

# **Strategic Framework**

Developed by the Task Force to Re-Imagine Catholic Education  
*November 2009-March 2010*

## **Mission Statement of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany**

“We are God's people sharing a responsibility to witness God's unconditional love and to bring Christ's healing presence to our world.”

## **Mission of the Diocesan Schools**

“The schools, guided by the mission of Jesus, are places where students witness, share and grow in the faith community. While offering excellent academic programs, the schools provide for the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of each individual within the framework of Catholic Christian values to witness God's unconditional love and bring Christ's healing presence to the world.”

## **Guiding Principle**

Catholic schools have tremendous potential to learn from one another and collaborate with each other, as well as the local, national and global communities, to shape a future full of hope.

## **Core Values of Catholic Education**

- Catholic faith, tradition and spirituality
- Respect for other religious traditions
- Life and family
- Child-focused, student-centered
- Social justice, service to the community, commonwealth
- Integrity
- Academic excellence
- Intellectual development
- Historic tradition of learning that is carried throughout one's lifetime

## **Characteristics of Catholic Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Schools emphasize:*

- Core values of Catholic education (above)
- 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (i.e., critical thinking, teamwork, innovation, technology literacy, communication, citizenship, leadership, etc.)
- Cultural competence and global awareness
- Innovation
- Technology (to learn with and from)

- Partnerships (with colleges, universities, businesses, etc.)
- Affordability and accessibility
- Inclusiveness
- Communications
- Flexibility and nimbleness
- Safety and security

## **Goals & Outcomes: Catholic Identity**

*[Subject of Task Force meetings on Nov. 9, 2009 and Dec. 14, 2009]*

**Goal #1: Catholic schools, grounded in the Catholic faith and tradition, provide an environment where the Gospel values of Jesus are articulated and integrated throughout the curricular and co-curricular activities.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Students are taught to live a life of faith and spirituality built upon a strong understanding and respect for the Catholic faith and the church as well as for other religious traditions.
2. Students integrate the values of the Catholic faith in their learning.
3. Students experience values of respect, care and the dignity of each person.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goal #2: Catholic schools care profoundly about faith and the world and embodying social justice values.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Students learn socially responsible behavior and demonstrate it in their lives.
2. Students are engaged in service projects throughout their experience in Catholic schools.
3. Students learn to become leaders in their faith and the world.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goal #3: Catholic schools create vital links with parents, guardians and families who choose to invest in Catholic schools.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Catholic schools recognize parents, guardians and families and as the primary educators and partner with them in the education of their children.
2. Students experience the core value of family and a sense of community within the Catholic school.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goals & Outcomes: Academics, Teaching & Learning**

*[Subject of Task Force meeting on Jan. 4, 2010]*

**Goal #1: Catholic schools are academically rigorous and provide a solid educational foundation though broad, innovative standards-based curricula that prepares students for a fulfilling life***Outcomes:*

1. Students are challenged by a state-of-the-art curricula that focus on core academic subjects as well as subject matter that ensures global awareness, technological understanding and proficiency, exposure to the arts, flexibility and nimbleness in addressing the skill needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the spiritual underpinnings taught through the Catholic faith.
2. Students achieve and exceed curricula requirements through emphasis on a student-centered approach to learning.
3. Students' learning and skill needs are met through a responsive curricula that is evaluated regularly and changed over time
4. Students are informed, empowered and actively engaged in learning.
5. Students are curious, creative and enthusiastic about learning and embrace lifelong learning.
6. Students develop and apply their skills to navigate successfully in the increasingly complex and ever-changing world.
7. Students learn to value and embrace innovation, technology and the ambiguity of tomorrow.
8. Students have a wide range of post-high school graduation options.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goal #2: Catholic schools are recognized and respected for a distinct combination of academic excellence and faith-based education.***Outcomes:*

1. Student learning exceeds New York State Learning Standards and Assessments because Catholic schools always reach beyond the norm.
2. Students succeed in college and/or the workforce.
3. Students develop spiritually, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically.
4. Students embody Christian values and learn from teachers who are exceptional, have a passion for Catholic education and its mission, and serve as role models for their students.
5. Students understand the connection between knowledge and faith.
6. Students experience prayer, meditation, contemplation and reflection and are encouraged to approach life thoughtfully and selflessly.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.
2. Catholic schools are in a unique position to develop their own rigorous standards and assessments, building on New York State Learning Standards and Assessments.
3. Assessment in Catholic schools is based upon ongoing formative, summative and authentic assessment of students.

**Goal #3: Catholic schools recognize that the quality of their teachers has the greatest impact on students; they demand, recruit and hire excellent teachers and employ only those who create vibrant, innovative and creative learning environments for students.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Teachers are carefully selected through rigorous criteria.
2. Teachers are held accountable to and assessed regularly against standards of learning and teaching as set for the Catholic schools' franchise.
3. Teachers come from a variety of backgrounds and have many life experiences that enrich curriculum, learning and instruction.
4. Teachers must engage in ongoing, robust professional development.
5. Teachers are highly proficient in the use of technology.
6. Teachers are highly proficient in the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (critical thinking, technology, global awareness, communications, teamwork, etc.); they prepare and teach the curricula demonstrating these skills with each individual student.
7. Teachers and students learn from each other.
8. Teachers embrace and value students of all learning styles and differentiate instruction accordingly.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.
2. A "teacher compact" should be considered and marketed heavily.

**Goal #4: Catholic schools seek and sustain mutually beneficial partnerships with colleges and universities nationally and regionally, with national and area Catholic colleges, and with businesses and the community.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Students have a distinct advantage when it comes to enriched curriculum.
2. Students have a distinct advantage when it comes to college acceptance.
3. Students have wide-ranging opportunities for learning and support.
4. Students have a wide range of post-graduation options.
5. Colleges, businesses and community seek out Catholic schools for partnerships and support.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goals & Outcomes: Innovation & The Future**

*[Subject of Task Force meeting on Jan. 27, 2010]*

**Goal #1: Innovation in teaching and learning is integral to Catholic schools***Outcomes:*

1. Catholic school teachers embrace and nurture innovation.
2. Student life is imbued with the intellectual and spiritual nourishment that spurs innovation and student success.
3. Catholic schools focus on the need for innovation to improve the quality of human life and celebrate the glory of the human spirit.
4. Catholic school teachers are committed to continuous improvement of their practice through reflection about how teaching can model and promote innovation.
5. Catholic schools encourage, develop and measure the effectiveness of new ways of teaching and learning based on the impact of evolving technology and innovative ideas on teaching and learning practices,

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.
2. Claiming this territory, if possible, in the constellation of K-12 education is important. This can be accomplished through programming, messaging and marketing.

**Goal #2: Catholic schools create teaching and learning opportunities for students, teachers and the Catholic community beyond the classroom walls.***Outcomes:*

1. Catholic schools extend the course offerings to traditional K-12 students and the Catholic community with online courses and through collaboration with area businesses, colleges and universities.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goal #3: Technology plays a central role in Catholic education.***Outcomes:*

1. Catholic schools explore and utilize emerging technologies.
2. Catholic schools believe that technology is integral to learning, teaching and interacting with the world.

3. Catholic schools enter into strategic alliances with colleges, universities and businesses to maximize proficiency in technology and extend the school community.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.
2. Technology can connect Catholic schools with students, institutions and significant sites around the world.
3. Claiming this territory, if possible, in the constellation of K-12 education is important. This can be accomplished through programming, messaging and marketing.

## **Goals & Outcomes: Governance**

*[Subject of Task Force meeting on Feb. 23, 2010]*

**Goal #1: Catholic schools, centered in the Catholic faith, are academically challenging, fiscally sound and embrace cooperation within a centralized and streamlined cooperative structure that emphasizes, fosters and demands accountability at all levels of the educational community.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Catholic schools form an educational cooperative that is an extension of the work Catholic schools and parishes do in their communities. The cooperative is led by the superintendent who is its CEO and the Bishop's delegate for the educational mission of the Diocese. He/she reports to a board elected by school communities and the Bishop.
2. Catholic schools collaborate regionally to advance the mission of Catholic education locally. This includes joint marketing efforts, similar tuition structures, shared teachers and other means to communicate a common mission.
3. Catholic schools achieve significant economies of scale and uniform approaches by sharing numerous centralized services, including, but not limited to: administrative services; human resources, including teacher/administrator recruitment and benefit administration; curriculum innovation and development; internal controls; purchasing; professional development; student recruitment; enrollment management, marketing; development; financial aid; research; compliance, technology; partnerships (including links with colleges).
4. Diocesan education leaders continually seek "best practices" that are innovative and practical and can be incorporated into the operation of the Diocesan schools.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.
2. To allow more students the opportunity of a Catholic education, transportation, distance learning opportunities and new means of financial aid should be explored.

**Goal #2: Catholic schools represent a valuable franchise with a strong Catholic identity, a standard of academic excellence, fiscal growth and sustainability, innovation and responsiveness to the changing complexities of the local, state and global communities.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Catholic schools are a distinct franchise with unique messaging, which enlarges the community of support for Catholic education and requires commitment from all parishes, all pastors, all school principals and all local school boards.
2. Catholic schools are accountable for meeting high standards and operating within the franchise.
3. Catholic schools maintain their own “culture” and yet are part of a well-defined franchise.
4. Catholic schools benefit from a clear identity supported by sophisticated marketing.
5. Catholic schools benefit from a central authority that stays in the forefront of innovation, technology and other significant areas.
6. Catholic schools benefit from a central authority that sees accessibility and affordability of Catholic education as critical issues.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goal #3: Catholic schools within the Diocese are governed by a Diocesan School Board, with respect to standards of Catholic identity, academic quality, fiscal accountability and general policies. Each school maintains a local board to oversee its operation.**

*Outcomes:*

1. A Diocesan board is comprised of individuals elected by the local school boards (75 percent of the membership) and appointees of the Bishop, including representatives of the parishes without schools, business community, higher education, etc. (25 percent of membership). This board is the Diocesan- level policymaker and serves in a fiduciary capacity for the Diocesan system. It also recommends the appointment of the superintendent to the Bishop.
2. The superintendent supervises all aspects of the educational program, collaborating with the local pastor in the appointment and supervision of the building principal. Local principals are recommended for appointment by the local board to the pastor and superintendent.
3. Each school maintains a school board, elected/appointed locally, whose role it is to establish local policy for the school, within the parameters established by the Diocesan board, and to ensure the school’s fiscal sustainability.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goal #4: “A Diocesan Compact for Catholic Educational Programs and Services” clearly articulates the responsibilities of local boards, the Diocesan board, the superintendent and the Bishop. Each school using the “Roman Catholic” moniker and every Diocesan parish is part of the compact and participates in support of the compact financially.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Catholic schools and the parishes within the Diocese are mutually supportive and commit to partner in the Diocese in a variety of ways.
2. Catholic schools and parishes work together to advance the value of Catholic education.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

## **Goals & Outcomes: Communications & Marketing**

*[Communications & marketing were threads of all Task Force meetings.]*

**Goal #1: Catholic schools understand the value, power and importance of good communications and the Catholic “brand.”**

*Outcomes:*

1. Catholic schools communicate effectively and regularly with its internal audiences: parents, families and/or guardians.
2. Catholic schools “market” themselves seriously and professionally.
3. Catholic schools’ ongoing communications – both internal and external -- are professional and clearly delineate the difference between Catholic schools, other private schools, public schools and independent schools.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

**Goal #2: Catholic schools are recognized and respected for their distinct contribution to the educational constellation.**

*Outcomes:*

1. Students and their parents seek information about the Catholic schools.
2. Enrollment increases.
3. Alumni remain engaged and supportive.
4. Donor engagement increases.
5. Teacher recruitment is invigorated.

*Important considerations:*

1. Data must support this goal and these outcomes.

## Opportunities & Ideas to Be Considered Going Forward

1. Catholic schools are in a unique position to develop standards and assessments that exceed New York State Learning Standards and Assessments.
2. Catholic schools are in a unique position to develop rich partnerships and collaborations with Catholic colleges in the region, with other colleges and universities in the region, with business, government and the community.
3. Catholic schools have the opportunity to “claim” various areas of teaching and learning as their strengths.
4. Catholic schools should consider a teacher compact.
5. Catholic schools must focus on the child and market themselves as “child-centered.”
6. The Catholic School Office should partner with Catholic colleges to ensure that their teacher education programs are preparing teachers to meet the standards it demands.
7. Catholic schools must have a sophisticated marketing program that differentiates them and their strengths from others in the K-12 educational constellation.
8. Catholic schools have the opportunity to create a “think tank”-type institute that positions the schools as the “go-to” organization for certain areas of education.
9. To ensure the sustainability of Catholic education, there is a need to change or unlock the existing system to meet the present challenges facing both the church and schools.
10. Catholic schools enter into strategic alliances with colleges, universities and businesses to take advantage of their proficiency in technology as well as their science and math curriculum.
11. Both hard and soft data are important to measuring the progress and success of any plan.