



# **Notre Dame School**

## **Strategic Plan**

October 1, 2009 to June 30, 2012

For the completion of the three-year strategic plan, it is invaluable to remind ourselves of the school's stated teaching philosophy and core beliefs.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Notre Dame School is committed to a Christian educational environment in which each student can achieve academic excellence in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Guided by the values and teachings of the Catholic Church, the administration, faculty, parents, parish community and students work to encourage and assist each other's growth and wisdom.

## **SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY**

Notre Dame is a co-educational Catholic School. The education and development of children into mature Catholic-Christians is the fundamental reason for the existence of Notre Dame School.

The School, as an extension of Notre Dame Parish, shares its educational mission to enrich the faith community; foster discipleship and proclaim the Gospel message through liturgical activities, daily worship, and opportunities for service to school and community.

This philosophy is reflected in recognizing the potential and individuality of each child. We emphasize the development of academic achievement, cooperation, multi-cultural awareness and respect, and the development of responsible leadership and service.

Parents are the primary educators of their children and parental involvement enhances all aspects of our educational program. The education of the total Catholic Christian person emanates from the modeling of the home, the school, the Church and society.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The goal of the Notre Dame School Strategic plan is to identify the key pillars of focus of the School Board for the coming three years. The Strategic Plan outlines the areas of focus and priorities to insure the School Board has a clear blueprint and remains accountable to meet the stated goals as outlined in the plan for our school families. The plan covers a three year period of time with the understanding that it is important to remain fluid and open to adjustments in our focus and action items to best support the school administration, facility and school families.

PILLARS OF FOCUS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Recruitment / Retention of School Families</b>	The welfare of the school is derived from having a healthy student enrollment. Marketing and publicity tactics are identified to promote acquiring new families as well as establishing programs and communications to existing families about the school successful progress in student enrichment.
<b>Advisory Council</b>	Acting as an advisory council, the school board is accountable to provide the support and forums to address the needs and interests of both the School Administration as well as school families.
<b>Budget Management</b>	Support the School Administration and Finance Committees efforts in setting upcoming year's budget and fundraising strategies.
<b>Staffing</b>	Attracting and retaining quality teachers.

With alignment on the stated strategic pillars and tactics outlined in the plan, it will be the responsibility of the School Board to establish an action plan to execute these tactics. The Board will leverage existing resources/forums such as the monthly School Board meetings to monitor the status of its progress as well as to solicit the partnership of school families and other resources to complete these tasks. At the end of each year, the Board will conduct an open and honest evaluation of its progress.

## **RECRUITMENT / RETENTION OF SCHOOL FAMILIES**

### **Recruitment of New Families**

- **Baptism to first day of school** – Incorporate the joy of bringing a new child into the parish family with consistent and focused contact that is designed to pull families into the school. Through the involvement of a parent advisory group and the children of the school, the focus for contact would be on; birthday's, baptismal anniversaries, school open house dates, school events (musicals, plays, basketball, volleyball, curriculum night, etc.). The focus is to bring educational exposure and additional parental involvement to the solid educational program available at Notre Dame.

- **Contract Marketing & Enrollment Consultant** - Establish recruitment/retention performance goals, expectations and review recommended marketing tactics on an annual basis. Marketing consultant to provide an annual results report with lessons learned to school board. With this consultant and volunteer group we would look to contact local pre-school programs for lists of enrolled families to contact as potential ND school families. Additional work with local realtors, business owners and other individuals engaged in the community (especially parishoners) to help market ND school to new and existing parish community parents.
- **Open House** – Conduct annual review of Notre Dame’s annual Open House events to insure we are positioning the school in the best light possible. As part of the review, we will consider ‘best practices’ from other schools.
- **School Reviews & Accreditations** – Proactively seek reviews and accreditations from credible organizations, governmental groups and publications that rate elementary schools – both public and private. (ie. Chicago Magazine annual elementary school ranking, Illinois State School Board of Education ‘Recognized School of Excellence.’, etc.). Upon earning any 3<sup>rd</sup> party accreditations, the Publicity group should insure all existing prospective families are aware of the awards.
- **Community Education Needs/Wants** – Continually identify educational, sports and/or community support curriculum activities that can be added to the Notre Dame offering to enhance the student experience and draw more students/families to Notre Dame.
- **Benefit statement of the school** – what’s our strength, accomplishments, what do we want to be known for? Our ability to succinctly describe the school benefits to prospective families and ourselves will lead to greater success.
- **School signage** – Notre Dame signage such as the vehicle stickers and yard signs provide added advertising and endorsement value for the school. A full evaluation of the signage elements, message and how they are made available will be evaluated for the upcoming years.

### **Retention of School Families**

- **Annual School Board ‘Town Halls’** – Conduct informal meetings with school families to further parent/School Board engagement and communication. Encourage a family from each grade to host a ‘Town Hall’ and have a School Board member present to have an open dialog about their opinions and interests. The forum will also give the School Board member to reinforce the positive aspects and accomplishments of the school.
- **Exit Interviews** – Contact parents of children that are leaving AND considering to leave to better understand why and discuss what the school can do better/differently to retain the student.
- **Back to School Welcome Meeting** – Hold annual meeting at the start of every year with the school parents to introduce new programs, ideas, areas of interest and policies.

- **Interview high school Freshman/ND Alumni** – Solicit their feedback for their preparedness for high school in terms of academics, social and athletics.
- **Post ND Student performance** - School Board Member to stay in contact with HCHS and other Catholic High Schools to monitor the success of current ND grads currently in high school. Track %'s of students making Honor Roll, NHS, Student Gov't, sports, etc. and communicate/publish this quarterly. Use data to communicate through the ND website to current and prospective school families.
- **Contact new families each year** – Approach each new family to Notre Dame school annually to provide one more contact point for the new families as well as solicit their feedback on their experience in joining the school.
- **School Families Survey** – Conduct anonymous online survey to poll school families of their opinions and requested areas of improvement for the school and administration. Survey to be conducted annually.
- **School Ambassadors** – Expand the role of the Room Parents to also be School Ambassadors. Encourage the Ambassadors to attend the School Board meetings so they can be armed with news about the School Boards progress as well as provide them with a timely forum to share their observations and feedback of the current school year.
- **Buddy System Expansion** – Expand the Buddy System beyond just the students and bring in the parents/families for greater engagement. Encourage the students and families to share their learnings and/or questions about the school to foster a more positive, enriching environment.
- **Student Life Enrichment Program** – Establish a core set of after school extra curriculum programs to help support a well-rounded education. School Board to proactively review the composite of programs offered to help round out the classes offered, serve as forum to receive new ideas from the parents & faculty and ultimately help to market the Student Life programs. At the beginning of every school year, the School Board will publish an overview of the Student Life Enrichment Program along with contact information so students and parents can reach out directly to the program leaders to learn more and sign-up. Conduct annual parental feedback survey to gauge relevance for each program.
- **Diocesan Standardized Testing** – Communicate the results of the standardized testing for grades 3-7 in a forum for parents to fully understand the results and what actions (if any) the School Administration plans to take as a result of the learnings.
- **Establish Publicity Committee** – Committee to create an annual calendar of events for publicity coverage that will include news stories and photos of the event that can be promoted internally (ie, ND school website, email 'blasts',) AND/OR externally to local news media.
- **ND News** - Post monthly articles on the ND Website that further promote 'success stories' of the school's academia, student alumni and school families.

## ADVISORY COUNCIL

- **Compliance of School Facilities** - Conduct annual assessment of the core school facilities to insure they are all compliant in terms of safety requirements as well as meeting/exceeding parent and school administrations expectations/needs. Facilities include:
  - Gymnasium and equipment
  - Library
  - Science Lab
  - Other School Facilities as needed
- **School Curriculum Benchmarks** – Identify and annually review curriculum benchmarks to insure the academics are meeting/exceeding the Diocese of Joliet Catholic Schools Office curriculums for Religion, Mathematics, Language Arts, and Science
- **Discipline Policy** – Annually evaluate School Discipline and Bullying Policies to insure they are establishing an environmental framework for ND students to learn in a healthy, safe and religious-enriched environment.
- **'Best of Class'** – Continually seek out 'Best of Class' activities, policies and marketing strategies from other public and private institutions that Notre Dame can learn from and incorporate into our Strategic Plan.
- **Teacher Mentoring Program** – Solicit feedback from School Administrators and parents on a (frequency?) for the effectiveness of the new teacher mentoring program.
- **Parish Council Representation** – School Board Member to participate in monthly Parish Council meetings to insure the needs of the school and School parents are represented.
- **Parent Family Concerns/Issues** – School Board to support the school families by providing a forum to vet their concerns, issues and/or requests of the school administration and facility. The School Board is expected to advise the school administration with an objective perspective of the issues.

## BUDGET

- **Establish Annual Budget Communication Plan** – The budget will be reviewed monthly as an ongoing agenda item with the goal of identifying and communicating the school operating budget, expenses and fundraising goals/needs. Evaluate process for how budget and tuition is set on an annual basis.
- **Fundraising Strategy** – Partner with PTG, ND Men's Club and other fundraising groups to identify annual fundraising goals that work in partnership with the school budget and tuition. Conduct annual review of fundraising efforts to establish transparent financial fundraising and family fees/tuition goals. Component of strategy is to identify new fundraising ideas/opportunities as needed.

- **Partnership with Parish Council** – Establish productive on-going communication with Parish Council to insure the school's priorities and goals are in sync and supported by the Parish Council.
- **Collaboration with other schools** – Seek out other Catholic Schools for additional ideas and programs that are effective in the ongoing effort to raise funds and retain families.
- **Constant Monitoring of School Headcount** – monthly review of changes to the make up of our student population. Analyze the effect that increases or decreases in our student population will have in the current and upcoming year.