

Assumption Catholic Schools Strategic Plan 2022-2027

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STATEMENT: In order to fulfill the Great Commission, the Church responds to the right of the faithful to be “instructed in the divine saving precepts that purify judgment, and with grace, heal wounded human reason.”

Aspiration: The community of the Wisconsin Rapids Deanery will thrive by a renewal of collaboration between parishes and educational apostolates, shared commitment to the mission and growth of the Church, and formation of students, teachers, and catechists.

Rationale – The overall strategic plan of Assumption Catholic Schools is a guiding document based on our mission, the characteristics of Catholic schools, and the four domains of the WCSA accreditation standards.

Mission – To inspire excellence and personal growth grounded in Catholic principles and tradition

In addition to the overall strategic plan, the system and each school (K-12) has a five year action plan based on suggestions from the 2021 WCSA/WRISA site visit. Those plans are complementary to and a part of the overall strategic plan.

Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools

The nine defining characteristics come directly from the Holy See’s teaching on Catholic schools as compiled by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB (*The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools*, 2006), and from statements by Pope Benedict XVI and the American bishops. The characteristics define the deep Catholic identity of Catholic schools and serve as the foundation on which the standards and benchmarks rest.

Centered in the Person of Jesus Christ Catholic education is rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ provides the most comprehensive and compelling example of the realization of full human potential. (*The Catholic School*, 34, 35) In every aspect of programs, life, and activities, Catholic schools should foster a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and communal witness to the Gospel message of love of God and neighbor and service to the world, especially the poor and marginalized. (Miller, 2006, pp. 25–26)

Contributing to the Evangelizing Mission of the Church By reason of its educational activity, Catholic schools participate directly and in a privileged way in the evangelizing mission of the church. (*The Catholic School*, 9; *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 5, 11; *The Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School*, 33) As an ecclesial entity where faith, culture, and life are brought into harmony, the Catholic school should be a place of real and specified pastoral ministry in communion with the local Bishop. (*The Catholic School*, 44; *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 14; *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 34;) The environment in Catholic schools should visibly express the signs of Catholic culture. (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*; Miller, 2006, p. 40)

Distinguished by Excellence Church documents, history, and practices, supported by Canon Law, establish that first and foremost a Catholic school is characterized by excellence. Catholic schools should implement on-going processes and structures and gather evidence to ensure excellence in every aspect of its programs, life, and activities. (*Gravissimum Educationis* 8 and 9; *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 806 #2)

Committed to Educate the Whole Child Catholic school education is rooted in the conviction that human beings have a transcendent destiny, and that education for the whole person must form the spiritual, intellectual, physical, psychological, social, moral, aesthetic and religious capacities of each child. Catholic schools should develop and implement academic, co-curricular, faith-formation, and service/ministry programs in all these dimensions. (*The Catholic School*, 29)

Steeped in a Catholic Worldview Catholic education aims at the integral formation of the human person, which includes “preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, developing awareness of the transcendental, and religious education” (*The Catholic School*, 31). All curriculum and instruction in a Catholic school should foster: the desire to seek wisdom and truth, the preference for social justice, the discipline to become self-learners, the capacity to recognize ethical and moral grounding for behavior, and the responsibility to transform and enrich the world with Gospel values. The Catholic school should recognize that its distinctiveness does not rest solely on its religious education program (Miller, 2006, pp. 43–45, 52).

Sustained by Gospel Witness Catholic schools embrace the vocation of teachers and their participation in the Church's evangelizing mission. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 19; Lay Catholics in Schools, 37) A Catholic educator is a role model for students and gives testimony by his or her life and commitment to mission (Benedict XVI, June, 2005; Miller, 2006, p. 53). It is imperative that Catholic schools recruit teachers who are practicing Catholics, who can understand and accept the teachings of the Catholic Church and the moral demands of the Gospel, and who can contribute to the achievement of the school's Catholic identity and apostolic goals, including participation in the school's commitment to social justice and evangelization. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Directory for Catechesis, 231)

Shaped by Communion and Community Catholic school education places an emphasis on the school as a community - an educational community of persons and a genuine community of faith (Lay Catholics in Schools, 22, 41). Catholic schools promote genuine trust and collaboration among teachers and the governing bodies to foster appreciation of different gifts that build up a learning and faith community and strengthen academic excellence - understanding that parents are the primary educators of their children (Lay Catholics in Schools, 78). The Catholic school pays especially close attention to the quality of interpersonal relations between teachers and students, ensuring that the student's intellectual growth is harmonized with spiritual, religious, emotional, and social growth (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 18).

Accessible to All Students By reason of their evangelizing mission, Catholic schools should be available to all people who desire a Catholic school education for their children (Gravissimum Educationis, 6; Code of Canon Law, Canons 793 #2; Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium, Introduction). Aware of limited resources, Catholic schools seek innovative options to ensure that Catholic school education is geographically, programmatically, physically, and financially accessible.

Established by the Expressed Authority of the Bishop Canon Law states, "Pastors of souls have the duty of making all possible arrangements so that all the faithful may avail themselves of a Catholic education" (Code of Canon Law, Canon 794, John Paul II, Pastores Gregis, 52). Catholic schools have a formal and defined relationship with the Bishop guided by a spirituality of ecclesial communion, and a relationship marked by mutual trust, close cooperation, continuing dialogue, and respect for the Bishop's legitimate authority (Code of Canon Law, Canon 803 #1 and #3; Miller, 2006, p. 33).

WCSA Domains

Mission and Catholic Identity

The Church's teaching mission includes inviting young people to a relationship with Jesus Christ or deepening an existing relationship with Jesus, inserting young people into the life of the Church, and assisting young people to see and understand the role of faith in one's daily life and in the larger society. "This unique Catholic identity makes our Catholic elementary and secondary schools 'schools for the human person' and allows them to fill a critical role in the future life of our Church, our country and our world" (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997).

- I. Evaluate and renew the spiritual formation of teachers and staff according to the heart of Christ, according to the following possible approaches
 - A. Use small/large group formation
 - B. Implement the Franciscan at Home Catholic School track
 - C. Utilize Diocesan Lay Formation program
- II. Integrate Theology of the Body as appropriate for all grades K-12
- III. Integrate Catechesis of the Good Shepherd into Preschool - 5th grade
- IV. Annually evaluate diocesan religion assessments in grades 5, 8 and 11 to identify areas of improvement. Target goal is mastery level (80% or higher).
- V. Encourage Assumption High School students to assist parish Religious Education programs (as a catechist or assistant).
- VI. Annually review and evaluate the faith integration in all areas of school life

Governance and Leadership

Central to the mission of the Church is the work of Catholic school education. The success of this mission depends on the key components of effective governance, which provides direction or authority, and leadership, which ensures effective operations. Catholic school governance and leadership can be seen as a ministry that promotes and protects the responsibilities and rights of the school community. Governance and leadership based on the principles and practices of excellence are essential to ensuring the Catholic identity, academic excellence, and operational vitality of the school. Assumption Catholic Schools is a unified system in the Diocese of La Crosse. Those who serve on the governing body or leadership team provide an environment for the teaching of doctrine and Sacred Scripture, the building and experiencing of community, the serving of others, and the opportunity for worship.

- I. Administrators at Assumption Catholic Schools will be required to complete the Franciscan at Home Catholic School Leader Track.
- II. Members of the leadership team will annually articulate at least one professional growth goal
- III. Members of the leadership team and education commission will be formed in the Cardinal Newman Society Principles of Catholic Identity

Academic Excellence

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops affirms the message of the Congregation on Catholic Education that intellectual development of the person and growth as a Christian go forward hand in hand. Rooted in the mission of the Church, the Catholic school brings faith, culture and life together in harmony. In 2005, the bishops noted that “young people of the third millennium must be a source of energy and leadership in our Church and our nation. And, therefore, we must provide young people with an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education” (Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary School in the Third Millennium, 2005). The essential elements of “an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program” mandate curricular experiences—including co-curricular and extra-curricular activities— which are rigorous, relevant, research-based, and infused with Catholic faith and traditions. The following essential elements provide a framework for the design, implementation, and assessment of authentic academic excellence in Catholic school education from prekindergarten through secondary school.

- I. A portion of this plan can be found in the action plan formulated after the WRISA visit in October 2021.
- II. Assumption Catholic Schools will continue the local implementation of the Diocesan and system standards with the following goals
 - A. Assumption Catholic Schools will strive to achieve an 80% proficiency rate in Math and English on designated standardized assessments
 - B. Assumption Catholic Schools will average 22 on the ACT
- III. Assumption Catholic Schools will explore adopting a Catholic Classical Liberal Arts model of instruction in grades K-12.
- IV. Assumption Catholic Schools will pursue establishing a Catholic based 4K program

Operational Vitality

Catholic schools are temporal organizations committed to the Church and the mission of Catholic education including a commitment to a culture of excellence and rigor. These schools exist in an environment of constant socioeconomic challenges resulting in a need for:

- sustainable financial planning
- human resource/personnel management and professional formation
- facilities maintenance and enhancement
- comprehensive advancement efforts

Catholic schools strive to maintain standards for operational vitality in the four key areas mentioned above. Standards for operational vitality shall focus on the “operation” of the school—how it works and how it is supported. The leadership team shall manage each area and collaborate with the Dean, and finance council and education commission.

- I. Assumption Catholic Schools in cooperation with deanery parishes will explore an innovative and mission driven model of governance and operations designed to foster growth and evangelization.
 - A. Promote a strong relationship between the school system and parishes.
 - B. Increase efficiency, improve communications, and potentially provide services to the parishes:
 - a) Finance
 - b) Maintenance
 - c) Technology
- II. Assumption Catholic Schools and the Wisconsin Rapids Deanery will develop a sustainable model for parish financial support.
 - A. The method must address local needs and the variables impacting local parishes
 - B. This investment needs to be equitable and just to all parishes
 - C. Necessary arbitration may be performed by Diocesan financial staff to ensure equity and timely decision
- III. Assumption Catholic Schools and the Deanery parishes will promote the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program and Special Needs Scholarship Program.
 - A. Work with School Choice WI and Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools to advocate for expanded availability of the choice program

- B. Inform parish members and wider community of the options for parental choice at Assumption Catholic Schools
- IV. Assumption Catholic Schools will prudently increase 3rd source revenue to 35% of the annual budget.
 - A. Strive to increase Scrip sales 10% annually
 - B. Increase Royal Fund donations by 10% annually
 - C. Establish an annual Fund-A-Need appeal
 - D. Coordinate a capital campaign concurrent with the 2024-25 70th anniversary celebration
- V. Assumption Catholic Schools will strive to increase wages for staff.
 - A. 2023-2026 increase the hourly wage by \$1.00 annually across all classes of employees
 - B. 2023-2026 increase the base wage on the new teacher, non-contracted annual and administrator scales by \$1000 per year and maintain the annual step increase.
 - C. 2023-24 establish one teacher salary scale
- VI. Assumption Catholic Schools will hire a marketing/communications director to work within the Advancement Office thus having 3 staff - advancement, communications, and enrollment under the direction of the president
- VII. Assumption Catholic Schools will hire an HR manager
- VIII. Assumption Catholic Schools will prudently look at the use of available or potential new facilities within the Deanery
 - A. Evaluate future location of central offices
 - B. Investigate constructing either a K-5 campus OR K-12 campus
- IX. Assumption Catholic Schools will update the technology, enrollment, development, and facilities plans to coincide with this document.
- X. Clarify the relationship, roles, and responsibilities and improve the communication between Assumption Catholic Schools, the deanery parishes, and the diocese
- XI. Pastors will be provided information on the importance of Catholic Education to recruit families for Catholic Education.
- XII. Promote the value of Catholic Education as an integral ministry of the Church

History of Catholic Education in the Wisconsin Rapids Deanery

Catholic education began in the Wisconsin Rapids area when St. Philip's Catholic Church in Rudolph opened a small school in 1885. Other parishes followed suit in subsequent years: St. Peter & Paul in 1886, St. Lawrence in 1904, Sacred Heart in Nekoosa in 1908, St. Vincent de Paul in 1957, and Our Lady Queen of Heaven in 1949. In 1951, Assumption High School began enrolling its first freshman class at Our Lady Queen of Heaven and then opened at its present location in 1954.

1954–Grades 9-12 opens September 6 at Assumption High School (AHS)

1980–New gym and auditorium built at St. Vincent de Paul

1999–Unification of Wisconsin Rapids Area Catholic Schools

2008-2009–School system realigned.

In 1999, under the guidance of the Diocese of La Crosse, the parish schools and high school consolidated and became known as Wisconsin Rapids Area Catholic Schools. Assumption Middle School was created on the third floor of the AHS building.

In response to enrollment levels, student needs, and budget mandates, the schools reconfigured in 2004. Currently, St. Lawrence School houses an Early Childhood Program from six weeks to pre-K as well as being a host site for a WRPS 4 year old Kindergarten program. Students in K-2 are served at the Our Lady Queen of Heaven site. St. Vincent de Paul school houses grades 3-5. Assumption Middle School, which serves grades 6-8 and Assumption High School, grades 9-12, are located in the Assumption building.

Our most recent change occurred in 2010 when the system's name was changed to Assumption Catholic Schools so that all students would identify with the high school, which is the culmination of their Diocesan Catholic education. Students in the primary, intermediate, and middle school levels recognize that they are part of a larger educational organization with a common purpose and mission and can celebrate the proud tradition of AHS through their identification with Assumption.

We are grateful to the dedicated members of religious orders and our supporting parishes who founded, expanded, and shared their Catholic values with this community.

The Founders

When the parishes of Wisconsin Rapids first proposed establishing Assumption Catholic Schools in 1951, they had faith that the school would attract teachers who would give shape to a dynamic school community. They had faith that many area families would recognize the far-reaching potential of a Christian education in excellence. They had faith that the school would prove successful enough to sustain itself—and its students—for generations to come. Assumption Catholic Schools is the result of that faith.

Common Abbreviations and Terms

WCSA - Wisconsin Catholic Schools Association

WRISA - Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation

Wisconsin Rapids Deanery - the 11 parishes lead by the Vicar Forane (Dean) currently Father Robert Schaller. These parishes are located in Wood and Northern Adams County and provide the majority of the students as well as substantial financial support

Leadership Team - a group of professionals - president, VP Finance, Advancement director, enrollment director, building principals, Assumption chaplain and athletic director who work with the Dean and use the education commission as an advisory body to run the school system.