



ST. JOHN NEUMANN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

142 Wilma Drive
Maryville, Illinois 62062
618-345-7230
www.sjncrusaders.org

September 7, 2016

Dear St. John Neumann family,

The attached Long Range Strategic Plan describes goals and objectives that will help St. John Neumann continue on its path to being one of the premier schools in the region, while also continuing in providing the highest standard of Catholic faith formation.

Upon collaboration among stakeholders, it was clear that St. John Neumann excels at our mission of faith formation. Our students are notably reverent, well-educated in our Catholic traditions, and are building a solid foundation in the ability to lead prayer-filled, moral lives. Our goal was to continue the success we have with the faith formation of our students, and partner that with a strengthened foundation in academic achievement. In addition, our goal was to look at the whole picture of our school's future. Every aspect of our school was examined; finances, marketing, enrollment, facilities, technology, and athletics/extra-curricular activities were all examined as we laid out a plan that would lay groundwork for continued and improved success of St. John Neumann. Many of the changes you have witnessed over the past few years, as well as those incorporated into this plan, come from studying Blue Ribbon Schools. Each year the Department of Education (DOE) awards elite Blue Ribbon School (BRS) status to 50 private schools. Catholic schools make up a large percentage of that group. Each BRS publishes a 25 – 30 page application describing every facet of their school. From how they support struggling and gifted students, to how they use technology, to in-depth discussions of curricular and extracurricular offerings; each BRS tells how they achieved excellence.

St. John Neumann has gone from studying these schools to implementing strategies that emulate their successes and fill SJN needs. This five year strategic plan builds upon that foundation. It is important to note that this strategic plan does not set achievement of BRS status as a goal. The primary reason is related to standardized test scores. The remainder of this cover letter addresses the reasoning.

The Dept. of Education's published guidelines indicate standardized test scores for BRS schools should exceed 85% of all schools in the nation (top 15%). The BRS schools publish scores for the past five years. A quick review shows many BRS schools with scores in the 70% - 85% (National Percentile Rank) range. Slightly below the DOE 85% NPR goal appears to be the norm. This strategic plan sets the SJN goal at achieving standardized test scores of 75% NPR in all subjects for all grades.

There are some caveats the strategic planning team wishes to communicate regarding standardized test scores. First and foremost, it is easy to assume setting goals for standardized test scores means the administration will begin "teaching to the test". That may occur at poorly run schools struggling to maintain accreditation. However that is not the case for schools such as St. John Neumann. Schools with high academic standards naturally incorporate the tested subject matter as part of their overall curriculum. As a result, students become capable of achieving high scores on virtually any standardized test. In other words, good schools do not "teach to the test".

The tested materials just so happens to be a part of their curriculum. Test scores provide a measured overview of curriculum and instructional effectiveness.

The strategic planning team had much debate about setting test score goals in the top 70% vs. 75%. The team decided to set the goal at 75% with the philosophy that goals should always be challenging and falling short (at 70% for example) does not mean failure. The team did not set the goal at the BRS standard of 85% for a couple of reasons:

1) There was universal agreement St. John Neumann must remain all-inclusive. While SJN, like most Catholic schools, is not equipped for students in need of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); it is committed to providing a Catholic education to every parishioner it can accommodate. Many BRS schools are selective in their admission policies. St. John Neumann has no intention of implementing a selective admission policy.

2) Anecdotal evidence consistently indicates the school's graduates excel in high school. Raising academic standards means more work for the students (and staff). The team attempted to strike a balance between allowing kids to be kids and pushing them academically. The team believes setting goals in the 70% - 75% region allows for such a balance. As goals are reached that balance can be reevaluated.

The strategic plan is intended to reflect the overall will of the parishes, administration and parents. Please read it and let us know what you think. Email responses can be sent to lrsp@sjncrusaders.org

Sincerely,

Your Long Range Strategic Planning Team

Father Alan Hunter, Laura Kretzer, Jennifer Cadagin, Darrin Compton,
Tom Chouinard, Skip Larkin, Peggy Reeves, Jim Riley, Mike Spillers,
Lee Swallows, Stephanie Venhaus

Subject Specific Experts

Father Joseph Havrilka, Melany Bechtold, Tom Carroll, Shari Cobb, Bart Miller



Mrs. Laura Kretzer, Principal