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Charting a plan for long-term success

By Dr. Tracy Bonday
The Catholic Mirror
Jan. 19, 2018

The key to success for any long-term good is to have a plan.

The Diocese of Des Moines has now engaged Meitler, a planning firm based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to help with its planning.

Meitler has a 46-year history consulting with Catholic dioceses, parishes and schools. Its experience includes working in over 120 dioceses in the United States, and large-scale strategic planning programs in more than 56 dioceses.

The process the diocese is starting will be led by Alan Meitler, senior consultant/vice president of Meitler. Meitler earned his MBA from Marquette University and holds a BS from Kansas State University in economics. He has been a speaker at national Catholic education and pastoral planning conferences on the topics of strategic planning, new school studies, funding schools, models for schools, marketing and market research.

For the past year, the Diocese of Des Moines has been working to secure funding for the creation of a strategic plan that would address some of the challenges facing its Catholic schools.

Like many across the country, the diocese faces challenges in enrollment and marketing, funding, Catholic identity, academic excellence and finance.

“The Catholic schools in the diocese have many strengths, and they need to be valued by the communities and parishes where they exist,” said Dr. Tracy Bonday, the diocese’s school superintendent.

“It is imperative that we build on those strengths to ensure the long-term stability, strength and growth of the diocesan Catholic schools,” she said.

Bonday said she hopes the diocese can go from 16 individual schools to a more systemic approach where there is a trusting relationship amongst all locations and everyone knows they are going in the same direction guided by the same goals.

The long-range planning will involve many people. A task force will work with the consultants to help develop consensus and help in the development of the report. The consultants will meet with stakeholders at each of the 16 locations and the task force will also help to gather input from local leadership in parishes and schools to help form the vision for the future.

The diocesan schools office is taking a proactive approach to help ensure that Catholic education will be available, accessible and affordable to parents desiring quality Catholic education for generations to come. The strategic planning process is part of that proactivity.