
Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools



A Vision for Excellence in
Catholic
Education

Inspired by a Caring, Committed, Faithful Community

Diocese of Des Moines

March 7, 2019



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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in their statements of 2005 affirm the mission and work of Catholic schools: *We must respond to challenging times with faith, vision and the will to succeed because the Catholic schools' mission is vital to the future of our young people, our nation and, most importantly, our Church.*

To respond to challenging times, the Diocese of Des Moines under the leadership of Bishop Pates initiated a strategic planning process to produce a vision and plan that will guide Catholic schools to fulfill their mission for the next generation of students and families. It is in the spirit of stewardship that this plan comes forth, to prudently manage the resources and gifts God has given the Church, to make disciples for Christ, to evangelize families, and to form young people capable and ready to transform the world with the Gospel of Christ.

The planning process was guided by a Blue-Ribbon Task Force whose members gave generously of their time and wisdom. The process was directed by Meitler Consultants, a nationally recognized leader in planning with Catholic schools. The planning process included several opportunities for parish and school leaders to contribute to an understanding of the current state of Catholic education. After extensive information was collected, Catholic school leaders participated in a key findings event where strengths were celebrated, problems to solve identified, and opportunities to be better were discussed. Many schools had further discussions locally. The Blue-Ribbon Task Force conducted in-depth study and through much dialog, formed proposed plans for wider discussion and input. The preliminary plan will be presented in March 2019.

As you read and use the plan, prayerfully consider how it will shape the future of your school to be the most effective it can be in fulfillment of the mission of the Church.

Blue-Ribbon Task Force

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VISION FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The vision was expressed by many stakeholders in the Catholic school community throughout the Diocese of Des Moines. While schools in the diocese already exemplify many aspects of the vision, the statement challenges all schools to aspire to be the best and not be content with the status quo. The vision should challenge all schools to pursue greater results that are consistent, creative, and collaborative. Goals and strategies in the strategic plan will flow from the vision.

Catholic schools in the Des Moines Diocese will be the most effective at building Christ-centered, collaborative, inclusive partnerships with parents, students, and parishes to provide innovative academic excellence and inspirational faith formation for students.

Foundational Beliefs

FAITH FORMATION

Faith formation fosters a personal journey, promotes a relationship with Jesus, and teaches how to live the Gospel through love and service to others.

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Excellence is relentlessly pursued in academics and service by instilling a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and growth that empowers students to maximize their potential and use their gifts to serve God and others.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Schools with their parishes create a loving, caring and welcoming Catholic faith community that promotes integrity, trust, and collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and the wider parish.

I. MAKING DISCIPLES

Goals

- 1. The vision for Catholic schools will be shared by stakeholders (bishop, pastors, principals, teachers, parents, students, parish personnel), as the guiding principles of our Catholic schools.**

Catholic education is at its best when we work together to accomplish the mission of our Church in making life-long disciples embedded in our faith.

Recommendations for implementation

- 1.1 Each school will develop and live the profile of a graduate utilizing the principles stated in the vision statement.
 - 1.2 Vision statement and the profile of a graduate will be a living document to be reviewed for implementation annually.
 - 1.3 Catholic identity effectiveness survey will be administered annually with data evaluated and shared with diocesan office, pastors and administrators.
- 2. The parish, school and diocese will collaborate to evangelize the families served in the school ministry.**

Being that consistent engagement is the catalyst for creating and sustaining a positive Catholic culture in a parish and school, it is the responsibility and opportunity of church leaders to work together to make disciples of families served through the ministry of Catholic schools. “Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence”. (*The Joy of the Gospel, p259, Pope Francis*).

Recommendations for implementation

- 2.1 Pastors and principals will create a schedule of opportunities to nurture positive, supportive, individual relationships with families to draw them into the life of the parish. Pastors and principals will seek input from parents regarding what they need to assist them in fostering discipleship in their children.
- 2.2 Annually, the pastor will meet with parents to discuss ways for families to engage in the parish mission.
- 2.3 Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for church and the school personnel will be identified.
- 2.4 An annual meeting will be held at the diocesan level to provide training, mentoring, and support to pastors and principals on how to effectively lead both children and their families in becoming an integral part of the church community.
- 2.5 Emphasis will be placed on helping students and parents develop a personal relationship with Christ.

3. Diocesan standards for religion will be examined and updated to be reflective of the needs of the 21st century learner.

Standards should be utilized to drive instruction in all subjects including religion.

Recommendations for implementation

- 3.1 In alignment with the diocesan standards, deliberate and age-appropriate engagement in faith formation programming, such as retreats for students at the intermediate and middle school level, will be collaboratively developed by parish and school personnel to provide children avenues to foster a personal relationship with Christ.
- 3.2 In alignment with the diocesan standards, the vocations office will collaborate with schools and the Office of Catholic Schools to implement a program to encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life.
- 3.3 Evaluation of professional development will be conducted annually to assess the needs of faculty in both faith formation and Church doctrine to disseminate the faith accurately to their students.

II. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

A. PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Many schools function under a parish governance model. Every parish school must have a board that serves in an advisory and consultative capacity to the pastor and school administrator. The pastor has the canonical authority to make final decisions as the administrator of the parish.

Goals

- 1. The Parish School Board will be actively engaged in forming strategic plans and overseeing implementation of the plan, including monitoring and updating the plan. Decision making by the board and administration will be strategic and justified in the context of the plan.**

Recommendations for implementation

- 1.1 Catholic schools with leadership from their boards will formulate a comprehensive, multi-year strategic plan that is aligned with the diocesan strategic plan. The Office of Catholic Schools will provide a template and set standards for a quality plan. The Office of Catholic Schools will outline expectations for a quality planning process. School plans will be designed to complement the accreditation process.
 - 1.2 The Office of Catholic Schools will monitor the progress of the school strategic plan. Schools will have the option to complete their strategic plan on their own, request assistance from the Office of Catholic Schools, or engage approved consultants to assist them. Each school will select the approach that best fits them. Each school will submit an annual report to the Office of Catholic Schools with an update of the progress made regarding the school's strategic plan.
 - 1.3 In-services for administrators, pastors and boards will include expectations for a strategic plan supported by a quality strategic planning process.
- 2. The Parish School Board will understand its role in furthering the advancement goals of the school in harmony with the larger stewardship/advancement goals of the parish.**

Recommendations for implementation

- 2.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will provide a required board training for all board members; subsequent years the required workshop will be offered for new members. The in-service should educate the board members on fully understanding the functions of a board in the areas of Catholic identity, planning, policy making, administrator/principal selection and evaluation, finances/budgeting, and communications/marketing. The board in-service will address the board's role in advancement and how it can be an extension of stewardship in the wider church.
 - 2.2 The parish school board bylaws, which can be found in the diocesan manual, will be reviewed and updated by the Office of Catholic Schools.
 - 2.3 Recruitment and selection of board members will be a rigorous process. Recruitment of the best candidates will be a year-round effort and a priority for board officers who will make recommendation to the pastor. A tool will be developed and used showing desired qualifications of board members.
 - 2.4 Parish school boards will conduct an annual self-evaluation. The self-evaluation tool will be developed by the Office of Catholic Schools.

- 2.5 Parish school boards will have a part in the evaluation of the principal or head of school as designed into a process developed by the Office of Catholic Schools.
- 2.6 Parish school boards will establish working committees to best serve the parish and school as listed in the diocesan manual. The Office of Catholic Schools will provide several models for a committee structure.

B. ADMINISTRATORS

Strong leadership is paramount to any organization. Proper funding that supports competitive compensation must be provided to attract and retain the best faith-filled leadership possible.

Goals

- 3. All schools will be funded at a higher level so compensation for administrators is competitive and, on a level, commensurate with the responsibilities of the job.**

Recommendations for implementation

- 3.1 The strategic plan for each school will include a staffing plan for administration and support staff. Staffing will grow where needed to give principals the support they need to fulfill their leadership responsibilities. This may mean an increase in administration and an increase in funding whether individually or collaboratively with other schools.
- 4. Enhance the current leadership program to ensure a smooth transition as many current leaders prepare to retire.**

Recommendations for implementation

- 4.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will expand its current aspiring leaders program and create an intentional system to cultivate and recruit talented administrators for future leadership. School leaders will be asked to provide the Office of Catholic Schools with names of potential teachers who might become excellent principals. These teachers will be given opportunities to serve on diocesan committees in support of the strategic plan or curriculum enhancement, thus allowing the potential administrator to become exposed to diocesan processes and the Office of Catholic Schools the opportunity to assess their competencies.
- 4.2 The Office of Catholic Schools will determine additional areas of training that will benefit future school leaders. Examples of additional areas include planning strategically, working with boards, and a focus on making schools of discipleship.

5. **A process for professional evaluation will be in place for all principals, presidents and heads of schools. Current processes will be reviewed and updated to align with the goals of the strategic plan.**

Recommendations for implementation

- 5.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will review and update the evaluation process. The office will have a role in the evaluation process and define appropriate roles for school boards and pastors.
- 5.2 Evaluations will be conducted annually and will include measures of progress towards developing and implementing a school strategic plan.

C. DIOCESAN LEADERSHIP AND THE OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Diocesan leadership and the Office of Catholic Schools need to have a defined leadership role throughout the diocese. This is more than a service agency. While providing service, the office should provide leadership in areas of academics, governance, funding, and all areas associated with the strategic plan. The Office of Catholic Schools functions on behalf of the Bishop and with the authority delegated by the Bishop.

Goal

6. **Redefine the role of the Office of Catholic Schools. The Office of Catholic Schools will have the authority to lead and oversee the Catholic schools throughout the diocese.**

Recommendations for implementation

- 6.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will lead the implementation of the plan and schools will work collaboratively to implement the plan.
- 6.2 A new committee will be put in place to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan. While the present diocesan school board has served the diocese well, the strategic plan implementation committee will guide the diocese as it moves to the new future outlined in the plan.
- 6.3 The Office of Catholic Schools will review and revise the current process for hiring and releasing heads of schools. The process will include guidance and oversight by the Office of Catholic Schools. The Office of Catholic Schools will screen candidates that are then eligible for selection by local schools and will approve final recommendations from search committees and pastors.
- 6.4 The Office of Catholic Schools will work with the Finance Office to monitor school finances and support transition to a new funding model as defined in the strategic plan.
- 6.5 The Office of Catholic Schools will oversee and hold accountable all Catholic schools in the diocese regarding school policies, best practices and diocesan policy.

D. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Goals

7. Collaboration between the pastor, Office of Catholic Schools and school leadership will be purposeful and evident in the leading of the school.

As the canonical head and spiritual leader of the parish, the pastor is the authority of the school. It is necessary, therefore, that the pastor have a vital role in the school. It is through the pastor's leadership, presence, commitment, and collaboration with the school leadership and Office of Catholic Schools that a school can best serve the people of the Church.

Recommendations for implementation

- 7.1 Pastor and principal will have an annual meeting with a representative from the Office of Catholic Schools to discuss what does a faith leader look like and how to bring the faith alive to those being served. The pastor and principal will also review the current school culture regarding Catholic identity, parish-school relationship, marketing, finances, and other relevant topics.
 - 7.2 Parish staff and school leadership will work to provide programs and opportunities to show families how to develop a personal relationship with Christ.
 - 7.3 Pastors will support principals with the faith formation of teachers and staff. This can include planning together, pastor role with faith development, leading prayer, counseling, and so on.
 - 7.4 Parish and school leadership will create opportunities where the pastor is visible to the school community enabling the pastor to build relationships with school families as well as gather input from families on how to best form disciples. The pastor will invite school families to become involved in the many ministries of parish life.
 - 7.5 Administrators of parish schools and pastors will collaborate to ensure that the school is viewed as an integral ministry of the parish.
 - 7.6 The diocese will develop an orientation and introduction program for pastors new to a parish with a school.
- #### **8. To necessitate the building of disciples, pastors will have an active role at the Catholic high schools.**

With most of the elementary students matriculating to our Catholic high schools, pastors need an active, visible role in fostering a culture of discipleship to our students.

Recommendations for implementation

- 8.1 School administration will create a schedule of opportunities for parish priests to be an integral part of our high schools to nurture students with an emphasis placed on helping students develop a personal relationship with Christ.
- 8.2 Current school chaplains will continue to have regularly scheduled events where students can form a relationship with the chaplains.

9. Collaboration among priests is necessary to ensure the accessibility of Catholic education to all families of the Church.

Developing disciples in the Church is the responsibility of the entire Church. In the diocese's endeavor to build the future Church, all priests are needed to support the Catholic school ministry.

Recommendations for implementation

- 9.1 All parishes will cooperate with the Office of Catholic Schools regarding sharing of data, access to parish communications, and marketing of Catholic schools.
- 9.2 All parishes will take an active role in promoting Catholic schools during Catholic Schools Week.
- 9.3 Catholic schools located close to parishes without schools will have the support of those parishes and work together to reach out to parish families.
- 9.4 Parishes without schools will contribute financially to the mission of Catholic schools.

III. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

A. STRUCTURE

The internal structure of the diocese and school is paramount in supporting the academic growth of the children served.

Goals

1. Provide ongoing professional development that is rich in knowledge and beneficial for improving student engagement and instruction.

Culture of continuous improvement and life-long learning is at the core of offering the best possible education to our students. As we work toward and maintain national accreditation, we are better able to implement new initiatives to offer our students the best in Catholic education.

Recommendations for implementation

- 1.1 Offer workshops on topics to improve student learning such as student engagement, differentiated instruction and data-driven decision making, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), digital learning for 21st century classrooms.
- 1.2 Increase the school year by five professional development days along with appropriate compensation to educators.
- 1.3 Coordinate two regional teacher professional development days each semester.
- 1.4 Form a professional development committee to oversee the needs of professional development and to develop a long-range plan to address the identified needs.
- 1.5 Align teacher evaluation instrument to AdvancEd and National Catholic Standards and Benchmarks.

2. The schools will recruit and retain the highest quality of teachers and staff.

Recommendations for implementation

- 2.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will develop a teacher recruitment and selection process.
- 2.2 Each school, under the direction of the Office of Catholic Schools will support teachers through mentoring, coaching and annual evaluations, ensuring the ongoing improvement of teachers.
- 2.3 Each school will work to compensate teachers and staff at 90% to 100% of teacher and staff compensation in local public districts. (*see recommendations in finance regarding compensation*)

3. Greater degree of accountability and over site will be given to the diocese in regard to educational policies, personnel and finances.

Central operations have many potential advantages for schools and the diocese. The diocese can relieve the school of many “non-essential” tasks that hinder their time which should be devoted to educating the child. In addition, there is variability in academic quality from school to school. Schools should have accountability to the Office of Catholic Schools and other appropriate diocesan structures to ensure adherence to academic quality.

Recommendations for implementation

- 3.1 The diocese will develop components of central operations that can best support the needs of both the diocese and the schools. This plan will include a compliance audit to ensure that all schools comply with state, federal and diocesan guidelines.
- 3.2 The Office of Catholic Schools will oversee the implementation of data-driven processes in schools to ensure that data is being reviewed and instructional changes are being made based on student data.

B. ACCOUNTABILITY

Schools and the diocese are academically accountable for the families and students they serve. Accountability needs measurable standards and transparency. All schools will desire and aspire to standards that strive for excellence and create the best possible school.

Goals

4. A diocese comprehensive assessment plan will be developed with formative and summative data driving instruction and making curriculum adjustments accordingly.

Academic excellence embedded in the Catholic faith is a primary consideration for parents when choosing a school for their children. It is difficult for the diocese to determine academic success of its schools and students when currently the Office of Catholic Schools only receives data in terms of proficiency.

Recommendations for implementation

- 4.1 Each school will formulate a plan to use both formative and summative assessment to drive instruction. The diocese will offer professional development to train educators on how to make data-driven decisions based on these assessments. Additional human resources at the diocesan level will be added to assist, monitor and ensure data-driven decision making is ongoing to drive instruction.
- 4.2 Diocese creates a template for the comprehensive assessment plan and puts structure in place to ensure the implementation of the plan.
- 4.3 The diocese will investigate new standardized testing program for schools.
- 4.4 Assessment committees will be created to oversee the standardized testing in elementary and high schools respectively.
- 4.5 A structure will be created for ongoing review of priority of standards utilized on K-8 report cards and the ongoing evaluation of said standards.

5. Greater articulation of curriculum alignment will be implemented across all grade levels, and in particular, vertical alignment from elementary to middle to high school.

Most students will matriculate from Catholic elementary schools to one regional high school. There is a need for greater articulation of curriculum alignment across all grade levels, and, vertical alignment from elementary to high school.

Recommendations for implementation

- 5.1 Continue the use of standards and benchmarks to help navigate the curriculum. Annually, educators will meet to discuss the implementation of standards at each grade level and how the curriculum is seamless through school transitions.

C. LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership is the most important element to the success of any Catholic school. Finding the best qualified leaders cannot be taken for granted. The best leaders may have to be developed from within; such an initiative takes intentionality, incentive, and effort sustained over many years.

Goal

6. Prepare, recruit, and retain strong principals with capable administrative teams to support them.

Leadership makes all the difference in the success of a school. The projected shortage of teachers and administrators over the next five to ten years will impact Catholic schools and their ability to recruit and retain highly qualified administrators. Another point of concern is the large percentage of current principals that are approaching retirement age.

Recommendations for implementation

- 6.1 A strong mentor program has been put in place. Currently, with the allotted resources, the program is limited and will not meet the future needs of the diocese. The program should be expanded, and more fellows should be selected to participate in the program.
- 6.2 Included in the strong mentoring program is the recruitment of potential administrators. Current administrators will be asked to submit names of teachers that could be mentored as future leaders.
- 6.3 The Office of Catholic Schools will have as a component of the marketing program, a program that advertises the advantage of working in the Catholic ministry to help recruit all potential educators both at the teacher and leader level.
- 6.4 Principal evaluation should be evaluated and aligned to AdvancEd and National Catholic Standards and Benchmarks.

D. DELIVERY

How we educate should be purposeful in our endeavor to meet the needs of the students we serve.

Goal

7. Enrich the academic program to support student development while meeting the needs of the local community.

Utilizing various learning models, the schools in the Diocese of Des Moines are better able to serve the students entrusted to their care.

Recommendations for implementation

- 7.1 School communities will develop and implement various learning models such as blended learning, multi-age classrooms, project-based learning and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) or STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art, Mathematics). Each school will identify its areas for investment and what will make it special academically. While some schools will have very unique programs like dual-language, others will have a core program that serves the general student but goes above and beyond in specific areas.
- 7.2 School communities will develop a plan to serve students with special needs. This plan will include the possible scope of services as well as possible collaboration with other entities in the community which could serve as resources to the school.
- 7.3 Establish a task force to review the curricular and co-curricular opportunities to ensure they are meeting the students' needs and are competitive with offerings in other local schools.
- 7.4 Develop guidelines and research resources for blended classroom instruction and other technology-assisted teaching and learning.

IV. OPERATIONAL VITALITY

A. ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

School viability is inextricably linked to enrollment. In the current environment, young parents have choices and the factors influencing their choices are changing. Catholic schools can thrive in this environment, but must be nimble, communicative, and relational. Enrollment management is planned strategies and initiatives designed to enable the Diocese of Des Moines to have more influence and foresight over the enrollment of its schools.

Goal

1. Create a rebranding of Catholic school education and launch a major marketing campaign.

The value of a Catholic education is communicated by its brand. The brand and mission it represents must be embraced by the entire Catholic community.

Recommendations for implementation

- 1.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will hire a full-time marketing expert. Their role will be to guide implementation of the marketing plan, provide expertise to schools, coordinate initiatives that are regional or diocesan, and be persistent with helping individual schools develop quality marketing and recruitment programs.
- 1.2 The Office of Catholic Schools will lead the effort to create a diocesan-wide marketing plan. Expertise will be called upon to form and deliver a brand that supports the marketing efforts of all Catholic schools.
- 1.3 The Office of Catholic Schools will facilitate and monitor the development and implementation of the marketing plan.
- 1.4 School personnel will have new resources and opportunities for professional development on the most effective ways to communicate the mission of Catholic schools, particularly the value of their Catholic school to parents and the parish. Support will also be provided on rebranding.
- 1.5 Every school will establish a budget for marketing. A reasonable target is 3 to 5% of operating expenses.
- 1.6 Schools with enrollment above 200 will have a designated staff member who is responsible for implementing the marketing plan of the school and overseeing communications. This person may be part-time or full-time and could have other responsibilities as a staff member. Ideally, they would assist the principal in working with a marketing team, oversee the implementation of the marketing plan, and be the onsite local expert in marketing and recruitment.
- 1.7 The Office of Catholic Schools will create a comprehensive marketing plan that will include templates, commercials, testimonials, electronic and printed media which will be integrated into a communication strategy utilizing a combination of traditional and digital media.
- 1.8 Each school will create and implement an ambassador program. As the lead ambassadors, the pastor and principal will collaborate with a parent committee in reaching out to prospective families and assisting in the orientation of new parents in the community.

PROSPECTS AND THE PUBLIC

Goal

2. Develop strategies and timelines to ensure accurate data and information is being collected, updated and distributed to potential school families in an accurate, timely manner.

Great marketing is defined by three critical components. Our story shapes our brand. Our websites are our most important first impression. But, the most important dynamic, today, is to know how to most effectively reach our young adult audience.

Recommendations for implementation

- 2.1 Each school will update, expand and maintain databases, ideally on a platform that is integrated with the parish in the case of a parish school. Staff time will be given for this task. Included in the database will be potential Catholic school benefactors such as area businesses and foundations, grandparents and alumni. The database will also be greatly expanded to maximize our potential to reach today's younger, more sophisticated target audiences. At the very minimum, email addresses and other communications platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn will be included.
- 2.2 At the diocesan level, the marketing expert will oversee the collection and analysis of data that will drive the marketing plan. This information will include, as a minimum, accurate demographic information, enrollment and retention numbers.
- 2.3 At the diocesan level, the marketing expert will lead a selection process to find a marketing firm who can be a long-term partner for the diocese. This firm would provide a consistent website branding application that easily allows parents to navigate content/data throughout the school website. This application will embrace each school's individuality while branding each entity as an integral part of the larger diocese Catholic school ministry.
- 2.4 Each school will form an enrollment/marketing committee. They will be supported by the local staff given responsibility for marketing and the Office of Catholic Schools' marketing director. The enrollment committee will be responsible for implementing a systematic admissions process; developing retention procedures, timelines, developing an assessment tool for families exiting the school and other best practices; developing media contacts; and forming an ambassador program.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Goal

3. Develop a communication plan that will allow the good news of Catholic education to permeate the communities of both present and potential families.

The good news of Catholic education must permeate the community it serves. A strong communication program embedded throughout the diocese will help spread the lifetime attributes of a Catholic education.

Recommendations for implementation

- 3.1 Each Catholic school creates its own compelling stories. Great branding relies heavily on the art of great storytelling. During the year, testimonials at each school will be updated and shared in various venues including digital media.
- 3.2 Each school will create an annual report that highlights Catholic identity initiatives, academic programs, capital improvement projects and the annual financial report using a diocesan provided template.
- 3.3 The diocesan marketing director will develop a calendar of press releases, school fundraising events, and marketing plans and strategies each school will utilize throughout the year. Included in this plan will be a diocese-coordinated plan for Catholic Schools Week (CSW).
- 3.4 The CSW plan will be coordinated with both the Office of Catholic Schools and the local parish and school. All parishes, including those without a school, will be expected to take part in the CSW marketing plan. The CSW plan will include the expectations of the pastor, principal, board and ambassadors, as well as all stakeholders.
- 3.5 The Office of Catholic Schools will provide professional development for front office staff. Discussion topics will include, as a minimum, establish best practices for building customer service including establishing a friendly, personal touch with callers; follow up with prospective families; and monitoring of Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO) lists for potential new students.
- 3.6 The Office of Catholic Schools will disseminate a quarterly newsletter to parents and stakeholders totting the good news of Catholic schools. Relevant topics and stories of interest will also be disseminated through digital resources on a continual basis.

STUDENT POPULATION: RETENTION OF CURRENT STUDENTS; RECRUITMENT OF NEW STUDENTS

Goal

4. Develop a plan to retain current families as well as recruit new families.

As a ministry of the Church, it is our responsibility to reach out to as many families as possible and offer the gift of Catholic education.

Recommendations for implementation

- 4.1 Each school, with the collaboration of the Office of Catholic Schools, will develop a plan to increase the impact of Catholic education on minority students. Each school and the Office of Catholic Schools will continue to work on Hispanic recruitment by building community relationships and partnering with the Office of Hispanic Ministry.
- 4.2 Each school will develop a plan to recruit children of parish families. The plan will include new families to the parish, families of children being baptized and families of children currently in religious education programs.
- 4.3 Each school will annually administer a satisfaction survey through an electronic platform to stakeholders.
- 4.4 Each school will create and commit to a retention plan that includes all faculty and staff. The plan will include, as a minimum, strategies fostering a community of caring and belonging through building strong relationships where parents are ensured that each child is cared for and needs are being met. The plan will also include procedures and protocol to express and resolve concerns.

B. FACILITIES

Goal

The physical structure of every school must be constantly maintained, updated and enhanced to ensure a safe and attractive environment that will deliver the best in a 21st century education.

5. Under the direction of the Office of Catholic Schools each school will develop a master facility plan. Where parish facilities are involved, planning will be done in collaboration with the parish.

Recommendations for implementation

- 5.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will provide a template and a criteria for what should be expected in an acceptable facilities plan. The plans will address facility maintenance, improvements, and needs for 21st century education. Plans should also provide timelines and proposals for capital funding.
- 5.2 Each school will submit a master facility plan to the Office of Catholic Schools with annual updates. Plans will be reviewed by the Diocesan strategic plan implementation committee to see that they meet criteria, answer strategic questions, and have realistic goals.

C. FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The funding of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines would be accomplished through the creation of a funding structure that supports an elevated educational setting where all students can thrive. For all schools, programs of excellence will be staffed by the highest quality teachers and staff who will be attracted and retained due to an exceptional work environment and competitive salary and benefits.

Goals

6. Under the direction of the Office of Catholic Schools the educational programming of all schools will be enhanced to reflect the very best in Catholic education.

Offering the very best in Catholic education is paramount for schools to be competitive and justify their value to the parent and donor. Many sections of the plan address constant improvement and make a case for why funding is needed to deliver an outstanding and exceptionally good education.

7. Compensation for Catholic school educators will be raised to be competitive with the teaching profession.

The best teachers are the only ones who can produce the best education, the most important investment to achieve a vision of excellence and quality in schools. Teachers are recruited for their faith and character, as well as their professional competence. Because Catholic schools are selective, it narrows the pool of candidates and requires Catholic schools to be competitive in how they compensate. Salaries and benefits are starting to impact recruitment and retention of quality teachers, and as the baby boomer workforce retires, attracting and retaining new teachers is critical. The gap in compensation between Catholic and public teachers has reached a level where newer teachers may not be willing or able to remain at Catholic schools long term. We do not want to lose our great teachers.

Recommendations for implementation

- 7.1 Establish compensation targets by regions for all schools to work toward. Target should be 90% and eventually 100% of public-school systems in the region. A salary scale will be published for each region.
- 7.2 As schools change their revenue model, and as new revenue is realized, pay increases will be given. Each school will formulate a 5-year plan with annual percent increases in compensation and a corresponding plan to grow revenue. Each school will articulate in their strategic plan timelines to reach compensation goals.
- 7.3 Schools who might struggle to implement a change in the revenue model will be supported by experts who can help develop workable plans and learn from others that have made the change successfully.
- 7.4 An annual report will show salaries benchmarked against established targets by school.

8. Compensation for Catholic school administrators, heads of school, principals and presidents will be competitive and reflect the level of responsibility these positions require.

Strong leaders more than pay their way in leading schools to viability. Capable leadership will bring the vision to reality.

Recommendations for implementation

- 8.1 Research salary ranges for these positions and publish for schools to use in planning.
- 8.2 Since the diocese is directly involved in all principal and president searches, salaries will be established according to ranges identified by the diocese.
- 8.3 The diocese will monitor compensation levels.

9. Tuition assistance will be generously funded and widely embraced as a normal part of paying for school so Catholic education will be available and accessible to all families.

As a ministry of the Church, Catholic schools need to be financially accessible to those families who want a Catholic education. To make this a reality, additional financial assistance must be generated.

Recommendations for implementation

- 9.1 Tuition assistance will be funded generously, and a metric will be identified for small and large schools. The pool of tuition assistance funds will grow each year from a variety of sources. The formulas used to calculate gross tuition will be standard for all schools, and common definition of terms will be understood by all.
- 9.2 Tuition rate increases will be planned and happen in conjunction with tuition assistance.
- 9.3 Significant tuition assistance funds will come from local sources and local schools will have incentive to build these funds as much as possible. Local sources will be extended by diocesan initiatives such as the Catholic Foundation of SW Iowa.
- 9.4 The Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO) will maximize their allowable donations, and will be ready for future growth when caps are raised.
- 9.5 Advocate for expansion of school choice programs at the state level.

10. A major diocesan capital campaign will be conducted to fund the Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools and other diocesan needs that appropriately fit within the scope of the campaign.

Recommendations for implementation

- 10.1 Formulate a case statement from the Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools. Assign dollars needed to each case element. Important campaign elements should include expanding financial assistance, launching new initiatives, marketing schools, and improving facilities.
- 10.2 Make preparations to conduct a major campaign. As part of those preparations:
 - a. Consider an assessment of all stewardship and development activities currently carried out in the Diocese of Des Moines to evaluate their effectiveness, coordination, and readiness to engage with a major capital campaign.
 - b. Define the role of the Catholic Foundation of SW Iowa with regard to a capital campaign, including planned giving as a possible component of the campaign.

11. The Catholic Foundation of SW Iowa will continue to grow financial support for Catholic education through planned giving, endowments, and donor-advised funds. The Catholic Foundation of SW Iowa could pursue corporate gifts, foundation gifts, and grants out of reach for most schools.

12. Build advancement programs at the school level. Financial assistance and quality schools will be significantly supported by funding through growth in advancement programs.

The success, good news, and story of Catholic education needs to be told throughout the Des Moines Diocese. There are many opportunities to grow support with many more contributing partners. Investment in advancement programs has been limited, and so the capacity to do advancement has been limited.

Recommendations for implementation

12.1 Every school will have an advancement plan as part of their strategic plan with specific goals, strategies, benchmarks and accountability. Advancement programs will have these elements: year-round strategic communications, annual giving, planned-giving, endowment, special events, and cultivating major donors.

12.2 Every school will identify a person in addition to the principal who is responsible for advancement. In many cases, this should be a part-time or full-time position with compensation.

12.3 Explore ways for schools to work together within their regions or the diocese to support advancement.

12.4 Schools will establish an accurate and updated database using current software.

12.5 Advancement programs will develop and promote planned/deferred giving to build endowments and long-term growth.

12.6 Schools will have an active advancement committee as an extension of the school board to support the advancement plan and actively raise funds. These committees may take different forms depending on the size and organizational structure of the school or system. In some cases a foundation may have been established and fulfills this function.

13. Build an advancement program for Catholic schools at the diocesan level.

Recommendations for implementation

13.1 The Office of Catholic Schools will work with the Stewardship Office and Catholic Foundation to establish a coordinated plan for diocesan development on behalf of Catholic schools.

14. Raise tuitions through a phased approach to more closely reflect the cost of a Catholic education and the real value of a Catholic education.

Under the current model, all families receive significant financial assistance whether needed or not. Those families who can afford to pay the true cost of Catholic education should do so, and thereby improve income to the school while directing significant financial assistance toward families with need, especially those in the middle income group. Financial assistance should be strategically directed in ways that enhance enrollment and keep schools accessible.

Recommendations for implementation

- 14.1 Set tuition goals for multiple years and do so as part of a financial projection. Raise tuition more than financial assistance so that there is significant revenue growth. Make more than an inflationary increase, but with adequate preparation move tuition to better reflect real cost. Find the balance between tuition raises and financial assistance funding to increase net revenue but be accessible for all income groups.
- 14.2 Coordinate tuition increases so tuitions are within a range or even standard for all schools in the Des Moines metro area.

15. Parish investment will continue to make excellent Catholic education available and be at a level that is healthy for parishes and predictable for schools.

Schools are a ministry of the Church and support from all parishes is paramount for the viability of schools. Currently support from all 80 parishes represents 37% of their parish tithing and plate collections with some parishes reaching a level above 70%.

Recommendations for implementation

- 15.1 Sustain parish investment at a level that is reasonable for parishes and continues generous support for Catholic schools, measured according to accounting formulas established by the Diocesan Finance Office.
- 15.2 When multiple parishes support a school through a subsidy formula, there will be a written agreement to formalize the support. Agreements should be reviewed every three to five years. The agreements should be transparent. Formulas should not be driven by number of students enrolling.
- 15.3 All parishes will be supporting Catholic school education, either because the parish sponsors a school directly, or the parish is part of a diocesan assessment program.
- 15.4 Shift a portion of parish investment away from operating subsidy to be more generous and strategic with tuition assistance, making it easier for schools to charge tuition that better reflects the cost of education and making it possible for families to still afford Catholic education even with tuition increases.
- 15.5 Develop a diocesan plan to increase stewardship and tithing in parishes.

16. Professionalize business practices to achieve better fiscal management and transparency.

As Catholics, we are called to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us. We must, therefore, adopt best business practices to ensure maximized use of the resources in our care.

Recommendations for implementation

- 16.1 Creation of 5-year budget projection at every school to reach compensation and best practices goals.
- 16.2 Enhance recording and reporting of finances to show benchmarks and consistent measures of key metrics. Key metrics will be actively used in school management and budgeting; i.e. capacity, cost per pupil, staffing level, enrollment outcomes, marketing programs, tuition collection, etc.
- 16.3 Evaluate the need for reduction of cost strategies at local sites.
- 16.4 Provide mandatory in-service for all finance councils, business managers, pastors and principals on the new direction for finances. Give practical help and tools. Establish expectations for schools that align with the diocesan strategic plan and establish measures that lead to greater accountability.

D. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

This document is a guide for the Diocese of Des Moines for many years, so the plan must identify possibilities and allow some flexibility for change as circumstances unfold. Below are possible options to study for the future.

17. Over the next three years, evaluate and expand services offered to students with special needs.

As Catholics, we must ensure that families who want a Catholic education are offered that opportunity for their children. While the schools in Des Moines have worked diligently to meet the needs of students with various learning differences, the Office of Catholic Schools should consider studying what is currently being offered by the schools and what additional programs can be coordinated and offered throughout the diocese.

Recommendations for implementation

- 17.1 Evaluate what is currently being offered in the schools to meet the needs of students with special needs.
- 17.2 Conduct a needs assessment survey to determine what services are warranted by the families in the community regarding special needs.
- 17.3 Using the data collected, study the feasibility of adding more special needs programs throughout the diocese on both the elementary and high school level. This process should include the possible scope of services as well as possible collaboration with other entities in the community which could serve as resources to the school.
- 17.4 An ongoing evaluation process is needed to determine the effectiveness of programs being implemented.

18. In the next three to five years, study the feasibility of opening a new Catholic school to serve the growth areas east and northeast of Des Moines: specifically, Waukee, Grimes, Johnston.

Parishes without schools in these growth areas as well as any new parishes that could be planned should be included in the study. St. Boniface Parish has the demographics and size to be a substantial sponsor of a Catholic school (2018: Parish households - 1716; Baptisms - 104; First Communion - 138). A new school could be the shared ministry of several parishes in the region. Consider the impact on existing schools.

19. Consider the benefits to establishing a regional middle school for the Des Moines metro area.

Students at the middle school level need curriculum/instruction specialization that sometimes may be difficult for individual elementary schools with limited enrollment and resources to offer. Having a regional middle school with specialized instructors, labs, facilities, technology, resources, and wider variety of offerings may create a learning environment that is able to meet the interests and needs of a wide diversity of middle school students. With a regional middle school, the vertical alignment necessary for high school preparedness may be more easily implemented. Partnerships within the community may be formed because the administration and teachers could have greater capacity for outreach. Students may benefit from a larger and more diverse population of fellow students to interact with a larger number of students making it more likely of finding peer groups that share their common interests and talents.