

Speaker 1 ([00:01](#)):

Welcome to the Vanderbloemen leadership podcast. I'm your host, Holly Tate, vice president of business development here at Vanderbloemen on today's episode, Brian Jensen, executive search consultant here at Vanderbloemen interviews, Lynn Swinger chief strategy and innovation officer at the association of Christian schools international at ACSI. Lynn leads initiatives to address compelling questions and challenges facing Christian education, a published scholar and conference speaker. She is the lead editor of the books. Mindshift catalyzing change in Christian education and pivot new directions for Christian education as well as coauthor of bring it to life Christian education and the transformative power of service learning. She is also the editor of the ACSI blog and host for the podcast moving forward and Christian education. Tweet your takeaways from today's show using the hashtag Vander cast and check out our show notes to join our Facebook group where we host behind the scenes content and giveaways. Without further ado, here's Brian's conversation with Lynn.

Speaker 2 ([01:07](#)):

Well, I am so excited for this guest. We have today, Dr. Lynn Swann or is joining us. She works with an incredible organization. We're going to hear more about the association of Christian schools international and I'm gonna let her talk to you more about the exciting work that they are doing. But Lynn, thank you so much for joining us today.

Speaker 3 ([01:27](#)):

Brian, thanks so much for the opportunity to be Hugh.

Speaker 2 ([01:29](#)):

Yeah, it's fun to catch up with people doing the good work of furthering Christian education around the globe. Really. So I want to start by just you know, we're going to get into some of the specifics of your work and what you're doing, but tell us a little bit about who you are, your story, and what, what's exciting about your current work right now.

Speaker 3 ([01:49](#)):

Sure. So I actually started out in a very different place than where I am now. I started out in higher education in New York city at Columbia university and I was an administrator there while I was doing my doctoral work. And from there I became a faculty member at long Island university. I was in the graduate school of education, which was near where I lived at the time. And, and also during that time I was doing research nationally with a national grant looking at engaged learning and also at flourishing among college students. So I was extremely happy in that role. I was teaching, I was doing research, I was doing grant work. And then I I serendipitously, you could say, or sovereignly a a year off my oldest child during that year happened to go to Christian school. And so while I was off, I volunteered in the school.

Speaker 3 ([02:39](#)):

I helped with accreditation, I helped with faculty development. And so when the Dean's office called that April to, you know, asked me about my return and talk about classes, I told them I wouldn't be coming back. And I always say I had been bitten by the Christian education bug. So just that joy educating students holistically, you know, academically and spiritually, I just really had to stay and I had become really sold out to the school's mission and that was educating students to have a heart for God, a mind for truth and a passion to change the world. So I stayed at that school for about 10 years

positions of increasing leadership until I joined ACSI first in the Northeast and then moved to a national role with thought leadership and the research. So currently my current role, what excites me, it is that it really combines everything I've done both in higher ed and K to 12. And just the research, the thinking deeply about teaching and learning, thinking and about and identifying best practices and, and not just asking the big questions about education and, and I mean education in general and obviously Christian education specifically, but also working with leaders and practitioners to answer those questions for our time and for our schools.

Speaker 2 ([04:01](#)):

Yeah. Incredible work you get to do. And I want to, I want to ask you more specifically about the type of work you in particular get to do in just a second. But tell us first host just a little bit more about ACSI. It's this incredible network of Christian schools literally from around the globe. I was actually just visiting an ACSI school in Kigali, Rwanda. I was there last week, a meeting with the director of Ben Thomas and just incredible work that's happening around the globe. So tell us more about the organization and what makes it so special.

Speaker 3 ([04:36](#)):

So ACSI is unique in a few ways. You know, it is as, as you mentioned, it is global. It's the largest Protestant Christian school organization in the world. We have about 2300 members in the U S and double that again across the world. And there are another 15,000 schools in the global context that we support in other ways, not necessarily through membership. So we estimate the reach of ACSI is about 5.5 million children around the world. And even just focusing in on the U S you know, the, the, the schools we have here are incredibly diverse. You know, in terms of size, geography, where they're located. Urbanicity are they independent or church affiliated? And even there, if they're church affiliated, there are many different denominations. They have different missions, demographics, you name it. So what's amazing about ACSI is that all these different schools join together,

Speaker 2 ([05:32](#)):

Right?

Speaker 3 ([05:32](#)):

I think believing in the power of association and that we can do more together than we could apart. And that diversity is really our strength together. So our, our mission is to strengthen schools and equipped person educators regardless of their context. So the things we like thought leadership and research [inaudible] involved with like government affairs, legal, legislative services, our various offices, really the potential for impact and reach is pretty tremendous. And you know, ACSI was started in 1970 and now 40 years later the world has dramatically changed then. And the realities facing Christian schools are different. There are more extreme and more uncertain in many ways. And so I really believe ACSI still has an important role to play in sustaining and even growing the Christian school sector into the future. And an acuity that will be, you know, innovating, collaborating with other organizations and really zeroing in on those challenges and opportunities that schools face today. And even ones that we don't see that might be on the horizon.

Speaker 2 ([06:38](#)):

Yeah. Incredible work. And, and I want to get to some of that throughout our conversation today about the importance of thinking forward. For the next, you know, we've just started a new decade. So what

will the decade of 20, 20 of the 2020s hold for Christian education? Education in general is such an interesting phenomenon right now, but what will happen with Christian education and how can it people like those of you working at ACSI really contribute to the future of, of thriving institutions. And so one of the things you get to focus on on a regular basis is thought leadership. So I love your title. You're the chief strategy and innovation officer. So tell us a little bit about what you get to spend most of your days doing as you, as you do. Some of the things you just talked about furthering the mission of, of Christian education.

Speaker 3 ([07:27](#)):

So my days are really very varied and that's something that I love. You know, I really enjoy a mix of thinking of writing engaging with practitioners, dialoguing and travel. And so I spend a lot of time doing things like just talking with phenomenal Christian school leaders and their teachers and their staff. I was actually at a Christian school this week presenting on some of our new research and I met with a group of leaders from that area and it was amazing just to be able to hear their challenges, you know, their excitement, their hopes, and to engage with them. And so I would say that is one of my favorite things to do. And of course I also spent a lot of time doing research, you know, that involves data collection writing analysis, applying for grants, and we've got some great projects at ACSI that we're working on in those areas.

Speaker 3 ([08:16](#)):

And I also spent a good amount of time traveling and presenting all over the U S so I'm facing our schools internally, but I'm also facing externally a lot. So for example, I'll be headed to the UK in a couple of weeks to speak at it. National conference fair for the church of England schools headed up to keynote and Canada in a few months, the same museum in the summer. And the really a wonderful thing about that is I have the opportunity to collaborate and build initiatives with other leaders in different organizations. So for example, I chaired the global Christian school leadership summit in 2019 and we are looking to host that event again in spring of 22. So I get to be involved with things like that. We're also working women's leadership initiative which involves SISA here in the States and also leaders from various Christian school organizations in Canada. Mmm. So it's, it's, it's very busy, but it's dynamic and it's always something new, which I love.

Speaker 2 ([09:14](#)):

Yeah. It's such a, I mean, a lot of people would say, wow, then you get to do an incredible you get to live this incredible life. And especially those of us that live and are passionate for Christian education and, and seeing it flourish. What are some of the things you're here and you, you talked to a lot of people in Christian schools and those that are interfacing with Christian schools. What are just some of the things you're hearing could be challenges, could be excitement questions, what types of things are just rising to the surface as you have all these conversations?

Speaker 3 ([09:48](#)):

Yeah, so I think the major thing that I'm hearing is a real consensus. And this was not something that I, I saw when I entered Christian education about 12 years or so ago. But there's a consensus that there are enough societal markets cultural forces sort of coming together that what we are dealing with an education writ large and in Christian education specifically is beginning to change. And I'm hearing a lot of, we know we need to do things differently. We're just not sure how to do that, really even how to frame the frame, the problem. And so, you know, a lot of what we talk about and in our area is

reframing challenges as opportunities. So, you know, schools are faced with all these challenges, whether it's enrollment challenges or you know, cultural challenges, et cetera. But really the, the way to address this is not just to do it practically, practically or technically, but so to say, all right, if we believe Ephesians three 20, if we believe that God can do immeasurably above and beyond anything could ask or think or imagine, depending on your translation, then really any challenge that we face as an opportunity and Oh, it's an opportunity to, for the gospel, it's an opportunity to do things with better efficiency, to do things with excellence in a way.

Speaker 3 ([11:10](#)):

Maybe we haven't done it before to reach folks with Christian education that we haven't reached before. And so I've heard a lot about the challenges and I've been really engaged in trying to say how do we reframe those as key opportunities?

Speaker 2 ([11:25](#)):

Hmm. That's such a good word. So one of the things I want to do then is kind of jumped from that and look at some of the specific work you've been doing. So unit folks at ACSI just completed what I think is a fascinating research project that considered really a number of factors that contribute to creating a flourishing culture, which I think is so important. So to create this flourishing culture within the school environment, can you just share where the idea

Speaker 3 ([11:54](#)):

Came from? What was the catalyst for it and what are some of the key takeaways as you reflect back on this project? Yeah, so the, the projects, the flourishing schools research project, and it was about a two year old really now three year initiative. And to answer the question of how schools flourish. So the Genesis of it was a few years back, ACSI produced a forcing schools framework, which was a, an entirely conceptual document. And it basically catalog the categories of things school should do in order to flourish. And by flourish we mean really, you know, holistically. And I'll, I'll get into that in a second. But when I came on board, ACSI research was, was really starting to try and understand empirically what it meant for Christian schools to flourish. And so we conducted an extensive literature synthesis. You know, we studied the expectant student outcomes of over 60 leading Christian schools.

Speaker 3 ([12:45](#)):

And then from that we designed a three 60 instrument, meaning it surveys, parents, leaders, board members, teachers, alumni support staff and students. And so it's really three 60 piece to really get at the question of what does it look like for Christian schools to flourish. So we launched it last year and we had over 15,000 survey responses groups. Yeah. And that what's even more surprising is it that amount of time it represents over 280, 24 hour days of response time. Wow. The study was just massive. I mean it was really the first of its kind in Christian schools. And, and you know, through the analysis process, we looked at outcomes data and that included yesterday included standardized test scores. But it wasn't limited to that because we wanted to look at those holistic outcomes that that we looked at. And, and through that analysis, five large domains emerged for, for schools to flourish, for students to flourish and for teachers and leaders to flourish.

Speaker 3 ([13:46](#)):

And those domains are at purpose, which is kind of the central purpose of, of, of Christian to that relationships in orientation, expertise and resources and wellbeing. And each of those domains has

multiple constructs under it, like six to eight. And all of those constructs are actually predictive of flourishing and ends. If the school's doing well on those or if they were to be intentional about improving that, they would see a gain and flourishing outcomes. So I'd really encourage folks to download the national report that's available for free and now they can do that at [inaudible] acsi.org backlash flourishing schools. And I think you'd asked me just to a few takeaways, right? Yeah. So just, I'll try and try and go through so much. But I think you know, I, I mentioned we looked at the outcomes of Christian schooling and so many of those outcomes are kind of self evident.

Speaker 3 ([14:46](#)):

Like hiring qualified teachers has a positive impact on test scores. Right? And you know, if you provide enough resources in the classroom that reason teacher turnover. But some of the really fascinating findings are things that we tell our selves and our teachers and our families all the time. And we actually now have data. So for example, one of the things we looked at was alumni and their self report on their faith and their relationship with God. And we found that alumni were significantly, and I mean multiple times, nearly three times more, more likely to be walking with God if they come from a school where teachers do things like they're oriented towards best practice. If the schools effectively and collaboratively meet the needs of students with special needs, if their administrators engaged the surrounding community. And those are not common things we think of when we say we.

Speaker 3 ([15:37](#)):

How do we engage students in spiritual formation? And, and really to me this is amazing because now we have data to support what we've been saying all along that Christian schools are different because when they model excellence for God's glory, that's the best practice. If they care for needs among them, that students with special needs and if they engage their communities in service, they're really modeling Christ for students and students pick up on that and it has a lasting impact on their faith and we can track that after they graduate. And so that's really powerful. And it's a powerful fact, powerful effect we saw into the future. The second thing would be the wellbeing of teachers and leaders. And this was actually, as I mentioned, those domains, that was one of the top five areas of growth for schools in our sample. And what we're finding is, and this is not limited to Christian schools by any means.

Speaker 3 ([16:30](#)):

I think it's schools in general, you know, teachers and leaders are overwhelmed. They're saying we don't have time to prepare, they don't have time to take care of themselves. And so this data suggest that we probably need to start paying better attention to that because a teacher and leader wellbeing has an impact on the school and on students' experiences. And so Rex Miller, who's, who's a futurist and has done a lot of work with various Mindshift processes, including one in one with a Christian education, has a book coming out on teacher Brian out the spring. We also have a number of podcasts and blogs on this topic. And folks can find those at blog, that acsi.org. But I think this is a conversation we're going to start having to have because it impacts the outcomes that we want to, we want to produce. And then the last thing I'd say that's a takeaway is all schools can flourish and all schools have strengths and opportunities for growth.

Speaker 3 ([17:33](#)):

And I think so often in Christian education and education writ large, where we tend to think of schools as either flourishing or not, you know, doing not. And so this model really breaks that paradigm to say, you know, God has created each student uniquely, each teacher uniquely, each school is unique. And so

schools can actually take the assessment for themselves. They can get customized results and they get what I like to call kind of a contour map of where they're flourishing, where they can target for growth. And if they invest in those areas for growth, they will see a positive impact on flourishing outcomes. The one thing I will say, I'm sorta wrap the findings is that even though each school's unique, the most frequent construct in terms of areas for growth in our sample was resource constraints. So that appeared in almost 75% of schools that were involved.

Speaker 3 ([18:27](#)):

And yeah, that's probably not a huge surprise for Christian school educators and leaders. So but ACSI and we're looking to respond to that. So we're actually developing a new project that's going to look at sustainability, you know, in direct response to this research, but also to what we're hearing day in and day out. And I think it's important to realize that sustainability how we define it is important. So it's not finding a way to continue our current practices into the future, but it's making sure that our mission, it continues into the future. And if we carry our mission into the future, that may actually mean our schools need to look different from the pastor today. And so this project that we're developing, we've got our first year of funding provided through a grant that we applied for. We'll be looking at innovative financial models, operational models, things like cost sharing and mergers, charter networks, community partnerships, third source income, new delivery systems that oftentimes are mediated by technology, things like wraparound programs and petite programs and so forth. And so that's something to keep an eye out for the next couple of years that the flourishing research and other work that we're doing is informing.

Speaker 2 ([19:45](#)):

Oh, I love it. There's, I mean, there's so much rich stuff just in the last few minutes you've been talking about, I wish we had all afternoon to talk about it, but we don't. Because I loved the forward thinking of your organization, of the work you're doing to be thinking, how can we keep helping schools stay on mission and sustain it into the future? Because a lot of people would be listening and say, well, resource constraints. Yeah. You're not telling me anything. I don't know. As I sit here trying to figure out how to make the budget work, but I want to go back to the, the, the point to your, your research is showing that schools can be flourishing schools and there's multiple factors at play there that they can they can look at and say, Hey, for our context, how are we gonna make sure where a flourishing school and how are we going to stay on mission?

Speaker 2 ([20:38](#)):

And I just think that the work you're doing is so incredibly important. And I want to ask one follow up and then we'll move on. Cause like I said, there's so much to talk about, but one of your key takeaways being wellness. And, and we talked so much in education about the wellness of students, but to be sustainable and our mission, we really do need to be thinking about institutional wellbeing and the wellness of our teachers, our leaders, so that the mission can continue. Were there some, were there some best practices or schools that you found doing incredible work to help help their institution be better, to be more well, well rounded and well in health and spiritual and, and social practices?

Speaker 3 ([21:21](#)):

Yeah, so I think the first thing I'll say is that this, this construct, this stress construct was way up there in addition to resource constraints. It was maybe the third most frequent frequently report in. So I think that's telling in the sense that this is a common problem. And so if you were to say, can you, can you

point to a school that's doing this well, that would be really hard to do. I actually asked the same question that you're asking of Rex Miller with his project. And his response was, you know, education in general, being a, the profession you know, is, we don't, we don't really do a good job of that. And I think sometimes Christian schools and Christian ministries especially, don't do a good job of that because we also have the spiritual Niantic of, we're sort of you know, we're, we're dedicating our lives to this.

Speaker 3 ([22:12](#)):

And, and so not attending to ourselves as well. But what I would say is what starting to as we're talking with schools is that it's not so much a wellness program that you put in place or you know, you're not just encouraging faculty or telling people to take care of themselves. That's kind of like a scripture that says, you know, it's like if you see your brother in need and you say, ah, be well fed and warm and you don't provide them with anything, you know, that, that's not helpful. You know, that. And so I think we need to start looking at our structures. We need to start looking at our days. You know, how we structure them for teachers. Do they have adequate preparation time? And of course this all has financial considerations, but we need to consider it because it's actually affecting the quality of our program and the education of our students, let alone the health and wellbeing of our staff.

Speaker 3 ([23:04](#)):

So I think we need to look at schedules. I think we look need to look at our own practices and how we model things as leaders. You know, most Christian school leaders, I know they're out of the house, you know, three, four nights a week at games and this and that. And it's just overwhelming and exhausting. And I think looking at structures, modeling really starting the conversation at your school and really listening to your staff and things and having those solutions come about you need to your context and that requires collaboration, engaging stakeholders. There's no easy fix for this because it's complex problem, but really engaging

Speaker 2 ([23:46](#)):

The community, the school community and this conversation is definitely the first way to start. Ver. I, I couldn't agree more and like I said, there's so much we could dig into here, but I want to get to another project that that you've just finished up. So if people are listening and you're like, Whoa, don't move on. There's so much good stuff there. You heard from Lynn how to, how to find the report and we'll make sure it's in our show notes because it's just fascinating research that people should be aware of. But I want to move on to talking about, you also just finished a book that I think is going to be an invaluable resource for Christian educators. It's called Mindshift catalyzing change in Christian education. When, can you just give us a synopsis of this collection and tell us what your hopes are for those that pick up the book?

Speaker 3 ([24:31](#)):

Yeah, sorry. Pause. You might have to re reword that because you do hear my doorbell rang. My dog just went nuts though. I apologize on that. Good thing. It's not live. If it's live I lock them away, but all right, so we can, we can restart.

Speaker 2 ([24:48](#)):

Yeah, let me, let me ask the question again. Okay. Pause. So then you also just finished editing a book that I think is going to be proven to be an invaluable resource for Christian educators. It's called

Mindshift catalyzing change and Christian education. Can you give us just a short synopsis of the collection and then tell us what your hopes are for those that pick up the book?

Speaker 3 ([25:13](#)):

Sure. So we, this was a really fun project. A lot of work but, but a lot of fun. And back in 2017 we had a group of Christian educators leaders. It was informal, but we started regularly talking about how do we engage transformation and Christian education. And we kind of shared a common dissatisfaction, you know, some of this resistance to change. We'd seen just resistance towards innovation in general and Christian education specifically. So I'd mentioned Rex Miller before. He's a futurist, a committed Christian. He had pioneered this process called mind shift and he'd done in a number of different industries and also in education and he generously agreed to walk with us. So we gathered 60 leading educators from the us, Canada, Australia, and the UK. And we journeyed together for about two years through what became a Christian education mind shift. And that was the Genesis of the book.

Speaker 3 ([26:10](#)):

The book was co-written, co-edited by myself, Eric Ellison and Dan Berens. And also we had about 14 authors who coauthored various chapters, you know, in the book can be found on Amazon. It's also in the PDP stority CSI. And the book was really written to chart some of the transitions that Christian schools are making or that they need to make. And it just to take some of those off, you know, things like isolated to network from a scarcity to an abundance mindset, from a machine view of educations or that industrial model we've inherited, to something that's more human that's more suited for the knowledge economy and for really God's economy that we live in. I'm from Gutenberg to five GS. So that's the technology piece from white to mosaic. So that's the demographic shifts in society and also asking what the gospel requires of us when we think about diversity and seeking justice and loving our neighbors.

Speaker 3 ([27:08](#)):

And a key transition also is siloed to engaged. And I'm actually just tweeted this out and the other day you know, I think one of the things we haven't done well as a sector is engaged with the larger community. So many of us have heard of Christian education in terms of a three legged stool. You know, you get that a lot. So the three legs are home, church and school. But like the issue with that is only one person considered a stool. But if we think of a four legged table, which is home and church and school and community, the broader community, many people can come if we sat at that table. And so the question with this piece of silo to engage is, which is more gospel line? Is it the stool or is it the table? Well, we kind of sit at and so again, that goes to engaging our community.

Speaker 3 ([27:57](#)):

And then we also talk about in the book the transition from fear to hope where we become less like the servant and the parable of the talents who buried his talent cause he was afraid. So he buried his resources at the master and given him, and we become more like the servants who took the masters resources but took risks, right? Doubled those resources. And it might've been scary to do that, but they were rewarded. And so that parable makes clear for us. We're not going to be rewarded for fear and we're not going to be rewarded for bearing what God has given us. But, but really, like I said before, with infusions three 20, if God can do more than we can ask, think or imagine, we really have no reason if you're, and so that's the basis for the book we've distributed, either sold or given out and you're only 11,000 copies in the U S Canada, UK, Australia, other parts of the world.



Speaker 3 ([28:48](#)):

And you know, for those educators that pick up the book, our hope is that it would really spark conversations in their schools. Every chapter has discussion questions and it's really meant to be a piece that sparks dialogue and also encourage them to reach out to other schools. You know, start having conversations about these transitions, these from two journeys. You know, we've found that innovation rarely if ever happens in a vacuum. And so it happens when people join together and collaborate and spread ideas and so along their networks. And so that's really the goal of, of that book.

Speaker 2 ([29:24](#)):

Good. I encourage people to pick that up too. Fascinating greed. It's a wonderful research and I love when a project like that collaborates different voices from around the Christian education world. Just it brings a richness I think to a project like that. So congratulations to you on, on putting that out there and it's good to hear it gaining traction. I want to, I want to start to wrap up and I, I wanted to provide an opportunity for us to talk a little bit about moving forward of innovation, of thought leadership. Cause I know it's on the top of your head on a regular basis. And I think that navigating Christian education, particularly in its current malaise, it's just, it's not for the faint of heart. And I think a lot of people would agree with that. And so moving forward I think it's often going to require us to heed the words of you know, first Chronicles regarding the sons of his car that they we don't know a lot about the sense of it's a car, but we know that it States that they understood the times and then they knew how to respond.

Speaker 2 ([30:26](#)):

And so as someone who's spent a lot of time dissecting our current times, and, and as you strive to help people think about navigating the future, Lynn, what do you think will be key leadership practices for Christian educators as we move into this new decade?

Speaker 3 ([30:43](#)):

Yeah, I love the question and I love the image from scripture and I think something really interesting to know about where the sons of Instacart here is when Israel was going through something that had never happened before. So they were about to transition power from from Saul to a new King. Yeah. And it was a contested transition. So you know that the scripture that you talk about that passage, God actually sends these tribes to David where David is. And so God sent these sons of sr to David in this time of transition. And I think it's a, it's a great picture of where we are now. You know, we are in a time of major change things that have not happened before. I think everyone would agree that the rate of changes even increasing and, and in every area, you know, culturally, socially, politically, the market you know, and, and as it's changing more quickly, schools need to become nimbler.

Speaker 3 ([31:45](#)):

They need to be faster, not just to respond, but also to anticipate opportunities. And so the question really for me is how, how we become number, and I think we need to look at how to make schools more like learning organizations, right? Instead of institutions, this is a lot of Peter [inaudible] work, right? So organizations know what their goal is, they know what their mission is, but they're constantly growing and they're constantly proving and get there. And institutions, which is what most schools are attended just as soon as they do the same thing they've always done, they're going to get the results that they want. And so learning organizations are like ecosystems and institutions function more like assembly lines. And so learning organizations use formative data that use feedback constantly. They're making

continual adjustments. And we need faculty to do that. When you lead us to do that, we need boards to do that.

Speaker 3 ([32:37](#)):

We need to learn how to navigate complexity and certainty. You willing to take rests. And if we really think about it, the same skills we want to see in our students, that higher order thinking, that creativity, that problem solving, those are exactly the things we need to cultivate in our schools, starting with the adults in the building. So some of the leadership practices or behaviors that I recommend to, to folks who are really thinking about this are, you know, the first is to get plugged into the conversation. So are you reading? Are you listening to podcasts? You know, I had one leader say to me once, it was there and it was a very prominent leader. He said I said, well, are you listening to podcasts? And meaning? He said, when do I have time to do that? Our response was, you don't have time to not do it right.

Speaker 3 ([33:24](#)):

You can't afford to just get further behind and not not keep up. And so just to stay plugged in. I mentioned the blog before. And I'd also recommend digital education, which is a great podcast by Eric Ellison. He's a senior fellow at the center for the advancement of person education. So, you know, those are just some things, just some easy resources you can access to keep up. And then I would also say, you know, you've got to start these conversations at your school. You know, you've got to say what is absolutely nonnegotiable? What, what can we never change? What is our mission if missional? And then you have to collectively make a commitment that everything else is up for negotiation. No. And then, and then look at that. And along those lines, I would say, you know, always be piloting something new. Give yourself the space to experiment and to, to do what we've heard, which is to fail forward.

Speaker 3 ([34:21](#)):

Meaning that if you fail, you learn from it and tells me forward not backwards. So you're failing forward instead of staying in the same place and, and, and missing out. So pilots allow you do that. It's like a holding environment, a safe environment. So I think you should always have a few pilots of new programs, ideas, approaches, giving on at any time. And then just as the same time that you're starting these conversations and you're piloting, you know, you want to do that internally. But like I said, as we learned with mind shift, you want to do that externally as well. So I'd say visit other schools, take a team with you, send a team out, bring the emerging leaders from your school to places where innovative things are happening. You know, it's really Keno awaken our imagination to what is possible and you serve a creative God and we're creative beings made in his image.

Speaker 3 ([35:10](#)):

And sometimes when we're stuck in our challenges, we just need to get out of ourselves and be able to see people who are dealing with similar challenges but are coming up with creative solutions. So it's sort of visit schools, visit other places in awakened imagination. And, and as I mentioned earlier, the last thing is just you know, build relationships with other people. You know, there, there's plenty of research that suggests innovation spreads across networks, spreads through cross collaboration across sites and different places and different people. And so don't just go out and visit, but start building networks with other schools, whether it's in their area, wherever it might be. Technology, certainly comediate that with the goal of sharing innovation. And so all these things taken together I think will position somebody well to, I find that opportunity to develop innovative thinking and to have those important dialogues about Christian education into the future.

Speaker 2 ([36:06](#)):

Lynette has such good wisdom and and I love it all. And like I said, I wish we had more hours to dive into this. It's so much fun to have these conversation that somebody who has worked for a long time in Christian education. I love it and I'm so passionate about helping further it. And I know you are too. And I, I know people will love this episode. Those that are just looking for some, some wisdom as they move through. What can be a, just a difficult landscape to navigate right down Christian education. So thank you. And, and how can people learn if people have then sparked their interest on this? How can they find more out about your work or can they find some of these things and you have a podcast, how can they find that? Just tell us some contact info.

Speaker 3 ([36:52](#)):

Sure. Yeah. Well, the, one of the first places to look would be over at our blog and podcast site, which is [blog.acsi.org](http://blog.acsi.org). I'm also extremely active on Twitter, so I'm, my handle is at Lynn swatter, that's L Y N N S w a N E R one the number one. And so there are also a lot of pretty forward thinking innovative Christian school folks both in K to 12, but also in higher ed who are on there. And so I would say that that would be a great way to file things. And then, you know, folks are always welcome to email me. I'm very happy to engage with people, chat, chat with them, chat with their schools. And so I'm happy to give my email out, which is just my name. It's Lynn, L, Y N N underscore Swan, or [@acsi.org](mailto:@acsi.org)

Speaker 2 ([37:42](#)):

Lynn, thank you so much. It has been a blast to have these conversations. I hope we can have more of them in the future and I, we are praying with you or supporting your work there in the good feed people at ACSi. So thank you so much for joining us today.

Speaker 3 ([37:57](#)):

Brian, thanks so much for having me. It's always exciting to talk about these various innovative projects and other things that are going on and especially to have the opportunity to talk about the future of Christian education.

Speaker 2 ([38:08](#)):

Wonderful. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([38:11](#)):

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