



St. Mary Catholic Schools
Grades P3-12

**St. Mary Catholic Schools Board of Directors Meeting
President's Report
March 8, 2018**

Catholic Identity, Discipleship and Religious Programming

- An all-staff retreat in August focused on how to integrate the theme of Servant Leadership into the classrooms and throughout the school departments. Each month, the faculty and students at each school engage in activities related to that month's servant leadership-related key attribute. Our servant leadership key attributes are: service, attitude, leadership, kindness, commitment, belief, focus, perseverance and witness.
- We welcomed our new campus priest, Fr. Jon Thorsen. Father Jon is with us each Wednesday, celebrating mass with the high school students, and being available for other mentoring and faith-filled activities. SMCS also entered into a contract with *Spiritus* for an intern in fall.
- Our community answered the Catholic call for social justice and discipleship by hosting fundraisers for a variety of causes including hurricane relief and cancer research, sponsoring blood drives, and providing volunteer service in many capacities.
- SMCS strengthened ties within local Catholic community by encouraging students' families to volunteer for parish ministry roles and by having system president and administrators meet with parish members and several supporting parish/finance councils.
- St. Mary Catholic Schools has embarked on our ALPHA journey, *Disciples on the Way: A Missionary Journey into the New Evangelization*. Starting with topic one, *Is There More to Life than This?*, the pilot session was embraced by staff, and feedback was favorable. SMCS will schedule the other sessions over the remainder of this year and throughout next year. Sessions are made up of ten groups of 10-12 people, and are led by six SMCS administrators and four religion teachers. All employees will be required to participate in the ALPHA sessions.

Academic and Curricular Developments

System

- Our Academic Excellence strategic initiative task force has focused on identification of curriculum gaps and resource needs of teachers. Currently work includes development of a scope-and-sequence document for subject areas, across grade levels.

- Achieved phase two of the expansion to grades 2 through 8 of STEM-based Project Lead The Way (PLTW) curriculum, a national STEM (science, technology, math & engineering) program which supplements our science curriculum.
- The school counseling department completed implementation of Naviance, a new comprehensive K-12 college and career readiness platform, which provides tools for assessment, career exploration, and post-graduation planning.
- A new mental health counselor was added to the school counseling staff to provide proactive, preventative, and remedial counselling services to high school and middle school students.
- New summer opportunities were offered to enhance school-year curriculum in fine arts and STEM.

High School

- The high school participated in *Take a Veteran to School* sponsored by HISTORY (channel).
- The business department expanded with the addition of a new part-time teacher and new/additional courses offered in Accounting, Intro to Business, and Personal Finance.
- A new CAPP health class, The Active Lifestyle, has been added.
- Students are utilizing distance learning to take several classes, including newly offered Architecture classes. College credit for the Architecture classes will be awarded for students who matriculate to UW-Milwaukee School of Architecture.

Middle School

- Many students in eighth grade are now taking level one world language (German, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese) and certain math classes for high school credit.

Elementary Schools

- An investment of \$70,000 was made on curriculum, educational materials, and teacher training to launch our new literacy program.
 - The Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Reading materials were purchased, and all K-5 grades now have library shelves (leveled books) and work-study materials. Designed to meet 21st century global standards, the curriculum includes state-of-the-art tools and methods for teaching reading skills and strategies.
 - Additionally, Fountas and Pinnell Word Work binders/books/CDs were acquired to be used as instructional materials for phonics for grades K-3.
- The new Aquinas Program curriculum has been developed, a teacher is completing certification, and the program is actively being marketing for inception next year. This program is designed for motivated and academically talented students in grades 3-5. It will be project based and taught in a multi-age classroom led by a teacher certified in gifted and talented instruction.

Marketing and Recruitment Initiatives and Results

- A new prospectus, *We Are Zephyrs...Faith.Academics.Service*, was created for recruitment use.
- In addition to our recruitment efforts, the following occurred this year:
 - Hired a new director of admissions
 - Offered early enrollment and transition year (kindergarten, sixth and ninth grade) discounts
 - Created a small task force to focus on addressing enrollment-based issues
 - Started school stores for elementary and middle schools where families can easily purchase Zephyrs spirit wear
- Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP)
 - WPCP is actively promoted through radio advertising, bulletin inserts, posters around the community, email and social media reminders, newsletters and word of mouth. An information open house will be held during the open enrollment period again this year.
 - This year we broadened our marketing campaign to include all financial assistance, tuition grants, and scholarships promoted simultaneously with WPCP.
 - Since inception, we have met WPCP program requirements, and grown from 28 to 113 voucher students in four years.
- Recruiting events including special school visit days, activities for preschoolers, open houses, information nights for parents and students, special student nights at sporting events, etc. are promoted via advertisements and articles in local newspapers and magazines, with bulletin inserts and posters around the community, in newsletters, in social media and on the system website.
- Annual, customary recruiting events:
 - School information nights were held at each school in October. The three elementary schools attracted only a few families. Most of the families in attendance at the high school were from outside of our school system, while most attending the middle school were current families. Approximate attendance: high school - 40 individuals; middle school – 60 individuals.
 - 8th grade visit day to the high school was held in October attended by 80 area 8th grade students. Students enjoyed attending classes and watching some homecoming activities and each left with an SMCS sweatshirt.
 - 5th and 7th grade visit days were held in November. Students attended sessions to learn about our co-curriculars, academics, fine arts, etc. All attendees received a SMCS t-shirt. Approximately 40 students attended these visit days, most from other Catholic schools.
 - Over 25 students shadowed at the middle school and 20 shadowed at the high school on Shadow Days in November.
 - Grade/Middle School nights are held at the high school football and basketball games to engage students and help with retention, especially at the transitional grades.
 - The community is invited to our ON TRACK presentation series each year, which are offered at no charge and are very informative. The three relevant topics hosted by SMCS this year are: *Seven Myths about College Admissions; QPR for Suicide Prevention; 21st Century Parenting-Keeping your Child Safe.*

- *New recruiting opportunities for this year:*
 - Hosted Aquinas Program parent information evening attended by 40 parents (28 families), some new to SMCS.
 - SMCS Campus Showcase event featured high/middle school campus tours, blessing and dedication of the new Fitness Center, and each family received a gift of a Zephyr sport tote bag. The event was held just before the homecoming kick-off festivities and attracted near 100 guests.
 - Elementary Showcase evenings featuring topics on STEM, Literacy, Enrichment and Engaged Learning at the three elementary campuses. A few new prospective families attended.
 - A preschool Treasure Hunt was held at each elementary campus, with some new families attending.
 - The PLTW Advisory Team involving teachers, parents, and business representatives, was instrumental in developing STEM Saturday, a new community event involving SMCS students and local businesses employing talent in STEM fields.
 - SMCS exhibited at Go Valley Kids Family Resource Fair and SMCS will be advertised in their literature.
 - An evening with MVP Aaron Rodgers was held in August at our middle school. Over 900 high school and middle school athletes from the Neenah-Menasha community attended.

- Community engagement is critical to the success of marketing initiatives. *New events to promote community engagement this year included:*
 - Z-Night, a new system fundraiser designed to promote unity and fellowship among our entire SMCS community—alumni, school families, parishes and community supporters; this year combined with our Athletic Hall of Fame dinner; results: 100 people more than last year’s similar event and more than \$50,000 profit
 - Zephyrs Gold, a raffle ticket program with a valuable prize given away once a month for six months
 - Outreach initiated at community events such as farmers markets, local festivals, and Lifest
 - Implemented a series of incentives to engage alumni and encourage their financial support

Professional Staff Development and Personnel Services

- In partnership with the board of trustees, administrators are working with teachers to enhance each area of the K-12 curriculum. A series of meetings is scheduled as part of the teachers’ monthly professional development to identify gaps in resources and determine ways to address them.

- CESA 6 Literacy Center was contracted to train all elementary teachers on how to utilize Lucy Calkins materials in the classroom.

- P3 - 12 teachers participated in a workshop through ArtsCore as they were introduced to arts integration techniques presented by a nationally acclaimed presenter.

- Five Early Childhood teachers participated in a full day conference “Learning Without Tears” in Madison, and the remaining two will be trained over the summer.

- Several teachers and a principal participated in PLTW training at MSOE over the summer.

- Five teachers from SMCHS attended the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics convention in Chicago. Topics included best teaching practices, best uses of technology and successful collaborations for teaching math and science, as well as STEM-related methods to benefit all learners.
- All K-12 teachers and administrators attended the day long Diocesan Education Convocation at the KI Center in Green Bay, featuring nationally known author and educator, Cathy Vatterott and her book, *Rethinking Grading*, as well as breakout sessions on various educational topics.
 - The middle and high school teachers have met monthly since August to work on new grading concepts and integration plans.
 - In January, SMCS began working on a grading statement to submit to the diocese.
- All seven administrators completed the Administrator Discipleship Formation Seminar organized by the Diocesan Department of Education at Silver Lake College this past summer.
- Initial educators are attending training through the Diocese.
- Our health and wellness initiative continues to be promoted. On-site health risk assessments and flu shots were offered to employees: the Humana Go365 (wellness rewards) is actively communicated.
- All faculty and staff are invited to utilize our brand new training and fitness center; a punch card incentive program will be introduced in spring.
- A monthly safety and wellness bulletin is distributed to all leadership-level personnel to share with their departments/schools.

Athletic Achievements

- Opened a state-of-the-art 6,500 square foot training and fitness center addition to the high school, a gift from generous donors. The center enables students to train in multiple ways to develop the strength, agility, finesse and skills necessary to be competitors in all areas while benefitting the health and well-being of all students and staff.
- Completed a \$120,000+ tennis court restoration project that was funded by the support of many community donors.
- The system's activities and athletic director earned designation as a nationally certified athletic administrator.
- Varsity accomplishments:
 - Started a successful powerlifting team that currently has students qualified for state and national competitions.
 - Girls tennis team won both the conference and championship tournaments; five players advanced to the WIAA sectional.

- The equestrian team won the Reserve Championship and the Spirit Award, and qualified for the state competition.
- A freshman cross country runner competed at the WIAA state meet and was recognized as an Academic All-Star.
- Boys basketball finished 15-10 overall; advanced to the WIAA regional final.
- Girls basketball finished 14-10 overall; advanced to WIAA regional final.
- Girls volleyball won first conference title in over 30 years; advanced to WIAA sectional final.
- Both boys and girls soccer had competitive seasons.
- Baseball finished 23-1 overall; advanced to WIAA sectional (June 2017)

Specific Challenges

- Enrollment continues to be a top priority, and while increased focus and additional tactics have been initiated, our numbers continue to be flat at the high school and middle school, while dipping at all three elementary schools. This is attributed to many factors, including:
 - increased competition for students from both public and private schools
 - decline in number of Catholics and number of families engaging in Catholic parishes and/or desiring a Catholic, faith-based education
 - a shift in family decision making, with children being allowed to select a school of their choice
 - an increase in the number of students (enrolled and prospective) who have learning and/or behavior issues that the system is unable to accommodate for optimal learning.
- The overall cost of education continues to rise beyond tuition increases. Major expenses relate to compliance, operation of new facilities, and technology infrastructure, software, and devices. Costs estimated at \$282,500 associated with projected technology upgrades, building and grounds improvement, innovative educational programs, new textbooks and instructional materials, and attainment of competitive salaries are not accounted for in next year's budget, and will need to be delayed or funded through other sources.
- Our system is financially at risk if supporting parishes are unable to meet their subsidy allotment. With financial sustainability dependent upon the viability of our parishes, the need to grow revenue sources through identification and attraction of additional donors, sourcing third-party funding for educational resources, and increasing efforts in recruitment/development is ever more important.

Priorities for Year 2018-19

- Achieve progress towards the goals of the SMCS Strategic key initiatives which focus on advancing Catholic education and creating dynamic Disciples of Christ, attaining academic excellence, growing enrollment, and obtaining a financially stable business model while investing for the future.
- Establish an SMCS Foundation with approval of the SMCS Board of Trustees and SMCS Board of Directors; subsequently install Foundation Board of Directors and transfer/invest appropriate funds.
- Ensure that all SMCS employees positively engage in and embrace ALPHA: *Disciples on the Way: A Missionary Journey into the New Evangelization*.