

Questions and Answers

The Plan

A plan was presented on Sunday, October 30 that included three recommendations:

- Creation of a new leadership position at the Catholic Education Office to oversee all of the schools in the City of St. Louis
- Funding for enhanced programs and services in all of the city Catholic elementary schools
- Creation of a new school at the site of the current St. Joan of Arc School that would serve the families from Our Lady of Sorrows, St. James the Greater and St. Joan of Arc Parishes.

Several questions and comments have surfaced regarding this plan and these recommendations.

How was it determined which schools would participate in the new school?

The pastors of the three parishes approached the Archdiocesan School Oversight Committee requesting assistance in dealing with the changes that were impacting their parish and school communities. All three parishes were experiencing the same changes and challenges related to declining enrollment, increasing costs of the schools, and a depletion of parish reserves. During this school year, all three parishes will need financial assistance from the archdiocese to balance their budgets. It was clear that a new choice had to be developed to provide Catholic education for the children of these three parishes

Could other schools join this new school later?

That is always a possibility.

Can a parish opt out of the new school?

At this time, each parish is only committed to studying the plan to determine if it is the right thing for that parish. Certainly if some information comes forward that would indicate that the parish would not be served well in this new model, the pastor can reconsider his decision. However, once a decision is made by the archbishop, the parish is committed to moving forward with the plan.

Is there a stage two to this plan? How will the other city schools be affected by this plan?

All schools in the City of St. Louis were reviewed and considered in developing this plan. It was clear that these three schools needed immediate attention for the 2017-18 school year. It was also clear that the changes in the City of St. Louis will continue and that other schools may face similar challenges in the future. The two recommendations related to leadership and enhanced programs and services were designed to help all schools in the city to deal effectively with these challenges. All Catholic schools in the City of St. Louis will be impacted by the new leadership position and the funding for programs and services. The plan is designed to insure that parents throughout the city have access to similar quality academic and faith formation programs thus lessening competition among schools. The plan seeks to position the Catholic elementary schools as the schools that parents can confidently choose for their children.

This plan seems to involve a great deal of added bureaucracy?

There is no added bureaucracy. A current position at the Catholic Education Office is being restructured to allow that person to focus solely on the schools in the City of St. Louis. Some additional staff is being added at the school level to assist the Director of City Schools and the school principal in the administration of the school. This additional staff will include a coordinator of religious education, a director of development and a business manager.

Why move Our Lady of Sorrows and St. James the Greater families to St. Joan of Arc? It would seem that you are putting the new school closer to St. Gabriel School.

One of the goals of the Archdiocesan School Oversight is to insure that parents in the City of St. Louis have reasonable access to schools. For these three schools it would seem that such access is provided by placing the school at St. Joan of Arc. In addition, St. Gabriel School is almost at capacity in terms of its facility.

Will creating a new school at the site of St. Joan of Arc School stop families from choosing larger schools like St. Gabriel and St. Margaret of Scotland or other nearby schools like St. Ambrose?

No. It is clear within the City of St. Louis that families enroll in schools without regard to parish boundaries. Parents choose a school that is in the best interest of their children and their family. This plan and its three recommendations hope to increase quality Catholic school choices all over the city ensuring that parents have quality options wherever they live.

There seems to be a large area between St. Roch and St. Ambrose Schools. Will this create a problem for families seeking a Catholic school?

There is a large geographic area between these two schools which includes Forest Park and Highway 40. However, demographics indicate that the number of families seeking Catholic education can easily be served by the surrounding schools.

Is this new corporate school to be established at the St. Joan of Arc site similar to what was established at Holy Cross Academy?

Holy Cross Academy uses a corporate school governance model similar to what is being proposed for this new school in South City. In the Holy Cross corporate model and in the model proposed at the St. Joan of Arc site, the pastors are members of a corporate board. In addition, a board of directors will hold certain powers in regard to the operation of the school. However, there are some very significant differences between the Holy Cross model and the proposed model. The new corporate school will not employ a president to oversee the school as does Holy Cross Academy. The Director of City Schools will have that role. In addition, there will only be one site at the new school in South City as opposed to four sites at Holy Cross Academy, one of which is a middle school.

What other options were considered before this plan was recommended?

Was a middle school model discussed?

The middle school option was discussed and reviewed numerous times. Based on all the information obtained in the South City Collaborative Planning Process, families in South City expressed limited interest in a middle school. In addition, the costs related to a middle school and sustaining schools for grades K through 5 were very high, making it unaffordable for parents and parishes. It was clear that to create a quality middle school that is affordable for parents and parishes, more than three elementary schools would need to be sending students to the middle school.

Was a multi-school model considered?

A variety of models involving two and three schools were considered. The two and three school model was found not to be cost effective and could require parents with more than one child to transport children to several different sites each day.

Did you consider closing all of the parish schools in the city and reopening some as regional schools?

Variations of this model were considered. However, it was determined that Catholic education in the City of St. Louis would best be served at this time by allowing a variety of schools types to exist in the city: parish schools, corporate schools and Archdiocesan elementary schools. Parishes and parents do not seem to be at the point of embracing the idea that one type of school fits all.

Perhaps sending Catholic students to the public schools and providing a quality PSR programs would be a better option?

Parents certainly have the option of sending their child to a public school and then to the PSR program offered in the city. Right now, we are trying to preserve and strengthen the Catholic schools in the City of St. Louis through this planning effort. All research indicates that the Catholic school is still the best way to educate a child in the faith.

Will this plan simply be a band aid and what will happen if the plan does not work?

It is clear that some change must occur. To allow schools to close one by one would be devastating to parishes and families. We believe in the long term, these three recommendations will provide the leadership, programs and types of schools needed to sustain vibrant Catholic education in the city. All need to keep in mind that the changes and challenges facing Catholic schools in the city will remain in the coming years. However, with enhanced leadership and strategic planning for all of the schools, the archdiocese will be better able to monitor these schools and address future change and challenges before they become a crisis requiring drastic choices.

Is it feasible to have a new school up and running by the next school year and make it a positive experience?

Yes. If a decision is reached in the coming weeks, there is time to assemble a staff and develop the curriculum and program that will be needed for a positive school experience for the 2017-18 school year. This has been accomplished in a number of other schools in the archdiocese over the past several years. Based on the experience of these other schools and with the focus and direction of the Director of City Schools and the staff of the Catholic Education Office, the new school will be ready by August 2017.

Will other Catholic schools in the city have to relate to the Director of City Schools?

Yes. All schools in the city will be involved in a new partnership with this individual, even the parish schools like St. Gabriel, St. Margaret of Scotland and St. Ambrose.

Is it a coincidence that the superintendent is from St. Joan of Arc? How is this unbiased?

The superintendent was not part of the subcommittee working the last four months developing these recommendations and did not provide any influence on the decision about which location was to be chosen.

If this plan is approved what are the next steps?

The following steps will be taken immediately after approval from the archbishop:

- all families will be notified of the approval,
- a date and process for registration will be announced,
- a search will begin for the principal,
- planning for any building renovations will commence,
- members of a board of directors will be identified and appointed,
- parent committees to assist in planning for the new school will be assembled.

Communicating the Plan

Sunday, October 30 began the process of communicating the plan to the three parishes especially impacted by the recommendation to create a new school at the St. Joan of Arc Parish site. That meeting was always meant to be the start of the dialogue of our communication process. At that meeting, all were informed that we would address the questions and comments received at the meeting in a timely fashion and return responses to the parents and parishioners in some fashion. At the meeting all participants were provided three ways in which they could contact the Archdiocesan School Oversight Committee. The following question surfaced regarding the method of communication used at the October 30 meeting.

Why were questions not fielded from the attendees at the October 30 meeting?

The planning team believed that everyone deserves to be heard and felt that the approach of everyone writing down questions and comments in small groups was the best option for everyone to be heard initially. In the coming weeks, all of the channels of communication provided at the October 30 meeting (email address, phone number, and US Mail address) remain open. A follow-up meeting is scheduled to take place at each parish site the week of November 14. This meeting will allow for the planning team to answer questions composed at the October 30 meeting as well as address new questions via sharing from parishioners and school families.

How and when will a decision regarding this plan and its recommendations be communicated?

After all of the input, suggestions and questions from the three parishes and schools have been reviewed and shared with the Archdiocesan School Oversight Committee, the recommendations will be finalized and sent on to the Archdiocesan Board of Catholic Education and finally to the archbishop for a final decision. A decision is expected in December. Throughout the process mentioned above, the parish and school community of each of the three parishes will be kept apprised of the progress through the parish bulletin and school newsletter.

The New School

Enrollment

What will be the maximum class size in the new school?

Parents from all three schools have grown accustomed to smaller class sizes over the last several years. Lower school enrollments do provide the benefit of a lower teacher-student ratio. The plan calls for a class size at the new school of no more than 25 students per classroom.

What is the enrollment capacity at the new school site?

With 18 classrooms, as well as additional rooms for specialty classes, the facility can accommodate two classes of each grade, K through 8. With no more than 25 students in each classroom, the new school would be able to enroll as many as 450 students. Since the combined enrollments of the three school now totals around 400, there would be little problem accommodating all of these students. If 80% of the current students enrolled in the new school, approximately 300 to 320 would be attending the new school.

Can a non-Catholic child attend to increase the enrollment?

Yes, non-Catholic children who are currently enrolled in the three schools are most welcome to enroll in the new school. New non-Catholics will be considered for enrollment as space is available.

Will there be “St. James pupils”, “Our Lady of Sorrows pupils”, “St. Joan of Arc pupils” at the new school?

Efforts will be made to unite the students of the three schools as students of the new school. Just as in a high school, students from a variety of parish schools come together, students from these three parish schools will unite as members of the new school community.

What can we do to insure the current families consider the new school as an option?

Once the decision is made by the archbishop, communication regarding the new school will begin informing parents of the application process, tuition rate, programs, services etc. In addition, activities and events will be offered to begin blending the parents and students of the three school communities. Hopefully, current families would encourage one another to consider the new school as the option for their children.

Where will the kindergarten students come from for the new school?

The new school will draw its kindergarten students from the three parishes’ pre-schools and the parishes in general. If space is available, the kindergarten could also draw from other pre-schools in the area. The three parishes and their pre-schools would be expected to direct and encourage parents with young children to consider attending this new school.

What will happen if the enrollment in the new school does not reach the projected level?

We have projected enrollment at a variety of levels and are prepared to open the school regardless of the number that register for the first year. If the enrollment does not reach projected levels the first year, steps will be taken to grow the enrollment for the following year.

What will happen if the school grows in enrollment beyond the facilities?

This would be a wonderful problem to address and would be a sign of the school’s success. The board of directors along with the pastors and the Catholic Education Office would begin to look at options that could accommodate this growth.

Can parents choose to send their child to another school?

Parents are always free to choose the school where they would like to enroll their children.

What will be done to prevent other city Catholic elementary schools from accepting the families from these parishes?

Pastors and principals from these schools will be asked to encourage inquiring families from these three schools to remain enrolled in their current schools for the remainder of this school year and to give serious consideration to attending the new school at the St. Joan of Arc site for the coming year.

Facilities

How and why was St. Joan of Arc site chosen as the location of the new school?

Several steps were taken in regard to the selection of this site. First, the building review from the South City Collaborative was carefully studied along with demographic data from the neighborhoods involved. In addition, input was considered in regard to the condition of the facilities from the pastors and the Archdiocesan Office of Building and Real Estate. St. Joan of Arc School was chosen as the site of the new school due to its central location among the three parishes and the concentration of Catholic children in that area.

Was a neutral location considered as the site?

No existing neutral site is available at this time in that general area. Of course, renting or purchasing another site would add to the cost of this new school.

Will a new building be constructed at the St. Joan of Arc site?

No, the existing facility is large enough to accommodate the students from the three parishes.

Will classrooms be large enough at the site to accommodate the students?

Yes, the classrooms are large enough to accommodate 25 students. In addition there are enough classrooms for two of each grade level and space for specialty classrooms. A spacious gym and cafeteria are also available in the facility.

Is the site of the new school in good condition? How much renovation will be needed to accommodate the students?

Yes, the school facility at St. Joan of Arc facility is in good condition including air conditioned classrooms. A review of the interior and exterior of the facility was undertaken. The Archdiocesan Office of Building and Real Estate was also consulted about the condition of the building. It was determined that the parish has maintained the facility with care over the years. No major repairs to the building are needed. There will be a need to reconfigure some space within the building to accommodate programs and services. Funding to make some renovations to the building would be provided through the archdiocese.

Finances

Expenses

How do you plan to afford the additional staff that will be included in this new school?

The positions that are crucial to have in place at the start of the next school year besides the principal, school secretary, teachers and support staff include: business manager, development director, counselor or social worker and learning consultant. The cost of these additional positions will be covered as a result of the financial investment of the archdiocese.

Will the new school pay rent to St. Joan of Arc Parish?

A lease will be drawn up between the corporate school entity and St. Joan of Arc Parish specifying how the building will be used and the responsibilities of both the school and parish in regard to building costs and maintenance. However, there will be no rental fee charged by the parish.

Tuition

Who is responsible for setting the tuition rate and other school fees?

The board of directors working in consultation with the pastors and superintendent will determine tuition and fees for the school families.

What will be the tuition charged at the new school?

The current tuition rate at the three schools range from \$4,500 to \$5,350 for one child and from \$6,100 to \$7,700 for two children. Hopefully, the tuition charged at the new school would stay within the range of the existing rates and may even be a bit lower due to the larger number of students enrolled in the school. The tuition rate would be available to parents at the time of application to the school.

Will there be a multi-child discount between high school and elementary school?

There will be a multi-child discount at the new school for grades kindergarten through grade 8. However, the multi-child discount will not be available between this elementary school and the Archdiocesan high schools. High school tuition is determined by each high school independently.

What about families that can't afford tuition?

All current scholarship programs, *Alive in Christ*, *Beyond Sunday*, and parish scholarships, remain available to those that apply.

Would it be possible to provide a tuition discount to families moving from the current schools to this new school?

This suggestion may have merit. It will be considered.

Considering the tuition rates, will the school suffer as families start looking for more affordable alternatives?

We anticipate a tuition rate that will be more affordable because of fuller classrooms. In addition, by enhancing our programs and services and positioning schools in a well thought out geographic location throughout the city, we are hoping to guarantee some stability in the years ahead.

Parish Subsidy

How is the amount of subsidy from each parish to be determined?

Setting parish subsidy will be one of the tasks of a new board of directors in consultation with the pastors of the three parishes. The board could choose to assess each parish a flat rate or it could develop a formula that would include the number of children enrolling in the school from each parish. Both methods have been used in other schools in the archdiocese. The board could also develop a new way to assess this rate. The pastors and the board of directors, with assistance from the archdiocese, will work to ensure that the new parish subsidy is affordable for the parishes.

Why must each parish pay for schools that no longer exist?

This new school would be the responsibility of the three parishes in partnership with the archdiocese. This new school is the Catholic school for these three parishes. As a result, each parish and the archdiocese have responsibility for the financial welfare of the school. In addition, keep in mind that all

Catholics regardless if they have a school at the parish or not have a responsibility to provide for the religious education of the next generation of Catholics.

If the families from Our Lady of Sorrows and St. James the Greater Parishes start to attend church regularly at St. Joan of Arc and stop contributing to their home parish – do the parishes have to continue their subsidy?

Each parish will be expected to continue their subsidy even if families leave their parish and join St. Joan of Arc Parish. The amount of subsidy could change, of course, depending on the formula or method used to calculate parish subsidy.

Are the three parishes financially viable?

At this time, all three parishes should be financially viable if they are not operating a stand-alone parish school. They should be able to meet a parish subsidy assessed from the new school.

Will the elder population support the new school?

It will be important for each of these parishes to remind all parishioners that they still have a Catholic school that the children from these parishes can attend. The parish, with or without a school located at the site, is still responsible for the Catholic education of the children of the parish.

Fundraising/Development

Will this new corporate model school still be a not-for-profit entity for fundraising purposes?

Yes. The new corporate entity will have a 501c3 designation.

Will families enrolling in the new school be expected to fundraise for the school and their parish?

The only source of income expected from the parishes will be the parish subsidy. The parishes will not be asked to do fundraising for the school. The school could engage in various types of fundraising events and programs. All of these will be coordinated by the director of development for the school. It is understood that parents could face an increasing financial burden being asked to support fundraising events for the parish and the school. The school will need to carefully coordinate fundraising efforts with the three parishes so as not to overburden the parents in regard to their investment of time, talent and treasure.

Why can't the archdiocese simply provide an ACA grant to each school and allow the three schools to remain open?

During the 2016-17 school year, the archdiocese will provide emergency grants of over \$589,000 to the three schools. This number is projected to increase substantially in future years. With the growing financial needs among other schools throughout the archdiocese, continued funding to these three schools at this level is not possible.

Will the archdiocese continue to fund the new school through an ACA grant?

The archdiocese is committed to funding a strong school at this site as long as enrollment remains healthy and the parishes and parents are able to continue their support of the school.

What about alumni funding?

This could be a task for the board of directors to determine the extent of past involvement of the alumni with each school and how these individuals might be invited to invest in the new school. Consideration could be given to participation in the *Catholic Alumni Program* currently being implemented by the Today and Tomorrow Educational Foundation.

How does this plan align with *Beyond Sunday*?

Beyond Sunday and this planning effort are all about enhancing Catholic schools. *Beyond Sunday* is providing funding for scholarships and enhanced programs. The planning effort is about providing a new school where those scholarships and enhanced programs can be used. All *Beyond Sunday* funds raised by the parishes will go to the parish – not to the new school.

Governance

How will the members of the Board of Directors be selected?

Pastors will nominate individuals from each parish to serve without pay on this board. The pastors will be looking for individuals who will bring the needed talents and skills to the table. The archbishop will then appoint the members to this board. In addition, members from the wider community could be appointed to the board. Efforts will be made to ensure that the board members have the time and the commitment to grow and develop the new school.

How will the archdiocese be involved with the governance of the new school?

The superintendent or his designee will be a member of the corporate board and will also work closely with the board of directors.

Will a corporate school model mean putting the control of this school in the hands of a disconnected archbishop and an off-site superintendent?

Certainly, the archbishop will be a member of the corporation, as will the superintendent. However, an individual from the Catholic Education Office will be acting on behalf of the superintendent in a very hands-on way in relating to the board of directors, the pastors and the principals of the school. This plan calls for much more involvement and oversight on the part of the Catholic Education Office than is currently exercised with these three parish-based schools.

Will parents still have a say in their children's education?

Yes, parents will continue to have direct contact with the principal and, if needed, the Director of City Schools. In addition, several members of the board of directors will be school parents.

Name

Will the new school have a new name or will it just be that St. James the Greater and Our Lady of Sorrows Schools are closing and the students and their money goes to St. Joan of Arc?

No name for the new school has been chosen. Keep in mind that all three schools are closing and a new school is being formed using the existing school buildings at St. Joan of Arc Parish. The selection of a school name will include the pastors of the three parishes and individuals from the three parishes. The final decision regarding the name of the new school will rest with the archbishop.

Pre-school

What happens to our preschool? Will pre-school be offered at the new school?

Currently all three parishes are each blessed with an excellent pre-school program. Hopefully, the pre-school programs would continue to be available at each parish site. However, the question remains: who will operate the pre-school? Each parish could own and operate a pre-school at its own site. Another option would involve the new school operating the pre-school at each parish site. This question would be among the first to be addressed by the pastors and school leadership, and include input from the pre-school teachers and the board of directors of the new school.

Programs

What will the curriculum look like for this new school and who will be making curricular and instructional decisions?

The principal and the teaching staff of the new school will be making curricular and instructional decisions working with members of the Catholic Education Office staff. The written curriculums of the three schools will be reviewed and compared based upon the standards and benchmarks for academic excellence put forth by the archdiocese. In addition to the core subjects of Religion, English/Language Arts, Math Science, Social Studies, Music, Art and Physical Education, a variety of in-school and after-school electives and enrichment programs will be offered. Technology will be infused in the learning process and STREAM initiatives will be introduced.

Will special education programs be offered for remedial and enrichment purposes?

In addition to housing the Learning Center currently at St. Joan of Arc School, the new school will include a learning consultant on staff to assist teachers with the various learning needs of the students. Enrichment classes will be offered during the school day and after school.

Will the Learning Center currently at St. Joan of Arc School remain in the new school?

At this time, plans call for this Learning Center to remain part of the new school.

Will there be a computer teacher on staff at the new school?

Technology will be integrated into the learning process at the new school. The hope would be to transition from the computer lab to a more one-to-one technology experience for children in the regular classroom setting. This will involve all teachers becoming proficient in the use of technology. Training will be provided for teachers to assist them in making this transition. Some type of computer/technology personnel will be needed to support student and staff use of technology.

Will there be any enhanced classes or programs for the middle school students?

The plan is to offer enhanced classes and programs for all students in grades K through 8. In regard to middle school students some electives would be provided in order to offer choices of classes and programs both during the school day and after school.

Will there be a band program offered at the new school?

Yes. There will be a full range of music educational opportunities for the students including band. Hopefully, the band program would build on rich band experience provided at Our Lady of Sorrows School for many years.

Will extra-curricular programs be a part of the new school?

It is clear that a rich and varied extra-curricular experience is provided at the three schools. The administration and staff would review these programs and determine what programs will be offered at the new school.

Will teachers be required to attend professional development opportunities?

It will be a requirement that teachers attend professional development opportunities, both those that address school-wide initiatives and individual learning desires. The teachers in the new school will be life-long learners on a continuum of constant improvement so that the students receive the best possible instruction and education.

Will the special programs and traditions from each school be continued?

The new school will provide a full array of special programs and services including a foreign language and the latest in technology. A thorough review of the programs and services offered at the three schools has already been accomplished. The administration and staff will decide what programs and services will be offered to best meet the students' needs.

What happens to each school's current equipment, materials and technology?

This material will be brought to the new school to be used in building the programs and activities for the students in the new school.

Could the current school uniforms be grandfathered in for a few years before changing to a new uniform?

An important aspect of the new school is unity and identity. Strong efforts will be made to blend the students together and become one community. Should the recommendations be approved, parents and students from each of the three schools will be asked to assist with uniform decisions and policy.

Will a hot lunch program be offered at the new school?

Yes, a full hot lunch program will be available for students throughout the week at reasonable costs.

Will new sports teams be created at the new school?

Each parish could maintain its current sports teams and other sports related activities. Of course, many parishes are already working together to build teams with children from other parish schools. It would be likely that the athletic associations of each parish would meet to coordinate their efforts. The parishes would need to consult with the CYC for further direction and guidance.

Will the gym be used for CYC sports?

Due to the large number of teams that play throughout the city, it is very likely that the gym will continue to be used for athletic events sponsored through the CYC.

Will the new school be offering before and after-care programs?

Yes, these programs will be available

What steps will be taken to blend both the students and parents from these three schools?

Once the recommendation is approved, steps will begin to be taken to blend students and parents during the second semester of the current school year.

How will parents be involved in the school?

Parents will be involved in the new school in similar ways they were involved in their previous schools: Home and School/PTO, field trip experiences, volunteering at school, coaching, scouts, etc. In addition, some parents may be asked to serve on the board of directors.

Will a long term strategic plan be developed for the school?

Yes. A long range strategic plan is an essential component of creating a successful school. This will be one of the primary tasks of the board of directors.

Sacramental Program

Who takes care of the children's preparation for sacraments? If it's the new school, then doesn't that usurp vitality from the parish?

There is no doubt that the new school would prepare students for the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Sacraments are usually celebrated within the parish. In other words, the children would be prepared at school and then receive the sacrament at their home parish. However, this is a question that would be decided by the pastors of the parishes as the spiritual leaders of this new school. In these cases, the pastors usually make a decision in consultation with school leaders and the parents of the school.

Staffing

Has the Director of City Schools been identified? If not, when will we know who that is?

Mrs. Maureen DePriest will serve as the Director of City Schools if the recommendations are approved. She would serve in this position for the remainder of this year and for the 2017-18 school year. Another individual will be hired this spring to begin training with Mrs. DePriest during the next school year. This new individual would then assume the role of Director of City Schools for the 2018-19 school year.

How will the school be staffed? Will only St. Joan of Arc employees be considered for employment? Will some teachers from other schools be employed at the new school? What about school volunteers, maintenance workers, cafeteria workers?

Under the proposed recommendation to create a new school at the St. Joan of Arc School site, all professional and support staff currently employed at the three schools (principals, teachers, secretaries, etc.) would lose their positions and would then have the opportunity to apply for positions at the new school. The new school, therefore, will employ individuals from each of the three schools. It would be a goal to create a staff at the new school that would have some teachers and staff from the three schools in order to make the students' transition to the new school a bit easier as they see familiar faces within the new school.

Who will choose the principal?

The Director of City Schools in consultation with the pastors and the board of directors will select the new principal. The hiring of the principal will be the first priority once the recommendations are approved.

How will staff be hired?

Staff will be hired through the application and interview process directed by the new principal and Director of City Schools. Priority will be given to the teachers and staff currently employed at the three schools. Evaluation of teachers will be the responsibility of the school principal.

Will the current teachers who are losing their jobs be given any compensation or severance pay?

That is not the usual practice in regard to reducing staff in the schools. However, the School Personnel Office at the Catholic Education Office will work with these teachers and assist them in finding other employment.

Is additional staff really needed?

It is important that schools provide a variety of services to meet the ever-changing needs of our students. Besides qualified, faith-filled and quality teachers, today's schools must provide coordinators of religious education, learning consultants, counselors, social workers, and nurses to work with the administration and teachers in providing the best education possible for the students.

Why a nurse for 300 or less students? Not all schools have this.

The list of health issues facing students and staffs continues to grow. We believe either a part-time or full-time nurse is necessary to ensure a healthy and safe school environment for the entire educational community.

Will aides be available in the school to assist teachers?

The decision to hire aides will be determined based on the needs of the students and the needs of the teachers. Class size will also be a determining factor.

Will the pastors be present in the new school?

Besides being on the various boards governing the schools, the pastors will be the spiritual leaders of the new school community involved in the sacramental and prayer life of the community. In addition, they will be asked to teach classes and be physically present in the school as much as their schedules allow.

Who will the parents talk to in regard to issues or problems?

Like any other school, the parents would talk with the teacher first if it is a classroom issue or matter and then to the principal of the school if the issue is not resolved at the classroom level. Of course, the parents are always welcome to talk to the principal on any other issue. The Director of City Schools is another contact beyond the principal if the parent cannot resolve the issue with the principal.

Transportation

How will children get to schools – will it be the parent’s responsibility or will a bus be provided?

It is clear that some students in each of these schools live so close to the schools that walking to and from school each day is possible. In addition, in many cases, parents only have a short drive to drop their children off at the schools. There is no doubt that the parents from St. James the Greater and Our Lady of Sorrows Schools would have a longer commute to get to and from school. If this commute becomes a burden, the school administration could certainly consider possible alternatives including a bus and carpool arrangements.

Other Concerns

Parish and Neighborhood

What is going to happen to the parishes without a school?

The parishes will remain. There are no plans to close these parishes. It is important to remember that while the school is an important ministry of the parish, it is not the only ministry. For many years a great deal of parishioner's time, energy and money has gone to maintaining the school. Of course, parishioners did this willingly and gladly. However, as a result, the parish did not always have the resources to address such issues as adult education, health needs of it parish, evangelization outreach, etc. Under the new school model the parish will have the ability to direct more resources to the other spiritual and temporal needs of the members of the parish. In other words, the parish could become more vital and meaningful not only for parishioners but the other members of the neighborhood community.

Will school families start attending at St. Joan of Arc instead of St. James the Greater or Our Lady of Sorrows Parishes?

That is always a possibility. The parishes must work with families to maintain their loyalty, support and involvement.

How will the parish survive financially?

With reduced costs in regard to operating a school on site, the parish can begin to replenish its reserves and address parish issues that could not be addressed due to lack of funding.

Vacant Buildings

What happens to the school building at the parishes without schools?

The continued use of St. James the Greater and Our Lady of Sorrows School facilities will be determined by each parish. The parish will retain the responsibility of upkeep of the facilities including increased security if needed. These parishes will also have the ability to rent the facilities to appropriate tenants which would provide an ongoing source of revenue for the parish. The Archdiocesan Office of Building and Real Estate could work with the parish in identifying possible tenants and in considering all the needed legal and liability issues associated with renting the facility.

Will vacant building facilities such as cafeteria and gym still be available to the parish?

Yes, it is still parish property for the parish to use.

Personal Concerns

I am concerned about my son. He has made a wonderful group of friends. This is our family and home. It will be a difficult change.

Moving to a new school will be difficult for students and parents. All have established close ties and friendships within their own school and parish community. Of course, at the new school the students will hopefully have their friends joining them and will then have the opportunity to make new friends as well. The same can be said of the parents. In addition, the new school will take steps to effectively transition and blend the student body as well as giving the parents and students an opportunity to meet and get to know each other.

My kids are going into 8th grade, so obviously this is devastating and disappointing. I am concerned about high school counseling and placement.

The administration and upper grade staff at the new school will be very sensitive to the needs of the eighth grade students. There will be efforts made to ensure that this group of students blends quickly in their last year of elementary school and that all the steps are taken to make it a memorable year. Certainly, in regard to high school placement, the staff will work with the students and parents providing appropriate counseling and direction to gain acceptance into the high school of choice.

Should we inform our children now regarding the closing of the school and the opening of a new school?

Every parent will need to make that determination based on what your child is hearing outside your home, the maturity level of your child, and realizing that this is a recommendation that will not be finalized until the archbishop approves the plan. The archdiocese through Catholic Family Counseling would be happy to make counselors available to any family or student needing short term assistance dealing with this difficult situation. Please contact your principal if you feel that such assistance is needed. The principal can then contact Mrs. Maureen DePriest, Associate Superintendent for Elementary School Administration, who will arrange for counseling services.