

**Summary of the 2015 TCCES State of Our Schools**  
**“Accomplishments and Future Focus”**  
**January 12, 2015**



The evening opened with a welcome from Jeff Berg, president of the TCCES Board of Trustees. Berg offered a prayer that focused on relying on God in times of transition, and shared a reflection using a golden shovel from the middle school groundbreaking, with a theme of “digging deep into our faith.” He then spoke about the board’s commitment to the TCCES mission, as well as the **board’s priorities** of faith, learning, service and community. Berg commented that this is a time of new beginnings for TCCES with a new name, the upcoming opening of our new middle school and a new leader in TCCES President Helen Englebert.

Berg shared that the board focused during the past year on a number of key efforts to continue growing and sustain our system including:

- Formation of a technology committee that met its goal of developing a multi-year technology platform that positions us to close existing gaps and enable the technology program to be sustainable
- Formation of a fine arts committee focused on integrating our fine arts efforts across all of our schools and with our new facility
- Debate about, evaluation and ultimate approval of participation in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program to enhance our financial assistance offerings to our families
- The development and implementation of a significant leadership structure change that separated the roles of high school principal and system president

Berg stated that the restructuring involved extensive recruiting efforts by the board, and that the group is pleased with the new arrangement, particularly with the selection of Helen Englebert as the new president. The board agrees that these improvements position TCCES to continue our outstanding growth, while maintaining focus on our core mission and vision. Berg stressed Englebert’s qualifications and shared that she is already working closely with system principals, the board of trustees and advancement personnel to promote collaboration and build upon our system’s strengths. Berg then introduced Helen Englebert.

Englebert thanked the board and the community for the warm welcome and support, and introduced the TCCES Leadership Team (Principals Pat Batey (SMC), Sandy Ehlers (Seton), Jeanine Leege (St. Gabriel Elementary), Eleanor Healy (St. Margaret Mary Elementary) and Jill Ahles (St. Mary Elementary); Advancement Personnel Jennifer Miller (Recruiting/HR), Michelle Dejno (Community Relations/Fund Development) and Molly Griffin (Communications); and Business Services Director Jeanne Lee.

Englebert spoke of the year 2014 at TCCES regarding several foundational areas: **faith and service, learning and co-curriculars**. She also talked about **initiatives**, both those that have taken place in the last 12 months, and those she is looking forward to in the coming year.

### **\*FAITH AND SERVICE**

Englebert spoke of faith and service as the cornerstone of our TCCES Catholic education. **Faith** is an integral part of everything we do, and is interwoven into liturgies, retreats, lesson plans and school projects. Giving a few examples, Englebert cited teachers praying together daily; students, faculty and staff gather frequently in prayer' and the fact that every committee meeting and official school or system gathering begins with prayer.

This year, TCCES was honored and proud to host Bishop Ricken's annual Mass for Catholic Schools, attended by more than 600 people from about 45 schools across the diocese.

She also detailed the Foundational Catechetical Certification that is required by the diocese for all teachers and teacher aides. This 60-hour certification requires 10 hours per year of training. While most systems require teachers to complete this obligation alone, TCCES has taken on the required faith certification as a group. TCCES chose "Methods for Faith Integration" as the first component because it is so central to who we are and why we are here. Consequently, teachers worked together at in-services to collaborate on how to integrate our Catholic faith into all aspects of education. This "group" approach was highly successful and is being continued this year with "Sacraments & Liturgy" as the component of focus.

Regarding **service**, she gave examples of students being involved in local, national and international projects, ranging from planting flowerbeds on school grounds to purchasing school supplies for students in Mexico and writing to armed forces members overseas.

### **\*LEARNING**

Englebert then discussed learning as another cornerstone of our TCCES Catholic education. She spoke of our **early childhood education program**, which uses Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and stresses an early literacy component. Hallmarks of the TCCES program include incorporating learning centers and tablets into the 4K program and exposing children consistently to reading, stories, words, songs and rhymes to reinforce early reading skills. Our TCCES early childhood education program is able to offer a safe, nurturing environment for young children from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

In the **elementary schools**, teachers work every day to incorporate important STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) into curriculum and field trips. Our elementary math program helps students to be better problem solvers by supporting understanding of math principals and application. Our science classes emphasize hands-on learning, engineering, and inquiry. Technology is a vital component of STEM learning, so SMART Board technology, digital cameras, and computer labs are used for research, projects, and instruction.

At the **middle school** level, Seton's math program teaches pre-algebra and algebra classes that fully align with our high school's curriculum. Success of this approach is confirmed by standardized test results. Great improvement has been made in reading and language scores since implementing literacy classes and intensive language arts classes. Two years into the program,

sixth and seventh grade results for MAP testing were above the national norm averages in all areas.

At St. Mary Central **High School**, a laude program was established at the high school this year to recognize and encourage excellence in academics; for the sixth time in five consecutive years, SMC has a National Merit Semi-Finalist, scoring in the top 0.5% of the 1.4M students taking the PSAT; our ACT average score was 24.4, continuing a 3-year trend of a rising average and ranking among the top in the Fox Cities; and 20 students were designated as AP scholars.

Many important initiatives occurred **across the system**, as well. Last year, we introduced you to the Teacher Effectiveness Project. This program is required for public schools, but we are only one of two private institutions to take advantage of this research-based teacher performance evaluation system. The pilot year, with 26 teachers participating, was deemed a success. So this academic year, we are expanding it to include all teachers, stressing the focus on teacher performance and student-learning outcomes.

Our teachers continue to collaborate by 1) working across grade/age levels and 2) striving for department-wide curriculum alignment from one grade level to the next. As part of this commitment, teachers from the middle and high schools are already making plans to work closely together next year through curriculum and sharing of resources.

We have begun our transition to PowerSchool at the request of the diocese, which will eventually completely replace Edline. Additionally, site visits (the last step to renewing our accreditation through WRISA for the elementary and middle schools) are scheduled for February 24-26, 2015.

#### **\*CO-CURRICULARS**

Co-curricular programs are a both an extension of learning and an additional cornerstone in our Catholic school system. The many examples cited included the phenomenal success of SMC's VEX Robotics and forensic, girls soccer, baseball and track & field programs; Seton's ever-growing cross country team, the elementary enrichment program and the system-wide Zephyrs Basketball Club (ZBC).

Of particular note is the success and growth of the TCCES Elementary Enrichment program, which was expanded last year to all three elementary schools. Further plans are being developed to make more classes available at each location. STEM-based enrichment classes, which apply science academic standards, are an extension of the great foundation that the students are learning in their science classrooms. Enrichment programs based in the arts (a variety of dance, art and music classes) and in healthy living (such as running, karate, cooking) help to create fun, make opportunities for socializing and round out the academic offerings in our schools. Enrichment showcases in April and November in the FAEC highlighted the students work, projects, and performing arts.

#### **\*INITIATIVES**

Englebert shared the following initiatives that were part of 2014, many of which led to or will carry forward as initiatives in the coming year(s) as well.

The system **name change** to St. Mary Catholic Schools (SMCS) will become fully effective July 1, 2015.

Englebert enumerated many **school and community events, programs and shows** that took place in our beautiful Jane Bergstrom Fine Arts Education Center (FAEC) in its first complete calendar year in operation. She also discussed the annual Celebration of the Arts which was successfully presented as a series for the first time in our fine arts education center.

A **fine arts committee**, which includes all fine arts faculty, two board members, administrators, and a parent from each school, was formed. Through this board-formed committee a proposal for a fine arts program was developed and interviews are currently underway to find new leadership for the system's program.

A four-year **technology** plan that incorporates a strategic direction for our school system was created and approved by the board of trustees.

\*In 2014, we graduated our first class with the high school laptop program. The initiative was very successful and serves as the foundation and model for the new middle school program.

\*The plan includes laptops for middle school this year. Outside funding was secured for start-up and the new plan stipulates a sustaining financial plan.

\*Teachers receive training August & during in-services to use the technology effectively, and we have an internal resource for students and faculty who provides training and troubleshooting.

In communications, a new website is being designed with financing being provided by an outside source. We are very excited about this project, which will be completed in time for a July 1 unveiling in conjunction with the system name change.

Participation in the **WPCP (Wisconsin Parental Choice Program)** had a successful launch and we anticipate the same results for the upcoming year. (*Patrick Batey provided details during the financial part of the presentation*).

And of course, our biggest initiative of all was **construction of St. Mary Catholic Middle School!** The new building will incorporate exciting 21<sup>st</sup> century design with collaborative learning spaces. We enjoyed a successful groundbreaking attended by Bishop Ricken, and \$9.6 M has been raised to date, with approximately \$1.4M left to go. This has provided tremendous opportunity for parish and school collaboration. Committees like **Connect 5**, which include members from all or most parishes working together to help promote, support, and raise funds for our new middle school, were formed and continue to work together. We wish to sincerely thank our Neenah-Menasha parishes for being our steadfast partners throughout this process. We truly could not do it without them!

#### **\*FINANCES**

In prior years, the main focus on our State of the Schools agenda was a balanced budget. Although not the main focus for this year's address, Englebert touched on the budget shared enrollment information.

Current **enrollment** stands at 581 in elementary schools, 157 at Seton and 243 at St. Mary Central. The total of 981 students is up 11 from the previous year, and includes 14 international students at the high school. We have experienced an increase of 220 students since 2004. This favorable trend of a 29% increase stands in stark contrast to the vast majority of private schools that are showing enrollments trending downward.

The system's **income** comes from three main sources of revenue: tuition ~ 50%, parish subsidy ~ 30% and third source funding ~ 20%. Scrip, our international students and donor support are key sources of revenue.

Approximately 60% of our families receive **tuition assistance**, and stated need always exceeds our resources.

The **current goal** is to manage a balanced budget now, and to prepare a balanced budget for next year. Our ongoing challenges remain the same – rising costs primarily in facilities operation, health insurance and the ongoing need for a competitive staffing and salary structure to attract and retain a qualified staff to support the faith and educational goals of our system.

Englebert then called upon Patrick Batey, who is the official TCCES representative for the **Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP)**, also referred to as “School Choice,” to share information about WPCP. Batey stated that we collected 110 applications during the application period, the fourth highest number of applicants in the state of Wisconsin, and we were randomly selected to receive 31 vouchers. Of our 31 applicants who were contacted by the state, 28 chose to enroll in TCCES schools. Five students are new to TCCES, and 23 are students who were previously enrolled (28 = 17 elementary / 7 middle school / 4 high school).

Despite concerns about participation in the program negatively impacting our Catholic identity because WPCP families can opt out of religious education and activities, TCCES Administration research found that the vast majority of families who participate in school choice across the state *want* that Catholic school experience for their children. We found the same to be true. In fact, no Parental Choice family chose to excuse their children from any religious experience. Secondary concerns about finances, testing and accountability were also substantially allayed by further investigation and experience as well.

Although the financial advantages of participation is offset in part by the requirements of auditing, registration and enrollment costs, the long-term benefits to the system could be substantial. During this school year, we receive \$7,210 for every voucher student in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and \$7,856 for every high school voucher student.

The program requires a full financial audit by an independent firm, and TCCES came through the audit in great shape. Some of our practices have been modified to meet the auditors' requirements, and we feel strengthened (not threatened) by this process.

We are currently providing the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) with the paperwork for the 2015-16 school year. From February 2 - April 20, 2015, families will be able to apply online with the DPI. After April 20, we will find out if we will receive any additional vouchers for next school year. Given our success in 2014, we don't anticipate any problems, but please encourage anyone who qualifies to apply. More information will be coming out in newsletters, emails, in church bulletins, and through personal contacts.

Following Batey, Community Relations and Fund Development Director Michelle Dejno shared some information about TCCES's work to build community relationships and to sustain and improve fundraising efforts.

Dejno stated that it could be said that the theme for the night is about building—building a new middle school, building trust, building relationships. It's an exciting time to be part of an organization that is moving forward and thinking ahead. Recognizing the **need to communicate differently** within our own TCCES community, with our stakeholders, donors and partners, many new strategies were employed this year to build relationships. These relationships have resulted in financial support from the community that will provide tuition assistance and college scholarships to SMC graduates, improve our facilities and impact our technology systems.

This year, we worked to strengthen the **connection between our schools and parishes**. For the first time ever, TCCES worked with the parishes of Neenah and Menasha to help them choose and develop a shared, yearlong platform focusing on education, using the Bishop Ricken's priority list from his 'Fully Alive' letters. In addition, efforts are being made to further unite the parishes and schools and build a better partnership. Strategies include using family testimonials for TCCES schools and programs within each parish, having performing arts students share their talents in their parish and working to bring community programs to parishioners. The pastoral team, along with the TCCES Advancement team, has committed to working together on these efforts.

We established the **ON TRACK series** of evening seminars in partnership with various community resources to provide information for wellbeing, at no cost to our community. The November seminar provided information for families to plan for college financing using 529s. The January 19<sup>th</sup> seminar will give tips about the 2015 market and how people can plan their finances accordingly. In March, we will present options for planned giving. Watch for interesting new topics each year.

Last year, TCCES took in over \$250,000 from **SCRIP** profits. Around \$200,000 went back to parents in the form of tuition reduction, and about \$50,000 went toward TCCES tuition assistance for needy families. A percentage also went to the parishes, and there was no profit kept by TCCES at all. Every penny raised went to families' tuition bills, our parishes or the tuition assistance fund. Despite all of this good news, only 50% of TCCES families use SCRIP.

Dejno feels that the old adage 'If you keep doing things the same way you will get the same results' is true of some of the methods we have been using to raise funds. Some of our greatest fundraising successes have not come without change... Zephyrfest has changed and grown over the past 30 years into the wonderful celebration it is today. Jumbo Gumbo celebrated 10 years this past November and we are evaluating how to freshen that event to make it even more fun! We began making changes this year in our approach to the **annual fund and school fundraisers**. Fundraising tactics must fit the audience groups, so we are changing some methods to use technology and innovation to increase much-needed third source funds. More direct communication, better use and upkeep of our database, more impactful alumni events and use of social media are related goals.

TCCES has partnered this year with the school event committees to increase business and marketing support. By offering business resources, raffle oversight and idea-sharing, the advancement office can help keep events within the TCCES guidelines to follow the mission and hopefully increase revenue. By taking a more strategic approach to school fundraisers, improving annual fund tactics and other online giving options, we hope to increase awareness and funds for our system.

## **\*CLOSING—OUR FUTURE FOCUS**

Englebert stated that a strong educational infrastructure supports a strong economy and an even stronger, more vibrant community. With that in mind, she believes our TCCES schools can attain educational achievement in a faith-based learning community to support our local community in a global economy and workforce by doing the following:

- 1) Set high standards, curricula, and assessments to ensure graduate readiness for college and the workforce
  - a. Focus on “**STEAM**” fields – Science, Technology, Engineering, **Arts**, and Math
  - b. Develop not only strong literacy and numeracy skills, but also problem solving, creativity, and collaboration skills through faith-based education
- 2) Elevate the profession of teaching through evaluation and empowerment
  - a. Continue emphasis on teacher performance and accountability with evidence based student learning outcomes
  - b. Provide the tools, resources, and training needed to enable our educators to be successful in a changing, dynamic learning environment
- 3) Prepare our schools and classrooms for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - a. Rebuild and expand our facilities – in process
  - b. Integrate technology into every aspect of learning
  - c. Create curriculum that has relevance for 21<sup>st</sup> century careers and align curriculum throughout our school system
- 4) Provide and promote student enrichment and extracurricular activities
  - a. Educate the “whole” person so students develop a full range of intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual skills and values
  - b. Teach skills such as collaboration, teamwork, communication, and accountability to develop leadership capabilities
  - c. Foster a deep and on-going appreciation for diversity, church, and community
- 5) Foster an environment of creativity and collaboration to center on our mission and core values
  - a. Embrace the change in system name – all campuses have St. Mary Catholic School name, all teams will be Zephyrs
  - b. Build on our new spirit of collaboration and commitment to our partnership with parishes
  - c. Share resources and alignment between schools to increase educational and growth opportunities for students

Together will work as a community to grow our faith to achieve our goals of education excellence!

In closing, Englebert thanked our guests for taking the time to attend. She also thanked everyone on behalf of the system for sharing their gifts—financial, time and talent--that are so generously given by our many donors, parishes, families, staff, and host of individuals who support our TCCES schools!