

A young Black female student with long dark hair is seated at a wooden desk in a classroom. She is wearing a white short-sleeved button-down shirt with a dark tie and a school crest on the left chest. Her hands are clasped together on the desk, and she is looking thoughtfully out of the frame to the left. Behind her is a large, vibrant stained glass window with various colorful patterns and designs, including circular motifs and abstract shapes. The lighting is soft and natural, coming from the window.

STRATEGIC PLAN

**DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM IN ALABAMA
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE**

Boldly Catholic | Academically Excellent | Rooted in Truth

“Education is integral to
the mission of the Church
to proclaim the good news.
First and foremost, every
Catholic institution is a
place to encounter the Living
God, who in Jesus Christ,
reveals His transforming
love and truth.”

POPE BENEDICT XVI
ADDRESS TO CATHOLIC EDUCATORS
APRIL 2008

INTRODUCTION

IN HIS PASTORAL LETTER *CALLED, FORMED, SENT*, BISHOP ROBERT J. BAKER EMBRACED POPE FRANCIS' CALL TO MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP AND URGED THAT THIS CALL "GUIDE, RENEW, AND REFORM PASTORAL MINISTRY IN OUR CHURCH."

According to the Bishop, Catholic schools are integral to that vision. They are centers of human formation, where students not only deepen their own faith but also reflect on the significance of their discipleship for the broader culture. In fact, Catholic schools are our best means for "formation in the Catholic faith and Catholic life in morals and practices."

Although Catholic schools are integral to the education mission of the Church, they have experienced significant challenges in the Diocese of Birmingham and across the United States. To meet these challenges, it is critical that our schools be understood as vital components of a unified pastoral ministry to evangelize today's world. Catholic schools are not simply education institutions, but agents of a common mission.

As part of the Bishop's plan to renew pastoral ministry in the diocese, he authorized the creation of a strategic plan to unite Catholic schools in a common vision. The planning process began during the summer of 2018 and concluded in February 2019 with a Convocation for Catholic Education. The process elicited meaningful input from pastors, school administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, alumni, and parishioners. The process included over 3,500 voices of the Catholic community through surveys, focus groups,

planning teams, and the diocesan Convocation for Catholic Education.

The planning process aimed to articulate a bold common vision for Catholic education, inspire wide participation, and develop an impactful plan with measurable benchmarks for at least the next 5 years. Aligned with the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*, the process was organized into five planning areas to ensure a thorough examination of Catholic education.

We present the *Strategic Plan for Catholic Education* as a culmination of months of discernment and deliberation. The following 13 goals and 82 objectives begin with and emerge from the Church's mission to foster a relationship with Christ not only for the students and families in our schools, but for all families in our parishes across the diocese. This mission necessitates that we cultivate a genuine communion among our teachers, administrators, pastors, and families grounded in love, holiness, and personal witness.

OUR PLANNING AREAS

- Mission & Catholic Identity
- Academic Excellence
- Governance & Leadership
- Marketing & Development
- Financial Vitality

As one Church, we aim to provide a Catholic education grounded in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, collaboration, a spirit of inclusion, and a courageous commitment to ongoing renewal, innovation, and transformation. Furthermore, we aim to communicate a common brand that highlights the unique value of a Catholic education. The clear communication of this value will increase enrollment of children and families and engage the broader Catholic community, making this ministry sustainable. Lastly, we commit to being excellent stewards of our Catholic schools through sound financial management and effective organizational practices, while maintaining accessibility and transparency to all stakeholders.

We envision that the continued renewal of our Catholic schools will assist in the overall missionary conversion of the diocese so that together we may be formed into living witnesses of Jesus. We share this *Strategic Plan for Catholic Education* not as a critique of the past, but as a hopeful and faith-filled vision and plan for the future.

PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Pre-Planning Phase & Assessment of Catholic Schools	JULY - SEPTEMBER 2018
Planning Teams & Their Focus	SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2018
Strategic Plan Framework	JANUARY 2019
Catholic Schools Convocation	FEBRUARY 2019
Drafting & Revising the Plan	FEBRUARY - MARCH 2019
Strategic Plan Review & Approval by Bishop Baker	APRIL 2019
Publication & Dissemination of the Strategic Plan	MAY - JUNE 2019

A PLANNING PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH THE WORKER

Blessed St. Joseph, patron of all working people, we thank you for the opportunity to build up God's Kingdom through this commitment to pray for the future of Catholic education in the Diocese of Birmingham.

Help us to be conscientious in our work, so that we may be good stewards of our Catholic schools.

May we do all things in a spirit of gratitude and joy,
ever mindful of the gifts we have received from God
that enable us to discern together the call of the Holy Spirit.

Permit us to work in peace, patience, and moderation,
ever mindful of the account we must one day give of time lost,
talents unused, resources untapped, ideas not shared, and good omitted.

May our deliberations exhibit our faith in Christ, hope in the future, and love of your Church and all who are served through our schools.

Glorious St. Joseph, may our labors be all for Jesus, all through Mary, and all after your holy example in life and in death. Amen.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS	LOCATION	GRADE LEVELS	GOVERNANCE TYPE
HOLY FAMILY REGIONAL SCHOOL	Huntsville	4K - 8	Regional
HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL	Tuscaloosa	9 - 12	Parish
HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC SCHOOL	Tuscaloosa	3K - 6	Parish
HOLY SPIRIT REGIONAL SCHOOL	Huntsville	5K - 8	Regional
JOHN CARROLL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL	Birmingham	9 - 12	Diocesan
OUR LADY OF SORROWS CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTER	Birmingham	6 wks - 4K	Regional
OUR LADY OF SORROWS SCHOOL	Birmingham	3K - 8	Parish
OUR LADY OF THE VALLEY SCHOOL	Birmingham	3K - 8	Parish
PRINCE OF PEACE ADVENTURE ARK	Hoover	6 mos. - 2 yrs.	Parish
PRINCE OF PEACE SCHOOL	Hoover	3K-8	Parish
SACRED HEART ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Cullman	3K - 6	Parish
SACRED HEART OF JESUS SCHOOL	Anniston	3K - 12	Parish
ST. ANN SCHOOL	Decatur	3K - 8	Parish
ST. BARNABAS REGIONAL SCHOOL	Birmingham	4K - 8	Regional
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER EARLY LEARNING CENTER	Birmingham	12 mos. - 4K	Parish
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER SCHOOL	Birmingham	5K - 8	Parish
ST. JAMES SCHOOL	Gadsden	3K - 8	Parish
ST. JOHN PAUL II CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL	Huntsville	9 - 12	Diocesan
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST SCHOOL	Madison	4K - 8	Parish
ST. JOSEPH REGIONAL SCHOOL	Florence	3K - 8	Regional
ST. PETER'S CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER	Birmingham	6 wks. - 4K	Parish





THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

GOAL 1 Ensure Catholic schools form lifelong disciples, engage parents in their role of passing on the Catholic faith, and provide faith-filled environments where students and families encounter Christ.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Make explicit our faith in Jesus Christ at all school events and in all promotional materials.
2. Build on Bishop Baker's pastoral letter, *Called, Formed, Sent*, to articulate a unified vision for how Catholic education forms Christian disciples who are committed to a virtuous life. Each school will articulate and communicate how its community lives out this vision.
3. Further develop at each school virtues-based character development activities in imitation of Christ that draw upon the life of Christ, the lives of the saints, and Catholic values.
4. Engage families in the mission and vision of a Catholic education starting with the initial visit and interview through graduation.
 - a. Draw families and parishioners into classroom visits, prayer, liturgy, school plays, concerts, festivals, grandparents' day, and/or other family-oriented events.
 - b. Be explicit and intentional about welcoming all cultures and faiths as an expression of our Catholic mission and how we see God in all people.
 - c. Support parents in their vocation as parents in general and as primary catechists in particular through workshops, assignments/activities, online resources, etc. Integrate related information and reflections into PTO nights.
5. Embed prayer throughout the school day and school activities, including the beginning and ending of the school day, class, mealtimes, sporting events, PTO meetings, etc.
6. Establish collaborative programming among the schools, sponsoring parishes, and regional parish catechetical ministries. Create faith formation opportunities that engage the entire parish community, involving the school in parish events and the parish in school events. Develop intentional processes to engage homeschool and PSR families.
7. Engage the school community in the promotion of vocations, exploring the broad range of vocational identity, highlighting religious and clerical vocations. Infuse the notion at each grade level that each student is called to a purpose-filled and meaningful life of discipleship through a faithfully discerned vocation. Example activities might include:
 - a. Integrating into the curriculum at strategic grade levels research projects to explore specific ways to live a faithful life through service to the church and the world.
 - b. Encouraging teachers to talk about their own vocation and demonstrate their lives as an authentic response to God's call. Showcase teachers' vocation stories to the school and parish community through social media, newsletters, etc.
 - c. Fostering formal and informal opportunities for students to interact with clergy and religious in the classroom, on retreat, or by a class "adopting" a priest or a sister.
 - d. Assigning a team of a priest, deacon, religious, and a married couple to visit schools to talk with the students about how each person is called to a special vocation.
8. Provide multiple avenues and regular invitations for parents and other stewards to share ideas and engage in continuous improvement of our schools in this area.

GOAL 2 Recruit, support, and retain teachers and administrators who embrace the mission of Catholic education.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Conduct a Human Resources audit of the diocese with the help of the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators.
 - a. Develop a posting system for open positions at the schools and advertise open positions to Catholic centers and organization websites.
 - b. Review application and interviewing process. Consider asking applicants to express their personal mission statement.
 - c. Utilize school administrator search committees that include teachers, parents, diocesan leaders, and parish leaders who can make hiring recommendations to the pastors.
 - d. Research the most just and equitable approach to teachers' contracts.
 - e. Ensure a best practices approach to annual performance reviews of principals by the Catholic Schools Office and pastor.
 - f. Standardize the expectation that each teacher will create a professional development plan in conversation with the principal that is aligned with individual school improvement goals and includes regular observations that involve quality feedback.
2. Articulate, communicate, and publish the benefits of teaching in a Catholic school and opportunities in the diocese.
 - a. Establish a just and equitable salary scale, benefits, and retirement plan that recognizes the professional value and dignity of teachers.
 - b. Provide tuition discounts for the children of all teachers, staff, and administrators.
 - c. Research national recruitment programs and practices to expand recruitment base.
 - d. Prepare recruitment programs to be presented through the Catholic campus ministry programs at colleges and universities throughout the state.
 - e. Partner with higher education programs in the region to offer education students opportunities for school visits, observations, student teaching, and employment.
 - f. Hold a diocesan annual job fair for schools to meet potential teachers.
 - g. Proactively engage potential candidates from public school districts and other dioceses.
3. Cultivate a sense of community among Catholic school teachers:
 - a. Promote teaching as a vocation; support teachers' spiritual growth and establish a respectful work environment that celebrates the joy of a faith-filled community that highlights the dignity and care for all its members.
 - b. Provide an introductory course on Catholic teaching and life to new faculty, showing special attention to the needs of those teachers who are not Catholic.
 - c. Institute a new teachers' formation and mentoring program at each school (new to the profession and/or to Catholic education) and establish a more formal mentoring program for new principals and new pastors.
 - d. Explore innovative ways to staff schools, including sharing speciality teachers across schools.
 - e. Explore the feasibility of forming an intentional community for Catholic school teachers to live together, learn together, and explore their vocation to teach. Partner with a local or national Catholic institution similar to Notre Dame's ACE program.
4. Utilize educational leadership programs and tuition assistance for continuing education.
5. Explore possibilities for incentives, tenure, and advanced career opportunities.

GOAL 3 Form Catholic school leaders into a dynamic, collaborative, and entrepreneurial community.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Define and communicate criteria, roles, and responsibilities of Catholic School Office leaders, pastors, administrators, and board members, including differences among parish, regional, private, and diocesan school governance models. Engage leaders currently in these roles in this process and consult Canon Law, national best practices, and local needs and charisms.
2. Aid the pastor in his role as spiritual father of the school community, teaching and guiding the faculty and staff so that they operate as a family.
 - a. Pastors should be seen in the school often and support the school financially, as well as oversee major decisions that the principal makes for the school.
 - b. The pastor should keep open and frequent communication with the principal and cultivate a good working relationship.
 - c. Train pastors and principals to be entrepreneurial--encouraging innovation and recognizing successes.
 - d. Establish intentional processes for and provide resources/training to develop the pastor and principal as a team.
 - e. Integrate a pastoral ministry rotation for seminarians at a Catholic school.
3. Identify ways to support principals with administrative and organizational processes with parish or diocesan resources, so that they may focus on their primary role as chief academic officers of the schools.
4. Encourage school leaders to align their strategic and professional development plans with their school's continuous improvement plan and accreditation process.
5. Ensure that each school's advisory board maintains a clear charter that adheres to diocesan policy, provides ongoing training for leadership teams (pastors, principals, and board officers), and gives the boards the necessary tools and resources to be effective.
6. Identify potential administrators within the schools and cultivate them through cohort-based leadership development opportunities.
7. Periodically evaluate the current school governance models in the diocese and consider alternative models and opportunities for collaboration as needed.
8. Optimize technological meeting opportunities to expedite collaboration, communication, and training.

A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY Our faculty and leaders support our students in every step they take.



GOAL 4 Build a collaborative culture to share effective and innovative practices founded on excellent pedagogy, child development, content knowledge, and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Create an intentional process that invites and empowers principals and teachers to innovate and inspire transformation.
2. Articulate and disseminate a common vision for the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT) for the diocese; consult national resources and involve input from a variety of voices across the diocese in the creation of this statement.
3. Provide professional development opportunities and resources to form teachers in the CIT and instructional best practices informed by current research on child intellectual, physical, and moral development.
4. Establish local school professional development liaisons and committees to implement and oversee Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) based on level, subject area, or improvement goals. Charge the PLCs to explore creative and innovative teaching strategies including ways to express the CIT throughout the curriculum.
5. Take advantage of resources and training opportunities offered by Catholic universities and national organizations to support innovative teaching practices.
6. Identify opportunities to implement the Cardinal Newman Society's Catholic Curriculum Standards.
7. Provide multiple avenues and regular invitations for parents and other stewards to share ideas and engage in continuous improvement of our schools in this area.

GOAL 5 Improve communication, transparency, and collaboration between the Catholic Schools Office, the Office of Youth Protection, Catholic school leaders, and other diocesan offices that support and ensure the safety of students entrusted to our care.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Review the access to and the effectiveness of safe environment and crisis management diocesan policies and procedures that have been established, to include an annual review and continuous improvement process to review communications, transparency, and collaboration.
2. Review these policies and procedures with school leaders on an ongoing basis.
3. Provide ongoing training for school leaders to ensure that they respond to allegations of abuse or student safety concerns with sensitivity, provide contacts to state agencies, and act as agents of reconciliation and pastoral care.
4. Ensure that any communication or statement regarding student safety that is shared by the diocese is properly and consistently communicated.
 - a. Encourage students, staff, or parents to ask questions or report any concerns through clearly communicated procedures.
 - b. When an issue involving a student safety concern occurs, provide updates to the community with full transparency to the extent permitted by law and in keeping with our moral responsibility to our community.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE Programs for our youngest students prepare and inspire.



GOAL 6 Define, measure, evaluate, and communicate the academic excellence and effectiveness of Catholic schools' curricula and programs.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Articulate a vision of Catholic education excellence that addresses academic rigor, 21st century skills, as well as the affective dimensions of learning, such as intellectual and social dispositions, relationship building, and habits of mind.
2. Maintain content area standards and benchmarks and provide digital access to the current documents and future updates.
3. Standardize evaluation tools to measure and track progress, including formative and summative assessments, and extend teachers' and principals' use of data to inform instruction and school improvement.
4. Examine instructional effectiveness at the classroom, school, and diocesan levels to identify successes and opportunities for growth.
5. Continue training for teachers and administrators in instructional best practices and in using formal and informal methods of assessment.
6. Encourage the use of holistic student portfolios and/or capstone projects (8th and 12th grade) to demonstrate excellence in many areas of student formation and development.
7. Share evidence of students' success utilizing various marketing strategies:
 - a. Publish student academic growth and/or achievement (as measured by formative and/or summative assessments) in a consistent, readable, and transparent manner through individual school reports as well as an aggregate diocesan report. Include the school reports with admissions packets.
 - b. Research and relate graduates' participation in their Catholic faith and success in their academic careers following their elementary and/or high school matriculation.
8. Provide multiple avenues and regular invitations for parents and other stewards to share ideas and engage in continuous improvement of our schools in this area.

GOAL 7 Develop excellence in the teaching and the inclusion of students with neurodiverse and physically diverse needs.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Strive to provide more inclusive academic learning environments at each school.
 - a. Audit physical plants of each school for accommodations and/or ADA compliance.
 - b. Identify, on an ongoing basis, the needs of each school community and define appropriate inclusive academic programming, addressing both remediation and acceleration.
 - c. Establish resources for determining and supporting individual schools' needs.
2. Provide high quality training to teachers on specialized differentiated instruction and support them with classroom resources.
3. Establish partnerships with local and state organizations (testing centers, universities, health clinics, etc.) to enhance the range of specialized services provided.
4. Create a system to share developmental specialists, therapists, and resources across schools.
5. Encourage schools to use Title II funds to train tutors for students with neurodiverse and physically diverse needs.
6. Create robust marketing of Catholic educational values and mission to support children with neurodiverse and physically diverse needs.
7. Clearly communicate available learning support resources to students and their families.
8. Provide multiple avenues and regular invitations for parents and other stewards to share ideas and engage in continuous improvement of our schools in this area.

"Catholic schools give students something public schools can't... Faith. And I believe the Holy Spirit is present in these schools."

**CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENT
STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY, 2018**

GOAL 8 Communicate the value of a Catholic education to diverse constituencies.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Invest in a market research study to better understand the demographics and drivers of parents in making educational decisions for their children.
2. Dedicate a diocesan position for Catholic schools communications and marketing to:
 - a. Create a common language of identity and mission, articulating the strengths of Catholic schools, highlighting both parity with competitor schools as well as outstanding unique attributes of a Catholic education, all supported with outcome data and testimonials. Include references to moral development, spiritual formation, service, supportive school community, safe environment, etc. Ensure language is accessible to diverse constituencies.
 - b. Create and implement a multi-media advertising campaign. Showcase the strengths of a Catholic education by highlighting outcomes, students, alumni, and success stories of schools.
 - c. Invite pastors to highlight stories from
- d. Provide ongoing trainings and a promotional toolkit for designated school personnel to use multi-media formats and outlets to showcase the value of Catholic education. Opportunities include articles in One Voice, video vignettes, testimonial profiles, and public service announcements featuring well-known Catholics to articulate the vision of Catholic schools to multiple audiences.
3. Provide training in professional enrollment management for principals, school advancement leaders, parent leaders, and/or parish leaders to utilize the variety of strategies to move students from inquiry to enrollment and retention.
4. Facilitate the recruitment and training of diverse school ambassador teams who witness to Catholic education, steward regular content, and communicate with their school families, the parish community (including feeder parishes), and the community at large.



TOGETHER IN HIS NAME Spiritual growth is key to a lifetime of success.

GOAL 9 Initiate and sustain the involvement of a wide array of stakeholders to support the ministry of Catholic education.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Form a diocesan Office of Mission Advancement and Stewardship to shift from fundraising to advancement and stewardship approaches in support of schools' development efforts directly and indirectly.
2. Ensure that each school has a designated advancement director. If hiring a director is not feasible, designate an employee as an advancement liaison.
3. Provide formal training and resources for school advancement directors through engaging national associations/foundations, e.g., Association of Fundraising Professionals, International Catholic Stewardship Council, Lilly School of Philanthropy, etc.
4. Establish annual advancement plans for each school and the diocese reflecting professional practices, such as cultivating major gifts, annual funds, planned giving, endowment development, capital campaigns (if feasible), patron program (adopt a child), and other additional sources of revenue.
5. Select, purchase, and implement a donor database using CRM software to support advancement strategies.
 - a. Cultivate donors using data from constituent research analysis (e.g., wealth screenings).
 - b. Track contributions and recognize these gifts with appropriate expressions of gratitude.
6. Establish parameters for diocesan financial grants to individual schools that address such issues as qualification criteria, amounts, and frequency of distributions.
7. Develop the competency and expertise in the Catholic School Office to maximize Federal Funding and other outside money in order to support and advise local schools in this area.
8. Cultivate a strong partnership with Catholic scholarship granting organizations.
9. Explore equitable ways for all parishes to contribute financially to the ministry of Catholic school education.
10. Provide multiple avenues and regular invitations for parents and other stakeholders to share ideas to assist continuous improvement of our schools in this area.

“We need more cohesiveness and consistency among schools in the diocese. Current trends and best practices in education should be a priority, along with religious education... bring our educational practices forward into the 21st century.”

CATHOLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE
STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY, 2018

GOAL 10 Ensure proper financial oversight at the school and diocesan level.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Designate a Diocesan School Financial Liaison who has significant accounting and financial reporting experience to support schools in their financial recordkeeping and compliance with diocesan policies. This person will:
 - a. Travel to individual schools at least twice a year.
 - b. Address administration, business office, accounting, internal control, and policy issues.
 - c. Assist with budgeting and planning needs.
 - d. Work to improve cooperation and collaboration between the schools and the diocese.
 - e. Provide services by the diocese at no cost to the schools.
 - f. Provide guiding standards to support schools in developing their Financial Committee.
2. Review diocesan financial policies and procedures, specifically for schools, ensuring best practice approaches and compliance for such items as:
 - a. Salary guidelines
 - b. Budgeting requirements
 - c. Tuition levels and assistance
 - d. Financial training at multiple levels
 - e. Student recruitment, marketing, and enrollment
 - f. Financial transparency
 - g. Per pupil tax amounts to support the Catholic Schools Office
- h. School Board and Finance Council qualifications and responsibilities
- i. School opening and closing criteria, including deficit and emergency funding
- j. Possible “schools only” financial best practices manual
3. Establish a robust internal audit group to oversee a strict review of budgets, revenues, and expenditures.
 - a. Increase the frequency of school audits: every year for larger schools and every other year for smaller schools.
 - b. Maintain and comply with a school audit calendar.
 - c. Ensure audit findings are addressed in a timely manner.
 - d. Consider outsourcing the internal audit function if staff cannot be quickly organized.
 - e. Consider implementing fraud detection software and data analytics that would assist the internal audit function.
4. Designate an individual at the diocese to monitor school financial performance on a monthly basis who aggressively follows up on identified issues and works with the School Financial Liaison to resolve any issues and ensure accuracy of financial reporting.
5. Provide continuing financial education that is appropriately tailored for school bookkeepers, board members, pastors, and principals. Consider a mixture of training approaches.

“We must respond to challenging times with faith, vision and the will to succeed because the Catholic school’s mission is vital to the future of our young people, our nation, and most especially our Church.”

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM, 2005

GOAL 11 Provide a viable operational model that maintains accessibility to all families.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop a financial model, with the assistance of a financial advisor, that monitors school financial performance and school stability addressing such items as:
 - a. Profitability
 - b. Break-even analysis
 - c. Cost per student
 - d. Enrollment targets
 - e. Tuition and fee rates
 - f. Fundraising levels
 - g. Income by type
 - h. Salary and benefits levels
 - i. Tuition assistance
 - j. Parish and diocesan subsidies
2. Cluster schools based on fact-based measures to identify financial best practices and strategies by cluster. Provide benchmarking analysis. Develop a list of warning signs or metrics not being met to alert both the school, parish, and diocese of financial issues.
3. Provide school leaders with an overview of financial improvement opportunities for local adaptation that drives future success. Consider providing financial forecast training to appropriate school personnel.
4. Minimize operational expenses by developing a diocesan-wide purchasing process, while maintaining seamless implementation at the school level. If a diocesan-wide process is not feasible, consider a cluster approach.



LASTING FRIENDSHIPS Our schools help to create relationships that last lifetimes.

GOAL 12 Maintain appropriate facilities and infrastructure needed to provide an excellent Catholic education.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop an inventory of school facilities and an assessment of the condition of each facility.
2. Establish an ongoing maintenance, inspection, and improvement plan for each facility, along with anticipated costs.
3. Share the maintenance and improvement plan, along with anticipated costs, with relevant stakeholders.
4. Integrate the anticipated costs for maintenance and improvement in the appropriate school and parish budgets and fundraising goals. Establish a diocese-wide benchmark for a percentage of revenues to be spent on maintenance related items.
5. Explore modern, creative, and cost effective ways to optimize school environments to maximize student engagement.
6. Emphasize maintenance and physical enhancements to the school environment in each school's strategic and/or continuous improvement plans.

GOAL 13 Communicate financial transparency to all stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Ensure diocesan financial policies and procedures are disseminated and available to the public to demonstrate best practice approaches and compliance (see 10.2).
2. Ensure that a formal, detailed, consistent, and transparent budget (including historical results) at the school level is available to all stakeholders on an annual basis as a foundation for meaningful future strategies and tactics. Invite and consider stakeholder input.
3. Continue to work to separate finances between parishes and schools.
4. Proactively communicate school financial issues and goals to stakeholders, including parents, alumni, local advisory boards, parishioners, and other stakeholders.
5. Require all schools to publish an Annual Report guided by a common set of standards to communicate financial stability and mission effectiveness.

BETTER TOGETHER Students pray before a student event.



CONCLUSION

THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION ESTABLISHES A FRAMEWORK OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TO REVITALIZE AND STRENGTHEN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AND BEYOND.

We acknowledge that the value and impact of this strategic plan correlates to the quality of its implementation. In collaboration with the Catholic Schools Office and in an effort to keep the larger community engaged, the reconstituted Diocesan School Board will play a key role in disseminating, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of the plan.

The Diocesan School Board will organize the implementation process by setting priorities, timelines, and benchmarks with the help of ad hoc committees. The implementation leaders (Diocesan School Board and committees members) will continue the inclusive, transparent, and unifying spirit established by the planning process, such that there will be continued opportunities for input and wide participation in the renewal of this pastoral ministry across the diocese. The strategic plan is a living document, which means that as the process unfolds, more effective and efficient strategies may emerge to better accom-

plish the goals set out in this plan. Thus, using this plan as a guide, we will continue to discern our way as a community into a better future for our schools in faithful cooperation with God's grace.

We are grateful for all who contributed to this planning process. Thousands were involved not only through focus groups, planning teams, and surveys, but also through praying as a united church for the success of this project through the intercession of St. Joseph. The spirit of prayer, generous collaboration, thoughtful deliberation, and faith-filled imagination across the schools and the diocese are nothing less than signs of the Holy Spirit in our midst. The planning process has been a catalyst for the renewal of our Catholic schools as we are striving for increased transparency, collaboration, and courage to make positive change. These are signs of a growing community of stewards who are called to take ownership and responsibility for the ministry of Catholic education. This *Strategic Plan for Catholic Education*, a concrete commitment and guide to reform this pastoral ministry, is one important step in renewing the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Birmingham. *St. Joseph, pray for us!*



YOUR GIFTS AND TALENTS The key to the success of our Strategic Plan will be to engage the greater community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Diocese of Birmingham is grateful to all who contributed to the Catholic school planning process. In particular, we appreciate the generous leadership provided by the following:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Most Reverend Bishop Robert J. Baker, S.T.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham
Fr. Michael Deering, Vicar General & Pastor of Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Tuscaloosa
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“The mission of the Catholic school is the integral formation of students, so that they may be true to their condition as Christ’s disciples and as such work effectively for the evangelization of culture and for the common good of society.”

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