

## Catholic School Leadership



One of the interesting things that I get to do this year is take classes from Creighton. I was invited to participate in the Catholic School Leadership program that Creighton offers. This is a 12 credit hour program designed to enhance the leadership of Catholic schools. I said “yes” even though I know that means hitting the books and a lot of studying. I’m just in my first class, but I’m already learning a lot. Isn’t it funny how God works and puts things in your life at certain times when you are willing to say “yes?”

For example, last spring I was thinking of how we fund our school compared to other schools in the archdiocese. And I wondered how long we could sustain this model. Interestingly enough, this first class I’m taking covers a lot of the various funding models found in Catholic schools across the country. Some of these models work better in certain areas of the country than others. And some worked well for many years in those schools, but then slowly began to be ineffective. In fact, in a study sponsored by the National Catholic Education Association in 2011, they found that during the last 50 years almost half of all Catholic elementary schools have closed, and enrollment has dropped by over 60% in Catholic schools. The main reason is lack of adequate funding. This hasn’t been our experience here at St. Columbkille, but it is something that we should be aware of so that we can begin planning for our future needs now.

So that brings me to another thing that I had been thinking about last year, and that is strategic planning. Last year, our superintendent told us that each school needed to develop a strategic plan. He told us that this would be necessary if we wanted to apply for any grants that might be available from *Ignite the Faith* funds. Well, I am not one to turn away free money, so I spoke with our School Advisory Council and indicated to them that we needed this strategic plan so that if the opportunity arose we could apply for some of those grants. I really didn’t hold a lot of hope that we would get any of those grants because they were going to be need-based and there are a lot of other schools with greater financial needs than ours. However, I like to have my bases covered, so I thought we could *throw together* a quick little strategic plan and have that done, just in case.

Wouldn’t you know it? The first class that I have to take has strategic planning as one of its major outcomes. And they aren’t talking about the quick little plan that I had intended to *throw together!* My instructor expects a plan that is well thought out and conceived, and designed to give us direction for future success. A plan that takes a lot of time and collaboration. A plan that will ensure success and growth as St. Columbkille Catholic School continues its ministry and mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This will be more work than I initially had thought. But, it is kind of exciting as we begin to plot out the steps now that will lead us into a bright and exciting future. Saying “yes” to God isn’t always the easiest way, but it is definitely the best way.