

Saint Philomena School

Transitioning into the future

The Strategic Plan for Fall 2008 through December 2010

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on January 8, 2008

Mission statement

St. Philomena School is a private Catholic school in the Diocese of Providence, under the guidance and leadership of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus. Its mission is to enable each child to recognize and develop the unique gifts given by God. Called to this mission by God, the School educates the whole child - spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially.

Through the cooperation of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus, the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students and their families, Christ's message of Faith, Hope and Love is shared with the greater community

Focus of this plan

This transition plan serves as a bridge between the historical accomplishments of Saint Philomena School and the changing future. With this plan, the School commits to “the gift of newness that opens doors closed by habit and routine.”

The early years of 2000 witnessed a capital fundraising campaign to improve and build facilities. This transition plan turns the school's attention to curriculum development, financing, and leadership development. By the end of the transition plan, the school might, again, consider another building initiative.

Specifically, this plan addresses the following issues, described on pages 2 – 5.

1. Change of leadership from f.c.J principal to lay principal
2. Quality curriculum
3. Protection of building and grounds completed through the building initiative
4. Recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff
5. Strengthening governance and management
6. Assuring financing
7. Maximizing enrollment
8. Maintaining school community

Issues and strategies: focus for the transition plan

Issue: Change of leadership from f.c.J principal to lay principal

For the first time in its history, a lay principal leads Saint Philomena School. In addition, school leadership recognizes that the f.c.Js may not have a presence in Rhode Island (or the U.S.) in the coming years. This reality offers unique opportunities, as well as a challenge to ensure Catholicity and the charism of the f.c.Js.

At the 2007 planning retreat, School leadership reiterated its commitment to Catholicity and the f.c.J. charism. Specific strategies for this transition plan include:

1. Communicate Catholicity in the marketing and admissions process. Reinforce Catholicity through the school environment and school activities.
2. Document f.c.J. charism and tradition through stories and staff orientation and training.
3. Develop a plan to secure a pastoral minister once an f.c.J. is no longer available on campus.
 - Responsibility: Mission Effectiveness Committee, Administration, FCJs and Faculty
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult: Parents, Diocese

Issue: Quality curriculum

As an expert in curriculum development, the new principal can ensure evaluation of core curriculum and enrichment activities, and standard setting that responds to contemporary expectations. This priority for the transition plan forms the foundation for the next step in the school's evolution.

Specific strategies include:

1. Evaluate curriculum – including Gifted and Resource Programs – using such tools as mapping, standards, and standardized tests.
2. Maintain individualized attention and education for the whole child.
3. Maintain balance of freedom in classroom teaching while covering the curriculum.
4. Consistently and equitably use technology throughout the campus.
5. Develop student service / service learning so that Saint Philomena students participate more actively in improving the lives of others.
6. Evaluate athletics and enrichment programs to strengthen offerings as appropriate.
7. Develop a plan to ensure the next phase of facility improvements to support quality education and enrichment.
 - Responsibility: Administration, Team Leaders, Faculty, Computer Director
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult : Building and Grounds Committee, Finance Committee, Business Manager

Issue: Protection of building and grounds completed through the building initiative

With its 2000 strategic plan, Saint Philomena launched a major building initiative. A capital fundraising campaign provided new facilities for the campus. Now the school must protect this expanded asset through management and maintenance.

Specific strategies include:

1. Devise the appropriate systems and infrastructure to assure proper maintenance of buildings and groups, and safety and security.
2. Develop a plan for short- and long-range improvements and new construction to support the curriculum and enrichment programs.
 - Responsibility: Building and Grounds Committee, Administration, and Business Manager
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult: Board of Trustees, Finance Committee

Issue: Recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff

Saint Philomena School recognizes that all staff – whether administrative or teaching – are essential to a healthy environment. The School acknowledges the importance of history and continuity, balanced with new ideas and a questioning attitude. Employee turnover provides a natural opportunity to seek new ideas and question the status quo.

Specific strategies include:

1. Revise compensation program to address salary disparities (e.g., base salaries, steps, education), and enhance benefits across the entire staffing population.
2. Increase the gender and ethnic diversity of the staff through proactive recruitment strategies.
3. Devise a recruitment plan for anticipated retirements.
4. Invest in staff development to build new skills and support the school's change process.
5. Launch community-building strategies to strengthen employee morale and nurture collegiality.
6. Develop a comprehensive orientation program that includes Catholicity, f.c.J. charism, mentoring, etc.
 - Responsibility: Administration, Team Leaders
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult : Finance Committee, Business Manager, Faculty

Issue: Strengthening governance and management

Governance and management systems benefit from a health check on a regular basis. Volunteers and board members who have not worked in the nonprofit / nongovernmental sector may need training to better understand governance, management, and financing for corporations like Saint Philomena School.

Specific strategies include:

1. Assure proper skill development for the Board of Trustees, its individual members and committees, and the Principal regarding: (a) best practice in governance including scope and limits of authority, accountability and transparency; and, fund development.
2. Revise the School's governing documents to adequately support the smooth functioning of the corporation.
 - Responsibility: Board Self Development Committee, Board of Trustees, FCJs
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult: Diocesan Resources

Issue: Assuring financing

The School operates on a tuition-based model, which strains affordability and risks elitism. Scholarship availability is critically important to maintain the f.c.J. purpose.

Specific strategies include:

1. As appropriate, manage expenses and efficiency through collaboration and outsourcing.
2. Evaluate the return on investment for additional revenue streams, e.g., renting the building and grounds.
3. Increase endowment through fundraising to mitigate affects of tuition costs.
4. Strengthen the School's capacity to raise charitable contributions by: (a) developing a comprehensive fund development strategy based on the documented body of knowledge, best practice, and next practice; (b) creating a donor-centered operation to nurture relationships and increase loyalty; (c) reach out to alumni, and (d)engage board members and the Principal in the fund development process.
 - Responsibility: Administration, Finance Committee, Business Manager, Development Director
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult: Board of Trustees, Building and Grounds Committee, Administration

Issue: Maximizing enrollment

The School has waiting lists for some grades and is not full in other grades. For some families, Saint Philomena School is a response to failed public schools. With enhanced marketing, the School can operate consistently at or near full enrollment.

The principle strategy is:

- Develop a multi-year marketing plan for admissions by (a) using data about enrollment trends in diocesan schools and independent schools; and (b) analyzing multiple enrollment scenarios with diverse variables.
 - Responsibility: Administration, Development Director
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult : Faculty, Parents, Community Resources

Issue: Maintaining school community

A sense of connectedness and engagement – community – is central to the mission of Saint Philomena School. Parental involvement and family participation makes a difference for student development, and the health of the School. However, the increasing demands on families requires that the School realistically manage its own expectations about this participation.

Specific strategies include:

1. Work with parents to articulate a continuum of community activities that respond to different family demands over time.
2. Enhance two-way communication within the School community – including better use of technology and website enhancement – maintaining the personal touch.
 - Responsibility: Administration, Team Leaders, Faculty, Parents
 - Timeframe: 2008-2010
 - Consult : Computer Director, Development Director

Monitoring progress and updating the plan

This plan serves as the framework for all staff, committee, and Board work during the coming months and years.

The budget is based on an analysis of the progress on the plan – and the priorities for the next fiscal year. The Board of Trustees uses these issues to design its meeting agendas. Quarterly, management presents an update on progress. Forward movement on the plan is part of the performance appraisal of all staff, including the Principal.

The Board and Administration communicate the focus of the plan to the School community, providing annual updates about progress. The Board may hold an annual planning retreat – a time for reflection and in-depth dialogue about trends and their implications, and adjustments to the plan.

By 2010 – 2011, it is likely that the School will launch another strategic planning process.