

Strategic Planning in the Archdiocese



Once again I have to marvel a little at how God puts things in our lives that are relevant to our current situation. We (School Advisory Council and administration) have been discussing strategic planning for a little over six months and it just happens to be the main focus of the class I am taking through my Catholic Schools Leadership Program at Creighton.

I have just recently finished reading the strategic plan for the Omaha Archdiocese. I had not read that document previously so it was helpful to read and study it. I can clearly see that our superintendent, Patrick Slattery, is moving from a very loose confederation of schools in the archdiocese to a more centralized approach with more authority in the Catholic Schools Office (CSO). *Vision for the Future of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Omaha (2012)* reads, "The Superintendent of Catholic Schools and Catholic Schools Office will be given the appropriate authority by the Archbishop to carry out the duties and responsibilities necessary to implement the strategic plan and ensure that Catholic schools in the Archdiocese are quality institutions fulfilling the mission of Catholic education." (p. 12).

This is not the way things have been operating for the last 100 years. Each school was an entity of a parish with very little oversight by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO). We all know the history and we know that this model is not sustainable in a growing number of parishes and dioceses. This is why Catholic schools have been closing across the country and in our own archdiocese at an alarming rate. As Catholics it is imperative for us to take a systems view of Catholic education in our archdiocese, and in some cases, across an even broader area, i.e., the United States. St. Columbkille is in the fortunate position of being a school in a parish that can probably sustain the one-parish, one-school model for several years, so it would be easy for us to be unsupportive of this strategic move towards centralization. However, we all need to keep in mind that Catholic education is the most powerful and reliable resource we have in passing on the faith. According to Cardinal Timothy Dolan, strengthening our Catholic schools "is but the first step in a longer process to make sure that we faithfully heed the final mandate of Jesus, 'Go teach!'" (*Pathways to Excellence*, 2010. p. 2-3). In the long run a selfish stance against centralizing more authority in the CSO would be detrimental to the ministry of Catholic education in our archdiocese and eventually in our own local parish.

So are there any tangible benefits we receive from the CSO right now? I think so. We now have someone in the CSO who is working on strategic planning and marketing. Another exciting thing that is happening has to do with the hiring of a new instructional technology person in the CSO. I recently sat in on a meeting with him in which he went over some ideas he has for an archdiocesan technology plan. He has a clear vision for the future of technology in our schools that will enable us to

customize learning for our students. This is an area where I would like to see our school make progress. It is also an area where we need assistance.

These are some of the benefits that can result from authority/services being centralized in the Catholic Schools Office. As Mother Teresa said, "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

Yours in Christ,
Jim Makey