“WILL IT BE SAID OF OUR GENERATION THAT WE PRESIDE OVER THE DEMISE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?”
—University of Notre Dame Task Force Report in 2006

WE MUST ACT. WE MUST PULL TOGETHER WITH A RENEWED CONFIDENCE. IMAGINE THE IMPACT IF FROM THIS DAY FORWARD WE WORK TOWARD A COMMON GOAL.

Catholic School Enrollment 2001—2012

“Strong Catholic schools strengthen all other programs of evangelization, service, catechesis and sanctification. The entire church suffers when Catholic schools disappear.”
—Timothy Cardinal Dolan

“A sense of urgency seems to be gripping many Catholics who suddenly see in the shrinking enrollment a once unimaginable prospect: an America without Catholic schools.”

A communion of schools
Academic excellence
Sustainable future
Vibrant communities infused with Catholicism
A bright future for our Church

“Do not abandon the school apostolate; indeed, renew your commitment to schools.”
—Pope Benedict XVI
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you are aware, Pope Benedict XVI has called for a “Year of Faith” beginning this October. During this year, all people are called to engage in a “more complete conversion to God” and to boldly proclaim the Gospel to all nations. Pope Benedict has asked us to reflect deeply on our own faith, and ensure that our actions, thoughts, and prayers reflect the loving teachings of Christ and His Holy Church.

It is in the spirit of this New Evangelization that I present this Vision for the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Catholic schools are a top priority for the Archdiocese. Since their inception in 1824, they have excelled in preparing young men and women to faithfully serve Christ and one another in an increasingly troubled world. This Vision represents a renewal of support, advocacy, and prayer for our Catholic schools, which have long carried a well-deserved reputation of engaging, faith-based teaching.

Catholic schools are vital to our evangelizing ministry and the future of our Church. I respectfully ask the faithful of our Archdiocese to become familiar with the various new directions addressed by the Vision. I also ask for your support in helping ensure that our schools continue to thrive, and that we achieve our mission to provide a high quality, sustainable, authentically Catholic education to all who wish to come. Most importantly, I ask for your prayers in the future success of our Catholic schools.

With the grace of God, and with the faith and conviction of the faithful of the Archdiocese, I know our Vision will succeed. May God continue to bless our Catholic schools, and grant them a bright and vibrant future.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

[Signature]

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Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

I am very pleased to present to you “Lighting the Way”, our Vision for the future of Catholic school education in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Our Vision is the culmination of two years of extensive research, including the input of thousands of school stakeholders. Ultimately, our Vision represents an agenda of growth and expansion of Catholic school education. I know that our Vision will ensure a future where top-notch, faith-filled schools are available and affordable to all families.

I would like to thank the many individuals who helped prepare our Vision, particularly the members of the Vision Steering Committee. Our schools are treasures beyond value, and I know that our Vision will provide thriving Catholic schools for many decades to come. May God bless our Catholic schools!

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]
IT IS CLEAR, BY THE LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO RESPONDED, THAT CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IS HIGHLY VALUED AND HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE LIVES OF PARISHIONERS AND FAMILIES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

Summary and Timeline of the Visioning Process

Summer/Fall 2010:
Start the Planning Process
- Archbishop Dennis Schnurr directed Dr. Jim Rigg to undertake a Strategic Planning Process
- The effort was given the title “Lighting the Way: A Vision for Catholic School Education”
- A Vision Steering Committee (VSC) was formed

Winter/Spring 2011:
Engage an Expert
- A national search was conducted
- The Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) at the University of Notre Dame was engaged
- ACE led the schools’ assessment and facilitated the planning process

Spring/Summer 2011:
Phase One: Data Collection and Analysis
- Several public forums were held throughout the Archdiocese
- Survey was circulated
- Research was gathered

Fall 2011:
Initial Assessment
- Initial Assessment Report was published on the “Lighting the Way” website: http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/education/lighting_the_way/
- Three archdiocesan-wide meetings were held
- The report was shared with approximately 800 parish and school leaders

Fall 2011:
Phase Two: Six Task Forces
- Membership was expansive: pastors, parish leaders, parents, principals, teachers, members of the Catholic Schools Office, and other experts worked tirelessly
- Task forces developed strategic planning goals and objectives

Winter 2012:
Validate
- Additional stakeholder input was needed to validate the direction of specific goals
- Three additional visioning sessions to solicit their feedback on finance, leadership, governance, and the future role of the Catholic Schools Office

Spring/Summer 2012:
Final Report
- Approved by Archbishop Schnurr, shared with all Catholic School Stakeholders
- Clear direction for each domain, timelines and goals over a 3 year period
- The goals, objectives, and action steps presented in this report represent the work of the 6 Task Forces that met from September 2011 to June 2012

The entire report, including defined timelines, can be found at: http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/education/lighting_the_way/

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Rooted in stakeholder feedback and analysis of existing data, our vision recognizes the following principles as essential for long-term school vitality:

- Our Catholic schools are vital to the parish ministry and essential to the evangelizing mission of the greater Church.
- Our administrators and teachers are the lifeblood of the Catholic school and will remain primarily accountable for the success of its mission and ministry.
- A standardization of curriculum, school policies and procedures, and staff certification will help ensure consistent excellence and a culture of accountability across all of our schools.
- The Catholic Schools Office should provide operational support as well as a venue for Archdiocesan-wide collaboration, communication, and sharing of best practices.
- A completely decentralized mode of operating schools is not sustainable.
Our Unified Mission

VITAL TO THE EVANGELIZING AND EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, WE ARE CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITIES DEDICATED TO FAITH FORMATION, ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, AND INDIVIDUAL GROWTH OF OUR STUDENTS, ALL ROOTED IN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF JESUS.

OUR PROMISE

We, the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati are committed to:

Spiritual Growth
An atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to our brothers and sisters is achieved, and thanksgiving and worship of our God is cultivated.

Academic Excellence
Academically rigorous and innovative schools that set the standard for excellence, and are supported by exceptional caring adults who reflect the Light of Christ.

Vibrant Community
Dynamic, welcoming, compassionate communities that are available to all.

Family Partnerships
Partnership with and upholding parents and guardians in their role as primary educators of their children.

Education of the Whole Person
Well-rounded, high quality education that empowers students to achieve their potential and use their gifts to serve God and others.

Global Awareness
Catholic schools that nurture the personal integrity and faith development of students and that challenge them to know and understand our brothers and sisters around the world.

Stewardship of God’s Educational Ministry
Ensuring a vibrant, sustainable future for our schools through unified support and faithful management of resources.
COLLABORATION FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

It became clear that our schools will require a balance of local and central control to provide for a vibrant future. Key decisions, strategies, and initiatives for Catholic schools will be made by leaders on both levels, a partnership approach.

Local leaders understand the unique needs and identities of their school/parish communities. Archdiocesan leaders possess a wider perspective and broader resources.

The vision provides for a number of new support systems. These include (but are not limited to):

- An agenda of growth and expansion
- A renewal of the evangelizing mission of Catholic schools
- The establishment of an Archdiocesan needs-based financial aid source for families throughout the Archdiocese
- A strategic, targeted approach to marketing and fundraising
- A Leadership Academy for new and aspiring school leaders
- Training programs for school pastors, boards and commissions
- The establishment of 3 Vitality Metrics that assess school achievement in religious, academic, and financial vitality
- A defined, transparent process for school openings, closures, and consolidations that includes input and decision making on all levels
CATHOLIC IDENTITY

We learned:
1. The Catholic identity of our schools is of great importance to the majority of parents, parishioners, and other stakeholders.
2. There is a need to form our principals more quickly and effectively to be religious leaders.
3. There is a need to systematically ensure that the Catholic identity of each school remains strong and the highest priority.
4. Engage our parents in ongoing faith formation including the importance of the ministry of Catholic schools.

Our vision calls for:
- A renewal of high quality religious formation for Catholic school leaders, particularly new principals.
- An emphasis on educating and encouraging students to discern a religious vocation.
- A conscious, measurable integration of the Catholic faith into non-religious subjects.
- The introduction of a Catholic Identity Metric to quantitatively gauge a school’s religious effectiveness.
- Designation of a qualified catechetical leader to serve alongside the principal.
- A seizing of all opportunities to evangelize and catechize school parents, including integrating faith teaching into extracurricular events.
- A closer partnership with pastors in ensuring that students participate in the sacramental and community life of their parish.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

We learned:
1. Our schools are generally performing well academically.
2. We need a systematic approach to training teachers in best practice instructional methods.
3. Our teachers and principals need better training in using data to drive instruction.
4. Our schools need better systems of support for students with special needs.

Our vision calls for:
- The implementation of high quality curriculum standards that drive strong academic programs and reflect emerging research.
- The employment of a Professional Development Director in the Catholic Schools Office to drive focused, high quality training for educators.
- The introduction of Academic Vitality Metrics that quantitatively gauge a school’s academic effectiveness.
- The integration of the latest technology into school instructional programs, as well as continual training for educators in using technology as a teaching tool.
- The establishment of preschool programs.
- The introduction of a uniform teacher observation and evaluation system.
- Enhanced training and new support systems for students with special needs, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and students who are English-language learners.

Moving to the Common Core
Beginning in 2011, we initiated a transition to the Common Core standards, an emerging, research-based model of structuring classroom instruction. The Common Core provides for rigorous, measurable standards for our schools.
MARKETING & ENROLLMENT

We learned:

1. Many elementary schools are engaging in little, if any, strategic marketing and recruitment efforts for new students.
2. Most school/parish leaders do not have access to reliable demographic data.
3. High schools generally have well-established and funded marketing and recruitment programs. In some cases, this has created significant competition for students.
4. There is a need for a stronger “collective identity” for Catholic schools; we need to understand and vigorously promote the concept of Catholic education to all people of the Archdiocese.

Our vision calls for:

- A systematic, continual gathering of demographic and enrollment data by the Office of School Strategic Planning. This data will be shared with school leaders in forming local marketing plans.
- Employment of a Marketing Director within the Catholic Schools Office.
- The formation of an Archdiocesan Marketing Committee, made up of marketing experts, to advise the Catholic Schools Office and individual schools on effective marketing techniques.
- Continual training for school leaders on how to form, implement, and monitor school marketing plans.
- An exploration into potential new students, particularly amongst populations underserved by our schools (such as the growing Latino population).
- An exploration into new schools in areas of population growth and/or areas not served by Catholic schools.
- Increased advocacy for Catholic schools among priests, particularly pastors of parishes without schools.

LEADERSHIP

We learned:

1. There is no systematic way of identifying, recruiting, and training new principals.
2. Ongoing professional development for principals varies in relevance and quality.
3. School Board and Education Commission structures vary from school to school. Some schools do not seem to operate a functional Board or Commission.
4. There is a need for more training for School Board and Education Commission members.

Our vision calls for:

- The establishment of a New Principals’ Academy, in partnership with local Catholic universities, to nurture new and aspiring principals.
- Implementation of a research-based standardized principal evaluation process.
- Continual strategic, high quality training for principals of all experience levels.
- Continual strategic, high quality training for pastors.
- Monitoring to ensure that all schools operate a functional School Board or Education Commission.
- Training for Board and Commission members.
- Ongoing systems of support and advisement for the Archbishop, Superintendent, and school/parish leaders on educational matters.

Latino Outreach

Through the employment of a Coordinator of Latino Outreach, funded by the SC Ministry Foundation, we were able to successfully recruit more than 30 new Latino families in Cincinnati-area schools. These efforts will expand to support all 91 elementary schools, with a particular focus on the urban cores of Cincinnati, Dayton, and Hamilton.

New Principals’ Academy

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the New Principals’ Academy will serve all new school leaders through instruction and mentoring. This year-long graduate course is offered in partnership with Xavier University and focuses on the unique role of the Catholic School Principal, with a particular emphasis on such areas as religious leadership, marketing, financial management, and strategic planning. Courses are taught by XU professors, outstanding principals, and members of the Catholic Schools Office.
FINANCE

We learned:

1. The finances of our schools are varied. Most schools have not developed a long-range financial plan for the future.
2. Overall costs of education, and tuition rates, are generally rising each year.
3. Our average cost per pupil is significantly lower than the local public schools.
4. The cost of tuition is a primary reason why more families (of all backgrounds) do not enroll in Catholic schools.
5. Many schools do not utilize an organized form of tuition assistance to families.
6. Our schools benefit from some substantial public programs, such as Auxiliary Services, transportation, and the Educational Choice Scholarship (EdChoice).

Our vision calls for:

• Creation of an Archdiocesan needs-based financial aid source. Seeded by regional fundraising efforts (fall of 2012) and within 3 years a capital campaign. Tuition assistance will be based upon need (assessed by a third party). The aid source will be endowed and continually funded through annual efforts that will follow the capital campaign.
• Coordination of fundraising for Archdiocesan programs (i.e. Catholic Ministries Appeal, Catholic Inner-City Schools Educational Fund, etc.) with the needs-based financial aid source to minimize conflicts and donor fatigue.
• Financial Vitality Metric that will quantitatively gauge a school’s effectiveness in finances, enrollment, and operations. Local leaders of at-risk schools in partnership with the Office of School Strategic Planning will develop intervention plans to address financial problems.
• The implementation of programs to realize financial efficiencies such as consolidated purchasing.
• Continual advocacy and monitoring to ensure public funding benefits Catholic schools.

Foundation Partnerships

In 2012, we will be partnering with the George J. Hubert, Jr. Foundation to raise funds for families of elementary schools on the West Side of Cincinnati. These efforts could raise substantial funds for tuition assistance for the 2013-2014 school year.

GOVERNANCE

We learned:

1. The current reliance upon single parish-based elementary schools is, in many places, unsustainable. The demands placed upon pastors are intensifying, and many parishes draw upon non-traditional populations.
2. There should not be a “one-size-fits-all” approach to governance. The unique needs of each school, illustrated and driven by collected data, should determine the governance of each school.
3. As the locus of educational expertise for the Archdiocese, the Catholic Schools Office should have a greater influence on the governance of our schools.
4. One of the strengths of our schools is their relative autonomy. In defining governance for the future, we must allow schools to retain a necessary degree of autonomy while establishing systems of common support, practice, and accountability.

Our vision calls for:

• The implementation of a defined, streamlined governance transition process that will determine how, where, and when school governance should be changed. At its heart, this process will be driven by collected religious, academic, financial, and demographic data. Decisions regarding governance will be made at both the local and Archdiocesan level, as defined by the governance process.
• The formation and use of a Governance Transition Team that will assist local leaders in implementing governance changes.
• The definition of approved research-based governance models that can be used in our Catholic schools.
• The implementation of a screening process by the Catholic Schools Office for all potential new principals.
• The continual education of pastors, principals, and board members in governance and governance models.

Data to Drive Governance Changes

Through the introduction of three Vitality Metrics (religious, academic, and financial vitality), we expect to continually possess reliable data about where and when changes in governance at our schools need to take place. Through a defined governance transition process, that includes decision making at both the local and Archdiocesan levels, we will help ensure that our schools are best positioned to meet the needs of those we serve.
FROM OUR VISION TO REALITY

To make this vision possible we are committed to:

Restructuring
We will change and adapt positions and priorities within the Catholic Schools Office to meet the needs of our schools and ensure that they are places of excellence.

Transparency
We will continue to listen and provide regular feedback to our stakeholders on the progress of our Vision over the next 3 years through school communications, public meetings, and web-based updates.

Using Data to Drive Decisions
We will employ 3 “Vitality Metrics” (Religious, Academic, Financial) to provide standardized, quantitative data for school and Archdiocesan leaders that will be used in defining future plans for Catholic schools.

Smart Stewardship
We will make operational decisions in a manner that demonstrates fiscal responsibility and best use of the time, talents, and treasures of our stakeholders.

Increased Collaboration
We are committed to building stronger partnerships with each of our schools and parishes and creating a greater sense of unity for Catholic education.

Embodying our Mission
We will ensure that our schools vibrant and authentically reflect our Catholic identity.

IT IS TIME TO RECOVER OUR NERVE AND PROMOTE OUR SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.

The current hospice mentality—watching our schools slowly die—must give way to a renewed confidence. American Catholic schools need to be unabashedly proud of their proven gritty ability to transmit faith and values to all their students, particularly welcoming the immigrant and the disadvantaged, whose hope for success lies in an education that makes them responsible citizens.

— Timothy Cardinal Dolan

Catholic schools are vital to our evangelizing ministry and the future of our Church. I call upon the faithful to become familiar with the various new directions addressed by the Vision. I also ask for your support in helping ensure that our schools continue to thrive, and that we achieve our mission to provide a high quality, sustainable, authentically Catholic education to all who wish to come. Most importantly, I ask for your prayers in the future success of our Catholic schools.

— Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr