



School Study Timeline

Spring 2008 - Consultants visit schools and meet with pastors and school administrators.

Summer 2008 - Research community demographics and analyze school trends.

Fall 2008 - Spring 2009 - Consultants meet seven times with advisory groups, conduct two focus groups, and refine strategic direction.

School Study Goals

A successful effort will lead to the long-term vitality and viability of our Catholic schools. The ultimate goal is to ensure that schools are:

- distinctly Catholic
- academically excellent
- fiscally stable

April 2009

Strategic Planning for Catholic Schools

Catholic Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

PLANNING PROCESS INVITES COMMUNITY INPUT

Over the past year, the *Strategic Planning for Catholic Schools* has inspired people to look to the future and to recommend ways to strengthen Catholic schools throughout the diocese. At every level - pastors, school administrators, parish and school leadership teams, diocesan staff - the dedication of time and talent attests to the value the entire community places in the mission of this ministry. Graced by input from a wide-range of people, the resulting plan promises to renew our schools as Christ's witnesses in the world.

From the outset, there was agreement that the goal was to identify strategic steps to ensure that schools were:

- distinctly Catholic
- academically excellent
- fiscally stable

In mid-February, more than 200 people met to review preliminary recommendations. In addition to immediate feedback, the process invited groups to

continue the discussion and to submit comments and questions. Written responses offered input on far-ranging topics, including:

- competition among schools;
- roles of pastors, principals, teachers and diocesan school office personnel;
- composition of local school boards;
- proposed models of funding Catholic school education; and,
- supports that must be in place for effective school administration.

Within our faith tradition, we celebrate spiritual change as a "conversion." Through prayer, openness to the Spirit, and honest dialogue, we witness the sacred signs of change. On the reverse side, please find answers to questions posed by school and parish leaders in a spirit of honest dialogue.



Catholic Schools for the Third Millennium Must Be . . .

Distinctly Catholic • Academically Excellent • Fiscally Stable

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS HELP BUILD CONSENSUS

Will the proposed funding model cause a decline in enrollment? Why not adopt the Diocese of Wichita's stewardship model? The Diocese of Wichita relies on stewardship to fund all parish and school ministries. To our knowledge, this is the only diocese in the United States that practices stewardship to fund mission and ministry. While the *Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools* identifies a preferred model for funding Catholic schools, it also recognizes "that different areas of the diocese require flexibility in their model given history and local circumstances." Once developed and if approved, the diocese will commit the necessary time and resources for the successful implementation of the funding model. In the Dioceses of Salt Lake City (Utah) and Venice (Florida), a similar funding model stabilized enrollment.

Why does the plan recommend limiting the number of parents on local school boards? The proposed recommendation in the study document does not offer a specific percentage of parent representatives on local school boards. School leaders, however, should identify people with expertise in areas needed to achieve the school's strategic plan, the primary responsibility of the school board.

Why does the plan promote 90% enrollment capacity? In light of the need for fiscal stability and well-informed planning, administrators need benchmarks. At 90% of capacity, schools can stabilize per pupil costs, provide adequate staff, and allow for appropriate programming. Many schools already have achieved this benchmark. In certain areas, however, circumstances may prevent the school from reaching 90% capacity. Enrollment is a cornerstone of school stability.

Do teachers in our Catholic schools have to be Catholic? The *Administrative Manual for Catholic Schools* allows for hiring non-Catholic teachers. In cases where two candidates are similarly qualified –

with one being Catholic and the other of another faith – preference can be given to the Catholic candidate.

By calling for 75% on standardized tests, are we setting ourselves up to 'teach to the test?'

Diocesan schools are recognized for superior academics. On the 2008 Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the 4th grade core total was 94% and 6th grade was 90%. Core totals average scores for reading, language and math. The Planning and Steering Committees believe that all schools should aim for composite scores at or above 75%. Our schools will continue to accommodate students with learning disabilities and special needs.



Do the requirements of the strategic plan set schools up for a 'survival of the fittest' situation?

Currently, the North Central accreditation process requires all schools to have school improvement plans. The school study requirement for some schools to also have benchmarks is an accepted practice to monitor and evaluate the progress towards improvement. The purpose is not to create competition but rather to lead to concrete steps to improve schools. As one principal has stated, "We have a great school, but we can always get better." Ultimately, careful planning positions schools to continue their missions.

Will there be support for school marketing and development at the school level? The plan clearly calls for diocesan support for developing local plans for marketing and development.