

Bishop Baraga Catholic School
Strategic Planning Committee
Recommendations for Improving Communication and Efficiency
December 15, 2010

Organization of Recommendations

The following document lists a series of recommendations, action steps, rationale and a proposed timeframe for implementation. Ideas have been broken into 4 broad categories:

- Improving School Committee Structure
- Strengthening Committees by Improving Volunteerism
- Improving Communication about School and Parish Funding
- Improving School Communication with Parents, Parish and Alumni

Please Contact Us!

Please review the following recommendations and respond to us with your comments and suggestions. Your response by January 7th, 2011 would be greatly appreciated. Once we have received feedback from each member of the school and parish leadership team, we will move forward with those recommendations that have received approval. The Strategic Planning Committee will work with the appropriate groups to plan and schedule the implementation of the approved recommendations.

Your feedback can be submitted using any of the following methods:

1. Email your responses to Becky Patrick, Strategic Planning Committee Chair at rebecca_patrick@sbcglobal.net
2. Email your responses to the Strategic Planning Committee at strategicplanning@bishopbaraga.com
3. Mail your written responses to Bishop Baraga Catholic School, Attention: Strategic Planning Committee Chair
4. Contact Becky Patrick at (231) 420-9322.

Thank you for your time and support!

- The Strategic Planning Committee

IMPROVING SCHOOL COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
<p>Move all school committees (Home and School, SCRIP, Marketing and Strategic Planning) under the umbrella of the Advisory Board.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Planning will work with Advisory Board to communicate this change to other committees. • Have each committee (working with the Advisory Board) document their roles and responsibilities. • Post all updated committee information on the “Volunteer Opportunities” section of the school's Web site. 	<p>The School Advisory Board would serve as the key point of communication between the other school committees. This would ensure that one group is fully aware of everything that school committees are working on. They would also be able to help committees avoid duplication of efforts or redundancy in soliciting volunteers. Their role would help increase efficiency while also assisting the subcommittees with problem solving.</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p> <p>New organizational structure should be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>
<p>Update school administrative flow chart to represent new school committee structure.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update school organizational chart. • Post new org chart on school Web site. • Include new org chart in Parent Handbook. • Give a copy to the parish office for their records. 	<p>The current school organizational chart is out of date.</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p>
<p>Assign School Advisory Board responsibility for maintaining communication across all its new subcommittees.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a representative from each subcommittee to the Advisory Board Meeting. • Alternatively, have each subcommittee submit a written status report to Advisory, which would then be made available to all subcommittees. 	<p>Sending a representative to Advisory will help cross-communication, but many committees indicated that it would be a burden for that parent to attend yet another meeting. If it is not possible for a representative to attend, a written update may be an acceptable substitute. Distributing the meeting minutes might suffice.</p> <p>The idea to have one common meeting time came from an alumna whose children attend Catholic school in Grand</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p> <p>New organizational structure should be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make each subcommittee's Meeting Minutes available to everyone. • Periodically schedule Advisory and all subcommittee meetings for the same time. Allow time at the start of the meeting for everyone to congregate and share a status update and then break out into individual subcommittee meetings. • Don't require Kitty to attend all school committee meetings. Under the new committee structure, she will be able to communicate with all the school groups through her attendance at the Advisory Board meetings. 	<p>Rapids. <i>Pros:</i> Could accomplish improved communication without requiring people to attend an extra meeting. It would serve as a social interaction and also make people more aware of who is involved on various committees. Also, since meetings are all together, we could provide child care. <i>Cons:</i> If you were on more than one subcommittee (i.e. both H&S and Marketing), you would not be able to attend both meetings. This might be okay, however, to the extent that it might help parents from taking on too much and getting burnt out.</p> <p>Regarding our suggestion to reduce Kitty's participation on school committees – it is certainly not because her efforts are not appreciated! We simply see this as a way of helping reduce some of Kitty's workload by using a more efficient means of communicating with all the various groups. Kitty has an incredibly full schedule and we feel allowing her a few additional evenings to get away from school and “recharge” would be a benefit.</p>	
<p>Create a stronger link between School Advisory Board and the Parish Finance Council.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a non-voting “liaison” post. This could be an Advisory member sitting on Finance, or a Finance person attending Advisory Board. • Periodically hold a “group meeting” between Advisory and Finance. Key times might be prior to the budgeting process, prior to the start of a new school year and again after the year is complete. 	<p>This is a critical relationship for the school. By having a direct line of communication between the Advisory Board and Finance, each will be able to hear and understand the rationale behind decisions that are made affecting the school. Also, this will increase the efficiency of communication – for example, Advisory will not spend time planning or discussing changes only to find out later that Finance can't support it. They will know right away what will work within the school's financial constraints.</p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>It would be helpful to have this link in place prior to the budgeting process for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>

<p>Create a stronger communication link between the pastor and school principal.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule a regular status meeting between Father Paul and Kitty. Frequency would be determined by Father and Kitty, but our suggestion would be perhaps weekly or twice a month. 	<p>Due to busy schedules and Father's duties at many different physical locations within the parish, it can be hard to connect and discuss school issues on a regular basis. Creating a standing status meeting will provide each person with a regular opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues.</p>	<p>Immediately</p>
<p>Create a comprehensive fund raising calendar</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify all fundraising activities, including the timeframe, target audience and intended purpose. (While this could be just for the school, we think it would be more effective to also include all parish activities.) • Chart these activities on one yearly calendar. • Distribute this calendar to all affected parties (parish, school administration, school committees, related 501c3 groups.) 	<p>While the issue of fundraising will be addressed in more detail during the next phase of the Strategic Plan, the creation of a common fundraising calendar is an easy improvement that could be implemented immediately.</p> <p>Currently, there is little coordination between the parish, the school and the various committees regarding our fundraising efforts. This can lead to situations where families feel like they are constantly being approached for money. By documenting current fundraising efforts on one common calendar, we will increase the efficiency, and possibly the return on these efforts.</p>	<p>Immediately</p>

STRENGTHENING COMMITTEES BY IMPROVING VOLUNTEERISM

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
<p>Replace current volunteer model with a new approach. Create a “Volunteer Contract” that would be distributed to each family annually. This contract would list specific volunteer opportunities and ask that each family identify <i>X</i> (i.e. 2-3) number of events they will help with.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have each school committee provide a detailed list of their volunteer needs. • Using this list, create the “Volunteer Contract”. This contract would include family name; address; phone number; e-mail address; areas of interest or expertise, committees or activities for which they wish to volunteer (we would provide our detailed list of volunteer opportunities); best day and time to call and a signature line. • Distribute contract to each family as part of the “packet” they are required to fill out at the start of each school year. 	<p>Our current approach for asking for volunteer help is too vague. Many parents (especially those new to the school) may be willing to help, but may not know exactly what is needed. For example, instead of saying “Help with the Gala”, tasks should be broken down in more detail, such as “Deliver Gala fliers to local businesses for display”. This approach is currently being used by the Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools and a sample of their Volunteer Contract is available.</p> <p>Also, by asking each committee to create a list of their volunteer needs, it provides them an opportunity to develop a more structured approach to their efforts. This “master list” will be a valuable tool to use when introducing new members to the group and also allowing for better continuity when the more experienced members retire.</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p> <p>New organizational structure should be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>
<p>Create a “Volunteer Coordinator” role. This person (or persons) would compile the information submitted by the parents to create a volunteer pool for each needed activity.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify who has capacity to take on this role. Potential ideas: Diane, a H&S representative, a parent volunteer. • Coordinator would collect completed “Volunteer Contracts” and create a list of volunteers for each activity. 	<p>The creation of a “Volunteer Coordinator” would provide one point of contact and one central repository of information related to volunteer needs. By creating a pool of potential volunteers, each school group would have a list they could work with when planning an event. It will also help parents schedule their involvement, knowing upfront what is expected of them.</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p> <p>New organizational structure should be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinator would distribute this list of volunteers to the relevant committee (H&S, Boosters, etc.). Using this volunteer list, each school group would contact parents prior to the event and arrange necessary details (time, place, task, etc.). 		
<p>Remove the requirement for 25 hours of volunteer time, replacing it with the new “Volunteer Contract”.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace references to the 25-hour commitment with the new volunteer model in the Handbook, Web site, etc. Inform parents of the change via an introductory letter sent with the “Volunteer Contract” and through discussions at parent orientation. 	<p>Currently, we are not enforcing the 25-hour policy which states that families not meeting their hourly commitment will be assessed a fee. We should not take the effort to track volunteer hours when there are no repercussions for not meeting the required number. We have also heard that it is frustrating for some parents who work much more than their 25-hour commitment who see others not participating with no consequences.</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p> <p>New organizational structure should be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>
<p>Partner with cluster parishes to expand our volunteer pool. Look for ways the school can assist with parish efforts and ways that parishioners can help the school.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite parishioners from our cluster churches to be a part of the Gala effort. Identify volunteer opportunities within the school that might be appropriate for parishioners (i.e. library help, breakfast program, reading to students, science fair judges, etc.) Identify parish activities where school families may be able to help (i.e. Task Force events, community service, etc.) Determine the best methods for making parishioners aware of school volunteer needs. 	<p>By offering our assistance at parish events, we raise the school's visibility and value within the parish.</p> <p>Also, there are times when parishioners are better suited to help with some of the school's volunteer needs. For example, it is more likely that a retired parishioner could help with the morning breakfast program than a parent with elementary-age children.</p> <p>For some of our larger fundraising efforts (such as Gala and St. Pat's Party), partnering with the parish would provide a much larger pool of potential help.</p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>This should be taken into consideration during this year's Gala planning, starting in January.</p>

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION ABOUT SCHOOL & PARISH FUNDING

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
<p>Educate each school family about the cost of their child's education and how it is funded.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information in the school handbook. • Post information on the school's Web page. • Explain annually during new parent orientation. • Include funding information in “Orientation Packets” distributed to new parents. • Write an article for the Baraga Buzz • Publish an Annual Report 	<p>Few parents realize what the true cost of educating each child is, and how that money is funded. Many don't understand that the parish is subsidizing almost half the cost of each child's education, plus the monthly payment on the debt related to the school's building.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Information should be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>
<p>Ensure all school committees are aware of the correct accounting and audit procedures required by the Diocese. They also need to understand the process by which the money they raise is administered via the Parish Finance Council.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the Finance Council create a document (using layman's terms) that outlines the proper accounting procedures that each committee should follow. • Have a member of the Parish Finance Council meet with the School Advisory Board to explain this document and also to discuss the procedures that are followed when the money raised is deposited to the parish accounts. • The School Advisory Board would be responsible for distributing this information to their subcommittees. They would also work with the school-related 501c3 groups (Boosters and 	<p>There is a lack of knowledge about how the money raised by the school is distributed within the parish. Most committees are also unaware that the Diocese publishes a “Standard Operating Procedures” document which serves as a “rule book” for handling parish finances. We need to ensure everyone is using the same procedures and fully understands how the financial procedures work. This will reduce the confusion, frustration and potential mistrust that comes from not being fully informed.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>The initial conversation should happen immediately, however, it should also be reviewed annually to ensure new members are aware of the procedures.</p>

<p>Education Foundation) to ensure they are also aware of these procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide copies (or a Web link) to the Standard Operating Procedure documents available on the Diocese Web site.		
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IMPROVING SCHOOL COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS, PARISH & ALUMNI

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
<p>Identify opportunities for strengthening our relationship with our cluster parishes.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for more opportunities for students to participate in Sunday Mass. • Make information about cluster parishes more prominent on the School's Web site. • Include a letter or periodic update from Father Paul or Father Robbie on the school Web site or in the Baraga Buzz. • Identify parish functions that students and their families could help with or participate in. 	<p>We should work to reinforce our connections to our cluster parishes.</p>	<p>Immediately</p>
<p>Create opportunities for regular (potentially anonymous) parent feedback.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a comment box where parents could make suggestions and voice concerns (anonymously if they wish). • Create a formal procedure for handling these feedback forms (decide who reviews them, how these inquiries are addressed and how decisions or relevant information is distributed back to school families). • Provide a questionnaire or feedback form to each family at the end of the school year asking for their input on what is working well and what areas need improvement. 	<p>Currently, we do not provide parents with an avenue they could use if they want to discuss a problem, but would rather do it anonymously. While technically the Advisory Board is supposed to handle parent issues, it is too formal of an arena if a parent has a simple question or concern.</p> <p>By regularly giving parents an opportunity to provide feedback, we show our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p> <p>Feedback mechanisms should be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.</p>

<p>Focus on creating a more “customer-oriented” relationship with our parents.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the recommendations above (i.e. feedback mechanisms, better communication, more efficient use of parent time) are all ways to start showing parents that we strive to provide a higher level of service. • We should continue to look for actions that can be taken to demonstrate to our parents that we appreciate their business. 	<p>We heard some frustration from parents relating to their perceived relationship with the school. They expressed a desire to be treated more like a “partner” in their interactions with the school. Particularly for those parents who are “burnt out”, they feel overworked and under appreciated.</p> <p>We need to look for ways to change the school culture as it relates to our interactions with parents. Our parents are paying a substantial cost for our “product” and we need to remember they could choose to take their business elsewhere.</p>	<p>Immediately</p>
<p>Work with the H&S Mentor Program to increase the information distributed in their “Orientation Packets”.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with H&S to get a list of information currently distributed to new parents. • Update these “Orientation Packets” to include additional information such as: a list of extra-curricular activities, volunteer opportunities, an explanation of school funding, an explanation of the school's relationship with the cluster parishes, availability of information on the school's Web site, etc. 	<p>The H&S Mentor Program is a great avenue for distributing information to our new families. We should work with them to include additional information, particularly in the areas where we know there to be confusion or lack of knowledge in our current parents.</p>	<p>By Summer, 2011</p> <p>Find out when H&S creates their mentor packets.</p>
<p>Work with the Marketing Committee to strengthen our recruiting process for children entering Kindergarten.</p> <p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach preschool parents in February or March (before they have already made up their minds about where their children will attend Kindergarten.) 	<p>While this issue will also be addressed in the creation of the school's marketing plan, it is critical that we start improving our recruitment process as soon as possible. By retaining more of our preschool children we can immediately have a positive effect on enrollment.</p>	<p>By February or March, 2011</p> <p>(In time to affect this year's recruitment.)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute “Orientation Packets” (see above recommendation) so that they have a complete picture of what the school has to offer. • Follow up with a personal call or meeting to discuss any questions or to help dispel any misconceptions. 		
<p>Create a “School News” area on bulletin boards at the cluster churches</p> <p><i>Actions Steps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with parishes to identify an area where we would be permitted to post school news. • Identify someone within the school who would be responsible for posting information to this board at each church location. • Create a process that would ensure that timely information is being distributed and that all locations are consistent. • Content should include pictures, student work, art projects, etc. - similar to the types of information currently displayed in the school's “Wall of Fame”. 	<p>The churches often have areas where “news and events” are advertised. We should work with them to provide information related to the school. This would reinforce the school's connection to the parishes.</p>	<p>Immediately</p>