

MINUTES

PLANNING MEETING FOR ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL

OCTOBER 14, 2008

Sister Michael Mary and Father Borowiak met Oct. 14 to discuss the planning of Saint Michael School. Father Borowiak presented an outline of topics which might be part of the planning of Saint Michael School. He said they were in no necessary order and were just a starting point. He emphasized that he wanted to look at all elements of a Catholic elementary education.

Father and Sister talked about the technology that could be used in Saint Michael School.

Father said an offer has been made by an anonymous donor to provide technology for Saint Michael School which would include a Smart Board in every classroom, a computer for every teacher, a computer classroom and computer server, the phone system and the security system for the entire school. The donor told Father Borowiak he will back up his pledge with forward funding for the abovementioned items.

Father and Sister also talked about the School Sisters of Christ the King commitment to staff a future Saint Michael School. Sister Michael Mary said at this time the School Sisters cannot make a commitment to staff St. Michael School. Father Borowiak said he evidently misunderstood the Sisters' commitment. After following up with Mother Joan Paul, superior of the School Sisters, Father Borowiak said he will begin looking for another order of teaching sisters.

Father Borowiak and Sister Mary Michael then talked extensively about the approach to opening a school.

There are two options:

1. Open all eight grades at once
2. Open several primary grades at first and add the next grade each successive year.

The discussion on these two options focused on the pros and cons of each option. The pros and cons for opening all eight grades are:

PROS

1. The entire school would be opened at once, in one location and parish students would be under one roof and parish finances would be directed to one school operating budget rather than five.
2. Students from the same families would not be split up between more than one Catholic school.

CONS

1. A school "identity" is best established with younger students
2. If older students in upper grades are forced to leave other schools and friends they may come to St. Michael School with an attitude and make it more difficult to establish an identity at St. Michael.

3. Older students from other schools might find it difficult to adapt to a new daily regimen at St. Michael. They might try to tell teachers and staff, “we did it this way at such and such a school,” or “I don’t like doing it this way.”
4. An entire staff and faculty would need to be hired at once, possibly creating an operating budget that could be difficult to meet with the current number of parish families.

Much discussion followed about this option. Sister Mary Michael strongly encouraged that discussion at this point include Saint Michael School opening with grades K – 4. Sister Mary Michael said it is much easier to work with younger students in creating a school personality and establishing a daily order. Sister said older students, especially those forced to leave other schools and friends can be difficult to shape and mold.

In addition, opening grades K – 4 would allow the school to work out any “bugs” in the system and improve in any areas.

Another advantage of beginning with grades K – 4. would be a more manageable operating budget. The parish would continue to grow as each successive grade is added. The number of parish families added each year would make it easier to meet an increasing school operating budget.

It appears that the advantages of opening a school, grades K -4 appear to outweigh opening all eight grades at once. Therefore, the planning process, at least for the time being, will work on the assumption that Saint Michael School will open grades K – 4. This however does not rule out changes in this approach, i.e. more grades may be opened at once. The next grades will open each successive year until all eight grades are in place so that a fourth grader who enters Saint Michael School will be able to graduate from Saint Michael in the eighth grade. Sister Mary Michael said it is important to establish all eight grades of a school first. After all grades of the school are established, Sister said preschool and daycare could be added. Both pre-school and daycare are currently planned in phase two of the parish’s building project.

There seem to be two difficulties in opening Saint Michael School, grades K – 4. They are:

1. Some families would have children in two schools – some at Saint Michael and some at another Catholic school or public school. Father Borowiak said he is of the opinion that if families, not wanting to split up children between schools, opt not to send children to Saint Michael but another Catholic school, that the parish would not financially support the educational cost of a child going to another Catholic school. However, he did not think having children of the same family in two schools would be an insurmountable problem for parents. He thought transportation might be arranged or some other idea put forward that could address this situation.
2. The second difficulty would be finances. While providing the operating budget for a St. Michael K – 4 school – Saint Michael parents and parishioners would be also be paying the educational cost of other Catholic schools for educating St. Michael students in grades 5- 8. The current average educational cost per child is \$3,000.