

Holy Apostles Catholic Church
New Catholic Elementary School Feasibility Data Study
December 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the fourfold purpose of Christian education, namely to provide an atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to our sisters and brothers is the norm and thanksgiving and worship of our God is cultivated.”

(Renewing our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; 2005)

In response to an expressed interest of opening a Catholic elementary school in our parish community, we initiated a professional feasibility study to address this possibility. The study, initiated in Spring 2011 and completed in December 2011, addressed several key questions:

- Should a new elementary school be opened in this area of the Diocese?
- Who would/should the new school serve?
- Will there be sufficient long-term enrollment to sustain and ensure the future of the school?
- What potential impact could a new school have on the enrollment of existing Catholic schools?
- How large could/should the school be?

This executive summary provides an overview of the feasibility study results.

Community Demographics

- The city of Meridian, particularly North Meridian and Center Meridian, show growth potential of 10,000 to 12,000 persons per decade, 2010 to 2030. These potential increases will provide the level of population needed to sustain a new elementary school.
- Southwest Boise is projected to experience the most significant population growth through 2020 and beyond (10,000 persons per decade 2010 to 2020), followed by the West Bench area. These are geographic locations that could be served by a new elementary school in Meridian, but primarily by St. Mark’s School and possibly Sacred Heart School.
- In the greater Boise area, population increases in Kuna are projected to be the highest with approximately 14,000 persons per decade, 2010 to 2030.
- Age group population projections, ages 0 to 14, show continuing growth through 2016, with the greatest increases for 0 to 4 and 5 to 9 year olds.
- Public school enrollment in the Meridian/Star/Eagle area increased significantly since 2000 and is projected to continue growing.

Parish Demographics

- Holy Apostles Parish is the largest in number families and one of the most stable in the greater Boise area.
- Infant baptisms are high as are the number of child First Eucharist recipients (highest in the Boise area).
- There are 650 children (kindergarten to grade 8) in the parish religious education program, highest in the Boise area.

Catholic School Enrollment

- 105 families residing in Meridian or Eagle zip code areas currently have children enrolled at a Catholic elementary school.
- St. Mark's School and St. Mary's School experienced enrollment increases since 2007-08; Sacred Heart School and St. Paul School (Nampa) had an enrollment decrease; and St. Joseph School remained relatively stable.

Tuition Affordability

- Median household incomes for Meridian, Star and Eagle (\$60,600 to \$78,800) are higher than the general county level and highest in the greater Boise area. Tuition costs exceeding 10% to 15% of annual household income becomes unaffordable without financial assistance.
- Survey respondents indicated an affordable tuition range of \$3,000 to \$4,500.

Market Research Survey Results Overview

- Parish response rate: 44%
- 192 children ages 0 to 4 years are represented in the survey.
- 51% of respondents are parishioners 2 to 10 years.
- 88% of all respondents attended a Catholic elementary school, high school and/or Catholic college; over 70% of parents with children had a Catholic school education.
- 83% attend Mass daily or weekly.
- 83% agree/somewhat agree a Catholic school should be an essential part of the life/ministry of the Church.
- 94% agree/somewhat agree a Catholic school is an effective way to help parents educate their children in the Catholic faith.
- 73% agree/somewhat agree that a new elementary school should be opened at Holy Apostles

Potential New Catholic School Enrollment

- Average of 17 to 20 children per age (ages 3 to 4 years) for a preschool program
- An average of 20 children per age (ages 0 to 2 years) for a day care program
- An average of 21 children (ages 0 to 4) for a kindergarten program
- An insufficient number of children (currently 5 years to 12 years old and in school) would transfer to the new school to make opening any grades beyond kindergarten unrealistic

Reasons for Enrolling:

1. Academic excellence
2. Catholic faith formation
3. Connection with Holy Apostles Parish
4. Catholic/Christian friends
5. Small class size

Reasons for Being Uncertain or Not Enrolling:

1. Cannot afford the cost
2. Academic programs may not be competitive
3. Location is not convenient
4. Prefer another Catholic school

Conclusions

1. The desire and call for a parish Catholic elementary school at Holy Apostles was evident in the parent focus groups and the survey results. There will be children who enroll in the proposed new school who would not necessarily enroll at another Catholic school otherwise.
2. Results indicate an interest in an elementary school that provides their children with access to superior academics in a Catholic environment. Parents will pay the higher tuition cost for what is believed to be a higher value education.
3. The potential pool of students in the general population of the study area is projected to continue growing for the next two decades. This trend provides the critical mass essential to both opening and sustaining a Catholic elementary school.
4. Competition for enrollment in local elementary schools will increase with a new school. Implementing effective marketing and recruitment initiatives along with a quality program, a clear mission, and strong leadership and faculty are imperative to sustain market share and enrollment.
5. Of key significance is the ability and willingness of parents to meet tuition expectations. While financial assistance will be needed, they were willing to pay the full, or a significant portion, of the \$4,500 suggested tuition.
6. St. Joseph's School, Sacred Heart School, St. Mark's School and St. Mary's School would likely be affected by the opening of a new school. Projected population growth could help in making up any potential loss with aggressive marketing and recruitment efforts.

Next Steps: Financial Feasibility Study and Projection

The following phase would be undertaken to proceed with planning a new school.

Parish leadership works with an architect or construction firm to develop an estimate of the capital costs related to building a new school facility.

Gather data to prepare a financial projection for the planning, construction, opening, and the first five years of the school's operation. The financial projection would include income from tuition, fees, parish investment, a development program and other sources. Expenditures would include costs anticipated for a quality school program of the enrollment size that is being projected, plus potential debt retirement costs. The purpose of the projection is to determine the tuition level at which the school can be viable, the amount of capital campaign revenue that will be needed, potential parish investment, start-up costs in the initial years and similar factors.

The financial study, with the data from the feasibility study, sets the foundation for the case statement which would drive a major capital campaign.