

Strategic Planning for
St. Helen Catholic School
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
2006-2010

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

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I. Introduction

A. Mission Statement

The mission of St. Helen Catholic School (SHCS) is to provide a well-rounded education emphasizing Catholic ideals of academic excellence, personal integrity, Christian service, and enduring faith.

B. Philosophy

St. Helen Catholic School is a culturally diverse community composed of the clergy, parishioners, parents, students, school personnel, and all who help to fulfill the school's mission. SHCS promotes high academic standards within Christ-centered spiritual environment. Members of the St. Helen community seek to teach Catholic values, strengthen students in the Catholic faith, focus on the education of the whole person, and witness to the presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

C. Goals

1. Educate and form the total person spiritually, intellectually, personally, socially, and physically while recognizing the dignity of each of each student as a member of the Catholic education community.
2. Celebrate traditions through daily prayer, regular liturgical and sacramental experiences, a solid program of Catholic religious studies, and the teaching of Catholic moral standards.
3. Promote traditional Catholic educational values by emphasizing high academic standards and achievement.

D. History

St. Helen Catholic School was founded in 1996 through the vision and generosity of the parishioners at St. Helen Catholic Church. Classes began August 1997 with grades kindergarten through fourth grade and the building opened in February 1998. The school began with fewer than 50 students and has grown to more than 200 students. Our first 8th grade class graduated in 2003. Our graduates that attend Catholic High Schools move on to Mt. Carmel High School, St. Thomas High School, Incarnate Word Academy and Strake Jesuit High School.

E. Enrollment

1997: 50 Students
1998: 110 Students
1999: 163 Students
2000: 188 Students
2001: 249 Students
2002: 256 Students
2003: 251 Students
2004: 246 Students
2005: 220 Students

F. Opportunities for Growth and Improvement

1. Investigate, propose, and implement viable solutions to the school's facilities limitations
2. Achieve growth in academic excellence rooted in gospel values
3. Establish a "best in class" athletic program
4. Implement top tier technology facilities, curriculum, and faculty that meet or exceed standards set by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and area public schools
5. Invest in teachers to ensure high quality educators for our children

G. Execution of Plan

The School Board members, with input from the Principal and the stakeholders, are responsible for developing, reviewing, and implementing this Strategic Plan on a timely basis. The Board and the Principal shall review this plan at least annually, making additions and modifications as appropriate.

Subcommittees shall be established for each of the key areas of the plan, charged with developing action plans and work assignments for each of the items under their responsibility. The School Board and the Principal are responsible for monitoring the progress of the subcommittees at their regular monthly meetings.

Subcommittees shall have a chairman who will submit a formal report in person at least twice per year to the school board. These progress reports should include as a minimum, an update of progress toward the subcommittee goal(s), including the status and plan containing key milestones needed to reach the goal. Subcommittees will conduct at least annual reviews of their goal areas to refresh and possibly add to the objectives, thus keeping the plan evergreen.

Note that the goals listed below are not necessarily listed in priority order.

II. Opportunities for Growth

A. **Facilities:** Investigate, propose, and implement viable solutions to the school's facilities limitations

1. Background

- a) The school has no playground facilities other than the Charlie Mack Pavilion, which is used for all physical education classes and recess by SHCS's over 240 students in grades K-8. As determined by the TCCED, the administration is to attain appropriate playground equipment and take adequate measures to secure, for student safety, the playground area.
- b) Classroom space has become tight as enrollment has increased and the curriculum has expanded to include computers and arts. Examples of these challenges include the teacher's lounge being used for instruction due to lack of classroom space and the displacement of the academic mastery center in favor of more classroom space. Furthermore, we have no elective room (band, dance after school, karate when it's raining, music, art, and many other subjects). We must use classrooms for extended day and have no conference room where parents or committees can meet. With some grades now expanding from one class to two and other grades needing to do so in the next two to three years, SHCS has effectively run out of classroom space.
- c) SHCS does not have an indoor athletic facility for sports such as basketball (girls and boys) or volleyball. These athletic programs use gyms at other schools in the area to host home games, and practices are held at a gymnasium rented from another school several miles from SHCS. Over 25% of stakeholders surveyed said that establishing an onsite a gym was a high priority.

2. Specific Objectives for Subcommittee to Pursue

Objective	Comments	Target Completion Date	Status as of April 2007	Completion Date
Attain funding and construct an age-appropriate play area, taking adequate measures to secure, for student safety, the playground area.	Main play area	August 2006	Completed	Spring 2006
	Full completion including addition of benches, landscaping, trash receptacles, and a shade cover (<i>added final item Jan 2007</i>).	July 2007	Fence has been moved to accommodate benches close to play area; shade cover options being researched	
A multi-stage plan for		November 2007		

classroom space with a time horizon of at least 10 years developed and agreed to by all stakeholders.				
An indoor athletic facility, suitable for at least volleyball and basketball, should be available.	Consider both short term and long term solutions with the short term one available as soon as possible, the long term within five years.	July 2007 <i>(short term solution)</i> July 2011 <i>(long term solution, if different from short term one)</i>	Working on a proposal to enclose the pavilion partially or as a whole to provide gym facilities. Possible proposal completion date of May 2007 for review by appropriate parish personnel at that time.	

B. **Academics:** Achieve growth in academic excellence rooted in gospel values

1. Background

a) SHCS has an archdiocesan curriculum that has a baseline composition of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) essential elements known as Texas Essential Knowledge Skills (TEKS). In addition, the archdiocese uses national standards to exceed the TEKS in many of the areas of discipline such as English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Academic excellence was the top priority of stakeholder survey respondents.

2. Specific Objectives for Subcommittee to Pursue

Objective	Comments	Target Completion Date	Status as of April 2007	Completion Date
Evaluate and recommend options to expand the Spanish curriculum.		August 2007	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2006: Increased Spanish from once a week to twice for grades 1-5. • Added Spanish II as a junior high elective. 	Spring 2006
Develop an art and music department to supply materials and instruction for all grades to experience and appreciate art and music.		August 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting spring 2006 art club has been offered as an after-school elective. • Grades K-5 have music instruction once a week; ability to offer more limited by teaching resources as well as the length of the school day • Art and music are currently integrated into other classes by all teachers 	

<p>Investigate and provide a formal report recommending ways to implement pre-AP science courses for qualified junior high students.</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider current efforts and future plans for curriculum mapping and tier learning. 	<p>October 2007</p>	<p>Currently investigating feasibility of offering pre-AP science and pre-AP social studies</p>	
<p>Establish a math and science advisory committee comprised of teachers and parents to review and analyze our strengths and weaknesses in these areas and provide a formal report including recommendations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include an objective evaluation system for our curriculum to help communicate its quality compared to that of other schools. 	<p>March 2008</p>		
<p>Investigate and provide a formal report recommending ways St. Helen can implement gifted and talented comparable programs at the elementary school level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue the idea of using an untapped source of a parishioner/parent volunteer base that could come in and serve as regular teacher aides so that some of these objectives could met without extra cost or facility area. 	<p>October 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently teachers offer tier assignments throughout the grades to challenge students of all ability levels 	
<p>Investigate the feasibility of offering up to two additional foreign languages</p>		<p>November 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to conduct a formal survey of students and parents to see which languages they are interested in as well as to find parents who may be able to teach 	

C. **Athletics:** Establish a “best in class” junior high athletic program

1. Background
 - a) Boys and girls basketball, soccer, and track, in addition to girls’ volleyball, are offered to St. Helen students. Part-time personnel and parents coach them. Due to facilities limitations described above, the practice and home game gym used is located offsite.
2. Specific Objectives for Subcommittee to Pursue

Objective	Comments	Target Completion Date	Status as of April 2007	Completion Date
Conduct benchmarking study of athletic programs in other K-8 Catholic schools in the archdiocese	Utilize resources such as the chairperson of the archdiocesan athletic program and/or Dr. Laird, the associate superintendent over athletics, as to what a "best in class" benchmark should be for schools such as ours.	May 2007	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHCS athletic fees are in line with other schools • Other schools offer same sports we do plus football, cross country, golf • SHCS academic requirements for eligibility are more stringent than most because we check grades twice as frequently 	January 2007
Based on results of above study as well as input from key stakeholders, including high schools, develop a plan for the athletic program including metrics for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit input from area Catholic high schools, Pearland HS and other area secondary schools • Plan should address whether there is a need for an athletic director 	May 2009		
An indoor athletic facility, suitable for at least volleyball and basketball,	To be accomplished in collaboration with the facilities	July 2011	Working on a proposal to enclose the pavilion partially or as a whole to provide	

should be available.	committee (see above)		gym facilities. Possible proposal completion date of May 2007 for review by appropriate parish personnel at that time.	
Increase number of students involved in athletic programs by 20% over 2006-2007 participation		2011-2012 season		

D. **Technology:** Implement top tier technology facilities, curriculum, and faculty that meet or exceed standards set by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and area public schools.

1. Background

a) St. Helen has offered computer instruction for years, at one time with a full-time computer teacher. Since then the program has grown. The lab now contains 25 PCs and two printers; classrooms have one or more computers; all grades K-8 receive some computer instruction; and a technology plan is in place. However, we no longer have a full-time computer teacher, and there is a lot of room for growth in the areas of curriculum, facilities, and staff development regarding technology. Almost 20% of respondents to the survey of stakeholders indicated technology/computers as a priority.

2. Specific Objectives for Subcommittee to Pursue

	Objective	Comments	Target Completion Date	Status as of April 2007	Completion Date
Curriculum	Provide in-lab computer-specific instruction to all grade levels for at least 60 minutes per week.		August 2007	Currently not able to achieve this goal due to not enough time in the school day to meet all requirements for accreditation and add this as well. The TCCED recommends that computer time be integrated into other subject matters, which is currently done.	
	Utilize computing resources in the teaching of non-computer subjects throughout the course of each semester as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grades 1-3: At least one subject (such as math, reading, etc.) ▪ Grades 4-5: At least two subjects ▪ Grades 6-8: At least four subjects 		August 2008	Goal currently met for grades 1-3 and 6-8; personnel changes in grades 4-5 this school year have made it more difficult. The computer lab is being utilized in these grades but not to the full extent it could be.	

Facilities	Maintain computer lab large enough to seat one student per computer during all usage periods, provide at least two printers, and offer secure Internet access.		Ongoing	Computer lab contains 25 computers and 2 printers and provides secure internet access to all machines.	Spring 2006
	Supply each classroom with at least three computers, one printer, and Internet access.		August 2007	In process; currently internet access is restricted to teacher computers, and printers are housed in a common area	
	Replace computers in lab every five years or less, printers every eight years or less. Rotate old machines to individual classrooms or to office each time.		Ongoing	Lab computers and printers are less than 2 years old. Classroom computers are less than 5 years old.	Spring 2007
Staffing	Secure onsite dedicated technology support at minimum of four hours per weekday.		August 2006	Currently reviewing bids for basic onsite support starting at 10 hrs/week and increasing only if need arises.	
	Provide at least four technology-related professional development opportunities for staff each year with at least one led by an outside professional.		Ongoing	Three have been offered so far this year.	

E. **Teachers:** Invest in teachers to ensure high quality educators for our children

1. Background

- a) St. Helen Catholic School staff is comprised of two groups: faculty and support staff. The faculty is required to meet or to exceed the archdiocesan guidelines, or to have an approved plan in place toward this goal. Support staff requirements vary according to the position; all Texas Catholic Conference Education Department (TCCED) requirements are presently met or exceeded.
- b) Teacher salary levels are currently lower than the level recommended by the archdiocese. Increasing teacher salaries is very important in order to hire and retain quality educators (those with many years of experience and/or advanced degrees).
- c) Offering ample training opportunities for teachers is also important to retaining and developing the school's staff. Currently teachers participate in approximately 12 hours of professional development.
- d) Hiring and retaining quality educators is vital to the success of the school and will ultimately increase enrollment.

2. Specific Objectives for Subcommittee to Pursue

Objective	Comments	Target Completion Date	Status as of April 2007	Completion Date
Perform a benchmarking process and establish a plan, (including metrics) to improve teacher financial compensation versus either local public school or archdiocesan recommended pay scales.	Ideas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incremental increases in tuition and/or decreasing the sibling and other discounts • Dedicating a certain percentage of dinner dance proceeds each year to salary increases or merit bonuses • An established endowment fund to ensure consistent funding 	March 2007	Plan includes increasing salaries to a level that meets or exceeds the Archdiocesan minimum pay recommendations as well as working with school office to develop merit-based component to the teacher compensation.	
Research and secure sources of funding to obtain at least \$250 per teacher annually for teachers and	Ideas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of an endowment fund or grants to ensure consistent funding 	December 2008		

staff to attend professional growth seminars, in-services, workshops, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriating more of the money in the budget towards professional growth• Implementation can be done incrementally over the next five years until a sufficient amount is reached.			
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