

Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools

Revised December 1, 2016



Diocese of Rockford

Prepared by:



INTRODUCTION	1
VISION FOR THE FUTURE	2
I. CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND MISSION	3
DATA AND OBSERVATIONS	3
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	4
II. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP	6
DATA AND OBSERVATIONS	6
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	6
III. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.....	9
DATA AND OBSERVATIONS	9
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	9
IV. OPERATIONAL VITALITY.....	13
<i>A. ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT</i>	13
DATA AND OBSERVATIONS	13
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	14
<i>B. CATHOLIC SCHOOL FINANCES</i>	17
DATA AND OBSERVATIONS	19
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	21
<i>C. FACILITIES.....</i>	25
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	25
<i>D. DIOCESAN SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP</i>	26
OBSERVATIONS.....	26
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	26
V. IMPLEMENTATION	27
GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....	27

INTRODUCTION

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockford have a long history of teaching the Catholic faith and Catholic values to young people through quality education. Catholic education is primary to the mission of the church, and Catholic schools are the most effective means the church has to form the minds and hearts of future generations. To ensure a stable and healthy future for Catholic schools and to strengthen these institutions to have even greater impact on the church and society, the Diocese of Rockford has developed a comprehensive strategic plan called *Faith Forward: Building our Blueprint for Catholic Schools*.

From November 2015 to October 2016, the nationally recognized consulting firm of Meitler has been working with Catholic school leaders in the Diocese of Rockford to form a new vision and practical plan that will release the potential Catholic schools have for a stronger future. The planning process included a number of opportunities for parish and school leaders to contribute to an understanding of the current state of Catholic education, offer ideas that would shape the plan, and respond to proposed goals and strategies. The preliminary plan will be publicly presented to Catholic school leaders for discussion and feedback on October 27, 2016.

To guide the development of the plan, a Catholic Schools Planning Committee was established. They reviewed data and findings compiled by Meitler and the Catholic Education Office. Early in the process, the consultants visited with every school and compiled significant data. Findings about the condition of schools were widely shared, and a discussion of new directions was initiated. The Planning Committee used the information and feedback received to create a working draft of the plan. The plan was then shared for feedback and will be refined after some reflection. The timeline for implementation and the human and financial resources needed for implementation are being developed.

A special thank you to the Strategic Planning Committee for their leadership and vision:

Name	Affiliation
Mr. Tom Austin	Labor Market Economist, Illinois Dept. of Labor Statistics
Fr. Carl Beekman	Pastor of St. Peter & Paul Parish & School
Dr. Michael Cieslak	Office of Research & Planning
Fr. F. William Etheredge	Superintendent of Aurora CCHS
Fr. Bob Jones	Pastor of St. Katherine Ann Drexel Parish
Mike Kagan	Superintendent of Schools
Msgr. Stephen Knox	Pastor of St. Patrick Parish & School
Fr. Michael Lavan	Pastor of Holy Angels Parish & School
Mr. Paul Logli	Executive Director of United Way of Rock River Valley; Board Member at Boylan CCHS
John McGrath	Director of Catholic Education Office
Sue Murray	Diocesan Fiscal Manager for Schools
Fr. David Peck	Pastor of St. John Neumann Parish
Mr. John Sentovich	Director of Development, Northern Illinois University
Mrs. Susan Sosa Bachmeier	World Relief of DuPage/Aurora; Member of St. Rita – Aurora
Mrs. Jean Spohn	Principal of St. Mary Elementary School
Fr. William Vallejo	Pastor of St. Edward Parish & School
Mr. Steve Wallace	Professor of Curriculum & Assessment, NIU

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

What is our vision for where we are going?

Our vision is our desired future, a target the strategic plan for Catholic schools will strive to achieve for all schools. The vision is a succinct description of what Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockford should be and should become. These are the most important areas for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockford at this point in history. Five or ten years from now, different areas may be identified as priorities change. Flowing from the vision will be goals, strategies, plans, and recommendations.

1. Catholic schools, as a diocesan and parish ministry, are agents of evangelization, and also serve as a catalyst and advocate for vocations of the Church.
2. Catholic schools provide an environment where students encounter the living God and the Catholic Church, are formed to be lifelong disciples of Christ, and actively engage in the Eucharist and sacraments.
3. Catholic schools foster a culture of academic excellence and distinguish themselves as the premier educational opportunity. They promote life-long learning that develops the whole person – mind, body, and soul.
4. Catholic schools operate efficiently, meaning enrollment is at 85% to 90% of a full school based on the level of staffing and educational program. Schools function within diocesan norms for student/teacher ratios, making adjustments when enrollment falls below norms. Schools will attract students from new and growing constituencies, in particular the Hispanic community.
5. Catholic schools respond to the demands of a 21st century education and shifts in population by updating facilities in existing schools and planning for new schools.
6. Catholic schools are most effective as a ministry when guided by a fruitful partnership between pastors, administrators, teachers, and parents.
7. Parents have both the obligation and the right to be the primary educators of their children. Therefore, parents are engaged and challenged to support the faith and academic development of their children. Parents and students are active members of the school and their local parish community.
8. New and expanded sources of revenue contribute to the funding of Catholic school education. The real cost and value of a Catholic education underpin the funding model of the future.
9. Catholic schools are microcosms of their parishes, their diocese, and the Universal Church. As such, Catholic schools are welcoming to families of diverse cultures, ethnicities, economics, and learning abilities.

I. CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND MISSION

Data and Observations

Catholic identity and Mission is the central focus for schools in the Diocese of Rockford. It combines commitment to basic values of our schools: evangelization; catechesis; building a faith community; rigorous academics; spiritual, social, and emotional growth; and life-long learning. The Catholic identity of a school in the 21st century reflects the documents from Vatican II, from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, from the United States Catholic Conference, and from research of the National Catholic Educational Association and related organizations. Such documents indicate that a school's Catholic identity must be entwined throughout all aspects of school life, its relationship to the parish(s) and the wider Church.

The essential elements of Catholic identity in our schools are built upon the tasks of catechesis: Word (knowledge of the Faith), Worship (liturgical education, teaching to pray), Service (works of mercy, action for social justice), Community (education for community, Church as a communal life), Moral Formation, and Missionary Initiative (living as Christ's disciples). (*General Directory of Catechesis, #85*)

- a. Catholic identity in the elementary and high schools is evident and strong. The key elements identified as essential are the foundation of each school in the diocese.
- b. The schools have, to one degree or another, a program of student and faculty retreat experiences, regular Eucharistic liturgy celebrations (some daily, most weekly), daily prayer, and a variety of devotional opportunities, service and social justice opportunities.
- c. All of the schools employ a Religion curriculum approved by the diocese and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- d. The schools are fortunate to have dedicated, faith-filled teachers and staff. It is apparent that they serve as witnesses of their faith to students and their families.
- e. Teachers of religion in the schools are expected to be qualified as catechists in the diocese.
- f. Evangelization is becoming a growing focus of Catholic school education and life. However, there is a need to provide for a more formal understanding and on-going formation regarding what evangelization is, what it means in the context of a Catholic school, and how to integrate it throughout school life.
- g. Continuing professional development is necessary for faculty members on becoming catechetical leaders, regardless of academic content area being taught. There are teachers who could benefit with more background in catechesis as well as addressing those who have not been well catechized.
- h. School leaders provide opportunities for adult faith formation among faculty and staff members primarily through a faculty/staff retreat experience and opportunities for celebrating Eucharistic liturgy and providing opportunities for prayer.
- i. A growing concern is the issue of parents who are not active in their faith or not catechized very well. It is important to assist parents to be the primary educators of their children in the faith and for them to grow in their own faith showing themselves as active members of a faith community. The challenge for schools is to evangelize parents as well as their children.

- j. The high schools employ a variety of approaches to faith formation and campus ministry. Some have a formal campus ministry program with appropriate staffing, and others partner with the local parish youth group in actively engaging students in faith formation.

Goals and Strategies

1. The parishes and diocese will reaffirm their commitment to provide Catholic school education for Catholic families and will encourage Catholic parents to enroll their children in Catholic schools.

Strategies

- 1.1 Marketing initiatives both diocesan and local will provide information about the benefits of Catholic school education directed at all Catholic parents.
- 1.2 Pastors, parish leaders, diocesan leaders, school parents, teachers, and others will encourage families to enroll in a Catholic school. A concentrated three-year marketing initiative will be developed to assist these leaders in their promotion efforts.
- 1.3 Financial assistance resources will be expanded to ensure the cost of a Catholic education can be affordable for families, regardless of financial means, to have the opportunity and the option to enroll at a Catholic school. Such resources should include expansion of current and new scholarships, building of endowment funds, and growth of effective school/regional development programs.

2. Catholic schools and the parishes that sponsor them in collaboration with the diocese and Catholic Education Office will initiate ways to fully assume their shared responsibility for evangelization.

Strategies

- 2.1 Each school will ensure that school life and learning are centered on:
 - **Word** – teaching and living Gospel values; preservation of and teaching Catholic values, traditions and beliefs that are the heart of the curriculum and programs of the school.
 - **Worship** – regular Eucharistic liturgy, prayer and devotions that give expression to the Catholic life of the school.
 - **Service** – opportunities for faith-in-action that are consistent with Catholic social justice values and teaching, and serve as a witness to the local community and world.
 - **Community** – the culture of a school integrates personal faith development within the experience and life of the larger school, parish and Church community.
 - **Moral formation** – character development is modeled and taught within the values and moral teachings of the Church.
 - **Missionary initiative** – students and adults are taught and live the importance of sharing one’s faith and becoming a disciple in the image of Christ.

- 2.2 Opportunities will be provided to encourage parents and guardians to be actively engaged in the faith formation of their children and for these adults to grow in their own faith and become (more) active in their own church community.
- 2.3 School principals will be recognized as an important contributor to ministry leadership in parishes with an elementary school. Under the leadership of the pastor and with his encouragement, parish and school staff will work jointly and in every way possible that serves the mission of Catholic education. Specific areas could be strengthening families, evangelization of parents and family members, Christian parenting, adult faith formation, and connecting adults to small faith communities.

3. Administrators, faculty, staff and governing bodies of the schools will deepen their faith commitment, grow through faith formation, and serve as witnesses of their faith on a daily basis.

Strategies

- 3.1 All newly hired teachers will participate in an orientation opportunity stressing the ministry of a Catholic school teacher, her/his role in the school's evangelizing mission, and strengthening Catholic identity through effective teaching and personal witness.
- 3.2 Regular formation experiences and in-service opportunities will be scheduled at the diocesan and local school levels focusing on personal and communal faith formation and community building.
- 3.3 All school faculty, including high school faculty, will participate in professional development to become catechetical leaders.
- 3.4 The Catholic Education Office and school administrators ensure that all teachers of Religion understand and faithfully implement the approved religion curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12. All teachers of religion will acquire the necessary credentials as certified catechists.
- 3.5 The Catholic Education Office will provide mentoring for new principals regarding their role as spiritual leaders within their school.
- 3.6 The hiring process will put emphasis on faculty that hold a deep commitment to the Catholic faith and personal relationship with Christ.

II. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Data and Observations

- a. There are 33 active education commissions among the 40 elementary schools. Approximately 23 of these commissions are involved with principal evaluation, policy formation, monitoring the quality of programs, public relations/ marketing and finances.
- b. Education commissions are subject to the direction of the pastor and the particular charge he gives them. Many are not clearly directed and do not feel empowered. Many commissions do not have the membership or vision to lead effective development programs. Although orientation is offered, it is not utilized by all schools.
- c. Only 10 schools have a committee focused on development and advancement activities. Three elementary schools have a part time person working on advancement.
- d. A few schools have assistant principals, often classroom teachers. Where assistant principals are present, the school has greater opportunity to address school viability issues as well as academic matters.
- e. The complexity of administering schools successfully has grown over the years. Pastors bring varying levels of gifts and skills to their role when providing oversight for schools. Inconsistency in leadership can lead to mistakes, conflicts, and lack of vision. Pastors are sometimes put in a position to handle issues like human resource issues for which they are not fully qualified.
- f. All but one high school have an advisory Council of Administrators comprised of local pastors and parish and school representatives. In many cases membership on the Council is based on representation rather than of areas of expertise such as finances, legal, facility management, etc. Active and engaged committees of the Council are limited in most high schools
- g. Traditionally, high schools have employed a Superintendent-Principal model of school leadership which provides a direct relationship between local Catholic elementary schools and high schools.
- h. A President-Principal model is in place in one school. As a result, professional oversight is given to business matters, enrollment management, advancement operations, as well as Catholic identity.

Goals and Strategies

- 1. Leadership at the local level will be enhanced by providing pastors and principals with programs and services that will strengthen their administrative and educational leadership skills.**

Strategies

- 1.1 Establish an orientation and introduction program for pastors new to a parish with a school.

- 1.2 Establish a year long orientation and induction program for new principals. New principals meet before school opens and then monthly with the Catholic Education Office to participate in presentations and discussions of pertinent issues such as Catholic identity, tips for a successful opening of the school year, how to lead successful faculty meetings, Diocesan policies and procedures, working collaboratively with boards, effective supervision strategies, conflict resolution strategies, parent-teacher relationships, school-wide assessment strategies aligned with curriculum goals, etc.
- 1.4 A mentor principal program will be established to provide new principals with advice and support from seasoned, successful principals.
- 1.5 Establish an ongoing principal education program. Principals may elect to attend a two and a half day off site conference yearly. Leadership development will be a point of emphasis. Offsite workshops will be offered each year. Sessions will be enhanced by opportunities for learning best practices as a school leader, peer sharing, and opportunities for camaraderie.
- 1.6 Principals will nominate faculty members who they believe have leadership skills to attend a special day long session titled “Invitation to Leadership”. The session will present strategies and programs that will help them prepare for the role of principal and encourages them to move toward that reality. The Catholic Education Office communicates with these individuals periodically to monitor their interest and commitment to assuming the role of principal.

2. Governance in parish schools will strengthen the role of education commissions by calling upon people with specific gifts and expertise, increasing accountability for results, and creating a culture that proactively establishes a vision and plan.

Strategies

- 2.1 The role and responsibilities of the parish education commission will be restated to emphasize strategic planning, matters of policy not operations, attention to development and advancement, marketing and enrollment management, facilities, financial planning, and working to strengthen the Catholic identity of the school. The relationship between the school education commission, pastor, principal, business managers, finance council, and pastoral council will be re-stated.
- 2.2 All education commission members will receive in-service on their role and the in-service will be ongoing.
- 2.3 Bylaws, governing documents, and policies will be developed by the Catholic Education Office. Any local adaptations will be preapproved by the office. The Catholic Education Office will have authority to monitor compliance with the specified governance model and recommend changes where there are deficiencies in implementation.
- 2.4 All new education commission members will be required to participate in an in-service provided locally, online, or through a webinar format.
- 2.5 Membership for education commissions will be recruited through a selection process established by the Catholic Education Office. The selection process will seek members who bring wisdom, experience, community leadership, and philanthropic leadership based

on criteria developed by the Catholic Education Office. Education commissions will be appointed by the local pastor and not elected.

3. New models of governance will be put in place where schools are sponsored by multiple parishes and function as a shared ministry of those parishes.

Strategies

- 3.1 A Catholic school board/commission will be selected for their knowledge, leadership, and expertise. While a connection to the supporting parishes is important, representation is not the primary criteria. Board/commission members will be selected who understand and embrace the mission of Catholic education.
- 3.2 Bylaws, governing documents, and policies will be developed by the Catholic Education Office. Any local adaptations will be preapproved by the office. The Catholic Education Office will have authority to monitor compliance with the specified governance model and recommend changes where there are deficiencies in implementation.
- 3.3 The relationship between the school board/commissions, pastors, parish pastoral councils, and finance councils will be defined through the delineation of roles. The school board will be delegated responsibility, with the pastors having final authority. One pastor should be established as the canonical administrator. He would convene the pastors of all sponsoring parishes in executive meetings to approve major decisions as outlined in the bylaws.

4. Principals will only be appointed to or released from their positions with the concurrence of the Superintendent to ensure that strong, effective, qualified leadership is in place in the school.

Strategies

- 4.1 Refine and promulgate a formal process for the selection and appointment of principals that includes the significant participation of the Superintendent. Formalize diocesan policy to say only candidates preapproved by the Catholic Education Office will be offered principal positions.
- 4.2 Before principals are released from their positions, the pastor and the Superintendent will agree that dismissal is warranted, proper procedures have been followed, performance evaluations have been conducted, and dismissal is in the best interest of the school. Principals will not be terminated or non-renewed without agreement from the Superintendent.

III. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Data and Observations

- a. Elementary school students are well-prepared for high school and those in high school are well-prepared for college. This is evidenced by both test scores and successful performance as students advance.
- b. Sufficient funding is a major challenge to buy updated equipment and curricular resources.
- c. Many of the elementary schools have limited science equipment and few labs. Labs that are in place are often dated.
- d. There is a range of technology in use. While all schools see the importance of technology as in education and in students' lives, only a few elementary schools have 1-1 programs.
- e. There is a growing population of students with special learning needs (IEP's, 504's, and unidentified) in the diocese. And there are parents who would like to enroll their students in Catholic schools but the student's needs cannot be accommodated.
- f. Testing results across schools show disparities in student performance. Catholic schools should be able test one to two grade levels above the norm, but not all schools are doing so.
- g. The age and condition of facilities is limiting technology capability. Updates and upgrades are needed to provide 21st century learning environment.

Goals and Strategies

1. Excellent teaching will be encouraged, supported and celebrated.

Strategies

- 1.1 Develop a profile of an excellent teacher from input provided by teaching and administrative staff across the diocese.
- 1.2 Use the excellent teacher profile as a goal reviewed during summative evaluation conversations with the principal.
- 1.3 Recognize excellent teaching, "Teacher of the Year" in each building and diocesan-wide. Nominated and/or winning teachers present their strategies at diocesan conferences.
- 1.4 Principals will seek ways to provide planning time for teachers willing to experiment with new techniques and strategies. Teachers present the project or cutting edge initiative they want to try. They then present the high and low points of the initiative to the staff.
- 1.5 The diocese will develop and carry on strategies for recruitment, development, and compensation of school personnel to ensure the effective implementation of a first class educational system.

2. Technology will be integrated into every school and the teaching of every teacher to achieve specific learning goals and make students adept 21st century learners.

Strategies

- 2.1 Support an enhanced diocesan wide technology committee to study application and use of technology in teaching.
- 2.2 Individual members, or small groups, research programs and trends in technology that enhance the academic program. Possibilities include Quizlet, Voice Thread, 3D printers, E-chalk, Robotics club, student blogs in response to teacher generated prompts, teacher generated and student generated power point study guides, YouTube presentations, more effective use of iPads, more effective and creative ways to utilize smart boards, to name a few.
- 2.3 Provide the opportunity for teachers and students from various schools to demonstrate the use of several programs at a conference day devoted to technology in the classroom.
- 2.4 Research and share grant opportunities to fund technology staff support, materials, and programs including specific application requirements and procedures. Present sample grant applications for each school to adapt as it sees fit.
- 2.5 Develop a comprehensive technology plan that extends beyond hardware and software and looks at a “philosophy of technology.” Answer why technology is necessary and how it will be used to achieve educational goals.
- 2.6 At least one school in each deanery pilots at least one plan in one grade for a year. At the end of the year, showcase successful use of technology at a follow-up conference.
- 2.7 Schools start to become one-to-one schools beginning with one grade at a time. Move away traditional computer lab settings.
- 2.8 Provide strategies for schools to better utilize technology for communication with parents.
- 2.9 Encourage teachers to emphasize differentiated instruction and integrating technology as an effective tool across the curriculum.

3. Teachers and administrators will grow professionally in knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development. Catholic school teachers and administrators will be among the best educators and models of faith in our society.

Strategies

- 3.1 Using assessment data, the Catholic Education Office will help identify school improvement plan needs with respect to academic performance.
- 3.2 Professional development will be designed to address identified needs with particular attention to differentiated instruction in mixed ability classrooms and integration of technology into the academic program.
- 3.3 School wide professional development plans will be created.

- a. Each school will develop a professional development plan based on the needs of the school. An emphasis should be placed on integrating technology into the curriculum and strategies for differentiated instruction in mixed ability classrooms.
 - b. The professional development plan will be monitored at each faculty meeting.
 - c. Text book companies will be asked to provide workshops on creative ways to use the materials and online resources associated with their text books.
 - d. Principals will identify excellent teachers in their schools. Once identified, principals will provide opportunities for other teachers to visit and observe those teachers who effectively utilize best practices.
 - e. The diocese will partner with colleges and universities to provide continuing education opportunities for teachers and an affordable path to advanced degrees.
- 3.4 The Catholic Education Office will investigate the feasibility of securing additional government programs and grants designed to enhance the learning and teaching experience.
- 3.5 A diocesan wide workshop will be held to teach principals, or their designees, how to write grants for professional development.
- a. A list of potential grantors will be distributed.
 - b. Sample successful grants will be shared.
 - c. Helpful hints on how to prepare a successful grant application will be presented
- 3.6 Professional development will provide specific help to principals and teachers as they strive to meet the needs of all students in mixed ability classrooms.
- a. Provide a diocesan-wide professional development day on the topic of differentiated instruction.
 - b. Encourage the use of the internet to access sample differentiated lesson plans, graphic organizers, templates, YouTube and PowerPoint presentations, and tiered assignment and assessment models.
 - c. Principals will provide a day for faculty to research and access the above mentioned materials.
 - d. Schools will choose one aspect of differentiated instruction for all teachers to focus on per month. For instance, one faculty may choose to tier assignments and assessment for students in their classes.
 - e. Principals will share results at principal meetings.
- 3.7 The Catholic Education Office will investigate government programs such as, Ready to Learn Television, and 21st Century Learning Centers, which partners with NASA, the National Park Service and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to bring STEM content to students in low income areas.
- 3.8 The teacher contract will be amended over time to include an additional 5 days for professional development each year. The increase will be instituted with a corresponding increase in compensation. Schools will have some flexibility in how they use the extra days.

4. Schools will develop a much greater capability to serve students with a wide range of gifts and needs.

Strategies

- 4.1 All schools will participate in a series of Diocesan wide, comprehensive professional development seminars focused on differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom.
- 4.2 Teachers will be encouraged to utilize lesson plans, templates, assessment tools, and strategies, available online in education sites, for meeting the needs of all students.
- 4.3 The diocese through the Catholic Education Office will have staff trained to work with the principals and teachers to master strategies for serving all the students in a mixed ability classroom.
- 4.4 Appropriate accommodations in assignments and assessments will be made for students with special learning needs and for high functioning students who need to be challenged.
- 4.5 Possibilities for special needs programming will be researched in areas of the diocese where such a program could serve a region or group of schools. Investigate well founded programs where students are included in the general program, but may have a different tuition and specially trained teachers. Consideration will be given to the need for teacher preparation and facilities.

5. Every school will identify a niche area(s) in their curricular and educational programs that makes them stand out and demonstrate superior benefits for students.

Strategies

- 5.1 Individual schools will establish a group charged with carefully and thoughtfully reviewing the mission statement in an effort to identify the school's unique mission. The group will study the educational marketplace to understand what choices are available to parents and to what parents might be attracted. The group will then examine the areas of the educational and co-curricular programs, existing and new, to determine where the school can be remarkable and offer distinct advantages that are most aligned with the school's special mission.
- 5.2 Schools will market their niche and unique brand internally and then to the broader community.

IV. OPERATIONAL VITALITY

A. ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Data and Observations

- a. In 2008-09, K to 12 enrollment in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockford was 13,479. Declining enrollment has continued across the diocese every year since 2008, declining 17.7% or 2,394 students to 11,085 students in 2015-16. Enrollment declines have been greater than population declines, suggesting Catholic schools are losing market share.
- b. Losing 2,394 students is like losing 10 schools of 225 students each. During this period only 2 schools closed with enrollments of 118 (*Archbishop Romero Aurora*) and 33 (*Nativity BVM Menominee*). The rest of the enrollment losses left schools with smaller classes, combined grades, or one section per grade where there once were two sections.
- c. The most common reasons given for enrollment losses are, in order: parents can't afford tuition, economy and job loss, and shifting values for society (i.e. parents value Catholic education less than previous generations). These are based more on perception than market data.
- d. Catholic schools in the diocese have 1,719 Hispanic students enrolled in K to 8th grade, and 553 enrolled in 9th to 12th grade, for the 2015-16 school year. Hispanic students comprise 20.6% of K-12 enrollment.
- e. Generally, Catholic schools find prekindergarten programs are important for recruiting kindergarten students. Based on school data forms, 421 out of 848 (49.6%) kindergarten students in 2015-16 enrolled from the school's prekindergarten program. The other half of kindergarten enrollment comes from private PK, public PK, or some home school programs.
- f. In 2015-16, Catholic schools only filled 57% of the available seats for PK3, and 75% of the available seats for PK4. While the PK4 enrollment is higher than grades K through 8 overall, prekindergarten programs are under enrolled.
- g. Healthy enrollment depends on strong numbers at entry grades like kindergarten. Kindergarten declined from 1,015 in 2010 to 844 in 2015.
- h. Healthy enrollment also depends on strong retention from grade to grade. This is an area of major concern for many schools, 14 schools lost 10% to 20% of their enrollment year to year. While some turnover is normal, the losses are higher than expected when schools have strong stable leadership and good reputations.
- i. For the 2015-16 school year, Catholic schools had staff hired and space for 12,602 students if every seat were filled to the maximum. While it is not realistic to operate at 100%, a healthy target would be 90%. As a diocese, schools are operating at 64% of their capacity, with 4,500 empty seats. Both the lost revenue and the cost is significantly impacting education on many levels.
- j. Empty seats have created a larger cost per pupil and resulted in inefficiency that is choking school budgets. As enrollment fell over the past seven years, no schools have closed. As a response, combined classes are being utilized in 6 schools. Other schools which once served two sections per grade have moved to single sections where needed.

- k. Combination multi-age classrooms largely came about as a response to under enrollment, rather than a preferred educational model with benefits for students. Teacher preparation for this model is mixed. While students can benefit from a combined multi-age classroom with a highly qualified teacher, the perception from parents towards combined classes is largely negative.
- l. In 2011, 26 (65%) of 40 schools had pupil teacher ratios of 20 and above, but by 2015 just four years later, 17 schools had pupil teacher ratios of 20 and above. Of particular concern are 8 schools where the pupil teacher ratio is below 15:1.
- m. When looking at market share against population, the share in Catholic schools is slowly declining.

Goals and Strategies

1. The Diocese of Rockford will launch a major marketing campaign to support marketing campaigns in all schools.

Strategies

- 1.1 The diocese will contract with a marketing firm to provide professional services to schools that teach and support brand development, web design, media presence, online advertising, and other related services. Schools could make a shared contribution to receive these services.
- 1.2 The Catholic Education Office will employ staff dedicated to training and consulting with schools to develop their local marketing plans and show real progress. Emphasis will be on local and regional marketing, and on personal and individualized recruitment efforts. The diocese could also identify consultant experts which schools can retain for assistance.
- 1.3 An enrollment survey tool will be developed for all schools to use with current parents.
- 1.4 A survey and process will be developed for all schools to use with students who do not return the following year. A database with results will be established and monitored.
- 1.5 Seek collaboration with the Archdiocese of Chicago, a leader in Catholic school marketing. Consider some form of joint funding to make marketing resources available to Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockford.

2. Every school will effectively communicate its value to the community and make a convincing case for parents to enroll their children.

Strategies

- 2.1 Every deanery will develop a marketing plan as part of its enrollment management strategy based on a template developed by the Catholic Education Office. Each school will develop marketing strategies based on the deanery plan and submit its annual plan to the Catholic Education Office for review and feedback.
- 2.2 Schools will collaborate with other Catholic schools in their region, and especially with the Catholic high schools. A message that supports all of Catholic education will encourage cooperation not competition, and build a brand of prekindergarten through 12th grade Catholic education.

- 2.3 Every school will budget funds to implement a local marketing program. The Catholic Education Office will set prescribed amounts.
- 2.4 Every school will have a staff person partially or fully dedicated to marketing and recruitment efforts. A job description template will be developed so the right people are selected for the role.
- 2.5 Every school will have a marketing committee working in close collaboration and with direction from the staff person responsible for marketing.
- 2.6 Resources with best practices and opportunities to share successful ideas will be provided through the Catholic Education Office.
- 2.7 Schools will learn to use communications tools such as social media, online advertising, email marketing services, and database management. Schools should retain professional consulting assistance for communications new to them or beyond their expertise.
- 2.8 A set of criteria will be developed for schools to evaluate their web site and online presence and entire communications program. Each school will develop an action plan with priorities, knowing schools will identify different areas that need attention.
- 2.9 Each school will set up a data/tracking system that captures information from the first contact with a potential student/family through graduation. The system will be integrated with other databases. A diocesan solution will be researched and recommended.
- 2.10 All school personnel will be educated and trained to understand the unique brand of their school and the role they have in marketing and recruitment.
- 2.11 Children and families of other faith traditions will continue to be invited, recruited, and welcomed in all Catholic schools.

3. Every school will determine how it will operate at 85% to 90% of capacity based on the design of the school program, staffing level, and established budget.

Strategies

- 3.1 Every school and deanery will develop an enrollment projection and enrollment management plan that shows how the school will operate efficiently and what adjustments it will make if below 85% capacity. Adjustments can be in teacher ratios, educational program designs, and collaboration with other schools. The Catholic Education Office will develop enrollment projection templates.
- 3.2 The Catholic Education Office will monitor enrollment in all schools. Schools not meeting enrollment expectations will be asked to provide an enrollment management plan. The Catholic Education Office and school will agree on the benchmarks and goals of the plan, and the Catholic Education Office will track progress.
- 3.3 Strategies to fill every seat using flexible financial assistance plans and new sources of financial assistance funding will support enrollment goals.
- 3.4 Schools which do not make progress toward operating at the desired capacity will identify appropriate benchmarks to determine their future viability. This will be done in consultation with the Catholic Education Office, and progress in achieving these benchmarks will be assessed annually.

- 3.5 Each school should explore the feasibility of an age-appropriate preschool program if they don't already have one. Schools with programs will determine if there is market demand to expand their program. Prekindergarten programs will have attractive and desirable facilities, be staffed with excellent teachers, and be distinguished as exemplary programs in the community.
- 3.6 An extended day program should be available and should make a positive contribution to school revenue.

4. Prekindergarten programs will be high quality programs with strong reputations in their communities.

Strategies

- 4.1 All schools will have a prekindergarten unless there is an exceptional reason not to have one.
- 4.2 Prekindergarten programs will be strongly marketed, and even expanded whenever there is opportunity and need.
- 4.3 Investments will be made in facilities to provide prekindergarten classrooms that are attractive, fitting, and conducive for exceptional learning.
- 4.4 While maintaining their intended mission, prekindergarten programs will be priced to be profitable. Schools will work hard to convince parents the cost of Catholic education is justified beyond prekindergarten, through elementary school and high school.

5. A special effort will be made to cultivate and recruit Latino students into Catholic schools.

Strategies

- 5.1 Several schools will be identified to adopt the Madrinas program.
- 5.2 School staff with marketing responsibilities along with members of the marketing committee will attend workshops such as those provided by the University of Notre Dame.
- 5.3 Schools with the potential to enroll Latino students will cultivate Latino education commission and board members.
- 5.4 Schools serving Latino families will intentionally employ professional staff and support staff who are bilingual.
- 5.5 Marketing materials and strategies will be designed in multiple languages with cultural sensitivity.
- 5.6 Schools specifically working to increase their Latino enrollment will design into their program an inclusiveness of the traditions and languages they are trying to serve with sensitivity to assimilation into American culture. Special efforts will be made to welcome not just students, but their entire extended family.
- 5.7 Parishes and their schools will identify key leaders in their respective Latino communities. Assistance will be sought from these leaders regarding ways to effectively reach out to the community in order to change thinking about Catholic education in America, and to recruit and enroll new students.

B. CATHOLIC SCHOOL FINANCES

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

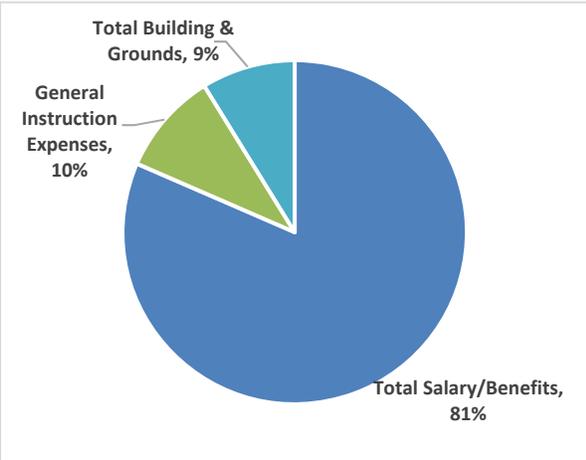
The current budgeting and financial planning process for Catholic schools is not functioning in a manner which will sustain and improve the quality and competitiveness of Catholic schools. Small adjustments to current practices will not be enough to accomplish the goals throughout this strategic plan.

In simplest terms, budget problems can generally be viewed as one of expense verses revenue. With respect to expenses, there are relatively few areas where significant savings can be achieved other than more efficient class size. Once this is achieved, the savings are not repeatable. It is clear that the problem on the expense side of the equation is not that Catholic schools are spending too much, but rather Catholic schools as a whole are not adequately funded to fully meet the educational needs and spiritual needs of the children they serve.

A NEW MODEL TO VIEW EXPENSE

The philosophy of budgeting for expenses in most schools is based on a poverty mindset, “we don’t have and we can’t afford”. This philosophy needs to shift to a philosophy based on a vision for excellent Catholic schools, “we must invest in order to thrive”.

Expenses can be identified in these broad categories:



- Personnel (salaries and benefits)
- Instructional expenses
- Buildings and grounds
- Administration (expenses are not separated)

For many schools, the operating and capital budgets do not fund educational programs at the level necessary or desired to fully realize the indicators of a healthy school. The most successful Catholic schools are those which have made, and continue to make, investments in human capital (competitive teacher salaries), technology, program improvements, professional development, recruitment, and modern, up-to-date, physical facilities. Lack of adequate funding is preventing schools from maintaining and improving their competitive edge. In short, there must be recognition of, and a commitment to, investing for the future. The budgeting process cannot be driven solely by currently available levels of revenue.

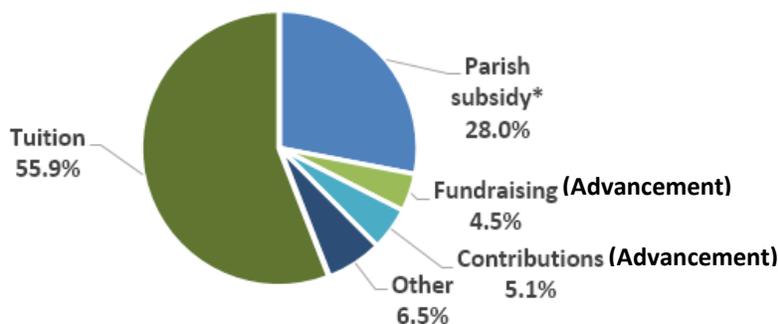
Schools are further limited in their ability to meet long term goals because there is not enough support or capacity in the administration to lead change or direct programs, particularly in areas like marketing, development, community relations. Principals are sometimes the only administration, and are expected to do more than their expertise or time allow.

Expense should be viewed as good when the cost produces desired results and achieves goals aligned with mission. There are areas for new expense that will help schools better accomplish their mission.

A NEW MODEL TO GROW REVENUE

Substantially greater revenue will be needed if Catholic schools are not only to survive, but also to thrive. There are four components to the revenue equation: tuition, parish subsidies, advancement, and other third party sources.

2014-15 Source of Elementary School Revenue



* Includes total parish support

Source: Catholic Diocese of Rockford

Tuition: The tuition model must be changed from one that seeks to minimize tuition to one that seeks to maximize revenues. The model must provide tremendous financial assistance in a way that balances financial assistance dollars against the impact of increased tuition on families' ability and willingness to pay. The tuition model must support not hinder full enrollment objectives.

Parish Subsidies: Subsidy needs to be redirected to supporting the Catholic mission of the school. This means subsidy should be used to achieve desired enrollment goals, strengthen Catholic identity, and support outcomes that serve the mission of the church.

Advancement: The most successful schools have demonstrated that substantial advancement funding, both on an annual basis and for large capital projects, can be achieved. Every school needs to conceive and carry out an advancement strategy. A parish school needs to undertake advancement as an extension of stewardship. The strategy must have a yearly component (such as annual funds) and long term component (endowments and capital campaigns).

Third Party Sources: External sources like special grants, estates, gifts for financial assistance, and government programs need to be pursued even more vigorously.

Data and Observations

The following are specific observations about the themes presented so far. These were identified as key findings early in the planning process.

Tuition and Cost

- a. Per pupil cost for 2014-15 was \$5,041 across the Diocese of Rockford. To put this in perspective, the average for public schools in the State of Illinois was \$12,521, one and half times a Catholic school. Public schools have an average class size of 21 and pupil teacher ratios of 19:1. Catholic schools are operating class sizes too small for the tuition charged. And Catholic schools need to spend more in many areas to be competitive with the best education, while not having to deliver all the same services as public schools.
- b. Many Catholic schools are not funding an adequate budget that adequately compensates teachers and administrators, provides support services, updates facilities, or even funds equipment and programs in core subject areas. Many Catholic schools have seen every possible expense deemed “non-essential” stripped from their budget.
- c. Financial reports for 2014-15 fiscal year show parent contribution through tuition to be \$23.3 million, while total cost is \$46 million. The amount contributed by parents is less because some of the tuition is funded by sources other than parents. Tuition accounts for 55.9% of school revenue.
- d. The average published tuition rate for the first child was \$3,294 in 2015-16 (*Note: does not include high schools, jr. high schools, or Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Thomas the Apostle*). The lowest tuition for the first child is currently \$1,800. Nationally, the average tuition in Catholic primary schools was \$3,880 for 2014-15.
- e. Tuition is often viewed in light of what families can “afford”. Affordability is subjective according to how much a family values the school their child might attend and how much they value a Catholic education. To give some perspective, median family income for families with children under age 18 was estimated at \$67,694 in the State of Illinois, and ranges from \$32,000 to \$143,000 in the Diocese of Rockford (*American Community Survey 2014*). Tuition for the first child averages \$3,300 for 2014-15. Most families can take the \$500 IL tax credit, so their actual cost is \$2,700. This represents 2% to 8% of family income depending on the area of the diocese, the average being 3.9%.
- f. Actual tuition paid is closer to \$2,500 per student when considering substantial discounts for multiple children and tuition assistance. Most families should be able to take the \$500 Illinois state tax credit reducing their effective tuition cost. Assuming tuition for two children would cost the family \$4,500, it would represent 4% to 13% of family income depending on the area of the diocese, the average being 7.3%. At least half of school families could afford more tuition, even with multiple children. The question is can they justify it.

Financial Assistance

- g. Only 4.6% of tuition income is covered by some form of tuition assistance, a major weakness in considering any increase in tuition. Most assistance is given in the form of discounted tuition rates and multiple child discounts. Sometimes assistance is given without full consideration for the school’s financial viability. The amount of assistance given is a relatively low number compared to Catholic schools and private schools nationally.

- h. Among students in prekindergarten through 8th grade, 908 students out of 9,123 receive some form of tuition assistance, or 10% of students enrolled. *Note: exception are the two “fairability” model schools. In these schools, tuition is essentially negotiated with each family to find a level each family is willing to pledge.*
- i. Many schools give tuition discounts to teachers and staff. These discounts are treated as a benefit rather than assistance based on need.

Development and Fundraising

- j. Contributions and fundraising amounted to \$3.9 million or 9.6% of the total revenue.
- k. Only five schools indicate they have an annual fund or something that looks like an annual fund. These funds brought in \$442,000 in 2014-15. Annual funds have significant potential to impact school revenue and should have the long term potential several times current giving.
- l. Development programs in elementary schools generally emphasize fundraising more than long-term development initiatives. The capabilities and vision for major gifts or annual funds are almost non-existent.
- m. Development programs in most of the high schools are not highly developed. Many have limited annual fund and major gift programs and are mostly dependent on special events and fundraising.
- n. The commitment to a high quality development program requires appropriate and experienced staffing, which some of the high schools need. It has been hard to retain qualified people in this area.

Parish Support

- o. Parishes contributed \$11.6 million in subsidy to elementary schools, or 28% of school revenue. The subsidy is given directly to the operating budget and is not tied to tuition assistance, enrollment goals, or specific outcomes. Parishes generally pick up any deficits schools have. The result is schools are less accountable for revenue and expense. They do not have the benefit of revenue successes accruing in savings for the future, and they do not have to run with full classes because the parish will pick up the difference.
- p. Parish ability to support their elementary schools and the high schools is questioned by some, but overall seems accepted by most members of the community. However, the percent of parish offertory used to support elementary schools has increased in the last four years, from 23.5% of ordinary income, to 32.6% of ordinary income. Add to this to the additional support for Catholic high schools which is 5% to 10% of ordinary income, and the 32.6% becomes 42.6%.

Salaries and Benefits

- q. Salaries for full-time Catholic elementary school teachers averaged \$34,648 in 2014-15. Starting salaries are still in the \$20,000 range for many schools.
- r. While principals generally report their teachers are dedicated and competent, there is a common theme of concern: retention of younger teachers and attracting teachers with some specialized competencies. Younger teachers will leave for better pay. They start in Catholic schools to get experience, but when a family comes along or other life goals emerge, they do

not stay. Experienced teachers do not have much increase in their pay, and certainly, the gap with their counterparts in the public system has widened.

Goals and Strategies

1. Move teacher salaries and benefits to a level that will attract and retain the highest quality teachers.

Strategies

- 1.1 Establish a salary scale by region. Every school will be expected to use the salary scale although it will be put forth as a guideline. The scale will be a minimum expectation for all teachers, as some schools may already be ahead of the prescribed scale. All schools should be using a salary scale compliant with diocesan guidelines within 5 years and preferably sooner.
- 1.2 The scale will adjust each year to make measurable progress in improving teacher pay. Require all schools to have a financial plan for increasing revenue and a financial projection to show how the school will achieve financial goals over 3 to 5 years.
- 1.3 Establish guidelines for paying stipends for teachers with special duties. Establish guidelines for paying a differential for specific positions difficult to fill such as science, foreign language, or special education.

2. Adequately fund maintenance and upgrades to school facilities.

Strategies

- 2.1 A current maintenance plan will be developed by each school or system to move towards proactive management of school facilities.
- 2.2 Operating budgets will fund a capital reserve account. Schools will fund the reserve as they are able.
- 2.3 Schools will proactively plan for capital fund raising to supplement their capital reserve fund and pay for upgrades and renovations.

3. Build a very strong financial assistance program accessible by a wide range of families.

Strategies

- 3.1 Financial assistance will be funded generously from multiple sources.
- 3.2 Financial assistance will be an integral part of marketing and communications.
- 3.3 Financial assistance will be administered at the local level following best practices as articulated by the Catholic Education Office.
- 3.4 Financial assistance will be strategically used to achieve enrollment goals. A portion will be reserved for middle income families.
- 3.5 Assistance will be generously given based on need. Automatic discounts like second child discounts will be reduced or phased out.

4. Determine and communicate the real cost of a Catholic school education, not just the cost to keep the school open but the cost associated with a vision for excellence and viable enrollment.

Strategies

- 4.1 Schools will build a zero based budget to reflect their vision and strategic plan. The final budget will be the product of conscious decisions to do or not do certain things like cuts in programing, deferring equipment purchases, increasing in pay, maintenance, and so on.
- 4.2 Schools will introduce enhanced benefits for students and connect them to tuition increases. Enhancements do not have to be expensive, but should be substantive.
- 4.3 Communications will show transparency in cost, subsidy, and parent contribution. Parents will be helped to understand the current costs associated with teacher compensation, expenditures on instruction, and expenditures for extra-curricular programs. And most importantly, parents will be helped to see the cost of achieving desired goals for a stronger education.
- 4.4 A well-executed marketing and public relations plan will be implemented 6 to 12 months before major tuition increases go into effect. This will clearly communicate the true cost of Catholic schools and the value of a Catholic education. Parents will understand the benefits to their children, the generous financial assistance available, and how to access it.

5. A new model and philosophy for setting tuition will be adopted.

Strategies

- 5.1 Actual revenue from tuition and fees will be 65% of school revenue within 5 years. Schools close to 65% and above will strive for a goal in the range of 70 %.
- 5.2 Every school will form a plan and timeline to make the transition. Plans will be submitted to the Catholic Education Office which will consult with each school about managing the transition.
- 5.3 The Catholic Education Office will enact a 3-year program to educate, monitor, and assist schools in developing financial projections and transition plans to the new model. Every school will develop a financial projection and use financial modeling to make decisions. Year-to-year decisions will be made in the context of long-range goals and a local strategic plan. The Catholic Education Office staff or outside consultants will work with schools individually to build their financial projections and plans.
- 5.4 Prekindergarten tuitions will be set with sensitivity to marketplace rates and with the expectation prekindergarten will show some net income to the school. Prekindergarten should be a separate cost center in the accounting system.

6. Use parish subsidy to strengthen the Catholic mission of schools and make them accessible.

Strategies

- 6.1 Transition a portion of parish subsidy from the general operating budget to financial assistance. This would apply to elementary schools and high schools.

- 6.2 Keep parish subsidy at a level that allows the parish to operate a vibrant parish ministry. Subsidy for parishes with elementary schools will be in the range of 20% to 30%, calculated as a percentage of parish ordinary income. Parishes above 30% will have 2 years to adjust, so by the third year they are in compliance.
- 6.3 Transition up to half of parish subsidy given to high schools from the general operating budget to financial assistance.
- 6.4 Communicate to the parish community how the parish contribution makes a difference.

7. Build advancement capabilities at a diocesan level to support schools directly and fund services that support those schools.

Strategies

- 7.1 The diocese will begin a diocesan advancement program to operate within the education office.
- 7.2 OR the diocese will initiate advancement activities for the mission of Catholic schools through the Catholic Foundation.

8. Build advancement capabilities in all elementary and high schools throughout the diocese.

Strategies

- 8.1 Each school will establish a budget line for advancement expenses. This may include some additional staff to support advancement activities.
- 8.2 Each school will establish an advancement council. The council will be active in raising funds, promoting the school, planning for development, and conducting annual evaluations.
- 8.3 Each school will identify part-time, full-time, or capable volunteer help to guide development activities. A development person could also carry other responsibilities. The position will report to the principal and be accountable to the development council.
- 8.4 An advancement assessment document will be developed to help each school examine its current advancement program, identify gaps, and establish goals. Either a diocesan office or consultant will be available to provide objective and professional counseling to help schools/systems with these reviews.
- 8.5 Each school will submit an advancement plan to the Catholic Education Office for approval. A prescribed template will be established by the Catholic Education Office.

9. Develop the case for a capital campaign to implement the plan.

Strategies

- 9.1 Evaluate the need for local schools and parishes to raise capital funds for facilities and financial assistance. Have a strong local emphasis on a campaign for Catholic education as part of any larger diocesan initiative, almost a mini campaign for each locality.
- 9.2 Identify the list of needs and opportunities identified in the plan that could be funded by a capital campaign.

- 9.3 Use any campaign initiative to identify major donors and build a foundation for long term philanthropic support for Catholic schools.

10. Establish best financial practices for all schools.

Strategies

- 10.1 The Catholic Education Office and Finance Office will provide templates, tools and training to assist pastors, principals, business managers, and finance committees with the proper method to do budgeting and the mechanics of creating five-year projections.
- 10.2 School budgets will allocate financial resources sufficient to cover the costs of administering and executing the recommendations of the diocesan strategic plan for schools. This includes new expenditures for marketing, advancement, professional development, and instruction. For many principals, additional support is needed and can be provided through several means: added staff support, part-time or full-time assistant principal, staff with special skills serving for specific functions, shared staff with the parish, talented volunteers and stipend volunteers, and sharing resources with other schools and parishes.
- 10.3 Principals and education commissions/school boards through their finance committees will be involved in the budgeting process. Principals will receive timely financial reports on a monthly or regular basis from parish business managers or bookkeepers. Principals will have a part in, if not be fully responsible for monitoring expenditures and maintaining a balanced budget.
- 10.4 Schools will have the incentive to build their advancement programs by keeping any surpluses as savings if they accrue. Monies raised for specific purposes will be restricted only for those purposes.
- 10.5 Parishes will establish pre-set subsidy levels based on realistic budgets. Parishes will establish multi-year commitments to schools. Schools will be required to live within the subsidies given by their parishes, and will be held accountable for deficits. Schools will have incentive by benefiting from surpluses.

C. FACILITIES

Goals and Strategies

1. All schools will have a master facilities plan. Both maintenance and capital improvements will be part of the plan.

Strategies

- 1.1 A buildings and grounds committee focused on school needs will function as a subcommittee of the school advisory council. It will make recommendations to the school advisory council and the parish.
- 1.2 Facility plans for schools will have a funding plan. Even when schools are parish facilities, they need to be update and maintained with the school mission and current educational practices in mind. Facilities are a point for marketing as well as the means for delivering excellent educational programs.
- 1.3 School advisory councils and their buildings and grounds committees will participate in a diocesan program to establish best practices for maintenance and in-service committees on current facility designs for education.

2. Facilities plans will be adequately funded.

Strategies

- 2.1 Major facilities projects will have a plan for raising capital, building capital reserves, or borrowing. As schools build financial projections as part of their strategic planning, any facilities costs that come from operations will be reflected in those projections and budgets.

D. DIOCESAN SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP

Observations

- a. Current staffing levels in the Catholic Education Office make it extremely difficult to provide direction and support to the schools. In addition to the Superintendent there is only one other professional staff member dedicated to Catholic Schools in the Catholic Education Office. This presents serious challenges to the schools who are unable to receive adequate support to provide a quality education for their students.
- b. More than half of the superintendent's time is spent in the following activities: assisting principals in the resolution of faculty, student and parent; advising pastors on issues that affect their schools; mediating grievances between parents and schools; mediating issues between principals and pastors. The superintendent will be assuming additional responsibilities to direct religious education for the diocese.
- c. Essential services that need to be provided by the Catholic Education Office but are beyond the resources of the office to fully carry out would include the following: participate in annual evaluation process for elementary principals; implement a formal professional development program for school administrators; provide training to new clergy on the responsibilities of pastoring a school; develop a professional development program for teachers; implement a catechetical training program for secondary personnel; create a mentoring program for future school administrators.

Goals and Strategies

1. The Catholic Education Office will be charged with overseeing implementation of the strategic plan for Catholic schools.

Strategies

- 1.1 Acting as the Bishop's representative, the Superintendent of Schools will have the responsibility and authority to oversee the implementation of the goals and strategies written in this plan.
- 1.2 The Catholic Education Office will be given a new name to signify a new role and new authority for the office. The job description for the Superintendent of Schools will be updated to reflect these changes.
- 1.3 The Catholic Education Office will be adequately staffed to carry out its expected functions. Staff expansion can be funded through a variety of different strategies.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and Strategies

- 1. Every school and every region with schools will have a comprehensive, multi-year, strategic plan. Every school will be guided by its plan, using it to inform all decision-making.**

Strategies

- 1.1 Strategic plans for schools will follow a diocesan template designed by the Catholic Education Office and organized around national standards and benchmarks. For elementary schools, it will align with the diocesan Evaluation for Elementary Schools. There is more flexibility for high schools plans, but they will have to comply with certain criteria.
 - 1.2 The process to develop and update the plan will engage local school board or education commission, parents, principal, pastor, faculty, sponsoring parishes, and major donors.
 - 1.3 Where there are schools serving populations of the same region, parish and school leaders will have a facilitated discussion that leads to a plan in that area.
- 2. The strategic plan for the Diocese, *Faith Forward*, will be reviewed and updated annually.**

Strategies

- 2.1 The Catholic Education Office will lead an annual process to review progress on implementing the strategic plan at the diocesan level, regional level, and local level. An annual report will be published. The review will help set priorities for the next year and make adjustments to the plan as necessary.
- 2.2 Every three years there will be a major plan review and update. The process will include an in depth review and update of the data, soliciting input from key constituencies, and recommending revisions to the plan. A region by region review will be conducted. New goals or strategies will be added looking five to ten years into the future.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools

The titles of the four main sections of this report and the standards identified below each title are derived from the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* from the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, School of Education, Loyola University, Chicago. The benchmarks are available at www.catholicschoolstandards.org.

I. MISSION AND CATHOLIC IDENTITY

- Standard 1:** An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence and service.
- Standard 2:** An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life.
- Standard 3:** An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.
- Standard 4:** An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.

II. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- Standard 5:** An excellent Catholic school has a governing body (person or persons) which recognizes and respects the role(s) of the appropriate and legitimate authorities, and exercises responsible decision making (authoritative, consultative, advisory) in collaboration with the leadership team for development and oversight of the school's fidelity to mission, academic excellence, and operational vitality.
- Standard 6:** An excellent Catholic school has a qualified leadership/leadership team empowered by the governing body to realize and implement the school's mission and vision.

III. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Standard 7:** An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with Gospel values, relevant standards, and 21st century skills implemented through effective instruction.
- Standard 8:** An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.
- Standard 9:** An excellent Catholic school provides programs and services aligned with the mission to enrich the academic program and support the development of student and family life.

IV. OPERATIONAL VITALITY

Standard 10: An excellent Catholic school provides a feasible three to five year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets and is the result of a collaborative process, emphasizing faithful stewardship.

Standard 11: An excellent Catholic school operates in accord with published human resource/personnel policies, developed in compliance with diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies, which affect all staff (clergy, religious women and men, laity and volunteers) and provide for clarity for responsibilities, expectations and accountability.

Standard 12: An excellent Catholic school develops and maintains a facilities, equipment, and technology management plan designed to continuously support the implementation of the educational mission of the school.

Standard 13: An excellent Catholic school enacts a comprehensive plan for institutional advancement based on a compelling mission through communications, marketing, enrollment management, and development.