

STRATEGIC DECISIONS AFFECTING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Viable Catholic schools are an essential element for fulfilling the mission of the Church in this Archdiocese. Catholic schools assist parents, as primary educators, in handing on the faith to the next generation. Currently, more than 34,000 students attend Catholic schools throughout the Archdiocese. Identification of the criteria of long-term viability in the areas of Catholic identity, academic programming, financial management, and community outreach (please see APPENDIX C for the full list of criteria) help us in discerning how to best live out the mission of the Church in Catholic schools within the Archdiocese. In some circumstances at certain schools, where the Archdiocese has a direct financial investment, higher standards of accountability and transparency may apply. Ongoing reporting concerning school viability along with site visits conducted by the Office of Catholic Schools maintains accountability standards set forth in the Strategic Plan. A schedule for submitting documentation, as well as for school viability visits, will be communicated annually to all schools in the Archdiocese. Under the Strategic Plan, all schools are called into greater collaboration.



The Archdiocese and its schools have retained a national consultancy group whose final report is due in November 2010. While the Strategic Planning Task Force gathered an enormous amount of data and offered insightful direction, it was necessary to receive the assistance of a consultant to bring the knowledge of our local situation distilled by the task force into conversation with best practices across the country. Pastors and principals have been informed of this initiative and a representative steering committee is working with the consultants to meet their November deadline.

SUMMARY OF CRITERIA FOR LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

CATHOLIC IDENTITY: A viable Catholic school has as its foundation a solid Catholic identity. The Catholic school operates in conformance with the laws, teaching, and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. It is committed to teaching the fullness of the Catholic faith, values, and practices and to integrating these core values into all academic subject areas. This integration of Catholic faith and values with life distinguishes the Catholic school from other schools.

ACADEMIC QUALITY: A viable Catholic school has a quality, comprehensive program as affirmed by an approved accrediting agency, utilizes technology to develop 21st century skills, and provides for ongoing professional development and formation for staff.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: A viable Catholic school has a long-range financial plan, has a balanced annual budget, monitors its finances, and reports annually to stakeholders. A viable Catholic School reviews its budget at the end of September and makes adjustments to reflect actual enrollment numbers.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: A viable Catholic school has effective development and marketing efforts to defray the costs of a quality, Catholic education and to attract new students.



SUMMARY OF CHANGE PROCESSES IN SCHOOLS

Local leaders, with direction and assistance from the Archdiocese, will make decisions regarding the viability of individual Catholic schools. Some schools will be part of structured discussion to determine solutions for problems of Catholic school sustainability and access in particular geographic areas. Final decisions regarding the future of individual schools are made at the local level and recommended to the Archdiocese. Each school community will receive communication about the change process category, if any, to which their school is assigned.

SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW SCHOOLS: Certain school communities will undergo the Catholic Elementary School Review Process for School Sustainability during the next three years and develop a plan that meets the criteria for viable Catholic schools.

SHARED RESOURCES DISCUSSIONS: Certain schools will engage in regional discussions to ensure the sustainability of the system of schools and parishes, as well as that of individual faith communities. These school communities will examine potential configurations within a region to either reduce or grow capacity to meet student enrollment and financial projections for the next eight to fifteen years. Possible outcomes of these discussions are greater sharing of resources and the development of regional schools.

URGENT REVIEW SCHOOLS: Certain school communities will begin the Catholic Elementary School Review Process for School Sustainability immediately with direction and assistance from the Archdiocese. An outcome of this process will be a recommendation, based on a decision by local school leaders, regarding the sustainability of the school into the future. A possible decision is that the school is unsustainable and should close.



TYPES OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Currently and going forward, Catholic schools within the Archdiocese can generally be grouped into four categories.

PARISH SCHOOL: A school supported by one parish.

CONSOLIDATED/REGIONAL SCHOOL: A school which serves a geographic region of an Archdiocese and is supported by two or more parishes.

SCHOOLS THAT RECEIVE SPECIAL SUPPORT: A school which may not be sustainable due to financial or demographic factors, but which is designated for special support because it is a presence of the Church in a key geographic area and/or it exists to serve the poor in providing the opportunity of a Catholic education. Such schools must raise a pre-determined percentage of needed development funding with the remainder provided through archdiocesan assistance and grant support.

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC SCHOOL: A school not formally affiliated with a parish. These schools are sponsored by a religious order or have archdiocesan oversight.