

**Minutes of Saint Michael School Parents' Meeting  
Sunday, November 8, 2009**

*Parents of Catholic School students met with Father Borowiak, pastor of Saint Michael parish on November 8, 2009. Father Borowiak asked to meet with parents to discuss key elements in the planning of Saint Michael Catholic Grade School. He was joined by Sister Mary Michael, C.K., a School Sister of Christ the King, who is serving as a consultant in the planning of the school. A transcript of that meeting follows.*

**Father Borowiak:**

“I just realized that there is a typo in the bulletin and I didn’t get a chance to proof it. The meeting is supposed to begin at 7 p.m., so I am hoping that most everyone is here today. Did everyone get a chance to get the handout when you came in? There should be two things; the planning of St. Michael School, this will be on the agenda for the meeting tonight and then there is a sheet that is titled “Technology Offer.” I also have some hard copies of the 2008 survey that was sent to all families in December 2008. I printed 40 copies so if anyone wants a copy of this it is also available online at stmichaelcheney.org. On the agenda for the planning of the St. Michael School, on the back page, if you’d be willing to join me, let’s begin with that prayer.”

*(Group prayer)*

**Father Borowiak:**

“First of all, thank you very, very much for being here tonight. This is an exciting time. We have done a lot of planning up to this point and there are a lot of things that have yet to be planned before we open St. Michael School, tentatively, in the fall of 2011. Just by a show of hands, for how many of you is this your first time in this building? Okay, this was part of the Old Cheney Public School. The building right next to us to the west was the old building that has stood here for the largest part of 90 years. There were two portables to the west of that. These four buildings were part of a total of almost 3 acres when the district one law went into effect that mandated all K-8 systems had to affiliate with a K-12 system. Norris acquired this property and they wanted to get rid of it and so that not knowing what our future was going to be I asked the Bishop if he would be open to buying this for our use. He agreed in 2008. When the Cheney Public School vacated this property, they simply locked the doors and walked away from it. The other three buildings to the west were completely furnished; desks, computers, everything - they just locked the doors and walked away from it. This building was built about 3 years ago and I think

that the Cheney Public School, among other things, just didn't want their financial reserves to leave their school district, so they built this building. Norris then sold these buildings and the property to the Diocese. All 3 acres, all 4 buildings and everything that went with it sold for less than what it cost just to build it. So anyway, our C.C.D. program uses this building every Wednesday. We also use it for meetings and other uses. It is a very useable building, I'm glad that we have it. For your information, I am recording this meeting and I hope everyone is okay with that. I have an MP3 player to record the meeting and the reason being is that several parishioners have called me the past several days I said that they could not be here tonight. Therefore I have a stenographer who is going to transcribe this recording and then I am going to post it on our parish website. So if anyone wants to know what was discussed it will be available in detail online and if you want to download a copy of it and then take a look at it at your convenience you may do so.

Let me begin with some introductions. We are honored to have some guests this evening. I think most of you know one of the Sisters, Sister Mary Joseph, who is the principal of St. Joseph Grade School. Many of your children go to St. Joseph School and Sister Mary Joseph is very accommodating in making sure that the students from St. Michael's receive a quality education at St. Joseph. The other Sister is Sister Mary Michael and she currently is the Vocation Director for the School Sisters of Christ the King. She also works in the area of development for the Newman Center, the student parish on the UNL campus. Sister Mary Michael was the longtime principal of St. Peter's Grade School. Some of you remember her from that. Several years ago I contacted the School Sisters of Christ the King. They are a diocesan order started by our former Bishop, Bishop Flavin about 30-35 years ago and their primary Apostolate is teaching in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lincoln. Their Motherhouse is on SW 56<sup>th</sup> St. on the way to Denton, west of Lincoln. Anyway, when I went to the School Sisters of Christ the King, I initially asked them if there would be any possibility that they might be able to staff, in part, St. Michael Catholic School. I had a very good meeting with Mother Joan Paul and her council and at the time they said that, just simply because of personnel numbers, that they are unable to commit at this time to staffing St. Michael School. Mother Joan Paul did say that she would assign Sister Mary Michael as a consultant to help me and the parish plan St. Michael School. Sister Mary Michael and Sister Mary Joseph both have an incredible amount of experience when it comes to education and particularly Catholic schools and I am very glad to have them."

"Tonight, what I'd like to do is go over with you what is outlined in this agenda. There is one main issue that if we can get it resolved tonight, that I think everything else will fall into place and that is how are we going to start St. Michael School? If you would be open to it, please, would you be willing to hold your questions until the end of the meeting? I think I might be able to

anticipate some of your questions and there is a lot in the agenda for which I would like to go through and arrive at certain conclusions at the end of the meeting. First of all, the outline of the meeting has a number of points. I'd like to go through the demographic numbers of our school children, the results of the 2008 survey that was sent out to all church families in December 2008, just about a year ago, the results of that survey and some of the issues that are going to be involved in the opening of St. Michael School. I think that numbers are really going to drive a lot of our discussion tonight and for the next year and a half. I went to our parish database and I queried the number of children who are currently newborns up to 4 years of age and then those who are now currently enrolled in this academic year 2009, all of our parish children and then I broke the numbers out - Catholic school children and public school children. You will see that we have 24 newborns in the calendar year of 2009 two more scheduled to be baptized and I know there are six in the pipeline (laughter), who have yet to be born and there may be some others who are being planned. So we have 24 children in this academic year alone and then you can see those who are one and younger, two, three, four; these are the total number of children that we have registered in our database. Now let's take a look at those children and I have them listed in the left column; those in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade in this academic year and then I pulled those same children out two academic years to see how many we would have in the academic year of 2011-2012 and then I broke those numbers down by Catholic schools and public schools. If you add up the number of newborns to the age of four, that is 162 children. If you take then, kindergartners through 8<sup>th</sup> grade in this academic year that is an additional 320. Then what I did was broke out numbers for Catholic schools and public schools and I then pulled those numbers over for those that would be up to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, because we're dealing with our grade school, in the fall of 2011. Those currently in Catholic schools, kindergartners through 6<sup>th</sup> grade number 105, those in public schools 146, that is up to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. There are more that are currently in the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In December of 2008, I sent out a survey when we were initially looking at some of the issues that were going to be involved in opening a Catholic grade school. That survey is available in its entirety on our parish website under tab 'new school'.

"I had a couple of individuals who worked for Gallup Organization help me formulate the questionnaire, and I asked, "what would your children be in that academic year? What would you like to see in the Catholic school?" If any of you are interested I have a few hard copies here. If you are interested maybe would you be willing to share them. So anyway, what it came down to was we had originally looked at starting the school K-4 and add a grade every year. There were a couple of reasons for us to do that. We thought financially it would be far easier to manage. Secondly, when you're trying to establish a new school identity, those involved in Catholic education said, "maybe it's not best

to fill your upper grades from other schools because they might come with an attitude if they're forced to go to a new school", and there are other issues that were involved. So anyway, I sent the survey out under the presumption that we would start K-4 and a grade every year. We got back more than 100 results. I sent the survey not only to Catholic school parents but everybody. The reason being, that I think that the support of the Catholic school is the work of an entire parish. So I wanted everyone in the parish to have an opportunity to have feedback. We got some great results back and I collated the results exactly as I got them. Now, one of the things that a number of parishioners did on their surveys was, that they wrote on the end of the survey that they wished that we would open all eight grades at once because they would have kids between two schools, split schedules, and other considerations. So I thought, well okay, since there were enough people who on their own initiative asked that so I went back to the parish finance committee and we ran the numbers and took numbers from North American Martyrs, St. Joseph and St. Peters schools. We took their operational pro formas, their profit/loss statements from their most recently completed fiscal year. We averaged numbers from the three and we used that as a starting point for discussion. We then pulled our numbers from our income and disbursement (profit/loss) and then we calculated, Kurt, was it 3% or 5% on income and disbursements? Kurt is on the parish finance committee. So anyway, we ran the numbers and we believe that beginning in 2011 we could run our own K-8 school on what we currently pay other schools to educate our children."

"I think you know - I have mentioned this a number of times - the arrangement we have with five other Catholic grade schools in Lincoln is that the parents are asked to choose the Catholic school that they want for their child and for the parents to pay the fee and the tuition that that school asks and then we as the parish collectively pay part of the remaining educational costs per child. For children at St. Joseph School for example, we as a parish pay \$3,100 per child per year for that remaining educational cost. The amount of money that the parish has laid out has increased significantly in the five years that I have been here. When I first came here in 2005, the parish paid \$44,000 to five other schools to educate parish children in Catholic schools. This fiscal year the parish is paying \$430,000. That is how much it has increased. So we went back over the parish's profit/loss and we ran the numbers and we believe we can make this work.

If you remember the results of that 2008 survey were in the bulletin in early 2009. I also mailed a hard copy to all families. As soon as the results got into the hands of parishioners I started to get phone calls, "Father, my son will be an 8<sup>th</sup> grader in the fall of 2011 and he will find it incredibly difficult to make the transition to a new school. Can we have an exemption?" So Monsignor Barr (pastor of Saint Joseph parish) and I got together and we took a look at

the number of Saint Michael children who would seventh and eighth graders at Saint Joseph School in the 2011-2012 and the 2012-2013 school years. You will see at the bottom of the first page of your agenda those numbers. I wanted to consult with Monsignor Barr because he has been in Catholic schools for a long time and when it comes to education and being an administrator, he has a lot of years of experience. He and I both recognized, for a number of reasons, it can be difficult for a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grader to leave what is familiar and go to a new environment. So the two of us worked together to draft a transition letter and here is what the letter originally was going to say. We were going to send out, to those parents who have 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the academic year, fall of 2011 - we were going to say that if you want to leave your child in the schools where they would be 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, that we would be open to doing that and we'll somehow work out the financial arrangement between St. Michael and St. Joseph parishes. Then I came to our parish council and I said, "what do you think of this letter?" A couple of council members said, "what if you only get two or three kids who make the transition to St. Michael School, how can you justify hiring a teacher for two or three kids?" Most of the families wanted an exemption for at least 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. One thing I don't want to do is combine grades. I don't think that is a good educational approach. So Monsignor Barr and I thought, and this is one purpose of this meeting, is that if the parents of children currently in Catholic schools now would be willing to leave those children who will be in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the schools where they are now that we will work out the financial arrangements between the parishes. Therefore we would like all the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, to stay in those schools because then Saint Michael School would not have to hire, that first year, a 7<sup>th</sup> and an 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and second year we would not have to hire an 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. We would open grades K-6 and then add 7<sup>th</sup> grade the next year and 8<sup>th</sup> the following year. Now, for those who say, "yes, but I still might have kids in two schools, how can we make that work?" Sister Mary Michael and I have talked about that. One of the things that we would be very open to splitting our schedule, that is the opening and closing times at St. Michael; probably at least 15 minutes early so that parents could drop off children at St. Joseph or St. Peter School and then get to St. Michael School. We would also seriously entertain an extended hours program so that we could accommodate children in those grades. Now, that being the case, if we can get everybody to be in an agreement and say, "okay, I am going for the first two years to leave my 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grader in the academic year of 2011-2012 in the school where they are now," then we would look at opening a school in the fall of 2011 grades K-6. Now, some people might say, "I have a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grader that just can't make that transition, are we going to be forced to go to St. Michael School?" The answer is no. If you so choose to leave your child at either St. Peter or St. Joseph School you can do so but with the understanding that you will have to pay the entire educational cost for that child which is going to be at least \$4,500 per year. If this is what we agree to then we cannot have any

exemptions because if I make an exemption for one person the whole thing falls apart. We have to somewhat draw a line in the sand so to speak, but we have to say this where we start. We cannot be paying to operate our own school and then be paying financial support to another school. We will not be able to make it financially work. Is that going to be a difficult situation maybe for some families? Yes, but I think that is the only workable plan to make this work.”

“Let’s go to the back side of the agenda to number five, the projected 2011-2012 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who are currently in Catholic schools. These are the children who are now in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades in other schools. There are 13 in each grade who would be in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the fall of 2011. Now some of the other things I talked about, number six on the agenda, if you would be willing to leave your children in those schools, we will arrange parish financial support for those two years to make that arrangement work. We would then make accommodations under number seven - start and dismissal times and an afterhours program and if push comes to shove that parents want their child in Catholic school - the understanding would be that they would have to pay the entire educational cost per child. Let me stop right there and focus on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade proposal for now. Are there any questions?”

**(Audience Member)**

I filled out the survey under the assumption that the school was going to open grades K-4. Why was a middle school concept not considered?

**(Father)**

“Well the result was because of the number of people who... first of all we don’t have a middle school program in the Catholic school system in the city of Lincoln and the number of people who came back and said that we would like to have all of our kids under the same roof every day, so can we open K-8 all at once and it was those who wanted an exemption, that resulted in us looking at the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. It was our conclusion that you have to draw a line somewhere and we figure K-6 would be splitting the difference between K-4 or K-8 and it was just a conclusion that we have outlined.”

**(Audience Member)**

“I have a question about the teacher’s teaching duties”

**(Father)**

“Yes?”

1097640.1

**(Audience Member)**

“And that is, are we going to have a teacher for each room or are we going to have similar to what they have at St. Joseph where you have someone that teaches maybe a couple subjects?”

**(Father)**

“Can you hold that question until we get to the next section? We are just getting ready to address that.”

**(Audience Member)**

“Yes, sorry!”

**(Audience member)**

What if parents only wanted to send their children to Catholic school up to middle school?

**(Father)**

“I guess that would go back to the family on how committed they are to Catholic schools.”

**(Audience Member)**

“Would the children of Saint Michael School have the same holidays or days off as St. Joseph or St. Peter Schools so we could, you know....”

**(Father)**

“The diocese plans in terms of holidays, the schedule is set in advance.”

**(Father)**

“And that’s one of the things I will sit down, largely with St. Peter and St. Joseph School, and discuss, because the majority of our children are in those two schools and we would do everything we could to parallel with them until we get our own identity up and running completely by ourselves. We would do everything we could to match what they do for that consideration.”

**(Audience Member)**

1097640.1

What if you cannot get the schedules to match?

**(Father)**

“The only thing is what we are trying to do is consider all of those things. There are certain things too that are beyond our control, and we are trying to do, in terms of accommodations on schedules and start times and things like that, we are trying to do everything we can to minimize those things that are difficult.”

**(Audience Member)**

“In the survey that was originally sent out as you said it was set up that it was going to be K-4. So I responded accordingly since it was going to be K-4 which would not affect my child who is still going to be in grade school at this time. Then because you heard people saying that they prefer K-8 and I understand why you want to bring that topic up but to me you missed a step because I would have answered very differently about how I felt about the opening and timing of the school had I known the child we had was going to be affected by how many grades were being opened I guess so it was like, I am not sure you have 100% accuracy ....”

**(Father)**

“Oh we don’t, it’s not to scientific or 100% accurate by any means.”

**(Audience Member)**

*In audible*

**(Father)**

“No, I didn’t go back and I didn’t run the numbers in terms of actual numbers and percentages and things like that but I did ask the question ‘would you consider moving a child from a public school to a Catholic school?’ There are actually a number of questions regarding that.”

“Other questions?”

Let me ask you this, are most of you largely agreed that it could be a workable approach to opening St. Michael’s Catholic School, K-6 and those who would have a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grader in those academic years that if we could get them to

stay in the Catholic schools where they are, we will continue the financial arrangement for those two years? Is that largely agreed?

Okay we will consider that; we are going to fine tune that but we will consider that to be the conclusion of the survey. Sister, would you be willing to talk about teachers, about benefits and Benedictine College and a few other things?”

**(Sister)**

“Hiring of staff is probably the most important thing that will happen as we plan to open. Because Catholic education between the teachers and the children is crucial and so hiring will not be something that will be taken lightly. Father and I have spoken extensively about the way we can build a faculty that will help achieve the mission statement and to achieve the ideals of the church in the most respective way. We would like to have the experience and wisdom of teachers with experience and the energy of young new teachers. How do you bring that together? Father Borowiak has said, let’s get some of the best and the brightest from some of our current Catholic educational systems and let’s work at getting some of the best and the brightest in recruiting and through a series of meetings and discussions and on campus visits we like do about three things in our hiring process.

First of all, everything would be an open process. There will be no people that are directly hired. Positions will be open to the public at large, to a recruitment program for the best and the brightest and also to teachers who will be submitting applications or teachers who choose to come to our school from St. Peter, St. Joseph or other Catholic schools.

Let’s go back to the best and the brightest and the dynamics in the Catholic education system. Any graduates from Benedictine College here? The place is on fire with the faith. It has a very strong education department. Our Sisters have recently been going to school there. They have a great education plus the sacraments of life in the church. On campus, the small Catholic campus the students have options for Mass at 8:30 in the morning, noon, 5:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. The 5:30 and 9:00 p.m. have the most. I think one of those has a 100 students and the other has about 50 at the Montessori. The noon Mass is a little less with about 20-25 students there, the parish Mass is 8:30 in the morning, with the least amount of students but there a few there. Father and I have already had a mission meeting down there; we’re looking at hiring, this spring, juniors at the end of their junior year. How do get in and get the best and the brightest? You take them at the end of their junior year and find those people who are excited about who wants to come teach in the diocese. We have a lot of young people from Lincoln who are going on to Benedictine so the reputation of Lincoln down on that campus is phenomenal. They love Lincoln down there, some of them are from Lincoln, a lot of them know Lincolnites,

some of them are very excited about the process. We also don't want to miss anyone else so a few young people who know that the school is happening tell more students up here at UN-L and other schools. We have a parallel system here in Lincoln to look at the young people who are at Doane and a few of the other schools, to give those people a shot at those spots also. We are also looking at putting new teachers in every other grade. We are not committing to a particular number from Benedict, but no more than every other class and we would like to look at some of the young people who are in other schools and we will team them with an experienced teacher in the even grades, a mentor type set up so that we can have the beauty of the experience with the veteran teacher and the new teacher.

We've done a process and it is exciting when I think back to my years at St. Peter's when we were building. When I came on there, St. Peter's was K-5 and there was 123 students in the school. When I left 8 yrs later there were 583 students in the school. So that was a huge, quick expansion. It is there also and with the young teachers that we had, between having children of their own and expansion. One year at St. Peter's we hired seven new teachers and so hiring is not something that is new. Probably the most important thing we will do is hiring qualified staff."

**(Father)**

"There's also an issue at St. Joseph. I think that most of you are aware of this - that as we vacate St. Joseph School they are likely going to have to let some teachers go. So that is one thing that we're going to be looking at. If there are veterans of the Catholic school system who would like to transition over to ours we would be willing to consider them."

**(Sister)**

"You know on the other hand there might be a lot of teachers who want to come over and so we may have to just choose. Opening a new school is exciting. Some people want to stay away from a new school because it is new. I was speaking to a few of you earlier, is there anybody here who graduated from those opening years at St. Peter's? They are old enough to have kids. I know we have few of them out there. A couple of our Sisters were 8<sup>th</sup> graders when they opened North American Martyrs and they shifted schools as 8<sup>th</sup> graders and had no problems and were very pleased to be part of a new school."

**(Father)**

"One of the things about the survey - the feedback that I got on it, I was a little bit surprised about and I didn't quite understand, was the concern of

respondents wanting quality teachers. By and large, I think that the experience in the Catholic schools in Lincoln now is that they are going to be great. One of the things I think that I have said regarding the school, one of the things that I want to strive for is excellence, in every way, shape and form. Academics, the faith, every area of a person's life, strive for excellence. You had a question about taking the 'home room' approach, the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Sister, how would we envision that?

**(Sister)**

"I think home room, yet, having teachers with specialty areas is a beautiful way to help them feel like they belong somewhere yet to give them that variety. As well as to get teachers who have areas of expertise and can do a really good job of teaching the subject matter. For example, science and math, those go together. You don't get three, depending on our number three or four academic areas. We have found as you mix kids in junior high the more different mixes you can come up with the better they are. So don't put them in, you know all the kids that go to science together, you have to match something, these kids are going to science together but then if you can mix it another way when they go to English and literature or whatever the case may be. The more mixes you can put them in the better off they are, generally. We plan to mix them around but yet to give them a place where there is a home room where they can put their things and can feel like they've got a place. You know there is really something to that, feeling like they have got a place. I remember years ago when I was a brand new teacher down at St. Mary's, we had some size issues in classrooms so we were going to have to leave the kids in the same room all day long and I thought, 'they're going to hate this, they have to stay in the same room all day long.' So I got ready to build my argument up and presented it to them at the end they said, 'that's great!' I said, 'that's great?' They said, 'yeah, because you know that nobody's going to be sitting in my desk. This is my desk and I can leave my stuff and nobody's going to be messing with it and I won't forget to take my stuff with me when I switch classes cause the teacher is coming to me.' So they like their space."

**(Father)**

"Some of the specialty classes will be art and music. The Sisters and I agree that we would like to have this as much as an open process as possible. I tell you what, those of you who knows Mrs. Tomek, who leads the music, she can get those kids to sing and she is a retired music teacher from both St. Joseph and the Cathedral Grade School and if we could work her in as an example, whether it's in the church or whatever (lots of talking and laughing *in audible*).

**(Audience Member)**

1097640.1

“I know this all knew but have you guys discussed having an advanced learning program like the Quest Program at St. Joseph so some of the higher learners can eventually have that at St. Michael?”

**(Sister)**

“We would hope that every student would strive to excel. We may not be able to open with as fully developed of a program. The bigger our school gets the more opportunities we’ll have to incorporate such things. Catholic education, especially on this end of town should use an accelerated program from day one, okay, but we would hope to challenge all.”

**(Audience Member)**

“I know St. Joseph’s uses paras. Is that something being considered? My part two question is: as the school develops and gets larger will there be a maximum from a class size for students?”

**(Sister)**

“St. Peter’s uses their paras more so than St. Joseph’s but I think they have got one para for every pair of grades over at St. Peter’s and that’s largely a financial issue. We hope to incorporate some. There is so much benefit to having a little bit of help for your teachers in the classroom so we hope to incorporate them to some level; to exactly what level is yet to be determined. Your second question?”

**(Audience Member)**

“As the school grows over time will there be a maximum number of students at a grade level?”

**(Sister)**

“To close a class is a very difficult decision to make and as a matter of fact, to close a class you have to have the permission of the diocesan superintendent of schools. This is why places like St. Joseph’s rather than....typically they will not let us close a class with less than 30 students. Rather than go up to that 30, St. Joseph has added a third section. St. Peter’s does not have that luxury because classrooms space isn’t there so they’ve had \_\_\_\_\_, instead of 30 kids in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and in Kindergarten they have three sections of 20 which they have permission to do that. Then 1<sup>st</sup> grade 25, 25 and 10 in the combination grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, you know maybe that is large. Now would we

close a class before 30? We would not be allowed to do so without permission of the superintendent of schools. so that the teachers can \_\_\_\_\_, you know, we've got a lot of space so opening a third section now... we don't want classrooms to get larger than they need to but in a excellent Catholic school environment you can make a good educational environment with more than 20 kids. It can be done. You have to have discipline in your planning very much in place but some of those issues are out of our hands."

"I remember being at St. Peter's one day and I went in and there were a few classes that they closed at 25. Fr. Perkinton said, 'no you may not close that class at 25, you either have got to add a PARA and find a way.' To turn a child who wants to go to Catholic school away is an issue that we want to avoid at any cost."

**(Father)**

"There are a couple other issues that have mixed in here, right now we are trying to raise a huge amount of money. I have an excellent couple of school districts to the south that many of the patrons of that school district say they want a church in the worst way. They don't want a Catholic school. That may affect our fund-raising when we get south of Lincoln. To open up the school K-6 is going to be very tight right now. We are not going to have a lot of those youngsters at the beginning. People have asked me what will the tuition be? At this point I don't know. Can we keep everything as affordable as it is now? That's where a lot of Catholics in the city of Lincoln don't know how good they've got it. St. Joseph School tuition is \$535 per child per year, with a smart board in every room, good facilities, etc. If you go out to a movie and a meal once a month you'll spend more on that in a year than you will your child's Catholic school education. One of the things I wrestle with right now are a fair number of our parishioners who are enjoying a Catholic school education are not giving a dime of church support to St. Michael's so the rest of us have to pick up the cost. That is one of the things we need to talk about as we continue this process. I hope to make the remaining 18 months of planning a very consultative process. One of the things that we are really going to need to take a serious look at is the paradigm by which Catholic schools are funded. Everybody has got to come on board and do their parts. Everybody can do something. So to have a lot of those extras, we may not be able to afford them right off the bat. It takes a huge amount as I mentioned, a huge amount, to run a school. In five years time, as a parish we spent \$44,430 a year for our parish in Catholic schools in 2005. Now there a some months recently that we are paying St. Joseph's School \$25,000 per month and that is one of five schools that we have children in. We pay to Pius as well. I am really going to need to encourage everybody to really step up and help and do their part. If we

could possibly keep it \$535 per child we would, but it will take everyone's effort. There was a couple that moved here recently from Washington D.C. and the father said, 'I'd like to have my children in Catholic school.' I said, 'I think St. Joseph's has room for them.' He said, 'what is the tuition?' I said, '\$535 per child.' He said, 'That is per month?' I said no for the entire year. You know what he paid in D.C.? \$10,000 per child per year."

"I got some viewpoints regarding school funding as a pastor because it is not fair for other parishioners to pay for other people's children's education when everyone can step up and do something. I'd really like to take a serious look at that paradigm and maybe look at some other type of funding. I want to meet with every family before we open the school and take a look at funding of the public and Catholic schools on these issues. Catholic schools yield nothing to public schools. Catholic schools in the city of Lincoln have things that public schools don't and we have excellent public schools – excellent. Norris for example, is a public school but they don't have a smart board in every classroom and they don't have computers in every room. We, I think, we have a good deal going. Yes?"

**(Audience Member)**

*in audible*

**(Father)**

"Can you hold that for a second? (*Inaudible talking*) Tonight, we are going to have early enrollment for the opening of St. Michael School in the fall of 2011 and this registration period will go all the way through the end of November. The registration fee is \$50 per student, per family and that is to allow us to save a place for your children and also to gather needed money for start up costs. After November it will be \$100 per student. We're also looking at the possibility of having a registration form online so that you can register online. A couple of things yet on the agenda....number 10. A couple of families met with Sister and I to draft a very preliminary school mission statement and this is a starting point. 'The St. Michael's Catholic School family is a Christ centered community dedicated to the spiritual formation of youth, academic excellence and stewardship within the framework of the Gospel and tradition of the Catholic church.' Your ideas? What do you think? Would you add anything? Would you change anything? Is it at least a good starting point for discussion?"

"Okay, we are looking to incorporate our school at our earliest convenience because many grant applications and corporate matching gifts require that a school have its identity and Mark Steuven and his wife, Erin are heading up

some grant applications, quite a few of them actually, and we did get a corporate matching gift this last week for the school. Also, we are working with Lincoln Public Schools and Norris because I think that those two school systems have a lot to offer in excellence and education so if we can share resources and work on issues of mutual interest we will work with them because they both have excellent schools. I've had the question regarding all of those who are members of our parish who are going to St. Joseph parish or St. Peter's - will they be made to come and enroll at St. Michael's School? Before I came here it was a common practice between Monsignor Dawson and Monsignor Pleskac then the pastor of St. Joseph - that if a parishioner wanted to stay at St. Joseph parish they could. Monsignor Dawson would write them a letter and give them permission to do so. A number of families who go to Saint Joseph actually belong to Saint Michael parish. When I said to them, 'you know you really belong to St. Michael's parish, out comes the letter and they say, 'oh no, we got a letter to stay at St. Joseph's.' It has tied my hands on a number of issues. Also, in our recent door to door survey the Marian Sisters found no less than 50 families in our parish who are going to St. Joseph's and no less than 50 families who are going to St. Peter's and some going to the Cathedral who told the Sisters in no uncertain terms they're not changing parishes. So, I have had families who have said, 'We'd sure like to be in your new school but we will wait until it gets built.' (*laughing*) That's not fair to the rest of St. Michael's parishioners and I don't know how to deal with that yet; we're going to have to deal with that somehow. I cannot force people to go somewhere that they don't want to."

"Okay, a couple of other things. That second handout - we have had a business couple in Lincoln who are not members of our parish, offer us the technology for St. Michael's School as a free gift, no strings attached. I sat down with two members of that corporation Thursday, along with our architect and these are the items that our school is going get and this is worth at least \$200,000 in technology. A desktop computer and laptop for every teacher, computers, they are going to set up a computer lab, media/library, they're going to create a multi-media center, provide all of the cabling, file server, main data, centralized servers, the students ID, etc. We're probably going to have a security system in which we will have cards that they will swipe or we will have ID cards, those will be provided. A smart board in every classroom and that's going to be the advantage of having the best and the brightest in teachers who hopefully will not use SmartBoards as a glorified overhead but can use it in terms of the interconnectivity of the Internet. Also, that same couple who asked to remain anonymous, has offered St. Michael's Parish, a matching gift that if we can match it, they'd like to have it set aside for the first five years of teachers salaries. Their offer is \$300,000 in addition to the technology offer of \$200,000.00. So, we're going to accept this in one of two ways. I am either going to try to carve \$300,000 out of the capital campaign and that is the

easiest way to do it, or simply rely on the generosity of all parish families to try to meet that \$300,000 match. \$300,000 plus \$300,000 is \$600,000 divided into the first five years of operations is a \$120,000 a year for teachers' salaries. That is a huge shot in the arm – huge. I don't want to miss this opportunity. What I want to do is consult and collaborate with you and find out what's the best way to go about matching this. Their total is, yes, is over a half of million dollars. I wrote them a thank you letter and told them that we accept their proposal and we will do everything in our power to match that \$300,000"

"At this point, do any of you have any questions? Yes?"

**(Audience Member)**

Will we have nuns to staff our school?

**(Father)**

"I wrote letters to at least 50 orders of women religious asking them to staff St. Michael School. They all told me, politely of course, no. *(laughing)* At this point none of them are even responding to a second letter from me. I sent the School Sisters of Christ the King a letter more than a year ago. At this point cannot make a commitment. The principal is going to be key. We are very likely going to have a lay principal, we do have a couple people in mind. We would probably have to bring a principal on board, maybe around the summer of 2010. I was working at home on the responsibilities of a principal and my mom said what are you doing? I had about 10 yellow legal pages just writing down what I believe needs to be done in terms of curriculum planning, etc. So at this point we are going to take a look at a hiring process, probably at our earliest convenience and try to get the principal first, the principal is key.

**(Audience Member)**

How long do you envision the planning of the school to take?

**(Father)**

"At least one academic year, a minimum of 12 months in advance of opening. Because, I think, I would like to keep this a collaborative process with the parents. Now, I am not going to get you here every week for a meeting but when it comes to the major issues like curriculum, the daily order... I've got something in mind for the daily order and I'd like to make this an incredibly Catholic school. I would like when possible, to welcome the kids when they come to school every day, celebrate daily Mass, have prayers in the classrooms, before school begins. I'd like to teach them the Angelus before every meal.

When they finish with lunch and recess, I'd like to get them into the commons area, and as a means of quieting them down I'd like them to pray the rosary everyday and then at the end of the day at the 3 o'clock hour I'd like them to pray to the Divine Chaplet, I'd like to give them the final announcements for the day and then dismiss. I've had some feedback on that and some people think it is a little too Catholic (*laughing*) If you get those kids on board and make it a nurturing, loving, authentic Catholic environment, they will love it. But anyway, there are a lot of those issues, the daily order, scheduling, parents' website, all of that has to be and I hope that...the construction manager is saying that we should get construction done in 12 months easy and then to have at least the summer to get the bugs worked out. A couple of other things, if I could throw this out? I might ask your ideas and your input if you might be open to helping a little bit extra being on the ground floor of the school... I am going to ask a lot, helping get everything set up, classrooms and things like that. Yes?"

**(Audience Member)**

*in audible*

**(Sister)**

*in audible, lots of people talking*

**(Father)**

"You know I contacted the Nashville Dominicans, they have a lot of vocations. The mother superior told me, that for every nun they have, that she gets a minimum of a thousand requests for her every year. She said to me, 'I have Bishops and Cardinals asking ahead of you (*lots of talking and laughing*). We will keep asking."

**(Audience Member)**

*in audible*

**(Father)**

"At this point what I am trying to do is actually, the overall plans are daycare all the way through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Daycare wasn't on my radar screen at first and someone said most families are two income families as most of you are. Some families came to me and said, 'we'd like to have, if we have a choice, to have all of our children under the same secure Christian roof during the day.' That makes a lot of sense. There is a lot of needs that are particular for a daycare and the same with a preschool in terms of requirements and standards. At

this point we're looking at a pre-school in a subsequent phase. I don't know what that phase will be. I have gotten a lot of people who want that church the second phase but what if what if the housing market turns around and housing starts begin to take off - how am I going to balance that? I don't know? Daycare will be a subsequent phase but we're looking at ultimately having the potential for two sections at pre-school, two sections of every grade and a daycare. My idea? I would probably not open enrollment for a daycare beyond our own parishioners because then you defeat the purpose, it's for our parishioners and part of our educational system. That's about the best answer I got. I don't know for sure. Sister?"

**(Sister)**

"You've got some excellent young active mom's who are teachers and that daycare could be an ace in the hole for St. Michael's if we could get them to come on board because we could provide care for their little ones."

**(Sister)**

"The parents here tonight, we build this school in a hurry, we push the second section of every grade - that's what happened to St. Peter's and so they ended up building a preschool and daycare a lot earlier. A lot of that is going to be numbers here I think and financial."

**(Father)**

"We have a line of credit from the Diocese and that is \$4.5 million at 4.5% interest and we can't borrow anymore, we're going to really have to pare back square footage and I think that we're going to be able to value engineer that \$8.5 million. The first phase is for the entire infrastructure for the entire parish plan. There's a lot of things that we're working on everyday - everyday we are working these numbers so there are both demographic numbers and financial numbers and then it goes back to how large can the classrooms get? It's like juggling five balls at one time trying to work all those things out trying to make it work. Yes?"

**(Audience Member)**

Do you see the extended hours program to be separate from a daycare?

**(Father)**

“Yes, the extended hours program would be separate from daycare and I know how that works because my sister runs the extended hours program at St. Patrick’s in Havelock. She teaches 4<sup>th</sup> grade there and most of their families are two income families. I see extended hours being at least to 5:30-6 p.m. An extended hours program would have to be a self standing program too.”

**(Sister)**

“One of the things we’re toying with is whether to go with an earlier start or later start. Okay, St. Joseph’s bell rings about 8:05 a.m. so we’re either looking at 7:50 or 8:20 potentially. You are the people who would be delivering your children, *(lots of talking)* If someone has children in three schools it makes sense to look at the earlier time but I would like to hear what you all have to say. Does anyone need any more time to think?”

**(Audience Member)**

“Well for me, I have to be at work at 8:00 or shortly before and there are times you can’t drop them off at 7:30 and still get to work so....” *(talking and laughing)*

**(Sister)**

“Well, if we have a 7:50 start, 7:30 would not be a problem at all. If we had an 8:20 start then there’s going to be a problem.”

**(Father)**

“Let’s just try to get as many people together and see what works out for the majority of the people because I think the state requires so much amount of time, instructional time, is that correct? How we tailor those schedules, if we can get most everybody on board, if it works for most everybody we’ll make it work.”

**(Sister)**

“How many people would go for before 8 a.m.?”

**(Father)**

“Before 8 a.m. drop off?”

**(Sister)**

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“Okay and how many people... 8:20 ish?”

**(Audience Member)**

“What about 8 a.m. or a little bit after?”

**(Father)**

“If we had a designated location, they could come in, in a before school program? Yes, at this point, we’re still like a year and half out, however, I think that gives us plenty of time to work those details out... I went to Catholic grade school in York. The school opened at 8 a.m. and the doors didn’t open before, so we went to church, my dad sat us in the back pew of the church and said, ‘you’re going to sit there and you’re going to be quiet until Mass starts’ and we did it for 8 years. *(laughing)* Any other questions? I believe that all of those of you who would like to enroll your child, I believe this is pretty straight forward. Would you fill this out? One for every child.”

**(Sister)**

“One for every family.”

**(Father)**

“One for every family.”

**(Sister)**

“Put the first three children on the front, if you have more than that put them on the back.”

**(Father)**

“If you have more than three children put them on the back. If you have any questions would you be available... okay? Any other questions?”

**(Audience Member)**

*in audible*

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**(Father)**

“Yes, I have written letters to over 50 orders, no and the thing of it is I want is women religious with habits and I want religious orders who are faithful to the Catholic church.

**(Audience Member)**

*in audible*

**(Father)**

“Yes?”

**(Audience Member)**

Will we have school uniforms?

**(Father)**

“At this point I think a uniform is a given. It eliminates a lot of problems, a lot of problems and we can work the details to that out.

*(lots of talking)*

**(Father)**

“Any other questions, comments? I tell you what, I am very appreciative of your time and your input. Again as we continue to develop issues, I would like to get you back on a somewhat regular basis and try to keep this as consultative and collaborative as possible. Anytime you have a question, an idea, or feedback feel free to contact me. Should we close with a prayer?”

**(Sister)**

“Before that... I have never worked with a pastor that has been as collaborative and as exhaustive as Father has been*(laughing and talking)* and the other thing that I see is that you use your gifts that you have and thank him. He has many experts in every area that he is consulting with on the school. We have a beautiful example of a pastor using the gifts of his people and looking out for the goodness of his people so support him in this. I am beginning to realize the

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phenomenal amount of work that falls on the shoulders of a pastor building a parish. So please pray for your priest! It's a phenomenal amount of work and I have said that a couple of times but you get the idea. So pray for Father and support him in every way you can. It's a beautiful thing that in the year of the priest and this planning process are working together, so give Father your prayers and your support in every way you can."

**(Father)**

"One of the ways we are blessed in this parish is having a competent parish. When you look at the disciplines and the professions and occupations and the willingness of people to step forward we are fortunate. Any of you who were here last Tuesday night for the kick off of the special phase, this place was packed, you couldn't get another chair in here. I think that speaks volumes about collaboration and consultation. It takes a little extra time but you usually end up with the best result. As many ideas as we discussed here tonight it shows you bring a lot of different ideas to the table."

*(Prayer)*