

January, 2012

Parents and Parishioners,

As communicated to the St. Mary School and Parish community, Policy #1.202 of the *Archdiocesan Policy Manual for Catholic Schools* calls for each parish elementary school in the Archdiocese to give a *State of the School Report* during the first half of the school year. This report was given as part of the November 22, 2011 Parish School Board meeting to which all were invited.

The following gives a brief summation of what was reported at that meeting.

**FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE:**

Kevin Kozek, Chairperson of the school's Finance and Budget Committee, reported that the school is financially sound thanks to solid support from the Parish, fund raising of the Home-School Association (HSA) and the current school endowment. The HSA will contribute \$110,000 from their fundraising events. The Parish currently supports the school with an annual subsidy of \$90,000. The Parish is also responsible for the basic infrastructure of the school's facilities (roofs, parking lot, windows, fire alarm, furnace, and other capital expenses).

In addition to its operating revenue, the school also holds a *P.A.C.T.* account with the Bank of America (an endowed investment account which is not part of the operating budget) that has a market value of \$457,680 as of Sep 30, 2011. Withdrawals from this account can only be made in certain limited situations.

For the 2011 – 2012 school year, a balanced budget was submitted to the Office of Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of Hartford, based on 219 students in K-8 and 71 in Pre-K. The current enrollment is 208 students and 74 students respectively. This shortfall in enrollment has contributed to a projected overall loss of \$92,000 for the school year. We are currently addressing both the current deficit and efforts to improve the future finances of the school with the following actions:

- \$25,000 of past due tuition from the 2010-2011 school year has already been collected.
- Setting up payment plans with families who still have children enrolled in our school but owe tuition from 2010-2011 or before. That debt currently totals \$82,000
- Families who owe money from the past five to ten years and no longer have children in the school have been referred to collections through an attorney. The outstanding debt on that group totals \$256,000, with \$142,000 from families who have left the school over the last three years.
- Revamping guidelines for tuition payments and collections.
- Investigating allowing for tuition payment by credit card.
- Because the Preschool physically has room for more growth; we are aggressively pursuing students for admission at any time of the year.
- Developing more aggressive marketing and advertising campaigns to increase future enrollment.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE:**

Robert Baird, Chair Person for the Strategic Planning Committee, stated that this committee is focused on the future of St. Mary's School. He reported that the most recent version of the Strategic Plan, 2010, will be used as a good starting point.

The goal is to have the 2011-12 version of the Strategic Plan submitted to the board for review in the Spring of 2012, subject to agenda decisions of the School Board Chairman and school administration.

As per the guidelines of both the Archdiocese of Hartford Office of Catholic Schools and the *New England Association of Schools and Colleges*, our accrediting agency, the Plan is broken down into the following seven categories:

1. Catholic Identity
2. Enrollment
3. Staffing
4. Quality Catholic Education
5. Physical Plant
6. Financial Plan
7. Advancement

This committee, working with the school administration and other board committees (including Finance, Facilities and Advancement), will create a plan for the future of our school. Understanding that circumstances are always changing, this plan is to be considered a roadmap that must be assessed and evaluated regularly.

In order to get an accurate handle of where we are at present, our committee is putting together questions to be distributed to current parents, alumni, alumni parents and teachers. We hope this information will be used to evaluate our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats over the next 3-5 years.

NOTE: All current parents were invited to take part in a "*Parental Satisfaction Survey*" that the Archdiocese conducted in November and December of this school year. The results specific to St. Mary School will be forwarded to us.

The Strategic Planning Committee is looking for 2 to 3 additional members for our committee who have an interest in the further development and improvement of the St. Mary School. We encourage anyone interested to contact Mr. Baird, the Board Chair, or the School Office.

### **PLANT AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE:**

Chairperson Kim Colucci reported that the committee performed a walk-through of the school and that custodial upkeep of the school has been evaluated, including a review of job descriptions and custodial schedules. The custodial staff is keeping up with the needs of the building. Suggestions were made to better the overall appearance of the plant. Things are running smoothly so far this school year.

We have contracted for the professional cleaning of all exterior windows, both inside and out. Approved by the board, this will be completed by the Masi Company during Thanksgiving break and will cost is \$1,117.50. NOTE: This project has been completed.

The committee is seeking quotes on the replacement of blinds in the classrooms and will present options to the board. They are also aiming to have the kitchen cleaned and painted. A schedule to continue the painting of the classrooms is being devised.

### **ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE:**

Chairperson Chris Cogguillo reported that the committee is always looking for more volunteers to work on the various aspects of Advancement.

**Annual Appeal:** Christine Paine and Chris have finalized the Annual Appeal Letter for 2011-2012. Letters are being sent to about 1500 including alumni and former appeal donors. The committee is asking that each board member personalize about 50 letters. The letter will allow for pledges. A Phone-a-thon for asking and thanking will be held in late March or early April. The Appeal will approach each group within the church, such as the Parish Council, Ladies Guild, and Knights of Columbus. The goal is to raise \$27,500 by June 31, 2011.

NOTE: Each member of the board is asked to contribute something, large or small, to show 100% support of the Appeal by the board.

The Chairperson recommended that when and if a paid marketing position is created that Marketing become a separate committee and that *Alumni Relations* fall under that category. In either case, there needs to be close communication between Advancement and Marketing.

### **MARKETING COMMITTEE:**

Although marketing falls under the Archdiocesan definition of *Advancement* and therefore a sub-committee of Advancement, due to the importance of marketing the school both to those inside and outside our community, this sub-committee is given equal status to other board committees.

Chair April Bryant reported our efforts to increase our visibility in the community and attract new families in ways such as:

- Sending out email correspondence to families introducing them to Linda Roney and making them aware media like the *Milford Patch* ([www.milford.patch.com](http://www.milford.patch.com)) and how we have been posting events and photos there. Asking them to send us any accomplishments of their children or good news about the school so we can get it out and show off the great things we do here.
- Did the same to the teachers – asked them to send us what their classes are doing.
- Our Fall, 2011 Newsletter is going out at the start of December.
- Concentrating efforts to increase enrollment in Preschool and Upper School.
  - Working on newspaper ads
  - Setting up Open Houses
- Investigating ways to re-vamp our Website to enhance its marketing potential.

### **Other Reports given at November 22, 2011 Parish School Board meeting:**

#### **FACULTY REPRESENTATIVES:**

On an alternating basis, members of the faculty report to the board on the various activities, projects and special activities of each grade level.

#### **H.S.A. REPORT:**

The H.S.A. President, Megan Albright, reported on the various activities of the Home-School Association. Although their required contribution to the Operating Budget

is less this year than last year (\$110,000 as opposed to \$130,000) it is none the less amazing that this group is able to bring in this type of income to reduce the tuition burden on parents.

For 2011-2012, due to the rain which cancelled the first night of the Carnival, they are behind, but hope to make this up in other upcoming events such as the Basketball Tournament and *SMS Sprint*.

### **REPORT OF PRINCIPAL:**

Principal Frank Lacerenza reported on the following:

- Curriculum: The school follows the Curriculum Standards of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Anyone can review these by going to [www.catholicschoolshartford.org](http://www.catholicschoolshartford.org), and clicking the drop down menu “*Quality Catholic Education*.”
- Technology: Inter-active White Boards (being well used) are now in 9 classrooms (at least one in each grade) and in the Preschool. The goal is to have one in each room within two years.
  - Lesson Plans and Grade Books, and therefore Report Cards, are all being done electronically.
    - Archdiocese is looking at availability of grades to parents, but being very careful – purpose of grading in elementary school is different than in high school.
- Tuition Assistance: All families may apply through objective application process handled by *SMART Tuition* (free to families, paid by school with T. A. funds)
  - Last year: \$30,000 available by year’s end (15,000 from AAA, 10,000 from CSSP, some from Ladies Guild, memorials, etc.).
    - 33 children from 19 families received some assistance; 5 families who applied did not due to not having enough funds.
  - This year: This year only \$28,000 (hoping for more).
    - So far: 29 children from 16 families received some assistance, 5 families who applied did not due to not having enough funds.
  - In addition, we do make arrangements with families with legitimate situations; sometimes extending their payment schedule beyond the current school year.
- Professional Development for staff: Professional development is a requirement for all members of the professional staff:
  - Archdiocese sponsored: Curriculum Conference in October, Faith Conference in March, other smaller work shops, etc., to which we will send 1 or 2.
  - School sponsored: Technology, Differentiation, required updates in areas of Health, child protection, etc.. Usually these are part of Early Dismissals for Faculty meetings or special local inservice days.
  - Personal Development Hours: each teacher is required to do several hours on their own: workshops, internal training (technology), adult classes in relative areas, spending a day in another school, being on a NEASC Accreditation Team, or being part of a NEASC Commission, etc..
- Service – major part of our school’s Mission:

- Teddy Bears for Hospital, toys for Birthright, monthly food collection, collecting used items for the Parish “Baby Closet,” *Toys for Tots* in December, etc..
- Also, approved collections handled by individuals or sponsored by groups such as Scouts, etc..
- Mr. Lacerenza again repeated his invitation to anyone in the parish or school community to come into the school for a tour. For security reasons, please call for an appointment. You can have a tour by the Principal, Office Assistant, other staff member, or student (sometimes do it best!).
- Coming Up:
  - Preschool Sunday Open House on Dec. 11th.
  - Breakfast with Santa (12/4) – open to all
  - Band Concert (12/14 – 7:00)
  - Thanksgiving Prayer Service (11/23 at 8:30 in the Church).
  - Christmas Prayer Service (12/23 at 8:30 in the Church).
  - Catholic Schools Month: January. Theme will be “*Faith, Academics, Service; Catholic Schools.*” Many activities planned, including:
    - School Mass, Mon., January 30<sup>th</sup> (8:30 AM)
    - Open House (all are invited), Tues., Jan. 31<sup>st</sup> (9 – 11:00 AM)
    - *Bump Up Day*, Fri., Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>

### **PASTOR’S REPORT:**

Deacon John Hoffman, Father Cronin’s delegated representative to the school and board, reported that the parish supports the school. Mr. Hoffman, on behalf of the Pastor, reaffirmed the view that Catholic Schools are necessary in preparing children to become the Christian leaders our society needs in the future.

Financially, he mentioned that considering the current times and compared to most parish schools in the Archdiocese, we are in an excellent position.

Deacon Hoffman, a Catholic high school educator himself and former member of the Archdiocesan School Board, reported that all high schools give St. Mary School high marks in their preparation of students for the rigors of high school. He stated that all the area Catholic High Schools noticed a marked positive difference in those students who have attended St. Mary School through grade 8.

Mr. Hoffman also reported that as part of his role representing the Pastor to insure the effectiveness of the board, Mr. Hoffman will be coordinating the board’s evaluation of itself and its effectiveness. He will also oversee the boards role in the evaluation of the principal.

### **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:**

The board’s Chairperson, Mike Boynton, thanked those in attendance. He also thanked Deacon John Hoffman for all he has done in the past year to help re-organize the board into the committee driven board it is today. Mr. Boynton also thanked all those parents, parishioners and other friends of the school who are very supportive of the school.

Mr. Boynton reiterated that any parent or parishioner can be part of any Board committee, and encouraged anyone interested in doing so to contact either the chair of the

committee in which they are interested. One could also contact Mr. Boynton as Board Chair or Mr. Lacerenza, Principal, who will then refer the names of those interested to the respected committee chairs.

The Board Chair also again stated that any parent or parishioner is welcome to attend any regular meeting of the Board, usually the fourth Tuesday of each month except December and July. Non-members wishing to speak at any meeting may do so during the "Audience Remarks" section of the agenda provided they request to do so prior to the meeting (as per Constitution and By-Laws).

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**NOTE:**

If anyone has any question or needs clarification regarding this Report or the role of our or any Parish School Board in the Archdiocese, they are welcome to contact Deacon Hoffman (Pastor's Delegate), Mr. Boynton (Chair of Board), or Mr. Lacerenza (School Principal).

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