

Visitation Catholic School

Strategic Plan
2017-2018



FAITH IN OUR FUTURE

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Value Proposition

Visitation Catholic School:

- recognizes parents and families as valued partners in the education of their children. Family involvement and input are strongly encouraged and appreciated. This involvement allows families to become part of the larger family, which is Visitation Catholic School.
- provides a strong educational curriculum that exceeds state regulations and guidelines. It also integrates religious education into the curriculum which allows students to explore their Catholic faith through scripture, sacraments, and service.
- encourages students to accept challenges and to take risks in an atmosphere of caring and concern, provided by small class sizes and close relationships with staff.
- stresses the value of self-discipline and commitment, by promoting service to school and community. Colleges all have community service components on their applications. Learning to be engaged members of a school and community serves students well at many levels.
- provides numerous opportunities for students to develop their public speaking skills. The ability to perform and present in front of an audience, classroom, or group creates an advantage for them in high school, college, and beyond.
- makes available extra-curricular programs. They are considered an important part of the learning experience. Emphasis on inclusion and collaboration foster creativity, teamwork, and strong leadership skills—all of which are life-long traits.
- is a positive investment in your child's future. It has one of the lowest tuitions in the Peoria Diocese, yet it provides the foundation for great success in his or her future.

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Introduction

The first Visitation grade school was erected on First Street between Park Street and Lexington Avenue during Fr. Duffy's pastorate. In 1895, Visitation School opened under the guidance of Sisters of St. Dominic from Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. The sisters occupied a part of the building as their convent, with living quarters in back and classrooms in front. An annex was added to the school in 1905 and enrollment grew to include a high school from 1923-1932. Following the Great Depression that ended the high school, the grade school enrollment began to increase steadily as to warrant the need for entirely new building, which was finished in 1923. Mainly due to the presence of asbestos in that building, the current Visitation Catholic School (for grades pre-K through 8) was built in 1989.

Up until 1982, there were two Catholic schools in Kewanee at which time St. Stanislaus School closed. Being the only Catholic school in town, Visitation enjoyed an enrollment of over 350 students and always had a waiting list. There were four Catholic parishes within the community, as well as, five or six major manufacturing industries. As time has progressed, however, the community has gone through many changes. Today, most industries have left the area leaving high unemployment and an aging population. Only one parish is left to support the school. Enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year is estimated at 140 students in grades pre-K through eight.

Most of the families that remain at Visitation have a strong commitment to the school and its future. Some include fifth generation Visitation students, while others are young families looking for a faith-centered education for their children.

The following stakeholders have guided the strategic planning process at Visitation Catholic School as members of the Education Commission:

Jennifer Coombes, President
Sheila Cromien, Principal
Jeanne DeConinck
Tara DeWolfe
Sara Nimrick
Joey Shipley
Teri Stevenson
Kara Yepsen
Fr. Johndamaseni Zilimu, Pastor

The following pages outline the Visitation Catholic School Strategic Plan developed by the steering committee. We believe that a successful strategic plan requires broad input from within and even outside of the school community. We therefore invite you to share your reactions and suggestions regarding the strategies we have identified in the plan so that we can further refine and improve our school in the months and years ahead.

School Mission Statement

The Mission of Visitation Catholic School is to inspire excellence and to develop future leaders for Christ, through quality education grounded in Catholic values, principles, and traditions.

Philosophy of Visitation Catholic School

We believe that Visitation Catholic School exists to make one's faith become living and active through the light of instruction and with God's help. Faith experiences are integrated through liturgy, worship, and service to others. We strive to build community by instilling Catholic virtues and attitudes through example, guidance, and quality instruction.

In recognizing each individual's worth as a child of God, we strive to respect one another and the talents each person possesses. This Catholic atmosphere, quality instruction, development of life skills, and working toward justice and peace will foster the responsibility necessary for spiritual and intellectual growth.

Vision

To become an exemplary Catholic school, Visitation will:

- continue its longstanding commitment of providing quality Catholic education through the integration of its traditions, teachings, and values throughout all aspects of school life.
- form students of strong character and deep faith who will become honorable, productive citizens willing to serve others and to participate actively in the life of the Church forever.
- promote the love of learning that adds to the development of the whole person--body, mind, and spirit.
- grow its enrollment by means of effective marketing, recruitment, and retention programs.
- be recognized as a valuable ministry of Saint John Paul II where parishioners are encouraged to enroll their children/grandchildren.
- attempt to obtain tuition assistance from outside sources in order to make Visitation Catholic School accessible to all families who wish to send their children to us.

SWOT Analysis

Catholic Identity: Our school is faith-filled and it's apparent. Catholic traditions, teachings, and values are part of all aspects of school life. Children have religious ed. daily and participate in prayers multiple times throughout the day. All students help in preparing and participate in celebrating School Mass each Friday. Monthly Reconciliation and Adoration are provided, as well as participation in seasonal spiritual practices throughout the liturgical year. Altar server training is offered starting in fourth grade, followed by the opportunity to serve for daily Masses and funerals on a rotational basis. Our challenges include limited support from the parish and lack of family participation in Sunday Masses.

Academics: We are a PreK-3 through eighth grade school. We offer music, art, spanish, algebra, and all the core subjects. Our classes excel in public speaking, probably due to their participation in Mass readings and responses. Small class sizes provide for individualized attention. Students in grades 4-8 utilize Chromebooks for daily instruction. Weaknesses include lack of funding to enable offering enrichment opportunities, such as technology, band, etc.

Enrollment: Decreased city population, loss of manufacturing industries, high unemployment, and an aging community have contributed to diminished enrollment. Fewer new families moving to the area and others opting for public schools and CCD classes have also added to the decline. At one time the K-8 enrollment was 350 students, with a waiting list. Today we have an estimated enrollment of 140 (PreK-8th), which is an increase from the 2016-2017 school year. The Hispanic population in Kewanee has increased greatly over the past 10 years, but very few attend Visitation, possibly due to financial restraints.

Marketing: Our marketing and retention efforts have increased and a concerted plan has been followed, with the addition of a part time Development Director at the school..

Development: The Development Committee has made an effort to build a current alumni database and to reconnect alumni to the school. While the database is not complete, it is an ongoing process.

Facilities: We have a great facility that is air-conditioned and well-maintained. The school and gym are frequently used by the parish for activities and there is a good partnership between parish and school in this area. Built in 1989, the building is old enough to require serious maintenance issues in the areas of air-conditioning, electrical, and gym/cafeteria flooring.

Finances: We need approximately \$600,000 a year to continue school operations. The school provides about 50% of this cost. Dwindling parish funds have led to borrowing up to \$160,000 annually from the school foundation. In 2016-2017, \$80,000 was borrowed. This foundation currently has about \$160,000 left in their account, which puts our school in serious jeopardy of closing. Our area is economically depressed with little future for business development at this time.

Catholic Identity

Goal #1: To Continue teaching the traditions and of the Catholic Church.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Continue weekly school mass, rosary and monthly Reconciliation and Adoration	ongoing	Teachers/ Principal	ongoing	none	n/a
Invite religious representatives to come speak to our students about vocations	November, 2016 - March, 2017	Development Director	April 2017	0	0
Continue the school wide morning "Prayer Circle" to start each day	ongoing	Teachers	ongoing	none	none

Goal #2: Implement a community service program for the 2017/2018 school year.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Continue our "Vis Gives Back" monthly fundraiser for local charities. Builders Club members will continue to educate the students about the monthly charity during Prayer Circle.	ongoing	Builders Club	May, 2018	0	0
Each grade will complete 2 service projects during the 2017/2018 school year. One project will be completed as a school during Catholic Schools Week	ongoing, January 2017	Teachers/Devel opment Director	May, 2018	0	0
When possible, include VCS students in various community events - ie Salvation Army Bell Ringing, singing holiday songs at area nursing and retirement homes	ongoing	Devel. Dir/Principal/Tea chers	May, 2018	0	0
Continue to develop our "Virtue of the Month" program to reinforce stewardship and Catholic values	ongoing	Faculty	May, 2018	\$250	PAT

Academic Excellence

Goal #1: Continue to monitor math scores (ITBS & AimsWeb) to identify any areas of concern.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Continue regular testing of math concepts through the use of AimsWeb testing.	Sept. 2017- May 2018	Teaching Staff	May 2018	None	n/a
Administer the ITBS achievement test to students in grades 3-8.	September 2017	Teaching Staff	September 2017	None	n/a
Evaluate ITBS results to determine areas of concern.	October, 2017 (after results are acquired)	Academics- Sub-Committee	Oct.. 2017	None	n/a
Discuss areas where tests scores prove a need for improvement.	November Teachers' Meeting	Committee and other teachers	November, 2017	None	n/a
Math teachers work to align the curriculum to address areas that need improvement.	Ongoing	Math Teachers	Ongoing	None	n/a

Goal #2: Develop a PreK - 8 Math Curriculum					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Attend Region 4 Diocesan Meeting to begin the process.	September 25, 2017	Principal & Middle School Math Teacher	September 25, 2017	\$50	Budget
To identify teachers to work with other schools at the Diocesan level to create a math curriculum	September, 2017	Principal	September, 2017	n/a	n/a
Attend Diocesan Math Curriculum Committee meetings as scheduled	2017/2018 School Year	Principal, teachers	May, 2018	n/a	n/a
Implement the new Diocesan math curriculum into our ours	July/August 2018	Principal, teachers	August 2018	n/a	n/a

Goal #3:**Develop curriculum that will challenge the abilities of our more upper level mathematics students.**

Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
1. Using test scores, daily work, and teacher observation, determine students who qualify as math challenge students.	Sept., 2016- May 2017	Teaching Staff	Dec. 2016 and May 2017	None	n/a
2. Develop an incentive program that will inspire students to continual growth and provide growth opportunities.	Nov. -Dec. 2017 Feb. -May 2018	Teaching Staff	Ongoing	None	n/a
3. Participate in provided professional development within the Math Curriculum Areas.	Sept - May 2017	Math Department	Ongoing	None	n/a

Goal #4: Administer the ITBS achievement test online for grades 5-8

Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Verify online testing procedure	August, 2017	Teachers/Principal	September 2017	0	0
Administer test	September, 2017	Teachers	September 2017	0	0
Evaluate process and make recommendations	October, 2017	Teachers/Principal	October 2017	0	0

Enrollment Management (Student Recruitment & Retention)

Goal #1: Welcome new families and work to ensure a smooth transition to VCS					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Parent ambassadors welcome new families at the Summer Family Picnic	July, 2017	Parent Ambassador Group	July, 2017	n/a	n/a
Principal will follow up with new families to see how they are doing	September, 2017	Principal	September, 2017	None	N/A
Schedule a New Family Orientation Night	August 29, 2017	Principal/Development Dir. PreK teacher	August, 2017	n/a	n/a

Goal #2: Keep a positive line of communication with parents open and create a family atmosphere					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Principal will follow up with new families to see how they are doing	September, 2017	Principal	September, 2017	None	N/A
Teachers will send "good news" notes home each school year	One each semester	Teachers	May 2018	None	N/A
Continue "Family Nights" to promote fellowship among parents	3 per year	Devel. Dir/PAT Committee/Parent Ambassadors	Oct. 2017, Dec. 2017, March 2018	\$1000	PAT
Create and distribute a current parent satisfaction survey	January, 2018	Devel. Dir	Ongoing	None	N/A

Goal #3: Show appreciation and gratitude to our parent volunteers					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Classroom volunteers receive a thank you note for their time spent helping with the students	January 2018	Development Dir. coordinated with teachers	January 2018	none	n/a
Coaches are recognized and receive a thank you note with a gift card at the annual Athletic Banquet	April, 2018	Athletic Dir.	April, 2018	\$300	Athletics
P.A.T. and Committee Chairs will receive a personal thank you	ongoing	Development Dir., PAT, Athletic Board	ongoing	TBD	PAT, Athletics

Goal #4: Involve the students in retention efforts					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Students will work on a 'thank you' project during Catholic Schools Week to give their parents	January 2018	Development Dir. coordinated with teachers	January 2018	none	n/a
Continue 'Spirit Mondays' and promote school pride at various school events - pep rallies, athletic events, family nights, etc.	ongoing	Development Dir., PAT, Athletic Board	ongoing	TBD	PAT, Athletics

Marketing

Goal #1: Update current database of potential families					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Obtain updated CCD list and make any changes/updates to database	October, 2017	Committee	October 15, 2017	None	n/a
Update database with any newly registered parish family.	October, 2017	Committee	October 15, 2017	none	n/a
Contact area parishes to possibly obtain CCD lists or census information on families with children ages 0-7	October, 2017	Committee	October 15, 2017	none	n/a
Add local non-Catholic families with children ages 0-7 that are not already included	October, 2017	Committee	October 15, 2017	none	n/a

Goal #2: Increase exposure on social media, the school webpage and in local newspapers					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Boost our Facebook page to increase 'Likes' and page views	Multiple times throughout the school year	Development director	ongoing	\$125	School - marketing budget
Keep school webpage current and up to date	ongoing	Development Director	ongoing	none	none
Make regular posts about things happening at school on Facebook. Multiple posts per week if possible.	ongoing	Development Director	ongoing	None	n/a
All information should be approved by the pastor or the principal.	ongoing	Development Director	ongoing	None	n/a

Goal #3: Continue to promote our preschool program					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Ask former PreK parents to write a testimonials to include in information packet	November, 2017	Development Dir./Committee	December 2017	None	n/a
Make a brochure highlighting the benefits of sending students to the Visitation Catholic Preschool Program.	November, 2017	Development Dir./Committee	December 2017	TBD	School Marketing Budget
Remind parents of the referral tuition credit.	ongoing	Development Dir./Office	ongoing	ongoing	n/a

Development

Goal #1: Continue to bolster alumni relations.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Research and implement an alumni management software program	December 2017	Development Committee & Web Administer	December 1, 2017	None	n/a
Migrate alumni data from current spreadsheet to management software	Winter, 2018	Development Committee	March 1, 2018		FIOF Budget
Review online giving options	December 2017	Devel. Dir.	December 2017	None	
Request updated information from alumni via website, Facebook, parish bulletin, etc.	Ongoing	Development Committee	Ongoing	None	n/a
Update alumni database as needed	Ongoing	Development Committee	Ongoing	None	n/a
Continue sending alumni newsletters semi-biannually .	January, Julyr	Development Committee	Ongoing	None	n/a

Goal #2: Continue to assist the 'Visitation Forever' committee with the annual alumni appeal/pledges.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Meet with Visitation Forever committee to coordinate fundraising efforts.	ongoing	Development Director/ Principal	ongoing	None	n/a
Send 3rd year pledge reminders	December, 2017	Development Dir./Vis Forever Comm.	December 31, 2017	None	n/a
Sign letters with personal notes, if applicable.	ongoing	Development Committee, Principal, and Pastor	ongoing	None	n/a
Mail letters to parishioners, alumni, friends of Visitation, etc.	as needed.	Development Committee	ongoing	Approximately \$1000 mailing costs	Vis Forever fund

Facilities

Goal #1: Complete identified safety measures.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Address any safety issues pointed out during the Catholic Mutual inspection last spring.	Fall, 2017	Maintenance Supervisor	November 30, 2017	Minimal Cost	Maintenance Budget

Goal #2: Continue Capital Improvements on the school campus.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Replace lights in the gymnasium to energy efficient LED's	Summer, 2017	Maintenance Supervisor	August, 2018		Capital Campaign
Replace the floor in the gymnasium/Parish Center	December 2018	Pastor, Principal Maintenance Supervisor, Building and Grounds	December 2018		

Finances

Goal #1: To continue ongoing re-evaluation of the 5-year financial projections based on the information and recommendations provided by the subcommittees.					
Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Reformat spreadsheet for increased clarity.	August-October, 2017	Finance sub-committee	October 31, 2017	None	n/a
Re-evaluate the 2% per year increase that is now being used.	August-October, 2017	Finance sub-committee	October 31, 2017	None	n/a
Re-evaluate enrollment projections based on the recommendation on the Enrollment Sub-Committee.	October-December, 2017	Finance sub-committee	December 15, 2017	None	n/a
Re-evaluate fundraising projections based on findings of the Development and Marketing Sub-Committee.	October-December, 2017	Finance sub-committee	December 15, 2017	None	n/a
Review mid-year income & expenses as a source of information.	December, 2017-February, 2018	Finance sub-committee	February 28, 2018	None	n/a
Develop fiscal year 2017-18 budget.	February-April, 2018	Principal and Business Manager	April 30, 2018	None	n/a
Finalize budget after Finance Committee meeting.	April-May, 2018	Principal, Business Manager, Parish Finance Committee	May 15, 2018	None	n/a
Close school year; change projected 2017 figures to actual.	June-July, 2018	Business Manager	July 31, 2018	None	n/a

Goal #2: Because funds from the Visitation School Foundation will likely be depleted by the end of the 2018-2019 school year, another source of funding (at approximately \$120,000 a year) must be put in place.

Action Steps	Timeframe	Person(s) or Group Responsible	Projected Completion Date	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Continue to work with the Visitation Foundation, Visitation Forever, the Development Committee, Parish Finance Committee, and any other group to find another source of funding	1year	Principal, Pastor, Development Dir.	June, 2018	none	n/a