

# **Covenant to Educate: Re-Imagining Catholic Schools Strategies for the Future**

Developed by the Strategic Planning Committee  
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## **1) Governance**

### Grand Strategy

A shared governance structure will be implemented by the Diocese to drive a centralized, cooperative and streamlined capacity to lead, resource and brand Diocesan schools as a unified franchise.

### Desired Outcomes

Diocesan schools, as a unified franchise, form an educational cooperative that is an extension of the work Diocesan schools and parishes do in their communities. The franchise is lead by the superintendent, who, as the Bishop's designee for the educational mission of the Diocese, is the CEO. He/she reports to a board elected by school communities and to the Bishop.

Diocesan schools are accountable for working collaboratively to advance the mission of the Catholic Church. This includes joint marketing efforts, similar tuition structures, shared teachers and other means to communicate a common mission.

Diocesan schools are accountable for meeting high standards and operating within the franchise.

Diocesan 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).

Diocesan educators continually seek "best practices" that are innovative and practical and can be incorporated into the operation of the Diocesan schools.

Diocesan schools benefit from a central authority that sees accessibility and affordability of Catholic education as critical issues.

The CEO/Superintendent of Diocesan Schools 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.

### Actions Needed in the Next 2-3 Years

Develop a consensus of the roles, responsibilities, accountability and mutual interests of various stakeholders in a federated governance system (including all schools and all parishes). These roles, responsibilities and mutual interests should be incorporated in a formal Governance Document (i.e. "A Diocesan Compact for Catholic Educational Programs and Services").

Enhance the role of the Diocesan School Board to include responsibility for standards of Catholic identity, academic quality, fiscal accountability and general policies. Each school will maintain a local board. Roles and responsibilities of the various entities will be incorporated in the Governance Document.

Take inventory of all resources: financial, human, physical, real estate, assets., etc. and develop a financial plan that includes resource needs and a resource development strategy to support the desired outcomes associated with this grand strategy.

## **2) Church-School Alliance**

### Grand Strategy

A "Church-School Alliance" will recognize that the interests of the Church and Diocesan schools are mutual and inextricable.

### Desired Outcomes

The Church-School Alliance strengthens parish life and leads to increased enrollment and participation.

Diocesan schools and all parishes within the Diocese are mutually supportive and commit to partner in the Diocese in a variety of ways supportive to a unified franchise.

Diocesan schools and all parishes work together to advance the value of Catholic education.

### Actions Needed in the Next 2-3 Years

Diocesan leadership will build consensus around a paradigm shift regarding the relationship between Diocesan schools and all parishes.

Diocesan leadership will articulate support for the Church-School Alliance.

Diocesan leadership will develop a plan for dissemination of the Strategic Plan for Diocesan schools and engaging the stakeholders.

### **3) Branding**

#### Grand Strategy

Diocesan schools will commit to a multi-year branding initiative, which promotes the franchise, communicates core Catholic values, student-centered learning and delivers on brand promise.

#### Desired Outcomes

Diocesan schools are recognized as 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.

The greater community understands the value, power and importance of good communications and the Catholic "brand."

Diocesan schools benefit from a clear identity supported by sophisticated, serious and professional marketing.

Diocesan schools' ongoing communications - both internal and external - are professional and clearly delineate the difference between Diocesan schools, other private schools, public schools and independent schools.

Diocesan schools are recognized and respected for their distinct contribution to the educational constellation, and as a result students and their parents seek information about the Diocesan schools; enrollment increases; alumni remain engaged and supportive; donor engagement increases; and educator recruitment is invigorated.

#### Actions Needed in the Next 2-3 Years

Diocesan schools will communicate effectively and regularly with its internal audiences: parents, families and/or guardians and with its external audiences: prospective families, alumni, donors, partners, businesses, colleges and the greater community.

Diocesan leadership will be visible and consistent in articulating its commitment to the mission, values and future of Catholic Education.

Determine common identity (symbols) of the Brand including a common mission statement that captures the essence of the franchise.

## 4) Teaching/Learning Excellence

### Grand Strategy

Diocesan schools will be recognized and respected for a distinct combination of academic excellence and faith-based education.

### Desired Outcomes

Diocesan school educators are highly proficient in the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and are committed to continuous improvement of their practice through reflection about how instruction can model and promote innovation.

Diocesan 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.

Students are challenged by 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 21st century and the spiritual underpinnings taught through the Catholic faith. This responsive curricula is evaluated regularly and changes over time.

Diocesan schools recognize that the quality of their educators has the greatest impact on students; they demand, recruit and hire excellent administrators and teachers and employ only those who create vibrant, innovative and creative learning environments for students.

Diocesan schools are student-centered and educators embrace and value students of all learning styles and differentiate instruction accordingly.

Diocesan schools recognize parents, guardians and families as the primary educators and partner with them in the education of their children.

Students are engaged in faith-based service learning throughout their experience in Diocesan schools.

Diocesan schools develop standards and assessments that are not bound by New York State Learning Standards and Assessments.

Students embody Christian values and learn from educators who are exceptional, have a passion for Catholic education and its mission and serve as role models for their students. Students share this passion for Catholic education and life-long learning.

Evaluation in Diocesan schools is based upon ongoing formative, summative and authentic assessment of students and educators.

### Actions Needed in the Next 2-3 Years

An "Educator Compact" will be created and renewed annually.

A "Family/Student/School Compact" will be created and renewed annually.

Define - and continually define - academic standards and curriculum which will determine what sets Diocesan schools apart in the field of education.

The Catholic School Office will develop the metrics of academic accountability for the franchise, which will be monitored by the Diocesan School Board.

## **5) Partnerships**

### Grand Strategy

Diocesan schools will seek and sustain mutually beneficial partnerships with colleges and universities nationally and regionally, with businesses and the community.

### Desired Outcomes

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

Students have a distinct advantage when it comes to college acceptance and have a wide range of post-graduation opportunities.

Colleges, businesses and community leaders seek out Diocesan schools for partnerships in developing wide-ranging opportunities for learning and support for students and educators.

Diocesan schools stay on the cutting edge of emerging technologies and best business practices through partnerships with businesses.

### Actions Needed in the Next 2-3 Years

Create an advisory group composed of leaders of the Catholic colleges and representatives from the Diocesan schools to explore areas of collaboration including but not limited to: professional development, professional development schools, faith formation, etc.

Diocesan schools will partner with local colleges to create and enhance professional development opportunities and training programs for educators, including certificate or degree programs specific to Catholic education.

Diocesan schools will reach out to local Catholic colleges to explore the

professional development school model.

Diocesan schools will work with business partners to enhance technology in the schools and develop innovative programs.

Diocesan schools will enter into strategic alliances with colleges, universities and businesses to maximize proficiency in technology, best practices and management strategies and extend the school community.

## **6) Catholic Identity**

### Grand Strategy

Diocesan schools, grounded in the Catholic faith and tradition, will provide an environment where the Gospel values of Jesus are articulated and integrated throughout the curricular and co-curricular activities.

### Desired Outcomes

Diocesan schools, in partnership with local Catholic colleges, offer faith formation training and programs to prepare teachers and administrators for Diocesan schools.

Educators are imbued with a sense of mission. They are prepared and trained to serve the Catholic mission as part of the expectation of their jobs.

All curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs in the Diocesan schools are imbued with the Gospel values of Jesus.

Students and educators live a life of faith and spirituality built upon a strong understanding of the Catholic faith and the Catholic church and respect other faith traditions.

Students and educators demonstrate socially responsible behavior in their lives, becoming leaders in their faith and in the world.

### Actions Needed in the Next 2-3 Years

Explore a partnership with the Catholic colleges and Diocesan leaders to advise on faith formation preparation for educators.

Diocesan leadership will refine and articulate the meaning of Catholic identity.

Catholic identity will be a central theme in the implementation of all strategies.