

# St. Matthew School Champaign, Illinois Strategic Long Range Plan 2008-2013

Pastor – Father Mark Merdian  
Principal – Kathy Scherer  
SLRP Chair – Robert Knight

May 28, 2008

Diocese of Peoria  
Catholic Schools  
**Renewing Our Mission  
Planning For Our Future**

*Come Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds and guide us in our efforts to renew the mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Peoria. Be present among us and enable us to see the plan you have for the future of our Catholic Schools.*

*Mary, you who were the first to receive the Holy Spirit, pray for us and with us that our efforts to renew our mission and to plan for the future may always cooperate with the actions of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the fullness of God's reign where all are loved. Amen.*



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## Note from the SLRP Chair

In October of 2006, Father Mark Merdian asked me to chair a strategic long range planning project at St. Matthew School in Champaign, Illinois. Eighty one people participated in a project that spanned twenty months. Long range planning is often a tedious job and this plan was no different in that respect. But, the passion and the energy of the people who worked on the plan has created a set of recommendations that promise to significantly improve an already terrific school. Our initial goal was to make St. Matthew School one of the best examples of K-8 Catholic education in the United States. Implementing this plan will draw the school much closer to that goal.

This document captures the results of the plan – i.e. the selected recommendations.

The project was organized as a Steering committee and eight subcommittees. The Steering committee oversaw the process, provided direction, and selected and scheduled the recommendations to be implemented. The eight subcommittees, Administration, Organization, and Governance; Catholic Identity & Mission; Education; Enrollment; Facilities; Finance; Public Relations; and Support Services; focused on specific topics as they related to the school. Subcommittees were encouraged to study the current state of St. Matthew School, other successful schools, and trends in their focus area. Each subcommittee provided a set of recommendations to the Steering committee.

I can not thank the people who worked on this project enough. I doubt there is another Catholic school in the United States that could assemble a group of people more passionate about their school. The energy and professionalism provided by the participants in this project was phenomenal. I am deeply honored to have had the opportunity to work with them.

### Steering Committee

Scott Bechtel  
Amy Blomberg  
Kim Fox  
Philippe Geubelle  
Mike Gillette  
Robert Knight – Chair  
Jill Meade - Faculty  
Father Mark Merdian - Pastor  
Karen Pickard - Faculty  
Kathy Scherer – Principal  
Judy Troxell

### Administration, Organization, and Governance

Kim Fox  
Ryan Hendrickson - Chair  
Paul Hergenrother  
Cindy Gumbel - Faculty  
Dave Kuhl  
Kim Lindgren  
Karen Martin  
Mary Murray  
John Schmitt

Catholic Identity & Mission

Karen Barnes  
Suzanne Boyer – Chair  
Stephan Boyer  
Father Anthony Co- Asst. Pastor  
Theresa Cuttell  
Cathy Fallon  
John Hansen  
Julie Hansen - Faculty  
Tece Hendrickson  
Henry Padilla  
Kate Padilla  
Karen Semple  
Judy Troxell

Education

Robin Bedwell  
Amy Blomberg  
Janet Brown - Chair  
Cindy Feeney - Faculty  
Suzanne Gibbons  
Philippe Geubelle  
Craig Jackson  
Kellie Kaefring  
Sheila Lavender  
Jill Meade - Faculty  
Rush Record  
Maeve Reilly  
Dan Rodawig

Enrollment

Julia Atkins  
Scott Bechtel  
Dennis Deedrich  
Mike Gillette - Chair  
Robert Knight  
Joe Lamb  
Todd Peterson  
Angie Washburn

Facilities

Jeff Gumbel  
Kevin Hinders - Chair  
Larry Kensler  
Tim Murray  
Janet Payonk  
Greg Petry  
Jim Semonin  
Daniel Wells

Finance

Tom Good  
Barb Kuhl  
Dave Line - Chair  
Kim Martin  
Aaron Rund  
Bill Vavrik  
Rick Wilberg

Public Relations

Amy Fruehling  
Angela Kerr  
Dolan Klein  
Mary Knight  
Katrina Olson  
Julie O'Mahoney  
Mark Randle- Chair  
Chris Washo

Support Services

Amy Armstrong  
Marla Deval  
Melissa Donahoe  
John Easley  
LJ Fallon  
Barry Johnson - Chair  
Melanie Michael  
TJ Miles  
Jennifer Mulcahey  
Liz Regen  
Seamus Reilly  
Suzanne Rodawig

Sincerely,  
Robert Knight, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Selected Recommendations

The following two tables describe the recommendations that were selected for implementation. Each recommendation includes the subcommittee that recommended it, a short description of the recommendation, why it was originally recommended, and a deadline for implementation. The recommendations are sorted in the order in which they are expected to be implemented. Table 1 describes recommendations that can be implemented without additional study. Table 2 describes recommendations that require additional study before they can be implemented. The deadlines cited in Table 2 apply to their implementation – i.e. both the study and implementation are expected to be complete by the deadline.

More complete descriptions of the recommendations can be found in the associated subcommittee’s report. Note that the spirit of each recommendation is expected to be implemented – i.e. the implementation of a specific recommendation may not *exactly* match its original description but the intent of the recommendation should be captured by its implementation.

In most cases, the school administration is responsible for implementation. A specific subcommittee of the Education Commission is responsible for overseeing the implementation.

**Table 1 Recommended for Implementation - No Additional Study Required**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>Due By</b>
Enrollment	Maintain contingency plans for stimulating enrollment should conditions change	Prepare for a downturn in enrollment	Sept 2008
Enrollment	Provide www.stmatt.net address to realtors and UIUC to make finding our parish / school easy for families relocating to C-U	Ensure current enrollment pipeline is primed with new families relocating to C-U	Sept 2008
Administration, Organization, Governance	At the annual Parents Information Night at the start of the school year, the Education Commission should lead the meeting rather than the Parents Club officers to reflect the more prominent educational advisory role that the Education Commission is intended to play.	Create a more effective Education Commission by improving the image of the Education Commission.	Sept 2008
Administration, Organization, Governance	As part of a more pro-active role for the Education Commission, consider the formation of new standing or ad hoc committees to evaluate key issue areas such as appropriate teacher-student ratios/classroom size, school safety, public relations, and fundraising.	Provide the Education Commission with more specific and wider advisory responsibilities. The Education Commission should be more actively “discerning the educational needs” (Ed Comm. Constitution, Article II C.1) of the School and anticipating and considering larger educational issues and trends.	Sept 2008
Administration, Organization, Governance	Parents Club officers should no longer lead the annual meetings at the Parents Information Night.	Clarification of both the Parents Club and education Commission roles.	Sept 2008

Public Relations	The pastor should have open discussions with Education Commission about any critical issues that might be on the minds of parents.	Improve internal communication between the pastor, administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents.	Sept 2008
Finance	Secure the services of an accountant with enough experience to prepare complete financial statements and supporting schedules on either a cash or accrual basis.		Sept 2008
Finance	A formula should be adopted for when official student counts are made and how average enrollment for a semester and year are arrived at.	Improve the school's financial transparency and the ability to monitor its financial performance.	Sept 2008
Support Services	Initiate a mandatory education program / meeting for players, coaches, parents, and administrators, and require attendance once a year. Attendance at this meeting will be mandatory for all coaches, athletes and cheerleaders, administrators, and one parent of each athlete and cheerleader. <i>The mandatory education meeting will include the following components. All information will be provided in written format as well.</i> 1) <i>Explanation of the value of role modeling Christ like behavior at athletic events.</i> 2) <i>Definition and explanation of appropriate lines of communication within the St. Matthew Athletic program.</i> 3) <i>Introduction, explanation of roles, and provision of contact information for the Athletic Administrators (Athletic Director and Principal or Asst Principal) and the Athletic Commission.</i> 4) <i>Explanation of appropriate player, crowd, and coaching behavior.</i>	Create a formal sportsmanship program which includes policy and instruction for players, coaches, parents and administrators	Sept 2008
Support Services	Utilize local and diocesan resources for ongoing support and education for coaches.	Provide training and support for the coaches in the St. Matthew athletic program.	Sept 2008
Facilities	Do Energy Audit. <i>Single pane windows should be replaced.</i>	Energy costs rising	Sept 2009
Catholic Identity & Mission	Start prayer partnerships with the parish. <i>Parents, teachers, parishioners, sign up as a school prayer partner, to pray for specific needs or programs, as well as general success and wellbeing.</i>	Strengthen the bond between the parish and school	Sept 2009
Administration, Organization, Governance	Provide visible information on the Education Commission in a prominent location on the School website.	Create a more effective Education Commission by improving the image of the Education Commission.	Sept 2009
Administration, Organization, Governance	Advertise more prominently the meetings of the Education Commission in the monthly school calendar, "Week at a Glance" memos and church bulletin.	Create a more effective Education Commission by improving the image of the Education Commission.	Sept 2009
Administration, Organization, Governance	Formalize / institutionalize a more transparent process of selecting Education Commission members.	Create a more effective Education Commission by improving the image of the Education Commission.	Sept 2009

Administration, Organization, Governance	Assign specific advisory duties within the Education Commission that encourage pro-active functioning of this group.	Provide the Education Commission with more specific and wider advisory responsibilities. The Education Commission should be more actively "discerning the educational needs" (Ed Comm. Constitution, Article II C.1) of the School and anticipating and considering larger educational issues and trends.	Sept 2009
Administration, Organization, Governance	Make it a specific and primary duty of Education Commission members to represent the interests of parents of school children.	Provide the Education Commission with more specific and wider advisory responsibilities. The Education Commission should be more actively "discerning the educational needs" (Ed Comm. Constitution, Article II C.1) of the School and anticipating and considering larger educational issues and trends.	Sept 2009
Administration, Organization, Governance	Make it a specific duty of the Education Commission to carry out the recommendations of the SLRP process, and create a subcommittee whose focus is long-term challenges and issues for strategic planning.	Provide the Education Commission with more specific and wider advisory responsibilities. The Education Commission should be more actively "discerning the educational needs" (Ed Comm. Constitution, Article II C.1) of the School and anticipating and considering larger educational issues and trends.	Sept 2009
Public Relations	Draft and publish job descriptions for each of the major school organizations and administrators. Draft and publish an organizational flowchart showing relationships between groups and administrators. Draft and publish a flowchart illustrating where and how to take concerns and problems. The job descriptions, Organization chart, and concerns flowchart should be presented at the Parent Orientation meeting, published on the website in a prominent location, and referenced throughout the year.	Properly define the roles of all groups and educate the school community on how to address concerns.	Sept 2009
Public Relations	Publish administrator, teacher, and staff email addresses and phone voice mail extensions. Explain how to create a teachers email address instead of publishing actual email addresses on the internet.	Improve internal communication between the pastor, administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents.	Sept 2009
Public Relations	Administrators are expected to issue email update of critical issues within 24 hours.	Improve internal communication between the pastor, administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents.	Sept 2009

Public Relations	Administrators are expected to issue email update of general status, events, good news at least weekly.	Improve internal communication between the pastor, administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents.	Sept 2009
Public Relations	Have a professional graphic designer implement the brand identity that has been proposed by the Public Relations Committee of the Education Commission on the website.	Make the school website more organized and user-friendly.	Sept 2009
Public Relations	Install free website analytics tools to see who is using the site how, and when.	Make the school website more organized and user-friendly.	Sept 2009
Finance	Create a complete set of financials for the school which would include having its own checking account and balance sheet.	Improve the school's financial transparency and the ability to monitor its financial performance.	Sept 2009
Finance	The school financial report should be prepared on an accrual basis to facilitate month to month and year to year comparisons so that timing differences in when bills arrive and tuition and fees are paid do not distort comparisons.	Improve the school's financial transparency and the ability to monitor its financial performance.	Sept 2009
Finance	A monthly narrative should accompany each month's school financial statements that describe the activity and variances for the period being reported upon. These reports should be retained with the financial statements so they memorialize the understanding of the activity being reflected upon.	Improve the school's financial transparency and the ability to monitor its financial performance.	Sept 2009
Finance	The school should account for certain "in and out" programs as "other revenue and expense" in a separate section of the school's operating report. <i>Things such as milk, field trips and ECP tend to cloud the picture of what the true cost of the school operations are and separating them would make the operating statements more informative and user friendly.</i>	Improve the school's financial transparency and the ability to monitor its financial performance.	Sept 2009
Finance	Include the assets and activity of the Parent's Club in the financial statements of the school. <i>This would facilitate planning and budgeting for the school and its needs.</i>	Improve the school's financial transparency and the ability to monitor its financial performance.	Sept 2009
Finance	Document, in a public way, the opportunity to receive tuition support. Website or bulletin. Tuition forms to be updated to include reference.	Make sure low income families know that attending the school is an option.	Sept 2009
Support Services	Define standards for athletic conduct and update policies if needed. Acquire educational materials relating to sportsmanship and athletics in Catholic schools and provide to student athletes and their parents.	Create a formal sportsmanship program which includes policy and instruction for players, coaches, parents and administrators	Sept 2009
Support Services	Enforce athletic policies	Create a formal sportsmanship program which includes policy and instruction for players, coaches, parents and administrators	Sept 2009

Support Services	Form a transportation safety committee to research and develop traffic recommendations.	Student safety	Sept 2009
Education	Provide new science tubs for primary grades. <i>Update and replenish the materials in the science closet.</i>	Improve the science program	Sept 2010
Support Services	Implement required coaches training sessions focusing on successful coaching strategies for use with elementary and middle school students within a Catholic school environment.	Provide training and support for the coaches in the St. Matthew athletic program.	Sept 2010

**Table 2 Recommended for Implementation - Additional Study Required**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>Due By</b>
Education	Consider hiring additional reading and student support personnel.	Meet the needs of diverse learners.	Sept 2008
Support Services	Change the lunch schedule to have the students play first then eat.	Most students hurry through lunch in order to get to recess ASAP. Switching the order of lunch and recess allows them to eat their food more slowly and normally results in more of their lunch eaten.	Sept 2008
Support Services	Engage a traffic consultant to recommend changes to traffic flow, curb and street markings, etc. <i>Provide credibility to any implemented changes to the transportation policies.</i>	Student safety	Sept 2009
Catholic Identity & Mission	Create a school motto. <i>Example: ~John 13:35 "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"</i>	Promotes unity of purpose, and understanding of mission.	Sept 2009
Catholic Identity & Mission	Define a student covenant. <i>Required as a condition of matriculation, reviewed with students by the Pastor.</i>	Provide clear communication of student expectations.	Sept 2009
Catholic Identity & Mission	Define a parent covenant.	Provide clear communication of parent expectations.	Sept 2009
Catholic Identity & Mission	Provide increased opportunity for family service projects. <i>Hands on opportunities for parents and children to be of service together. Opportunity for collaboration with parish ministries.</i>		Sept 2009
Administration, Organization, Governance	The Peaceable Schools committee, SLRP Administration, Organization, Governance and Catholic Identity & Mission subcommittee member(s), Ed Com, school administrators, teachers, and students to form a committee to review the entire discipline policy and associated collateral. Form a recommendation for discipline changes.  <i>Focus on self discipline and opportunity to self correct. Create separate policies for grades K-4 and 5-8. Create one consistent discipline process throughout all classrooms in the same category. Provide a dedicated conduct grade on student report card.</i>	Heightened administrative attention and reassessment of discipline policies.	Sept 2009

Public Relations	Reorganize the website content into fewer main "parent" menu headings (e.g., <i>About Us, Academics, Activities, Resources, Contact Us</i> )	Make the school website more organized and user-friendly.	Sept 2009
Public Relations	Include some or all of the following new content suggestions on the website: a. Extra-curricular guide – description, when to sign up, who to call, etc b. Mass schedules with server / liturgical schedule and sub list c. St. Matthew Handbook d. Administration and Faculty bios with photos e. Suggestion box f. Front page featuring this week's news and events g. Sport scores and records h. Volunteer opportunities and method to sign up online i. Reports about specific student achievements j. Service opportunities for students k. Substation links and / or resources for faith issues (scripture, Catholic Encyclopedia, prayer links, saints, etc) l. Weekly grade updates	Make the school website more organized and user-friendly.	Sept 2009
Education	Study the Spanish program and make a recommendation to redesign the curriculum or cancel the program. Class frequency should be a minimum of twice per week. Obtain and implement a proper K-8 Spanish curriculum. Hire a teacher that can be the leader for the Spanish program. OR Assess ending the Spanish language program if resources are not available. <i>Research shows grades K-3 as the time for greatest impact / learning. Class time should be 45 minutes at least twice per week per class for any real language learning / acquisition to occur. It is impossible for one teacher, even full time, to properly handle K-8th grade Spanish instruction at St. Matthew.</i> OR <i>If Spanish language, or any language instruction for that matter, is not properly resourced, the program could be eliminated and the staffing and time allotted to other academic priorities in the school. Effective language instruction takes time and effort. If we are not going to provide the time and effort, then we should evaluate where to place those resources.</i>	Improve the Spanish program.	Sept 2009
Education	Consider restructuring of the school day in order to provide teachers additional time for collaboration and planning. Consider lengthening the day by 30 minutes.	Meet the needs of diverse learners.	Sept 2009

Support Services	<p>Create an Enrichment Committee within Parent Club whose purpose would be to identify and implement a dynamic group of enrichment activities. The goal is to encourage parish and school collaboration and combined participation.</p> <p><i>a) Create the vision for enrichment activities at St. Matthew School thereby alleviating the responsibility of teachers to have to do so.</i></p> <p><i>b) Target the activities to the grade level of the student(s).</i></p> <p><i>c) Facilitate commitments from parents, members of the parish and community members to lead activities.</i></p> <p><i>d) Establish a mentoring and succession planning culture that assures that valuable activities are carried on from term to term.</i></p> <p><i>(Formalize the succession plan to moderate the ebbs and flows of participation in enrichment events (e.g. Science Olympiad) )</i></p>	Centralize enrichment activities, do not burden teachers or administrators, eliminate redundancies, balance athletics with enrichment opportunities	Sept 2009
Support Services	Adopt a well defined and appropriate music curriculum that meets the requirements of current music education expectations.	Develop and implement an education-based (as opposed to performance-based) music curriculum that incorporates age-based learning objectives for each grade.	Sept 2009
Education	<p>Reorganize math classes based on student math skills.</p> <p><i>This approach has been adopted over the past few years by Mrs. Schuett in the 7th and 8th grades in the pre-algebra and algebra curricula, with smaller class sizes used for struggling students and larger classes for more advanced students. This reorganization is flexible enough to allow students to move from one program to the other based on the motivation and progress of the students, and allows the teacher to adapt the lesson topics and pace to the audience. The list of topics covered by the two classes is the same, but the depth with which these topics are discussed is different. When parents insist on having their child moved from the slower to the faster pace class, the teacher typically requests additional preparatory work at home to allow the student to catch up with the rest of the class. The success of this skill-based teaching approach has been assessed through increased interest and improved performance of some students in math, feedback from parents and former students.</i></p>	Improve math performance	<p>Pilot Sept 2009</p> <p>Implement Sept 2010</p>
Education	<p>Implement a continuous and spiraling writing curriculum beginning with grades K-2 such as the First Hand: Units of Study for Primary Writing curriculum.</p> <p><i>After successful implementation, the program should continue with the 3-5 writing curriculum.</i></p>	Improve writing curriculum	Sept 2010

Administration, Organization, Governance	Establish a policy that institutes peer interview processes when hiring new teachers / staff. When hiring a Principal or other administrators, we encourage the use of peer interviews with advice provided by other administrators, teachers and members of the Education Commission, while acting in accordance with Diocesan policy and practice (Education Commission Constitution, Article II C. 9-11).	The adoption of more inclusive hiring procedures for teachers and staff.	Sept 2010
Public Relations	Utilize a parent resource group (such as the PR Committee of the Education Commission) to gain feedback on the website and solicit suggestions for new content.	Make the school website more organized and user-friendly.	Sept 2010
Education	Explore the creation of a science lab for middle school.	Improve the science program	Sept 2010
Support Services	Consider incorporating band rehearsals and instruction into the school day.	Encourage a broader participation in the band program.	Sept 2010
Support Services	Employ a permanent band director at St. Matthew, as opposed to a graduate assistant who is a short-term employee.	A consistent director will enable a more stable and attractive program for the students.	Sept 2010
Facilities	Study the viability to create new classrooms within current building. <i>Rooms dedicated to science lab, foreign language, and art.</i>	Flexibility to grow and improve curriculum, temporary classrooms not viable past 5 years.	Sept 2010
Facilities	Create plan to alleviate any parking issues associated with church	Address issues that could detract from the mass experience or cause concern with the neighbors	Sept 2010
Facilities	Fire Alarm system should be replaced / upgraded	Upgrade	Sept 2011