

Strategic Plan Questions and Answers

1. What is the purpose of the strategic plan?

The strategic plan aims to address current challenges, set clear goals, and create a roadmap for our future success. By us all working together to achieve common goals, we will create a school system that thrives long into the future.

2. How was the strategic plan developed?

The plan was developed through a collaborative process involving input from principals, pastors, school chaplains, parents, educators, parish leaders, donors, our Catholic High School and University partners, community members, and even students. We also studied and spoke with Dioceses from around the world who have overcome similar challenges to create school systems that are growing.

3. What are the key goals of the strategic plan?

Our mission is to teach, serve, and evangelize as we proclaim glory to God. Our vision is to ensure that Catholic Education is available to all who desire it for all time. Goals have been set for nine strategic points of focus. Dozens of exciting initiatives have been identified for the next three years. However, our primary goal is to address the disjointed nature of our Diocesan schools and the significant administrative burden that's been placed on our schools and pastoral leaders over the last several years. During the initial 18 months of the plan, we will migrate to one school system with strong leadership, infrastructure, and systems as the foundation for our future growth.

4. Who will our school report to in the new school system model?

Our school principal will report to either a senior principal within our School Community, to an Assistant Superintendent, or directly to the Superintendent. Our first quarter goals include recruiting a Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent and defining the details associated with new positions on our organizational chart.

5. Why do we have to be part of a School Community?

Each school has a unique identity, and we don't want to lose that. In fact, we want to bolster those unique qualities by creating deliberate centers of excellence based on Roadmaps that were created in October and the exciting initiatives in the strategic plan. We'll be working on ways to share our administrative resources to create greater engagement across our Family of Parishes and with neighboring Families of Parishes. By working together, we'll develop better ideas and economies of scale to have a greater impact on our broader School Community.

6. How will the strategic plan improve student outcomes?

The plan includes initiatives such as curriculum enhancements, professional development for teachers, integration of technology, expanded extracurricular opportunities, and a greater focus on student well-being to ensure students receive a well-rounded, high-quality education.

7. How does the plan address declining enrollment?

We will implement targeted marketing efforts, strengthen community engagement, and in the long-term, grow our tuition assistance programs to attract new families. Additionally, we'll focus on communicating the unique benefits of Catholic education and its alignment with family values. We want our community to know that Catholic education offers everything they value.

8. How will faith and Catholic identity be strengthened through the plan?

The plan emphasizes deepening students' faith experiences through stronger collaboration with our Faith Formation partners, service opportunities, retreats, and a stronger presence of Catholic values in everyday school life. In addition, the roles of our pastors and school chaplains are improving. By removing many of the administrative and operational burdens associated with overseeing a school, they can dedicate their time to ministering to our school leaders and faculty, parents and school families, and most importantly, our students.

9. How will the plan benefit principals, teachers, and staff?

One of our Strategic Points of Focus is creating a Great Place to Work. Our goal is to ensure that we've created a motivating and rewarding workplace that attracts, develops, and retains top talent while helping our team members find Christ, meaning, and joy in their work. We look forward to removing operational burdens and antiquated systems to give our dedicated professionals the time to do what they do best. We hope that a keen focus on financial management, as well as fundraising at the Diocesan level will allow us to offer more robust total rewards programs in the future.

10. When will I learn about new positions associated with the new school system? When will I learn more about how my job might change once we are part of the new school system?

Our first quarter focus is to write job descriptions and initiate searches to fill various positions. Watch the Diocese's jobs board for more information. We'll also be aligning our employment policies, looking for opportunities to benefit our team members. More information will be shared in the Spring.

11. What is going to happen at our school? Will our school close?

The goal of this plan is to create the leadership, infrastructure, systems, and programs to help each school meet the needs of its community and thrive spiritually, academically, financially, and as a great place to work. Someday, we hope to add schools, particularly in communities with poor performing public schools that leave parents no alternative. We also know that given our declining Catholic population and in a number of areas, a declining population of young adults and children, some of our markets may be saturated with schools. We must ensure that we can deliver high-quality educational experiences and create great places to work. If our school achieves the goals associated with our nine Strategic Points of Focus, we should thrive for a long time.

12. What will happen to our school board and home school association?

Community and parent involvement is vitally important for our future success and a hallmark of Catholic education. Our home school associations will remain our primary vehicle for parent engagement. Our school boards will be re-developed to become School Advisory Councils who help us drive things like marketing, enrollment, fundraising, and ensuring our community's most important needs are understood and met.

13. How will the Renewal, bankruptcy process, and major capital improvement needs impact our schools?

At this time, it is difficult to say. We have a few schools that are at risk. They have been asked to put a plan together very quickly so that we can be clear on the future direction of these locations.

14. How can a school thrive without a direct parish affiliation?

Some of our largest and best performing schools do not have a direct parish affiliation. The mergers of some of our parishes are actually intended to create more physical space for schools with the potential for growth. Our plan includes ideas for engaging parishioners and community members from our Families of Parishes more fully with our schools. We also will drive stronger collaboration with our Faith Formation partners. Creating collaborative ministry models is working in other parts of the country and across our Diocese. We will continue to focus on making it work for our schools and all of our Families of Parishes.

15. How will the community be kept informed about the plan's progress?

This month is a "soft launch" of our plan, similar to when a new restaurant serves friends and family for their first week of operation. We think it's vitally important that our teachers and board members hear about the plan from us. So, the Diocese will not be communicating anything about the plan more widely for a few weeks. When that communication begins, we will take great care to assure people that our future strategic direction is designed to strengthen our schools rather than making sweeping changes that make people nervous. The changes happening on the backend should only make things better for our team members, students, and school families. Over time, our goal is to create weekly positive news stories, more aggressive social media posting, parish bulletin updates, and school newsletter articles that get people excited about our bright future and the successes that are already happening in our schools every day, with or without a strategic plan.

16. What are the financial implications of the strategic plan?

Our parish-level financial controls are very strong. However, the process of developing the plan revealed that we can gain financial advantages if we centralize our planning, budgeting, transaction processing, and reporting for the schools. We believe that we can greatly reduce our school deficits by sharing best practices of schools that work at breakeven and surplus levels. We'll be changing the funding model to alleviate the burden of a school's deficit falling on just one parish and ensure that all of our schools, both parochial and regional, are part of the new model. The plan also includes seeking grants, increasing fundraising efforts, and

optimizing resource allocation to ensure financial stability without compromising the quality of education.

17. Doesn't a school system mean that we're becoming more like public schools?

Absolutely not. Strengthening our Catholic identity is the leading Strategic Point of Focus on our chart. We will continue to strive to provide everything our school families value – academic excellence, enriching student experiences, caring teachers, community spirit, strong values, and rich spiritual experiences. We will, however, put best practices from other successful school systems in place especially in areas like data management, human resources, athletics, and financial management.

18. How can parents and community members get involved?

Parents and community members can get involved by participating in school events, joining advisory councils, supporting fundraising efforts, and spreading the word about the benefits of Catholic education. We also have a number of strategic workgroups at the Diocesan level that welcome parent involvement.

19. Our school is thriving. What if we don't want to be part of this plan?

Over the years, our schools have been very successful. In fact, every school that has closed was once thriving. When you study what led to their demise, you see that it was a lack of leadership, infrastructure, and systems – all the things we are trying to improve through this planning process. If our vision is to truly ensure that Catholic Education is available to all who desire it for all time, we must implement the goals and initiatives established by this plan.