school so not really familiar with the needs, but seems like Peoria Christian is about the only option so something centrally located between Peoria and Bloomington/Normal might be attractive.

We have several Bethel parents wanting this for their children.

There are some other Christian H.S. options, but none conveniently close to Morton. With state mandates for LGPTA information to be provided in public schools, I think families will be looking for alternatives to public (government directed) education. Not to mention project 1619 & alternative history narrative that are not based on fact.

Traditional High Schools in the area do not teach religion, and offer history as an elective. We need a closer option for high school Christian education.

With the onset of the liberal attack on schools to indoctrinate public school students and the rise of homeschooling an alternative is needed.

Would of liked the option to send my children to a Christian HS when they were that age Most of the Christian High Schools are in Peoria. The closest Lutheran High School is in Springfield and Rockford.

The curriculum in traditional high schools is limited to liberal teachings and does not develop a well rounded student.

We believe there is a need for a Lutheran High School. With the increasing number of mandates put on our education system to include what is considered as socially appropriate material that must be included in the public school system curriculum, we feel it is important to offer an alternative education system for those families, who do not wish to have their children receive these types of influences and to give them the best foundation possible.

It would be good to have a Christian alternative locally. It is difficult to drive all the way to Peoria for a lot of families

Absolutely not. Great public schools in the areas. Wonderful Christian teachers at those public schools. Morton has one of the top High Schools in the State of Illinois from an academic standpoint. From my experience the HS at Morton classes are even better than what ICC offers. Based upon what I have read your proposal of HS education would be to do mainly on-line instruction (basically doing it from Bethel vs at Home). Studies have shown that due to lack of interaction with teachers and peer students people do not

grasp concepts and learn as much as being in classroom with instructor. If I have misunderstanding on this, then would like to know cost of teachers and space of starting HS. To match variety of classes and subjects I would believe you are going to need maybe half dozen teachers to provide education that people are getting at Public School. I understand that from a spiritual standpoint Morton HS doesn't and wouldn't be able to offer anything to students, so Bethel should consider providing a program to provide students with Christian fellowship outside of academics.

Peoria Christian as well as other private schools

It is becoming apparent that the public high school is in decline, both from a moral and an educational standpoint. There may be room for a Christian High School program in Morton, however, I would like to see better enrollment projections before considering the proposal.

Would love having a continuation of the Christian education within Morton but concerned about the quality of classes (especially Honors / AP / industrial / home economics) that could be offered. There needs to be college prep and life skills classes offered.

The reality is there are several Christian High Schools in the area. Located in Bloomington, Springfield and Peoria.

Peoria Christian offer a great, well-rounded high school opportunity, I believe.

For those wanting a Christian education, there are other options already available. My kids went to the grade school and if a high school had been available I would definitely have kept them at Bethel for the rest of their K-12 education. The years my children did attend Bethel were incredible in so many ways. Choosing Bethel was the best investment I ever made for them. Now adults with children of their own we have often discussed how thankful we all are for their grade school Christian education. The public school system continues to degrade and I believe more and more parents are looking for a better alternative. Also, more and more grandparents are giving the gift of Christian a education to their grandchildren. There are not many options in our area for a Christian high school, so I would wholeheartedly support it.

2. As a member of our congregation, would you support the idea of a new Lutheran High School at our church?^{160 responses}

Yes	No	Maybe
65%	22.5%	12.5%

Yes 104

No 36

Maybe 20

Please explain (Optional)^{52 responses}

Duh ya

This is a waste of money and time for the church. Find a better resource for money if you have it. Our school is our biggest ministry and look forward to growing that ministry. I appreciate the fact children can continue their Christian-based academic learnings K-12.

Do not shelter your children . One room schools are a thing of the past.

Do you NOT trust God to care for your children at a public High School? (Little Faith) I definitely support!

I do not think it is financially sound at this time

Would be supportive verbally and financially.

I think parents and students should have this option.

Absolutely Not Check out the ratings of Morton School District.

It may be needed but not financially feasible with the debt we now owe.

In addition to having school-aged children, I believe a Christian high school is an asset, value to the immediate and surrounding community.

I'm most concerned about having a very high overall quality, as well as concerned about future financial impacts in the case this grows and we need construction.

Not opposed if enrollment interest is there and able to be structured in a feasible manner. Two concerns to be addressed are <A> Pg 2 of Proposal regarding admissions doesn't address sexual preference or religious affiliation. Concerned that conflicts/publicity issues could arise that could affect existing ministries, and There may be some concern over students from age 3 to 18 being in one facility. I'm sure these could be alleviated.

Not necessary as Morton High School and other area small town schools are great! Morton High School has high ratings and high test scores. Many families move to Morton for their school system. I believe it would be a great addition to our ministry and be an opportunity to extend our ministry into the community even more!

No I would not financially contribute.

The school provides excellent education and now seems like a good time to take the next step. God has blessed our congregation thru the school and I think He will bless the next step - a high school. As presented in the case statement, the proposed concept sounds more like group home schooling with a concentration on remote learning. Remote learning may be better than independent study, but is not a good substitute for learning in the classroom. Some students may do well in this environment, but I think most would do better in a traditional classroom with teachers present.

Not a member

I see it as a new way and exciting way to serve the Lord.

Through both financial support and time.

I will pray for the high school and get involved.

I don't know that I would send my kids there after sending them K-8. For my situation it has been a good thing to attend Morton High School. But who's to say? I would want to see it in person and a growing amount of kids. I think high school needs some interaction with more peers.

Having had children go through the Morton public school system and over a nine year period of time, I believe they received a very good education academically. Having stated that, I believe that the local high school was lacking in the breadth of courses offered for students not likely to pressure a non college oriented career path. High schools in the area have all but abandoned non college career oriented course work because of the high cost of providing those types of classes. If I still had high school age children, I would be concerned with the breadth of academic opportunity offered by a very small high school. From a social and religious perspective, I see both pluses and minuses. Continued religious education to develop stronger values is a positive. Providing a local alternative to those who might otherwise opt for home schooling would be a definite positive. On the negative side, learning to interact with and deal with peers

that have different values and beliefs is an important part personal development. A number of peers and acquaintances who attended pericardial high schools had problems adjusting after graduation. When is it too soon for older children and young adults to learn to deal with others who have differing beliefs and values? Since most individuals develop their values before they reach high school age, it is important that they receive guidance and education in these areas from parents and the church. They should also be made aware of and learn about other faiths and values and how they differ from sound Christian teachings. I am not opposed to the creation of a high school at Bethel, but do have concerns about the ability to provide a comprehensive learning environment.

While I appreciate that the proposal gave a brief overview of how the high school would be conducted, I would like to know more about the educational philosophy of the high school (whether it'd be more teacher-directed or student-directed, a mix of both, etc.), if it would be able to accommodate students with special needs, seeing if transparent communication would be made available about safety protocols and school progress, if strong collaboration would be emphasized between school personnel and families, as well as between staff members, and if professional development opportunities would be given for staff members to further develop their skills and leadership.

See above

Absolutely!!! All of our children would go.

If there is enough support from Morton and other surrounding communities I may support the idea. Has the School board contacted any other Lutheran Grade Schools in Tazewell, Woodford and Peoria counties to see if they would help support a Lutheran High School. I would be more supportive of a Lutheran High School rather than just a Christian High School.

The same as above.

With 1 church financially supporting the pre-school, elementary, and a high school it seems to be quite a financial endeavor. I would like to see Bethel having more funding available to the many needs there are local, national, and globally.

I support the study to explore the idea and determine its feasibility.

with tuition paid by families of students & no building projects due to church's current indebtedness. 100% support. Anything to keep our youth involved with the teachings of the church. I am also a Bethel Lutheran School parent just this year.

When the grade school started I was opposed to it as I did not see the need. As there was no place for kid after 8th grade. However times have changed and with the rise of e-learning I see a church school as an alternative to homeschooling and public school decline.

Great High School in Morton and area communities.

We would be grateful to have this opportunity for our grandchildren.

We need to finish what was started: K-12 is needed.

Check out Morton H.S. No Need! or Tremont or Delavan Or Eureka. Get out of your BUBBLE! See above answer to Question 1

We need to focus on the preschool and grade school operations and expense Not with current enrollment projections. There needs to be a stronger case.

If assured of quality, I would support

See response to question 1

This is an undertaking which I believe well exceeds the resources that this congregation or any similar size one can support. There is an option for those who desire a Christian based, albeit not Lutheran, high school in the Peoria Christian High School.

By support, do you mean prayer? Financial? Volunteer?

We have had tremendous success with our grade school. It is an amazing witness to our community and a place for members as well to train up their children in the way they should go.

3. If you have children approaching high school age, please indicate number of children in each grade.

	1	2	3
5th Grade	5	0	0
6th Grade	7	0	0
7th Grade	6	0	0
8th Grade	4	0	0
N/A	67	5	10

4. If so, would you consider sending them to a Lutheran High School?^{73 responses}

Yes	No	Maybe
42.5%	39.7%	17.8%

Yes 31

No 29

Maybe 13

Please explain (Optional)^{34 responses}

For sure absolutely

When there is perfectly good education in our town why would I shelter a child even further away from the public? Shouldn't we be encouraging our youth to go and spread God's word? How can they do that if they're sheltered in a Bethel bubble.

No kids of age

For one of my children, it would highly depend on the athletic offerings the Lutheran High School can provide.

Maybe but probably not . There are other qualified choices in our area

No longer have school age children.

But I have not no kids in these age groups

Three kids oldest is in third grade at Bethel

Absolutely would send them to a Bethel Lutheran High School, no doubt.

The value in sending my children to Bethel is in people who know them and care for them. People who've literally watched them grow up as members of the church congregation. People who still care about them and pray for them. I love the stability and community Bethel provides my children. I attended a small Christian School through high school, Much like this model that is proposed. I want the same experience and reinforcement of Christian faith for my kids. What is more important in life? Now more than ever, we need to continue Christian education every opportunity there is. Never. I think public schools provide a diverse approach to a child's education. Kids need to learn how to communicate with people who are different from them. Having and going through Bethel with the same 5- 10 kids does not provide the well rounded background that is needed to get along with different types of people.

See #1

will promote it to the best of our ability.

My only hesitancy would be the potential small size and my child being in a brand new school that's just starting up.

Yes as my children get older I will support sending my children to a Lutheran High School. I feel my children received a good education at MHS with Christian values

My youngest is a freshman. Would not change now but might feel different if they were younger. empty nester

Our kids have graduated High School already.

Darn, this is just 4 years too late. Isabella & Ethan would have been students. God's blessings as you move forward with this NEEDED school.

We feel that we have an excellent public school system in our town and while it is not faith based, many of the employees and board have Christian values. Depending on the specific needs of my child, private school could be an option but not one that I anticipate.

not applicable

If I did have children at that age, I would.

We will never send our children to a public school again after all our years in public school and in seeing what is coming down the pipe in public education and the culture.

Again, if the teaching is on-line via ICC or other sites my answer would be NO. If they hired in-house teachers and curriculum offered good enough education then Maybe

N/A

I have no children that age.

We have a strong option with Morton High School in town which we feel best prepares young adults (educationally and emotionally) for life post high school.

5. What are the most important factors to consider for establishing a new Lutheran High School? Please rank your top five factors in order of importance with 1 being most important.

Curriculum, College/Career Preparation, Location, Tuition/Fees, Enrollment, Facilities, Technology, Strong Christian Emphasis, Faculty, Safety, Other (Please Explain Below)

	1	2	3	4	5
Curriculum	40	37	20	9	5
College/Career Preparation	22	34	15	16	4
Location	0	1	3	6	6
Tuition/Fees	3	6	18	10	17
Enrollment	3	5	4	10	7
Facilities	0	0	7	7	8
Technology	1	5	14	18	13
Strong Christian Emphasis	53	21	17	9	15
Faculty	2	10	25	13	12
Safety	3	7	2	3	5
Extra-Curricular Activities (Sports, Band, Music, Drama, Speech)	3	5	4	20	24
Other (Please Explain Below)	3	0	1	1	2

Please explain (Optional) 23 responses

I would love to be able to send my children to the high school, but we will have multiple in high school for multiple years, so I don't think that it would be feasible for us financially.

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DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME!

Community involvement so the school is not considered insular.

NOT CONSIDERING

Most important is starting with NO debt. would a high school in the present buildings be accredited? Safety is always first and foremost. It seems that every parent would put safety first. I believe a strong Christian emphasis goes hand-in-hand with preparing for college, career, and life following school. Technology, curriculum, and a best in class faculty to deliver learning is critical to making that education and experience impactful and lasting.

Morton High School is exceptional! Very good Christian teachers that will support and care for your children. They are not "study hall monitors" or your choice of words "supervising teachers". They have studied their particular subject and can accurately teach it. They are specialist in their field. One or two "supervising teachers/study hall monitors" cannot possibly be knowledgeable in all high academic fields. (Through COVID, we have all learned that on-line teaching is not as effective as in class teaching.) . Teaching staff credentialed in various subjects teaching their subjects.

ability to offer, or participate in extra-curricular activities the level of 709 would also need to be considered and I am not confident the Morton area has enough population to support a viable HS I feel the Christian aspect is always priority and figure that would be taken care of, but #2 is extra curricular and could be considered #1.

Personal social development .

Make sure students' interests and talents are taken into consideration, strong/quality leadership is valued, high expectations for students and staff, and ongoing evaluation of staff and student progress. While there's a lot of emphasis on rigorous courses, make sure there's also relevancy. For example, having students learn math in a home economics class or having a personal finance class.

Our curriculum, college preparation and faculty would have to be equal to other area High Schools. The enrollment and tuition would have to justify the cost of the High School. Can the Church support any more cost of the school at this time?

Tough to rate, but I see the faculty, Christian emphasis, and curriculum all close to #1. These are the things I think we should consider when making the decision. The Strong Christian Emphasis is going to be there.

Ability to socially prepare the students for life at a University

Should be strong Lutheran emphasis. High School must provide for social growth within different kinds of relationships. This age group should have the opportunity to develop ways to deal with anger, people you don't agree with, breakups, makeups and emotions in healthy ways. With only 10 students total, I don't see those opportunities for development.

6. Would you as an individual, be willing to financially support a high school at Bethel Lutheran Church? 160 responses

Yes	No	Maybe
41.9%	25.6%	32.5%

Yes 67

No 41

Maybe 52

Other 38 responses

It depends on cost

Again this is a waste of resources and time.

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Waste of \$\$ the church can grow other ways!

Not at this time with the current economy and our church debts

I could increase my church offering to help support the high school.

Absolutely Not

Would need to see what total costs are and what will be covered by tuition/fees. Given that facilities costs would be covered by congregation, I would think most of operational expenses would need to be covered by tuition/fees.

This isn't just a high school, this will be a ministry, isn't that we we are called to do? NOT AT ALL!

Difficult to answer absolutely without more information, but probably not.

To the best we can as the Lord blesses us.

I have no children, but I will help support the school as this is part of our christian duty. I'm now on a limited income. I will support it as much as I am able.

given current economic situation in Illinois, I don't feel I can support Bethel's ministries at a level more than I already am

It would depend on my financial situation at the time.

We as a family would try to give extra to this endeavor. I would also try to help with coaching etc. even without children there.

If I wasn't paying tuition for a child to attend.

If the cost was reasonable. Are the parents of the High School students willing to pay more than the current Grade school tuition? I continue to support the current school even though my kids graduated many years ago.

I think the high school should be more self-supporting, not dependent upon congregational support. I do not want to detract from the elementary school for funding; we give would rather support the elementary school to reduce the congregational support and encourage more members to attend BLS. \$70 monthly

I've been told that the plan is for Bethel to supply the facility, but the operational cost will be covered by student's parents.

See #2 Good stewardship of blessings we already have is first priority, especially with indebtedness. We will lead wherever the Lord follows.

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We have supported christian education for many years and will continue to do so as much as we are able. If approach is with Qualified In-house teaching staff yes, if some type of on-line approach with a proctor sitting if front of room NO

Still supporting the building fund

I do not feel the school is needed.

This needs to be financially viable on its own before we would consider jumping into this. Relying on individuals for substancial and long term backing is risky. As for the church, we need to be debt free before considering financial support for an undertaking such as this. It has been an on-going understanding that the church congregation should not be any long term source of financial underwriting of the school.

Would you encourage others to enroll their children? 160 responses

Yes	No	Maybe
61.3%	16.9%	21.9%

Yes 98

No 27

Maybe 35

Please explain (Optional) 37 responses

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There's nothing wrong with Morton High School

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Using ICC as a back up is NOT a Lutheran High School.

If administration cannot write a decent proposal, how are they going to educate your children . Yes, we all need Jesus in our lives!

That would be their choice as a family not mine

Why are we hiding our children. God would rather you LET THEIR LIGHT SHINE! Send them to the public school. It's a wonderful school. GREAT CHRISTIAN TEACHERS.

If the parents show an interest.

Absolutely Not! No - they need real teachers. A teacher to monitor them is not High School.

Assuming a strong program is developed, I would support based on our success with PS and ES programs. Having worked at a college in their Student Development and Health Service Department, I have witnessed students coming to a college not prepared or able to adjust to all the changes colleges have to offer. Small school students have the most issues with adjusting to others. We are already in a "bubble" in Morton compared to other districts. Let our children go and stop coddling. Trust in God to take care of your children . They do not need to be in a one or two room high school. This will not help in the real world situation that will follow including college and careers.

I know many people, family and friends included, that would definitely look at a Christian high school option in Morton very seriously!

NO!

Difficult to answer absolutely without more information, but probably not.

It depends on the kid and family. I know it would be a positive for most anyone but I would let them know they may miss out some extra opportunities.

Students need to be with others in a normal environment...not in a conference room! If we can meet the important factors I identified above.

The HS will not be for all students, but I would encourage those students that would appear to thrive at Bethel.

Children and adults need to learn to work with others. Not just 8-10 other students. They need to be ready for college. Socially this atmosphere is not good.

This high school option will not be the right fit for many students, I believe especially this students interested in extra curricular activities

I would need more information about curriculum, faculty, etc.

With all of the online learning that has taken place in the last year, I don't feel that a mostly online high school would be the best choice for most high school students.

Public school agenda is getting more & more anti God and more secular humanism. People need to be informed on the travesty of what is happening in our public schools. page was missing

If the high school quality of education is as high quality as our elementary school, the students will be blessed with many advantages for their future.

Great schools all around. Waste of money for an online "study hall" high school.

Bad idea! Waste of money. We need to show our light into the world. Why hide! We cannot conquer the world in a tiny classroom online

Again depends on environment as I have stated previously

If they were looking for Christian High School education I would recommend as I feel Bethel will do a good job.

I have concerns over the quality of education that is pieced together from a variety of sources. I feel it can be a disservice to have a class size of a handful of students. They have not had the exposure to both the good and bad that they would experience in a larger student body.

Not at this time. From what I read, this niche sounds like something that could be done as homeschooling.

153 responses Bethel Grade School Parent Survey

1. Do you feel there is a need for a Lutheran High School in our area (Central/Morton,

IL)? 153 responses

Yes	No	Maybe
77.8%	4.6%	17.6%

Yes 119

No 7

Maybe 27

Please explain (Optional) 56 responses

The direction of our country and the world we live in showcases the drastic need for private school options, particularly Christian focused options.

No other Lutheran high school around. I'd like my children to continue with the Lutheran doctrine through high school and college.

The government and public school system is continuing their efforts to teach our children ideas that completely go against what we know to be true from the Bible. To protect our children, we must have options to protect them from these horrible teachings.

High School is hard and even harder on Christian teenagers they need a safe place to grow in faith and good quality education

I would need to know more about a proposed curriculum before I could assess

Too few options for private high school

There is not a Lutheran high school on the area. This would be a god send!

There is a tremendous need for a Christian based high school program.

There is a large gap in the area for a middle-class affordable Christian based education. I think there is a need for an option of a smaller high school in the area.

My children are nearing high school age and I would love to keep them in a Lutheran School With so many strong churches and youth ministries in our area, along with a public high school which is not antagonistic toward faith and religion, I don't see enough value in separating my kids at that age level. Morton would be far for us to travel each day as we live in Peoria.

I feel that in these times more than ever, a Christian based higher education system in the area is needed. I know several people who would come to Bethel if a high school was in place

The closest Lutheran High School is over an hour away. Many parents that choose to send their students to a local school to 8th grade then are left with no options when they reach high school. We will look at the options available and decide at that time.

Peoria area would benefit from a Lutheran high school. We have a strong Lutheran grade schools and then no where to transition to continue the curriculum.

There can never be enough Christian alternatives to the government schools!

I feel that parents want more control of what their kids are learning in school. And, I think the desire for private school will increase in response to future overreaching state mandates about curriculum content. There is no local private high school near by!

As a parent of 3 kids, who have been at GLS exclusively, this is something we would be happy to be a part of!

The closest one is approx 60 miles away and with the number of Lutheran Schools in our area I feel the need is great. Morton would be a great "central" location to draw from other area schools. I have never lived in Morton and I live about 50 miles away. So I feel as if I cannot comment on this. The ability to maintain Lutheran schooling is a good idea schooling in an environment where kids can see their teachers regularly turn to God for guidance seems important

I would like a Lutheran High School to function as an alternative to the "woke" curriculum. See this recent article regarding Illinois public schools below:

<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/compulsory-political-ideology-illinois-k-12-teachers-and-classrooms-moves-closer>

We need more options for Lutheran schooling for our children for after grade school It's amazing that there is no private high school on this side of the river. I think it will be wildly supported! I'm sure there are families that would like a Lutheran High School. I am not sure that we are one that would attend.

Our family would like the option of Christian schooling through high school

There is a limited number of Christian high schools available in our area.

There is absolutely a need for high school Christian education on this side of the river! There is a definite need for an education beyond eighth grade that includes faith.

As a parent and board member of another Lutheran school in the area, I often see our students leave the junior high setting to get accumulated to the public school setting. Our school has constantly discuss a need for a Lutheran high school and I am so thankful to see this in the works.

Our 7th grade grandson (at GSLS since preschool) would love to attend. As would our 5th grade granddaughter.

Peoria Christian seems to be an impressive program as well, however our family cannot budget to afford their tuition rates. We would be interested in a high school, Christian setting where tuition was more affordable.

There isn't any other Christian option on this side of the river

Morton high school is a great option

Need a protestant option for Christian education in the area.

To continue the child's education in a Christian environment is essential.

I think in Morton there is no need, but there may be for the whole Peoria area, I don't know. We already have a quality high school in the community. With the exception of the faith-based component, Morton HS offers educational, athletic and many other resources on a level far greater than a fledgling Bethel school would have the capacity to deliver.

Public education is move rapidly to the left and forcing an agenda that many folks do not agree.

Christian education remains a strong priority of the area LCMS members and some of the community. Given the decay of the public school system, we will need a Christian high school in Morton. I attended a Lutheran High School and taught at 3 different Lutheran High Schools. I feel that High School is a very important stage in my children's development for the formation and strengthening of their faith. It could serve a niche that's not currently being served.

There aren't any options to send our children to after 8th grade. We then feel that Public high school is our only option. This then makes my family wonder if we should transition our children into public schools sooner. Leaving Good Shepherd before 9th grade. To maybe help reduce the stress and establish new friendships.

It is unthinkable that there is not a Lutheran High School in the central IL area.

Closest Christian high school is Peoria... so might get surrounding Morton towns interest since it's closer I believe we need to continue the Lutheran education experience K-12

No options exist today. I wasn't sure when I would have to pull from kids from GSLS and move them to public or PCS.

2. As a member of the Lutheran school community, would you support the idea of a new Lutheran High School in Morton?^{153 responses}

Yes	No	Maybe
84.3%	3.2%	2.4%

Yes 129

No 5

Maybe 19

Please explain (Optional) 38 responses

Our family would love to see a local Christian option for High School.

I would weigh both options as it develops

If I were in agreement with the proposed curriculum I would definitely support it

Absolutely! I would send my children 🙏

Although I do not have any of my own children approaching high school age, I do work in the Pekin public school system. I do see a need for another high school option in the area, especially if it could offer smaller class sizes.

I think it would be great!

See above

I have 3 children and would love to send all to to a Lutheran high school when they reach that age. Same as above. The governmental schooling standards are getting more and more anti Christian even if the public school teachers are believers. Christian curriculum is a necessity.

We consider Bethel an extension of our family. We've experienced the benefits of a Christian education and we feel it would greatly benefit teenagers through their high school years.

We have a daughter in 4th grade and would be very interested.

I would support the idea of a Lutheran High school locally.

Now, more than ever, with current obligations and teachings that are mandated by the public school system, I feel there is a true need for this!

The more the better.

I'm not so sure I would drive to Morton for schooling everyday

So excited for this! We love Bethel!

We would definitely support the idea. I just do not know that we would attend.

I love the idea of continuing the opportunity to educate kids in a Christian environment with the high educational standards that Bethel provided for the lower grades.

I feel that this is a central location for the Lutheran school in this area. I also know the school from having family attend Bethel and know that the facilities could accommodate a high school.

We would be good ambassadors

Again, if it is offered to be the same support for families from area churches as CLS pulls from 3 congregations. Also, we believe and have seen the impact a good school counselor can have on helping students decide their vision after high school, so there would need to be a school counselor to aid in focusing on after school avenues in order for us to consider.

I don't believe there would be enough draw

Need a protestant option for Christian education in the area.

Totally support. I think surrounded by familiar teachers, students, staff, routine, events etc would be an advantage to the student in today's world.

To far to drive everyday for school.

I would not oppose it, but I'm not sure I'd be quick to send my children.

I don't feel that Bethel has the capacity to execute a new school offering without a loss of attention to detail in the current school. Not enough "bandwidth" to successfully do both with excellence. There is a need. And if we want to continue our ministry to students in central IL under the LCMS banner, this would be the only local option.

It would all depend on if the school could provide an academically challenging and competitive option - particularly for the college and higher level education bound.

Yes, this is an important mission and educational opportunity for the community. Go for it!

In Pekin would be great. However Morton is closer than Peoria.

I would also encourage the exploration of other centrally located sites as part of the study. It would be a no-brainer to send our students to an established Lutheran High School. It becomes a more difficult decision when the school is in its infancy.

My kids would likely attend!

3. If you have children approaching high school age, please indicate number of children in each grade.

5th Grade 6th Grade 7th Grade 8th Grade N/A

1 2 3

5th Grade 26 0 0

6th Grade 35 1 0

7th Grade 24 0 0

8th Grade 10 1 1

N/A 31 16 6

4. If so, would you consider sending them to a Lutheran High School? 138 responses

Yes	No	Maybe
62.5%	3.3%	12.4%

Yes 86

No 12

Maybe 40

Please explain (Optional) 40 responses

When our kids are of High School age, we have every intention of continuing Christian education over public school options.

It will depend on the setup for extracurricular activities.

We want to continue the phenomenal educational experience my children receive from Bethel now through High School.

Would like full time school

I would love to send my kids to a Lutheran school as long as it is affordable.

Would LOVE it

I'm concerned about my child missing out on the social aspect of high school. I know she/he will probably get a better education at Bethel, but she/he will miss out on growing her/his social skills. I feel that is very important.

I expect LGBTQ+ curriculum to be in full swing by the time my kids are HS age

Depending on the cost

Our daughter has always wanted to continue her education at a Lutheran high school. But, now it may be too late for her - even though she is torn, she wants to go to the public school to be with her brother, who is in 10th grade.

We have 4 children, oldest in 2nd Grade. Would like to send them all to a Lutheran High School.

Our kids will probably go to Morton High, but I certainly appreciate a smaller christian school and would definitely consider it as an alternative.

1 child currently 4th grade

We have a current 7th, 6th & 3rd grader.

Definitely! You can count my current 8th grader in for BLS High!

I would always like my children to have a faith based education .

I want my child to continue school in a Christian setting after he's done with grade school We will definitely send our kids to Bethel High School when they get to that age.

We love GSLS, but I think we may switch to public school when high school comes around. We currently have one child who is in first grade.

Number of enrollment and quality of academics and extra curricular activities need to be high. Also needs to be embraced for college acceptance at top universities.

There are many items to consider for each individual student and each family.

My entire family attend a Lutheran school but switch to public school in junior high. If there had been a Lutheran high school, we most likely would attend that school. I want the same for my children. my children are younger, but I would be excited by the possibility of a lutheran high school when they reach that age

It would be a wonderful continuation of their days at GSLS.

Our child is elementary age.

We would definitely send them there if available

I want them to go to Morton high school

Our student is in 2nd grade but this is great news as we plan to continue her attendance at Bethel. The news of a HS pretty much seals the deal.

I like the idea of them having to navigate a peer group whose families are not dedicated to the Lord before they leave the safety of our homes and direct oversight. However, if I have a child student who would greatly benefit from a more limited peer group or have academic opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have and they desire, I'd consider it.

See above answers.

My older kids are very social and athletic and desire the MHS environment. My youngest may be a different story but we will access when the time is appropriate.

N/A

I also have a student in 4th grade and would send her as well. I wish my daughter who is a sophomore could have attended a Lutheran High.

I have a child in 4th grade and 1st grade at Good Shepherd, Pekin and would certainly sending them to a Lutheran High School.

Would depend on timing. I'd personally need to see some success stories and testimonials of using this teaching approach. At least have a couple years go before us to get the bugs worked out. also think there is benefit to the social interaction that the kids get with going to high school such as Morton where there are lots of students versus going to a high school with just a handful of kids.

Have a freshman at pekin high that we would send also

Mine are 3rd grade and pre k 3 but yes I would consider it!

5. What are the most important factors to consider for establishing a new Lutheran High School? Please rank your top five factors in order of importance with 1 being most important.

Curriculum, College/Career Preparation, Location, Tuition/Fees, Enrollment, Facilities, Technology, Strong Christian Emphasis, Faculty, Safety, Other (Please Explain Below)

	1	2	3	4	5
Curriculum	43	50	16	10	9
College/Career Preparation	25	38	25	15	11
Location	5	3	10	7	8
Tuition/Fees	11	10	25	15	12
Enrollment	6	4	3	13	14
Facilities	1	0	5	5	4
Technology	0	4	5	10	10
Strong Christian Emphasis	39	16	19	15	8
Faculty	3	9	12	16	15
Safety	4	9	6	10	3
Extra-Curricular Activities (Sports, Band, Music, Drama, Speech)	6	3	21	17	34
Other (Please Explain Below)	2	0	0	0	0

Please explain (Optional) 12 responses

While I like the idea of a Christian education, there is also an importance to not shelter them and give them broader social opportunities and experiences.

Strongly support

The curriculum is very important to make sure it is teaching the core subjects that are consistent with sound teaching/science and the Bible, which will prepare them for their futures. Of course, Christian

principles/values should be emphasized in every subject. Beyond that, the technology and extra-curriculars are important and I would like to know how the new Lutheran School would provide for those two items. This was really hard! All these that I have marked are very important and could be a #1 :-)

I am not allowed to choose a 6th factor, but I would rate facilities and technology (online learning software) as equally important. How would the proposed high school deal with kids who transfer in? Are the dual credit community college credits transferrable to a 4 year university? Would it be an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Sciences degree? A strong math/science foundation is important to us. Foreign language would be fun as a 100% online elective. Athletics is not a huge factor, as my boys are already in private sports leagues. Perhaps if the high school would grow to a large size, it could form a team with the private Morton Fury soccer club?

All of these are very important. I was hard to choose 5, and especially hard to choose the order. Curriculum comes first, but one concern we have would be class size - is there a varied enough group of students to force my child to adapt to different personalities, understand cliques, see different ways of learning and doing life?

Bethel would need to have an FFA program or have some sort of connection/sharing arrangement with another institution's FFA program (Future Farmers of America). This is very important to our family in determining high school selection.

I am not sure at this time what another factor would be in our decision.

NA

Not only a strong Christian emphasis, but a specifically Lutheran emphasis in doctrine and practice. This is desperately needed to oppose the secular direction that public schools have been heading.

6. Would you as an individual, be willing to financially support a high school at Bethel Lutheran Church?^{153 responses}

Yes	No	Maybe
46.4%	13.7%	39.9%

Yes 71

No 21

Maybe 61

Other^{16 responses}

Absolutely if I could afford to. I'd give my time for sure.

My own child.

Currently Low income Single mom to 3

If we had a child there we would be involved

I wonder if there would be a scholarship? I am a single mother and have had my children on scholarship. My daughter is in college and went to Bethel from 2nd grade to 8th on scholarship (we paid from preschool to 1st grade when I was married) and my son since preschool. My husband left us. My daughter is a Sophomore in Iowa and was just accepted into their nursing program and is on the Deans list. My son

continues to be on the honor roll at Bethel. There is NO better place to be with its extraordinary teachers. I would definitely need a scholarship.

Unsure what this question is asking.

Faithful supporter of the grade school and would also support faithfully to the high school without question!

Tuition

If I had the money

I would like to know the particulars before jumping into such an investment.

If my kids went to the high school, I would expect to pay full tuition. As a Bethel Member I only want to voluntarily support it as I feel lead.

I'm not sure what is meant by this question; if by financial support you mean tuition, then yes, but we don't have the means to otherwise support the school financially.

Yes, Bethel does a great job and it would greatly benefit the community to have a Christian high school. possibly some but there is not margin for a lot

At this point it is not within our ability to support financially.

Sure Ithrough your fundraising efforts if I am capable at whatever time that might be

Would you encourage others to enroll their children? 153 responses

Yes	No	Maybe
71.9%	2.6%	25.5%

Yes 110

No 4

Maybe 39

Please explain (Optional) 16 responses

Again, I strongly feel this area could benefit from another option for high school. Under the right circumstances I think a small christian high school can be a great opportunity. I will wear a sign board if you want me to!

I would definitely if the schooling isn't just as good as the education I get currently i would make others aware of the option, but the choice is personal

If we feel the best option for our child we would encourage others

If asked, we would share our experiences.

We would have to experience it first for ourselves.

I feel that attending a Lutheran school growing up has help me be successful in life. I feel the balance of academics and the focus on our faith is extremely important.

We strongly feel pulled to support and advertize such endeavor, but would want to know the particulars in what is being offered compared to Peoria Christian HS.

If I felt the approach and enrollment fulfilled parents' desire for their student, absolutely! I will promote the HS to everyone. In cases where it makes sense, I will specifically encourage individuals to send their kids.

We are very happy with the school.

Do you have any suggestions for the steering committee? 37 responses

FROM PARENTS

For those of us who have the option of a great public high school, the selling point needs to be why? Why should we get behind a Bethel high school? What would make it stand out?

Very excited to hear this is being considered!

No

I believe success would largely depend on a non-denominational christian format which would potentially attract families who now drive all the way to Peoria for PCS enrollment. I personally would have limited interest in a Lutheran emphasis approach.

The low projected enrollment numbers is what would concern me the most right now about enrolling my children with the Lutheran High School when they are at that age.

Lots of prayers that this happens

My biggest and single most important concern is class sizes being too small. I feel there are severe and understated social and educational implications where children are only exposed to a small group of peers. Diversity/inclusion and healthy competition are very important parts of a child's development. Small classes also prevent extra curricular such sports, which promote further, different developmental benefits. While I like the idea of a high school, I think it would need to mature to be in the ran

FROM CONGREGATION MEMBERS:

Do you have any suggestions for the steering committee? 62 responses

No

Yes need more staff to be educated on kids with dyslexia and how to treat them!!!!!!!! Matching T-shirts for Zoom Calls

Reconsider

Nope

Not at this time.

If you do this do it right-great curricula, teachers, technology, and opportunities.

I don't believe it's financially feasible at this time.

go slowly, and think this through, get key people on board.

FROM COMMUNITY

Do you have any suggestions for the Steering Committee?

No

Bethel school was excellent for lower grades (preschool through 4th) but in upper grades my children would have benefited from a broader selection of activities and larger student body for friend groups.

Possibly focus resources more on HS youth groups in the church and make that a vibrant showcase for the community.

Investigate “standard” curriculums at other Lutheran High Schools, also schools geared toward college prep (IL Math/Science Academy, Benet Academy, Notre Dame HS, and other highly regarded parochial schools) look for unique course offerings and educational approaches. Possibly examine HS Home School curriculums, to decide the direction, focus, and organization of the ideal school. The purpose would be to help students to expand their thinking and knowledge both deep and wide, studying other curricular areas as well as pursuing higher level thinking skills in standard subjects.

This is exciting!

RECONSIDER!!

No need...focus on K-8

No, but I love that you are trying for this!

I am a Christian and I have great respect for your church and I sincerely believe this is a complete waste of resources when there is a wonderful HS right here in town. I also think it's a Christian parent and church's responsibility to put our kids who have been raised with Christian ideals into the public school system to shine the light and be an asset for others to know.

I think this is a great idea! I would suggest really praying about the tuition rates that you will set. Morton High School is a very good school, so keeping it cost effective to send students to a Christian high school should be a top priority (as I am sure it is). Comparatively to Notre Dame and Peoria Christian School, your high school would need to offer the same or similar programs (curriculum and extra curricular) to charge close to what they charge.

This takes away from our high school. Separating kids with an interest in religion means we remove even more of a chance of spreading the word with those of a less strong faith at a time where they may need it most.

Pray and start an intercession prayer team

Focus first on the curriculum and values and how that would set Bethel Lutheran High School apart from other schools, the core competencies, followed by the facilities. It's the foundational learnings that will count more in ones future than the actual structure that the learning took place. And I realize that the structure and location are important too but a great building does not produce a great student. Invest the money into diversity training for students and staff.

Get er' done! Praying this is fruitful!

A main roadblock I see is exposure to diversity. Public schools do give students more exposure to various students with various backgrounds and experiences. This is becoming even more evident in our culture and needed. How would this be an area considered when growing Bethel into the high school years?

Survey Summary

Reviewing the 386 surveys gathered from members of the community, parents of Bethel Lutheran School, members of Bethel Lutheran Church and school administrators reflect a very positive agreement in starting a Lutheran High School. Depending on the survey participant group some of the questions asked can be questioning about the total support of a high school. The hard data of answering yes, no or maybe gives indication for the start of a high school. It is important to review and study the written responses to the questions

asked on the survey. Of equal importance suggestions made to the Steering Committee as they continue to do the work for this very important program that is being considered. Reading the comments and suggestions tends to give a real perspective for the level of support that is there in addition to the questions that still need to be addressed. It is important to take the time for such review to help with planning.

When asked if there is a need for a Christian/Lutheran high school in the Morton area the survey responses from the community, members Bethel Congregation, parents of Bethel Lutheran School and the four Lutheran school administrators, sixty-seven percent (67%) of the respondents marked YES on the surveys, 22% marked NO, and 15.5% marked MAYBE. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the Lutheran school community/parents would support the idea of a new Lutheran high school in the Morton area. Asking parents of Bethel Lutheran school if they would consider sending their children to a Lutheran high school 62.3% indicated YES, 8.7% indicated NO and 29% indicated MAYBE.

There is general support from Bethel Lutheran School and from members of Bethel Lutheran Church and from the Morton community survey respondents for a Christian/Lutheran high school in the Morton area. While school parents and congregation members gave positive support for sending students, financially supporting and encouraging parents to send their children to a Lutheran high school community respondents were less affirmative for the same topics.

Survey responses also revealed a priority of factors that respondents were asked to rank while considering enrollment for their student. The factors in order of priority were #1. Curriculum, #2. College/career preparation, #3. Tuition/fees, and #4, Location.

Comments indicate a number of concerns regarding financial sustainability, adequate number of students to enroll in addition to a qualified / state certified curriculum, student relationships and religious instruction.

While statistically the data reflects positively on the start of a Lutheran high school there are also some reservations. Those reservations are: the uncertainty that no congregational financial support for the school would be needed, the amount of tuition needed for multiple children in a family, the lack of a definite commitment for enrollment, the clarity needed for what an online curriculum looks like and the uncertainty related to individual students responding to an online curriculum . Of those responding an average of sixty-seven percent (67%) indicated they would encourage others to enroll their children in the school.

Additional comments made on the survey questions and not contained in this report summary are noteworthy for consideration and study as they give some reflection of needs, concerns and uncertainties about starting the school.

Congregational parent and community surveys with their comments given to the Genesis Consultants are contained in this report. The Steering Committee will want to not only look at the percentages for each question but spend important time studying and responding to some very important comments.

Summary of Interviews

One hundred twenty-eight individuals were scheduled to participate in the interview sessions with the Genesis Consultant. Bethel had over 80 people participating in 18 different focus groups. Over 65 were Bethel Ministry members and over 15 were community and school members. The interviews included some individual interviews and also multiple parent groups, multiple congregational member groups, community groups, Bethel teachers group, the Board of Education, the Elders, the Church Council, the Curriculum committee and the Steering Committee. The representation from so many groups and individual participants who spoke openly about the possibility of a high school at Bethel gives clear indication that the opinion of participants were valued. In addition, the interview process gave opportunity for participants to also be a part of the possibility for starting a new ministry program at Bethel. The sharing of thoughts and ideas while asking clarifying questions helps in the process of making a decision. In other words community members, members of Bethel congregation and the school community were provided the opportunity to ask questions, share their thoughts and suggest ideas while listening to a proposal for a Lutheran high school at Bethel.

The group interview and individual interviewees were receptive to the interview process and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their feelings and ideas about the possibility of a proposed Lutheran high school. The following summary of the interviews represents the major themes expressed by those interviewed. Statements or questions that are in quotes were from interviewees and are cited as a representation of those interviewed in general. When asked to describe the quality of schools available in the community there was affirmation that the Morton public were “very good.” The programs that the schools provided and services for students were quality programs, “especially in the area of band.” There was also concern expressed about the future of public education. According to multiple interview groups, things were going to be mandated by those in charge of public education that were in conflict to what Lutheran believe, teach and confess.

Reaction to the Case/Vision Statement

There was an openness by all interviewees to discuss a high school in Morton, Illinois. Initially the interviews centered on the reaction to the CASE the Steering Committee had presented for consideration while also casting a vision. The comments reflected a genuine interest, and identified concerns for consideration. General concerns and questions arose around the cost, adequate number of students, quality academic program, college prep, on line curriculum and instruction, and extracurricular activities. Suggestions and comments reflected a concern for wanting to be assured of a sustainable financial future, realistic enrollment numbers and a real assurance of a Lutheran faith based high school.

Important Qualities of a High School w/ Online Instruction When reflecting on the type and quality of program the school would provide for students the interviewees were unclear as to what the curriculum would actually look like or include. In addition, comments or concerns were about safety, high school students and elementary students in proximity to each other adequate internet connection and space. Interviewees wanting a better understanding of online instruction and what that would be like for students. Individuals also encouraged the relationship that the high school could build with ICC for college and high school credits.

Funding of the Proposed School

There were references made to the budgetary challenges for funding the proposed school. The interviewees agreed that the school should be funded with student tuition. There was uncertainty about how much the congregations would want to financially support the school. Scholarships, adopt-a-student, and multiple child discounts for families in need were funding issues that were also discussed. Individuals commented on their willingness to support the school and financially help families with demonstrated need and for those who had a desire to educate their children at this high school. When the potential tuition was shared many comments felt the tuition “seemed reasonable.” Other comments questioned the tuition they’d seen in the Case and wondered if people would pay that much when “there is no real teacher at the school.”

Major Obstacles

When asked about major obstacles to establishing a classical Lutheran high school interviewees made reference to finances, budgeting and start-up costs and adequate enrollment numbers to sustain the school. Others commented on the need for having information on the number of students that would enroll and the need to clearly understand the curriculum instruction process.

Additional Counsel for the Steering Committee

When asked to give additional advice and counsel to the Steering Committee as they continue their work the following comments were made:

“Keep up the good work”

“Consider scholarship help”

“Maintain high standard of quality education”

“Is there an appetite for a financial campaign to be conducted?”

“Please don’t hurry the process”

“We are building Christian leaders.”

“No need to have a capital campaign.”

“Clearly communicate and define what need does this program fill.”

“It’s not really traditional as stated in the Case.”

“Calculate actual annual costs.”

“Do it well but within 6 months it is rushed.”

“Need the right person for the job.”

“Parents will want a full understanding as to what it will all look like for their kids.” “Enrollment cap being considered.”

“Seems low for enrollment”

“Make sure there is adequate staff so it doesn’t fall on present teacher.”

“Have quality staff.”

“Consider contracting public HS teacher after 3:40 when their daily contract ends.” “They can teach biology, lab science, etc. late afternoon or early evenings.”

“Over communicate so congregation buys in and is well informed.”

“This needs to be Mission-driven’.”

“Pray for the process.”

“Consider long term plan and facility need.”

“Will pastor(s) teach religion, apologetics class?”

Summary of Interviews

In general, people were genuinely open to the discussion of a Lutheran high school. The greatest concerns arose around the issues of curriculum, clarity of program, clarity of curriculum, adequate number of available committed students/families and adequate support and long-term commitment. The governing entity will need to address concerns and take into consideration multiple important issues that impact the school's academic program, enrollment and sustainable finances. Finally, high school policies will need to be thoroughly and thoughtfully developed that will address help administration.

Professional Opinion

The Steering Committee, comprised of congregational members from Bethel Lutheran church, undertook this feasibility study using the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Genesis process to assist in deciding the start of a Lutheran high school grades 9-12 at Bethel Lutheran Church and School Morton, Illinois. Many who participated in the interviews and surveys stated their appreciation for the opportunity to express their personal opinions regarding the establishment of a Lutheran high school. The feasibility study process provides opportunity for members to assess school programs offered to families in their community.

Counsel appreciates the efforts made in the gathering of statistics from the surveys. More detailed information may be needed from the congregation to determine their level of support and commitment to move ahead if there is a startup of Lutheran high school grades 9-12.

Statistics gathered over time may assist the congregation in determining its ministry needs, congregational plans and level of support for a Lutheran high school if it is to be truly part of the ministry of the congregation. The level of support and commitment of people from the congregation needs to be shared with the Steering Committee in order to help them determine direction, actions, timing and sustainability.

Qualities of the Proposed School

Interviewees and surveys gave indication not only of a quality academic program but one that provides opportunities that would be excellent with high standards, college prep in nature, in addition to consider partnering with home school families. There is uncertainty as to what a high school with online courses will look like or how it will impact students without the typical social and academic interaction that is part of the high school experience and the learning process.

Throughout the country and in the Morton area there is an increasing interest and in some cases a strong need for Christian, faith based schools. The schools available to students in the Morton area are viewed with mixed opinions. This proposed Lutheran high school is projecting a very unique approach for high school education with an online instruction approach.

Funding the School

It has been shared that financial support for the high school would not be needed from the congregation. Tuition would need to cover the cost of all high school “online instruction” for high school subjects needed by students for the state of Illinois high school graduation and college entrance requirements. Any support staff and the administration would also need to be funded in this manner. Funds may also be needed for families qualifying for assistance if such is part of the program unless the school accepts only those students/families that can pay one hundred percent of the set tuition. If the proposed high school program could not meet expenditures through tuition the additional funds will be needed to be generated to meet program expenses.

In order for a high school program to have a solid start a funding base will need to be established that can be used to help meet expenses in its beginning months. An adequate number of students will need to enroll in order for the tuition and fees to eventually help the program to be self sufficient. The Steering Committee will need to identify the source for such support that a high school may need.

Surveys from the congregation show that 41.9% of the respondents say that they, as an individual, would be willing to financially support a high school at Bethel Lutheran Church. Twenty-five percent (25%) said they would not or could not individually help fund the high school and 32.5% were not sure. Reading the comments made by congregation members about funding the school as an individual, 30% of the comments made give support for individually funding while 39% of the comments indicated they could not or would be unwilling to individually help fund the high school. Eighteen percent of the comments were uncertain about individually funding the high school.

Surveys from the parents show that 46.5% of the respondents say that they, as an individual, would be willing to financially support a high school at Bethel Lutheran Church. Almost fourteen percent (13.7%) said they would not or could not individually help fund the high school and 39.9% were not sure. Reading the comments made by the parents about funding the school as an individual, 50% of the comments made give support for individually funding while 8% of the comments indicated they could not or would be unwilling to individually help fund the high school. Forty-two percent (42%) of the comments were uncertain about individually funding the high school.

If the intent is that no congregational financial support will be needed, then tuition and fees as well as an adequate number of enrolled students will all need to be in place. Additional study may need to be done to set tuition and fees to balance expenses.

Support for a Lutheran High School

The LCEF demographic report indicates that there is a projected steady number of students ages 5-17 in the area or a 17 – 19 percent of the total population. While the number of children eligible to enroll in a grade 9 -12 school in the geographic area seems favorable it is difficult to determine how many of those children are interested or would consider enrolling their children in a high school with an online program.

Based on surveys and interview responses there is statistical support for the start of a Lutheran high school grades 9 – 12. Responses from surveys are positive along with the interviews, however, no “sign on the dotted line commitment” was made. It was also uncertain whether or not the congregation would be willing to add this opportunity to do ministry, in a special and unique way through a high school online program. The congregational support area, even if it is not financial, will need to be thoroughly explored if it is to be a part of the Bethel congregational ministry.

Summary

The idea of a Lutheran high school has been discussed over the years many times. A Steering Committee in 2020, was started to more intentionally and formally determine whether it is viable to start a Lutheran online high school grades 9-12 at Bethel Lutheran Church and School. During the interview process and reviewing the survey results, Counsel finds positive responses to support the starting a Lutheran high school at Bethel Lutheran Church in Morton, Illinois.

Consideration needs to be given to a specific base of support, for enrollment purposes, from Bethel Lutheran Elementary School and from other churches, and the community. The Steering Committee would need to more assuredly receive accurate and hard data from these schools regarding student enrollment support from the k-5 schools. Congregational support will need to be more definitive and more thoroughly developed. Funding for a high school that is sustainable will also need to be given a priority with a financially supportive financial budget.

Few ministries or building projects tied to ministries, in the life and history of the church have begun with 100 percent support. However, at the right time in the life of a church, expanded ministry by way of a Lutheran high school may prove to be a blessing as God's people come together to support mission work, evangelism outreach, faith nurturing, Gospel proclamation, "discipling" and grace experiences through a Lutheran high school.

However, the startup time frame of August 2021(5 months, April-August) for the proposed high school given the need to address planning, enrollment, publicity, recruitment, finances and curriculum gives cause for counsel to advise against a time commitment that may not permit the development of foundational systems that fosters sustainability.

Recommendations

It is the recommendation of counsel to, in a realistic and practical time frame, develop, complete and have in place the following if a Lutheran High school with an online curriculum delivery for grades 9 - 12 in the Morton, Illinois area were to begin:

1. Financial foundation that insures not only initial startup but is sustainable into the future. Using the following formula as an example:

Net tuition/fees,+ congregational support,+ annual giving, + capital campaign is greater than >or = equal to
Capital investment + Operating costs (financial aid + congregational assistance)

(If there truly is no congregational support then the remainder of the financial formula bares a greater percentage of the funding formula.)

2. Enrollment that supports and meets an agreed upon portion of the expenses.
3. Identify and have in place all initial startup costs for the school.
4. Develop an initial governing and policy manual that will assist administration and clarify responsibilities and tasks.
5. Receive Bethel Congregational voters' approval.
6. A detailed online curriculum plan that will be clearly communicated.
7. A financial or business plan covering at least the first few years of the school is needed which includes:

- Accomplishments to date
- Planning Assumptions

Expense Projection

- Salaries
- Supplies and purchased services
- Online curriculum and supports cost
- Technology needs and expenses
- Other needs

Income Projections

- Congregation??
- Tuition and Fees
- Third source, gifts, fundraising efforts, grants, donations

Operating Deficit?

Enrollment Projections

School Management and Leadership

The Marketing Message

- The Target Market
- Marketing Strategies

Resource Development Strategies needed for sustainability.

7. A communication plan that is intended to promote and develop partnerships with multiple congregations, Lutheran elementary schools, individuals, donors and others interested in supporting the high school.
8. Seek National Lutheran School Accreditation through the LCMS School Ministry Department.
9. Reach out to the Central Illinois District for Leadership and school administration information and support.
10. Seek resources from LCMS School Ministry Department.