St. Stephen Catholic School

Strategic Plan

October 10, 2013
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I. Vision

To be the premier Catholic school in West Michigan, recognized for its faith foundation and development, academic excellence, and commitment to diversity. St. Stephen prepares students to become insightful thinkers and lifelong learners, who faithfully do God's work as citizens of the world.
II. Mission Statement

As Jesus came to invite all to the same table, St. Stephen Catholic School welcomes all to experience our unique learning environment. As we respect diverse academic levels, faith traditions and socioeconomic backgrounds, we commit ourselves to the education of the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. By our words, actions, and attitudes we encourage students to be active in their faith, respectful of others and thirsty for knowledge. It is our mission to equip them for a lifetime of learning, leadership, and service.
III. Strategic Planning

• In 2012, the Grand Rapids Diocese adopted a school management structure featuring an Education Board with several standing committees, including a Planning Committee whose tasks include developing a strategic plan for the school. The Diocese also provided training that recommended a process for developing the strategic plan.

• At St. Stephen School, the planning committee was combined with two other standing committees to form a Policy, Planning, and Mission Effectiveness Committee, which followed the recommended process for developing this Strategic Plan.

• Strategic planning is not a new concept for St. Stephen School. For example, the school developed a long range plan in 2006 and has been implementing it effectively. The new strategic plan is being developed in order to have a current document and follow the Diocese’s direction.
III. Strategic Planning

- In the strategic planning process, the first two steps were gathering information about the school and the community, and identifying underlying beliefs about current and future conditions affecting the school. Analysis of the school’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) was the third step. Information from these three steps then fed into the fourth step, which was a meeting of various school constituents to identify strategic goals. These goals were adopted by the Education Board at its April, 2013 meeting. Subsequently, other standing committees of the Board and school staff adopted prepared objectives to implement these goals.

- The strategic plan will be updated and developed further so that it will eventually cover a five year period or more.
SWOT Analysis

- According to the Diocesan training material, once the assessment is completed and the assumptions are identified, planning participants analyze the school’s internal life for its strengths and weaknesses, then analyze the external environment to determine opportunities and threats which are likely to impact the school’s future.

- This SWOT analysis is the basis for identifying priorities for strategic planning, which will be translated into strategic goals.

- Note that SWOT analysis of any program will identify negative internal and external factors, and the reader should not be alarmed by identification of these weaknesses and threats relating to the school.

- A summary of the SWOT analysis for St. Stephen School follows.
## SWOT Analysis

### Internal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Leadership and Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Community</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Size</td>
<td>Sports Leadership and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>Safety Issues on Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Formation</td>
<td>Discipline is lacking and inconsistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Small size can make difficult dynamics and make transition to high school intimidating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Tuition</td>
<td>Resources for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Middle School – turnover in staff and loss of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specials, Extras, Arrow Smith</td>
<td>“Specials” interrupt block of class time teachers need for the teaching basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>Support for the music program – band and vocals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Support for students with learning challenges

### Facilities – land lock, boiler, security, technology

### Finances

### Preparation for sacraments
## SWOT Analysis

### External Opportunities
- Fundraising
- Outreach/Partnerships/Collaborations
- Broader parent support and participation
- Offer child development classes
- Expand/Increase enrollment – academic opportunities
- Recruitment
- Increase materials to offer hands-on teaching
- Common Core – Aligning instruction/assessment
- More Catholic enrichment opportunities
- Develop our school’s identity and market that in the community

### Threats
- Competition from other schools at all grade levels
- Loss of students in grades 5-8
- Support for troubled learners is lacking compared to other schools
- Declining parish membership
- Personal finances
- Tuition increase (inflation) threshold
- High tuition of Arrowsmith
- Financial support from parish
- Do we have finances to attract the best teachers?
- Decline in traditional moral values
- Economy
- Changing demographics
- Perception that we are “less Catholic”
The St. Stephen School planning retreat was held on March 10, 2013.

Father Tom Brown, Board members, administrators, faculty, parents, and benefactors participated in the process.

We are grateful for the assistance of our facilitator Julie Whelan, principal of St. Anthony of Padua School.

The strategic goals derived from the planning retreat and additional faculty and Board consideration were adopted at the April 10, 2013 Board meeting and are summarized on the following page.
### Strategic Planning

#### Three-Year Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal #1 (Finance)</th>
<th>Develop and maintain school financial resources into the next 5-10 years.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal #2 (Marketing)</td>
<td>Utilizing the Mission and Vision Statements, define the unique identity of St. Stephen Catholic School and market that identify to all stakeholders. (Community, Parish, Parents of students and parents of prospective students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal #3 (Academic/ Mission/Effectiveness)</td>
<td>Provide premiere instruction that is academically rigorous to prepare students to achieve High School and College readiness standards in a faith-based environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal #4 (Development)</td>
<td>Support short &amp; longer term identified needs in academic programming and the sustainability plan developed by the Finance Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal #5 (Facilities)</td>
<td>Make St. Stephen Catholic School the safest in the diocese and promotes green space and curb appeal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adopted by the Board of Education, April 10, 2013*
IV. Board of Education 2013 - 2014

- Fr. Tom Brown
- Karen DeChant
- Jim Enright - Secretary
- John Finn
- Karla Finn
- Sheila Knopke
- Paul McCarthy – Vice-Chair
- Kevin Stotts
- David Strong
- Nan Swanson
- Cindy Thomas – Principal
V. Committees 2013 - 2014

Executive/Director committee:
Co-Chairs: David Strong & Paul McCarthy

Marketing/Communication Committee:
Co-Chairs: Karen DeChant & Karla Finn

Development Committee:
Chair: Nan Horner

Finance Committee:
Chair: David Strong

Buildings & Grounds Committee:
Chair: John Finn

Policy, Planning & Mission Effectiveness Committee:
Chair: Jim Enright