

# **St Mary's School of Kickapoo**

## **Status Report**

December 18, 2022

(Due to the holidays, the next issue of this Status Report will be Jan. 8, 2023)

This Status Report is available as an insert to the bulletin and is posted to the home page of the St Mary's Kickapoo website as well as the MyParish app. To save costs we no longer mail it to the entire parish. But if you still want to receive these reports in the US mail, please contact the parish office 309-691-2030

### **BENCHMARKS**

**All these benchmarks need to be met if we are to open school in the fall, 2023.**

1. It is imperative that we do not drop below our current enrollment of 63 students. If by April, 2023 we have less than 63 kids signed up for the '23-'24 school year, we will not open.
2. All families who choose to enroll their children for the '23-'24 school year must be fully up-to-date in all tuition, registration, and technology payments.
3. Beginning in August, 2023 there will be only two payment rate options: Either full-tuition or parishioner tuition. The only discounts will be for multi-student families or students of full time SMS employees. Those qualifying for the parishioner tuition rate must attend weekly mass and financially support the church beginning NOW.
4. All previous "deals" or tuition payment arrangements made with the school or previous pastors will be null and void beginning August, 2023.

### **INFORMATION AND UPDATES**

1. The drive to raise \$100,000 for the school by Feb, 1, 2023 is going great. To all those who have contributed, we thank you very much for this tremendous, positive response. The amount collected is updated and detailed each week in the bulletin.
2. To address another question from the Nov 10 meeting – what is the feasibility of SMS providing all day child care on non-school days? This issue is related to staffing and attendance. Currently we don't have the full staff to provide this service, so those resources would need to be identified and hired. We also would need to aggressively advertise to gather the necessary children to make the project worthwhile. As this day care offering would not be a core part of our educational mission, and considering the urgent need to address other issues, we plan to postpone further action on this day care idea until such time as the school is on better financial footing.

3. Another question from Nov 10 – how can we effectively publicize the SMS issues to the wider Kickapoo community who may be willing to help? The lifeblood of our school is our students, and we need more of them. Signs about SMS are being posted at the Koerner Rd/Rt 150 corner, ads are published in “The Weekly Post”, and Facebook/Google/Instagram. We are meeting with people from “The Weekly Post” to understand any other types and costs of frequent (monthly) publicity we can do there. Beyond that, it just takes the combined efforts of ALL families in our parish to constantly and enthusiastically spread the word about the benefits of our school. This word-of-mouth is the best way to reach parents to get them to give us consideration. This is a job for everyone in the parish, not just the families with school-age children.

4. Another question from Nov 10: Do we have a plan or can we determine how to best educate the parents of the pre-K kids on financial help and incentives available that would entice and encourage them to keep their child enrolled at SMS for grades K-8? Tuition assistance is available for the pre-K families who qualify for the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program. Also, K-8 tuition assistance is available to families who qualify for Empower Illinois scholarships or Spalding scholarships. Interested families may contact Bill Lamb at the school with questions or for guidance.

5. Tuition rates have been established for the 2023-24 school year. Rates were increased 4%, which is in line with the '23-24 rates of other diocesan schools. In keeping with our Benchmark #3, the only rates to be charged are shown below. The only modification to these rates is a \$500 multi-student discount for a family with both a Pre-K and K-8 child. The factors used to calculate the 2 student and 3 student rates are in agreement with diocesan recommendations and other school practices.

**Parish rate:** Grade K-8: 1 student: \$4,399  
2 students: \$6,818 ( $\$4399 \times 1.55$ )  
3 students: \$8,138 ( $\$4399 \times 1.85$ )  
Grade Pre-K: 1 student: \$4,420

**Non-parish rate:** Grade K-8: 1 student: \$6,245  
2 students: \$9,680 ( $\$6245 \times 1.55$ )  
3 students: \$11,553 ( $\$6245 \times 1.85$ )  
Grade Pre-K: 1 student: \$ 5,387

6. Please note: In addition to donations made directly to SMS, Cat matching will also match donations made to Empower Illinois. Donations made there entitle the donor to 75% tax credit on their state taxes. So, donations to the school through Empower Illinois benefit both the school and the donor. It may be something you want to consider.

7. Update on the SMS Endowment Fund: Information has been received pertaining to the Endowment Fund at Buse Bank (formerly South Side Bank). Those funds were transferred to a Diocesan account (in the name of St. Mary's Kickapoo) in 2017. Those funds are secure. However, we want to gather more information regarding actual amounts contributed and amounts that

represent earnings on the Fund. We are awaiting additional statements for previous years – back to the Fund's creation.

### **NEXT STEPS**

1. Send letters to prospective '23-24 school families notifying them of their tuition charge. We will also follow up with them to make sure they are fully paid up on '22-23 (this year) tuition payments. We will also identify families that currently receive the parish tuition rate but are not contributing to the parish as they are required to earn that rate. Either they will begin contributing as per the guidelines or they will be charged the non-parish tuition rate.
2. Determine the priority of repairs that are needed for the parish and rectory and determine the source of the necessary funding to make them.

### **SUMMARY**

Repeating from last time – because it is mandatory everyone in the parish remains aware of this:

1. Our-fundraising goal of \$100,000 for the school is just to help the school through the 2022-23 school year by reducing the amount of support required from the parish. Without a substantial increase in school enrollment and the related tuition income, additional funds of similar amounts (or more) will be required to sustain the school in each future year.
2. There is a need to permanently reduce the amount of funding provided to the school by the parish, to enable that necessary funds are available to maintain the church and rectory buildings. As has been stated and/or implied many times in this status report and elsewhere, the current level of parish support of the school cannot continue without putting the long-term viability of the PARISH at significant risk. It is imperative that the physical and financial needs of the entire parish (not only the school) are being met.