

State of Christ the King School

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February 8, 2018

The State of the School is a snapshot of where our school is now. National standards and benchmarks for effective Catholic schools include thirteen standards for Catholic education. We use these national standards because they align with the AdvancED standards, our accrediting agency, and they relate closely to the vision and mission of Christ the King. The 13 standards are divided into four core goals. I will discuss where our school currently relates to these four overarching goals. This will be a good thermometer for you to see the state of Christ the King School.

The first goal is appropriately Mission and Catholic Identity. We stay strong to our mission as a Catholic school. Being a Catholic school is why many of us are here. To teach the faith, no matter what the subject, allows us to fulfill our ministry as teachers and Catholics. We are the Cathedral School, an example of excellence in education, and we take that responsibility seriously. It is not enough to continue the status quo but to push ourselves and one another out of our boxes and to do better every day for our students. If we are not pushing each other to improve, we are not doing our job as educators. We are here to prepare our students for the world they face. Education is about learning and improving, reflecting and evaluating what works.

As parents, you are here to push us too. We have to hear from you. I welcome your feedback, and the teachers need to hear your thoughts and concerns, as well. Communication between one another allows everyone to grow. We want your involvement and welcome your ideas. Christ the King School has a great history and many love this school and want the best for it. Many people spend the majority of their childhood on this campus. Many were students here and then became parents, parishioners, and grandparents. We hear your feedback that you want to be involved in decision-making. This is why I proposed more outside involvement in School Council sub-committees to interact with our parents and teachers. We want more parent input on our strategic plans, marketing, finances, and policies.

Teaching character, knowledge, and spirit is our mission. We don't make it easy on our students either. We have high expectations for them, and we know you do too. As parents, we want our children to be ready for whatever world they wish to enter. We want them to be confident, prepared, and kind. We develop their character and spirit by immersing them in the faith because that is where they learn how to appropriately interact with the world and to accomplish the tasks God will lay before them. They need to know that God is there for them and to turn to Him for every need.

We want to encourage our students and families to connect more with our church, and we hope to better educate the parish on the great accomplishments of the school. We want the two to be more intertwined. We want the church to see that the future of the parish sits in our classrooms. They include the 470 students in this building five days a week, seven hours a day. We must welcome each other in. We want our school families in our cathedral, celebrating the Eucharist together. We want our parishioners and our parish staff in our school and to be part of our school events. Sing with us. Celebrate with us. Walk into our classrooms.

Eat lunch with us. This is the key to growing our entire parish.....church and school. We have to stop the divide. We are here to serve God and our community, together.

As I said, our mission and Catholic identity are our strengths. Keeping our sacraments in the school, focusing on prayer and adoration, and service make us a strong Catholic school. Service is why God put us here, to serve Him and one another. We teach our children that love and service should always be part of our lives, and they totally get how rewarding that is, giving their time, talents and treasures to others. Kids naturally get that. They want to give. Hurricane Harvey was a perfect example. \$2500 in change was brought in, the number of piggy banks that were broken that week! Our students go out into the community to sing to the elderly, to feed the hungry, to give clothes to those in need. *Just as they are called to do.* Their desire to help is endless. And the teachers have continually fostered service. It is one of the things I am most proud of about our school. The Hope Center, the Ronald McDonald House, God's Pantry, Lexington Women's Club, St. Joseph's Hospital, Catholic Action Center, ABLE, God's Net, the Stewart Home, and Greenhouse 17 are just some of the charitable organizations we impact.

Governance and Leadership is the second goal. Every administrative decision is made for the betterment of our students. What is best for the children? For every decision, that is the question that I always come back to. Governance and Leadership is a more difficult thing to talk about because, in part, I am talking about my role, but I'm going to be honest. I know I'm far from perfect, and I have lots of areas where I personally need to grow. I wish I could be in more places, in the classrooms more, *say the right words. I wish I could respond to my emails faster.* But all of us give our very best for our students. However, the change in our administrative structure has had many positive outcomes. The Dean for the faculty and the Dean for the students are necessary roles for our school to grow and prosper. The structure has allowed our administration and faculty to improve curriculum, better instructional practices, meet student needs, provide more support, and give more time to evaluate students and test scores.

It has greatly affected our guidance office. For the past nine years, we have had three administrators, but we didn't always have a full-time counselor who was able to dedicate her time to truly provide guidance counseling. The previous guidance counselor had many more administrative duties than our current counselor. But our goal has been to focus more on teaching positive behaviors, to address the needs of our families, and to be more preventive than reactive to student behaviors, and it has worked. Our Guidance Counselor is in the classrooms more than ever. We've had less discipline committee meetings, and it has allowed new programs to begin such as Veterans Day, Career Day, the Reality Story and our new Explore Your Future for our intermediate grades.

Our superintendent came to speak with our faculty a couple weeks ago. Dr. Conneely mentioned our diocese's lack of centralization in our schools. He said we are a diocese of independent schools, not a district of schools. The Diocesan Schools Office is made up of four employees, two are part time. We don't have a group of educators to write curriculum for us. We don't have a Director of Risk Management and Safety, a Director of Child Nutrition, a Director of Assessment, or an Early Childhood Director. We don't have a Data Specialist, Director of Pupil Personnel, an ESS Coordinator or a purchasing specialist. We don't have a grant writer, a Compliance Officer, a Family and Community Engagement Coordinator or instructional coaches. We do all this ourselves. However, we have heard it enough and know that many people think an easy fix for

everything is just get rid of an administrator, but that will not help our school grow and improve, and that is not what is best for our students. More help, provides more progress.

Then, there is our second Blue Ribbon award. The application is a lengthy process and would not have happened without the extra support. Only 50 non-public schools are chosen. It's not just something you sign up for. We are not in a rotation to receive it every so many years. Some years over 80% of applicants are not chosen. It's not just test scores, but curriculum, student support and data analysis that helped us to earn this great honor. It is quite a distinction, and we have done it twice.

As I said, Christ the King School has high expectations for academic excellence. It is evident in our Testing and Assessments – scores consistently average in the 94th percentiles. We are a school that examines our scores and uses tests that provides comparisons to national norms. That's important. Our students' scores on the Lexington Catholic placement test are strong. 17% of our students are in the top 10 percentile of the local norms. Our Academic Teams, Math Counts, Science Fair, our arts and sports programs are just a few positive and successful experiences at our school that produces not only academically strong students, but well-rounded students.

It is also not enough to have a preschool, but we want to follow the highest standards for early childhood, and we look for the cutting edge programs such as our Minds and Motion that will give our students an advantage in kindergarten. We have seen improvements in kindergarten growth and in our enrollment because of this.

You can look to Lexington Catholic or any other high school where our students attend, and they will tell you our students are very well prepared. Not only do we see their excellent results on their placement tests, but you saw in our Annual Report the awesome accomplishments of our former students, and in Lexington Catholics publications you can see the tens of thousands of dollars in college scholarships given to our CKS alums.

Operational Vitality is the final goal. Changes in enrollment have had effects on past budgets. Enrollment has been more stable this year and it looks to be for next year, as well. However, loss of enrollment is a trend of Catholic schools in our nation. Some of the reasons being lower birth rates and less Catholics in our nation.

One of the concerns in our budget has been over the subsidy given by the church. The subsidy went from \$520,000 to \$420,000 several years ago. Due to the lower offertory at the Cathedral, the subsidy has been debated. The first budget for the 18-19 school year started with a 1.8% increase in tuition. Even with the rise in insurance costs and utilities, we were able to make the cuts necessary to keep the increase low. Our cuts over the past several years have included loss of positions, hours of assistants, and cuts in programs. We have also bridged the gap by increasing revenue. Yes, there has been more fundraising and community events, Father Daughter Dance, Mother Son Dodgeball, BoosterThon, and the Princess Party. Big Blue Fling and Sip and Shop have also grown. We appreciate our PTO and faculty for all their help to make these events happen. We have also added revenue producing programs, such as our two-year old program and our Little Sprouts Summer program. We have increased revenue in our cafeteria and in our Faith First program. Over the past several years we have bridged a gap of over \$300,000 to make up for the loss in enrollment and subsidy.

As Fr. Paul shared in his homily two Sundays ago, he has decided to keep the subsidy pretty much as is. However, it was advised by the school council for tuition to be increased by 3% and then finance council

proposed it to be raised 4%. This is approximately a \$200 increase over the year. We are also planning to incorporate more funds for our families with multiple children by increasing our multiple child discount. Of course, the school subsidy comes from the church offertory, and the church has seen a decline in their collections and anticipates that will continue to go down. Fr. Paul has made a plea for every family to give \$10 more a week. We have faith that offertory will increase at the hands of our school families and by their support of the capital campaign.

A large part of the capital campaign will positively affect our school. It will improve our facilities and physically add to our building. It will provide us with a safer entrance and an improved preschool that will place them together on one side of the building for collaboration and sharing of resources. We need your help to make it happen. Our goal is 100% participation. Large or small, we would love to see all our families contribute to the capital campaign.

Please keep in mind. The cost to educate our students is over \$8000 per child, well above the tuition rate that parishioners pay. The cost to educate in Fayette County schools is over \$13,000. Christ the King continues to provide a top-notch education for a reasonable price. Programs and fundraising added to the subsidy makes up the difference in cost to keep tuition as low as possible. That's over a \$2000 difference for each child, and approximately half of that is paid for by the church. The remaining comes from programs and fundraisers.

In closing, I hope I have been able to provide a clearer snapshot of our school. I will include my speech in the next News Notes and share details of the 18-19 budget with you as I did last year. But please call or email me if you have questions or suggestions. Again, I appreciate your input and support of our school. Also, I'll close by saying you are our biggest marketers. Please share with your family and neighbors all the wonderful things that happen at our school. We are truly a gem, a Blue Ribbon gem, a strong school producing students prepared to serve our world and share our faith. Thank you!