

St Mary's School of Kickapoo

Status Report

November 20, 2022

This is the first in a series of Status Reports from the St. Mary's Parish Finance Council on the issues related to our school. We plan to distribute these updates every two weeks, to ensure full transparency on all school issues.

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 of 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, 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 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.

PARISH FINANCIAL APPEAL

Currently our Church supports the school at a rate of 96% of Church offerings. It is imperative that school revenue, through both tuition and offerings, increase. A parish Financial Appeal will be initiated, with a goal of \$134,000 by February 1, 2023. These funds will be used for this year's school operations, to reduce the need for Church support to 70%, which will progress toward diocesan expectations. This appeal is for this year only. Future school years will likely require future cash infusions until enrollment increases. Funds may be directed towards the Church or the School for this appeal.

Answers to Questions from the November 10 Town Hall Meeting

1. What is the status of the SMS Endowment Fund?
This is currently being investigated. Once we have definite information, it will be shared.
2. Early School Registration Fees – when does that registration money need to be sent to the school?
Registration money is due at the same time as the registration form. If the school does not open in the Fall, 2023 that money will be refunded. We will state that with the registration information for all to know.
3. Do other parish schools have a surplus number of students that could be re-routed to us?
Although we currently don't know of surplus students at other schools, we will reach out to those in our nearby area. Should there be any, we will make our pitch.
4. Do we have statistics of the Pre-K to K attrition rate over the years – how many kids start Pre-K that do not go on to K?
Those numbers are being compiled, and will be shared in the next newsletter.
5. Where can people get information on the CAT Matching Fund process and the Empower Illinois donation process? The Finance Council will prepare summaries of the CAT Matching Process and the Empower Illinois process. These guides will be placed on the table at the back of the church. They will take you step-by-step through the process and there will be Finance Council names and numbers to contact for questions or help.

6. A CAT employee who gave a monetary donation to the SMS auction – would that check written to the auction qualify for matching by CAT?

Possibly. Money given in exchange for goods or services (raffle tickets, auction items) would not qualify. However, if money was given for “fund in need” items, that would qualify.

7. Do we have a plan or can we determine how to best educate the parents of Pre-K kids on financial help and incentives and how to apply for and understand the details that would enable their child to stay on for K?
The Finance Council is working on that and will update as soon as possible.

8. Is it possible SMS could provide all-day child care on non-school days?
Novel idea. The Finance Council will discuss and report back.

9. On one of the spreadsheet hand-outs at the meeting, the numbers for “Athletics” seemed to be incorrect. Do we know why?
The Finance Council is investigating this and will provide an update in the next Status Report.

10. Because the larger Kickapoo and surrounding area may be willing to contribute, how do we publicize the SMS issues effectively to that wider community?
The Finance Council is discussing use of the Facebook ‘Kickapoo News’ site, the Weekly Shopper, and other venues to publicize our efforts.

11. Because some parish members may be required to make Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) from their IRAs, what is the recommended process where they may be able to make a directed, non-taxable gift of that RMD to SMS?
Here again, the Finance Council will prepare one-page summaries of the RMD / IRA Process and will place on the table at the back of the church.

12. What obligations to the Diocese do we have with respect to our benchmarks?
We have a reporting obligation to keep the diocese informed as to how we are progressing vis-a-vis our benchmarks. At this point, there is no indication that the diocese will influence the ongoing viability of our school one way or another. The future of the school is currently in our hands.

13. How can we better advertise for our school around the Sommer Park area? That area has their own HOA newsletter and the corner of 150 and Koerner/Trigger Road would be a good spot for a sign.
We are in the process of contacting the person who is in charge of the HOA newsletter.

SUMMARY

We cannot thank enough all those who came forward with monetary donations after the Town Hall meeting. That is very, very helpful and so much appreciated. We know everyone is making a sacrifice, so Thank You, Thank You.

The long-term viability of the school is based on our ability to increase our enrollment. It is a simple and as complicated as that. Anything we can do or think of to get more students -- we must consider.

NEXT STEPS

Prepare and distribute directions and contact info for CAT Matching, Empower Illinois and RMD processes. Please note: any CAT Matching donations made after November 28 through December 12 will receive a 2 for 1 match. There is a \$1000 max. You donate \$500, CAT will double to \$1000. They won't go past \$1000. You may want to consider this.

Discuss and finalize parishioner and non-parishioner tuition rates for '23- '24