

2018 - 2019

St. Joan of Arc Catholic School

Five Year Plan



Everything that the Catholic educator does in a school takes place within the structure of an educational community, made up of the contacts and collaboration among the various groups – students, parents, directors, non-teaching staff – that together are responsible for making the school an instrument for integral formation. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith, 1982, #22)

Thank you to the following parents and parishioners who worked to bring the Five Year Plan to completion:

Marketing and Enrollment: Kim Clements, Adam Kloudy, Jim Rickert, Kristen Shauger, Rich Weigel

Academics/Before and After School: Maria Anderson, Kelly Carr, Martin Colburn, Jeremy Jackson, Jennifer Hantsch, Andrew Marks

Catholic Identity: Ann Johnson, Jacqueline Skelly, Tracy Szalek

Finance: Katherine Jedlicka, Mary Agnes Laguatan, Michael Sweeney

St. Joan of Arc School Mission Statement

The mission of St. Joan of Arc School is to provide students a firm foundation in the Catholic faith and the means to achieve academic excellence.

Father Baltes' Reflections on the Five Year Plan

One of the most memorable expressions I recall from my years in Catholic Elementary School was by Sr. Mary Dionysia, a Franciscan sister, who taught language arts. With predictable frequency, she took great delight in tempering our youthful drive to design our futures. With a slightly poetic, and theologically acute statement, she would proclaim, *Man proposes but God disposes*. Its rhyming mechanism made it easy to commit to memory. *Man proposes, but God disposes*.

Sister Dionysian's wisdom was unmistakably clear – no matter how meticulously mortal beings propose plans and intentions for what they would like to see unfold in time, it is God who has the final word. Such an understanding is humbling in that it qualifies our role in the universe. At the same time, it is comforting because it asserts the sovereignty of God's will, which is not only greater than all human machinations, but always has the salvation of the world as its goal.

Man proposes, but God disposes, does not ignore our desire or diminish our efforts to construct the future. Quite the contrary. It invites us to undertake this responsibility with courage and creativity. It does, however, remind us that at any given moment, we may need to relinquish our time-conditioned plans to the One who knows governs all time, the One whom we acclaim as *Alpha and Omega* – the Beginning and the End.

And so as we construct and celebrate a Strategic Plan that casts a net over the next five years of our history at St. Joan of Arc School, we do so with both confidence and caution. We must believe in our carefully designed goals and ambitions. And we must also realize that all our goals are subject to the mysterious unfolding of God's one eternal goal. In the end we are co-creators,

co-designers, co-proposers with *The Creator*, *The Designer* and *The Disposer*. And for this, we give thanks. Amen!

Sincerely,
Fr. Gabriel, OSB

St. Joan of Arc School Philosophy

St. Joan of Arc Parish is deeply committed to Catholic education and the ministry of leading our students to become strong and responsible individuals, capable of making Christ-centered choices willingly. Therefore, St. Joan of Arc Catholic School prepares students to meet future challenges by fostering deep spiritual development and promoting academic success, based on individual abilities.

As catechists, teachers give witness to Christ, the Master Teacher, by their lives as well as their teaching. St. Joan of Arc educators commit to growing in their relationship with God and incorporating the Gospel in their professional and personal lives. Holding Jesus as a Model, the staff is committed to the development of Catholic values in our students.

Recognizing and respecting the role of parents as the primary educators of their children, the teachers assist parents with the Catholic faith formation of the family. Teachers, parents and administrators work as partners to form an ongoing relationship with God that is rooted in Gospel values.

Brief History of St. Joan of Arc Catholic School

As with the creation of many Catholic schools in the United States, St. Joan of Arc School evolved as a grassroots effort in 1924 when parishioners began raising funds to build a parish church. Land was donated in advance of construction by the Albert Riedy family. On August 29, 1925 the cornerstone of the church was laid with clergy, parishioners, and other supporters in attendance. Construction was completed in July 1927 with a three room school, a church with a capacity of 500, and a convent included. The first classes were led by two Benedictine Sisters from the Sacred Heart Monastery. Five students composed the first graduating class.

In 1955 construction on a new school building was initiated on Columbia Avenue. In 1957 the new school opened with 320 pupils and became part of the Diocese of Joliet. Enrollment grew to a high of nearly 700 students. To accommodate new students, a junior high addition was constructed in 1963 which included a large gymnasium and basement that served as the Parish Chapel to absorb the overflow from the original church. In 1985 an addition connecting the junior high and elementary buildings was completed leaving the configuration that is present today.

The Principal's Reflections on the Five Year Plan

The greatest challenge to Catholic education in the United States today, and the greatest contribution that authentically Catholic education can make to American culture, is to restore to that culture the conviction that human beings can grasp the truth of things, and in grasping that truth can know their duties to God, to themselves, and their neighbors.

Pope John Paul II

The St. Joan of Arc School's Mission Statement and Philosophy both acknowledge that instructing our students in the Catholic faith is integral to our purpose. In the survey that initiated the beginning of the Five Year Plan process, school parents cited Catholic identity along with academics as the primary factors in their decision to enroll. What is needed for the continued success of St. Joan of Arc School is to focus on building upon on the school's existing foundations; a school that is truly Catholic and of the highest academic quality. Every effort must be made by school administration and marketing to ensure the attributes of Catholic education in general, and at St. Joan of Arc specifically, are effectively conveyed within the greater school community.

The present Five Year Plan is intended to be a "living document" that presents a path forward. This plan will guide development for St. Joan of Arc School over the next five years. It will also serve to direct the work of the School Advisory Board in the coming years as we seek to fulfill the stated goals of the Five Year Plan. Change is a constant in our world. The Five Year Plan is advisory and is open to revision if circumstances dictate.

Catholic education in the United States faces many challenges including the ongoing decline in both Church attendance and Catholic school enrollment. Despite present day obstacles faced by Catholic institutions, we must move forward with faith, courage, and enthusiasm because we need Catholic schools to prepare our students for the future. The benefits of Catholic education are many. The *Wall Street Journal* recently noted a study conducted for the Fordham Institute at the University of California that compared students in Catholic schools to their peers in public and other private schools. Researchers noted the correlation between the focus that Catholic schools put on self-discipline and better student behavior.

St. Joan of Arc School remains a unique place because of its community spirit and focus on attaining its stated goals of fostering Catholic identity and academic excellence. James Austgen, a 2014 SJA graduate and 2018 Benet Academy Valedictorian, recently shared a wonderful letter extolling the virtues of this school. Mr. Austgen noted in closing, "I have no doubt that attending St. Joan of Arc school contributed greatly to my success in high school at Benet Academy."

Thank you for supporting Catholic education,

Michael Sweeney, Principal

Enrollment and Marketing

Goal 1

Increase Market Awareness Through Social Media

- Continue to increase social media presence on Facebook and other platforms to target specific geographic areas for potential growth.
- Maintain school website to keep current and robust; reinforce SJA's academic excellence at every opportunity on website.
- Provide free signage to all SJA parents and parishioners; place SJA signs in conspicuous locations in Woodridge, Downers Grove, and Naperville.
- Continue to use banners to promote SJA and Catholic Schools Week Open House.
- Continue to engage grandparents and long-term parishioners.
- Continue to engage with local civic groups including the Chamber of Commerce and major realtors to promote SJA awareness.
- Encourage school parents to rate SJA on external websites.
- Advertise and include in marketing materials financial aid programs including Adopt-a-Student, Empower Illinois, Diocesan Catholic Education Fund, and Tuition Grant.
- Establish goal of stabilizing enrollment in the first year of the Five Year Plan and growing enrollment by 3 – 5% over the subsequent four years.

Goal 2

Extend Efforts to Engage SJA Alumni

- Expand efforts to engage alumni by researching and posting on school website, Facebook, and other platforms where SJA graduates attend college.
- Note on website SJA graduates who are National Merit Scholars.
- Create "Remember When We Went to St. Joan of Arc" Facebook group.
- Combine annual SJA Picnic with an All Years Reunion event.
- Offer incentive to SJA alumni to encourage them to send their children to SJA.

Goal 3

Identify Target Groups and Expand Market Penetration

- Target specific streets and zip codes prior to Catholic Schools Week and provide financial aid informational postcards.
- Reach out to Comcast and Daily Herald to direct advertising to email sites and target specific groups.
- Expand outreach efforts beyond Naperville, Downers Grove, and Woodridge.
- Expand and target outreach efforts to lower middle class families, single mothers, and Hispanics.
- Target younger SJA families with social outings to instill a sense of community.

Goal 4

Financial Aid/Incentives

- Continue to promote the Empower Illinois program as well as Diocesan scholarship program (Catholic Education Fund).
- Expand the Adopt-a-Student program by requesting donors to make a multi-year commitment (e.g., 2-3 years); match donors with students requesting aid.
- Increase Adopt-a-Student funds by requesting donations quarterly on the website, church bulletin, etc.
- Establish a trial period (e.g. 5 years) to triple the amount of aid available to students in the Adopt-a-Student program.
- Explore other incentives and avenues to maintain and grow student enrollment.

Finance and Resource

Goal 1

Fund Raising

- Establish realistic school fund-raising goals and maintain accurate monthly updates.
- Establish and monitor budgets for major fund-raising events including the school auction.
- Delineate the revenue raising events that are the purview of the PSO and Marketing and track funds accordingly.
- Evaluate efficacy of existing fundraisers and research additional fundraisers.

Goal 2

Maintain Transparency in all School Related Financial Matters.

- Establish a yearly schedule in conjunction with the parish administrator to regularly receive and review financial updates.
- Continue to review the school budget regularly with pastor, parish administrator, Parish Finance Council, and School Advisory Board.
- Continue to reduce uncollected tuition and fees by regularly monitoring SMART Tuition and Extended Day accounts.
- Present payment options for tuition accounts in arrears and continue option of terminating student enrollment as worst case scenario.
- Endeavor to keep tuition affordable by targeting yearly increases not to exceed 5% maximum.
- In conjunction with parish/school head of maintenance, identify and establish timeline for repair/replacement of capital goods (i.e. student desks) and building/grounds improvements.

Academics/After School and Beyond

A challenging curriculum is the foundation of an exceptional school. An effective curriculum is one that addresses the academic needs of all students and provides opportunities for success at all skill levels. Going forward, we envision meeting the following goals will strengthen an already strong curriculum.

Goal 1

Develop a technology curriculum with a clearly delineated sequence of skills and content to be taught at each grade level

- Create a reliable technology infrastructure to provide supports necessary to maintain its stability.
- Identify and provide the necessary tools and resources to address Goal 1.
- Identify the technology needs including hardware, software, and instruction at each grade level.
- Identify necessary personnel needed to address needs for effective technology instruction, adoption of new hardware and software and maintenance of existing technology.
- Identify the expectations for incoming high school students at local Catholic and public high schools.

- Investigate the adoption of a 1-1 technology plan at different grade levels.
- Provide access to professional development opportunities in technology for teachers.
- Make use of existing technology and fully integrate technology instruction into the classroom.

Goal 2: Foreign Language

Implement a comprehensive Spanish program that will enable graduating students to smoothly transition to high school level courses.

Engage with local high school foreign language teachers to determine foreign language expectations for incoming high school students at local Catholic and public high schools.

Evaluate current middle school curriculum to identify possible content gaps in meeting high school expectations.

Implement improvement plan based on data collection.

Identify an effective early start program as an after school offering for grades two – six.

Goal 3: Extended Day

Evaluate the efficacy of the existing Extended Day program to determine if it meets the needs of families by offering competitive programming.

Convene a committee comprised of the Extended Day director, school staff, and parents to evaluate the current program's strengths and areas for growth.

Goal 4: Curriculum Mapping

Initiate curriculum mapping at each grade level for all core subjects to produce a month-by-month curriculum map detailing the progression of content and skills being addressed. Core subject maps should be aligned to both Diocesan and CCSS standards with desired outcomes for each unit delineated. The curriculum maps will be uniformly formatted for publication on the school website upon completion.

Catholic Identity

In an Angelus message this summer, Pope Francis captured the essence of our mission in Catholic education. He said, “the encounter with the living Christ in his great family, which is the Church, fills hearts with joy, for it fills them with true life, with a profound goodness that endures.” Catholic education should enable every student to encounter Jesus, the living Christ, throughout the school day in every teacher, administrator, student and parent.

“From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics, an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and peace.” The Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome.

Catholic schools will thrive if this “new environment” is present in every aspect of our academic, spiritual and religious education curriculum. The goal of Catholic Education is to get every student to Heaven, and to assist parents, their primary educator by strengthening the family unit. The family is where children best find their vocation, and not the vocation that society tells them, but the vocation that God wants for them. St. Catherine of Siena said, “If you become who you were meant to be, you will set the world on fire.” Let’s go set the world on fire!

To achieve these goals, the school staff must be intentional disciples living and modeling our faith with joy, mercy and compassion. These interrelationships between staff and student must be witnessed in how coaches treat all players from their star athletes to least skillful players; how teachers correct and encourage students; how administrators interact with children; how students treat maintenance staff and aides. We must evaluate every aspect of our actions; the songs we play before sporting events, the themes for fundraising events, and the kindness reflected on our playground.

You will note in Goal 2 that we are calling for a School Campus Minister. Why, in this era of cutbacks and streamlining, would a school add a position? “For a time such as this.” (*Book of Esther 20:14*). The opportunities and challenges that media and technology create increasingly have impact on our children and young people. Ministering to and with youth, from kindergarten forward, needs to touch every aspect of the child’s life so that new attitudes, norms and values can form and be nurtured within a Christian community. Parents and families want to do the right thing for their children. However, with growing busyness and isolation within families, basic foundations of faith often are underdeveloped.

Goals Already in Place for SJA’s Catholic Identity

- Our Mission statement and philosophy integrate the Roman Catholic faith into all aspects of school life.
- Our school provides regular opportunities for our students and staff to experience prayer throughout the day, weekly school Mass, and the Sacraments.
- Religious instruction continues to be an integral part of the curriculum.

- The teachers participate in ongoing professional development in religion and catechesis through the Diocese of Joliet as well as regular, consistent pastoral instruction, i.e. Benedictine Values, Word on Fire series, Overview of the Mass.
- Our students, staff and parents have a service-oriented outreach to Church and the community.
- Our school displays signs, Sacramentals, traditions and rituals of our Catholic faith and the Benedictine tradition.
- Grade seven students attended *Called by Name*, a celebration for vocations and grade six students visited the Sacred Heart Monastery and St. Procopius Abbey.
- Pastoral involvement is frequent, including Advent/Lent classroom visits, St. Michael Feast Day visit to Lisle Police Station with select students, Veterans Day and Honor Flight Assemblies, etc.

Moving Towards and Reaching Proposed Goals

The Catholic Identity Committee has proposed the following five goals to support St. Joan of Arc's continued preservation and development of its Catholic Identity:

Goal 1

The school's mission statement and philosophy statement are clearly visible and readily accessible. These statements combined reflect the drive and purpose of the school.

- Display the mission statement on banners at the North and South lots of the school campus periodically when other informational banners are not posted.
- The mission statement should be prominently displayed in the main entrance to the school.
- A banner with the mission statement should be displayed either in the gym entrance lobby or in the gym.
- Both the mission statement and philosophy statement should be on display and easily accessed on the school website, Facebook page, and other social media where St. Joan of Arc School is represented.

Goal 2

Appoint and maintain a "School Campus Minister" to help foster the faith development of the entire school community.

- Establish a hoc committee to determine role and responsibilities of Campus School Minister.

- Committee will provide recommendations for School Campus Minister.

Goal 3

Students are exposed to the Catholic Church's rich history of traditions, devotionals, and prayers.

- Students from grades three - eight should schedule dates to join parishioners in praying the Rosary each week before the all-school Mass on Friday.
- Introduce students to the Adoration Chapel and schedule regular visits by grade to provide familiarity with the Adoration. Each person that spends time in the presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament grows in holiness.
- Continue the tradition of beginning the school day with a reading of the day's gospel over the intercom with teachers providing further exploration of the reading in the classroom.

Goal 4

Emphasize and assist parents in the role as their children's primary educators of the Catholic faith by offering faith formation opportunities.

- At the annual Curriculum Night assembly, have a designated speaker address parent's role as primary educators of the faith.
- Record the all-school Friday student Mass homilies and send out links and encourage parents to listen to it.
- Feature a keynote speaker at the school auction to address relevant faith issues.
- Offer guided program, i.e. monthly faith enrichment exercises to assist parents in ways to pass on the Catholic faith.
- Introduce parent prayer groups.

Goal 5

The school helps students develop a service-orientated outreach to the Church and community.

- Offer school and parish service projects.
- Suggest family and/or individual service ideas and projects on a monthly basis.