



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS COMMISSION UPDATE - FEBRUARY 2011

From Commission Co-Chairs: John McMahon and Karen Rauenhorst

On February 14, 2011, the Catholic Schools Commission met for nearly two hours to discuss overarching themes as well as the progress that the working committees have made over the past several weeks. Below is a summary of discussion at this meeting.

I. COMMISSION OVERALL:

a. **Awareness:** We have met with principals, business administrators, and some members of the clergy in an effort to create awareness about the process we are undergoing as well as to ask for input.

b. **Input:**

i. **Meetings/conversations with key stakeholders –**

1. The Catholic Schools Commission first met with school principals on January 21 at their monthly meeting. We will continue to seek input and remain engaged with school principals throughout this process. We're on the principals' agenda for all remaining monthly meetings this school year.
2. The Catholic Schools Commission gave a brief presentation, addressed questions, and took comments at the Association of Parish Business Administrators (APBA) meeting on February 10. We will remain engaged with business administrators throughout this process.
3. Pastors received a mailed letter and information in the electronic *Archdiocesan Update* regarding the Catholic Schools Commission in late January. We hope to arrange a listening session with pastors soon.

ii. **Initial Focus Groups**—it is very important that we get input from the various stakeholders in Catholic education. To that end, the first round of focus group discussions take place on February 22 and 24. These focus groups consist of 10-12 volunteers from urban, suburban, exurban and rural school communities across the Archdiocese. Each focus group includes 2 principals, 2 teachers, at least 3 school parents (at least one of whom is also a school board member), 1 pastor, 1 business administrator and others. We have attempted as much as possible to ensure gender, geographic, ethnic, and age balance of participants.

iii. **Targeted focus groups** -- There will be additional focus groups formed throughout the process to address particular topic areas and provide feedback on specific recommendations from committees.

iv. **Information collected via comments made to csccommission@archspm.org.** We have received many very insightful and useful comments and suggestions that we are incorporating into the Commission.

- v. **Information collected in the archdiocesan strategic planning process** begun in February 2009 and the subsequent recommendations of the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) consultants.
- vi. **Recommendations made by planning bodies in other arch/dioceses** that have studied the issues facing Catholic schools, including declining enrollment, funding, and operating models to optimize enrollment and keep standards high.

II. **ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE:**

- a. Initially focused on building an inventory of communications practices and developing a consistent message addressing the value of Catholic schools
- b. Retained a firm to help in the solicitation of feedback from 100 Catholic school alumni, parents, and interested other parties on what Catholic education means to them. This will be helpful in the development of the overall message about Catholic education.

III. **EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE:**

- a. First meetings focus heavily on vitally important Catholic identity in our schools and developing recommendations to preserve and strengthen this identity through incorporating into a consistent core standards recommendation.
- b. Currently reviewing the various accreditation methodologies used in the schools, working to develop best practices to share with all schools.
- c. Analyzing methodologies to provide leadership and development support to the Catholic school principals.

IV. **FUNDING MODELS COMMITTEE:**

- a. Currently discussing tuition setting policies, practices and methodologies. There is currently a wide variety of practices and the committee is working to recommend a consistent methodology that schools can follow.
- b. In process of reviewing various reporting policies and standards for simplification and consistency.
- c. Considering finding funding source enhancements.
- d. Development and deployment of best practices from a financial standpoint, reporting.

V. **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:**

- a. Charter and membership profile for Archdiocesan Schools Advisory Board – 1st draft completed.
- b. Best practices, roles, responsibilities and membership for individual and regional school advisory boards - 1st draft completed.

This is a very exciting process, with many good ideas being shared and discussed. We continue to ask for input and participation in the discussions as we migrate from addressing issues to creating opportunities for everyone involved with Catholic education. You may email your input at any time to csccommission@archspm.org.