



Immaculate Heart of Mary School Strategic Plan (2023-2027)

Prepared May 2023



Introduction

This five-year Strategic Plan sets forth the goals and objectives identified for Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) School, as well as a framework for achievement or advancement of each goal. This Strategic Plan complements the strategic plan developed in 2021 for Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Parish. It is not intended to be an all-encompassing operating plan; rather it is a high-level roadmap of what we seek to become and how we plan to get there. It is intended to be a living, breathing plan that should be continually referenced, updated as necessary, and serve as a measuring stick for progress. The Strategic Plan has been prepared by School Administration and School Commission with input from the IHM School Community, and reviewed by Parish Council. The Plan will be revisited by School Administration and School Commission on a quarterly basis to assess progress and identify next actions needed. All IHM school families (and prospective school families) are encouraged to review the Plan and support the goals and objectives set forth herein as engagement of the IHM School Community is at the heart of this Plan. Any comments, questions, or concerns should be directed to School Administration.

Background

The IHM School Commission serves as an advisory commission to School Administration. In this capacity, the School Commission works with School Administration to create, adapt, and communicate school objectives, policies, and procedures. During the 2022-23 academic year, the School Commission and School Administration team worked collaboratively to develop this Strategic Plan utilizing the process recommended and guided by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS). This evaluation and planning process included in-depth feedback from School Commission members, IHM School staff, current IHM School parents, and current IHM students in 5th-8th grade.

NSBECS STANDARDS

Catholic Schools in collaboration with parents and guardians as the primary educators, seek to educate the whole child by providing an excellent education rooted in Gospel values.

NSBES STANDARD DOMAINS AND BENCHMARKS

Mission and Catholic Identity

Catholic schools invite young people to a relationship with Jesus Christ, insert them into the life of the Church, and help them see the role of faith in life.

Governance and Leadership

Catholic school governance and leadership based on the principles and practices of excellence are essential to insuring the Catholic identity, academic excellence, and operational vitality of the school.

Academic Excellence

Catholic schools provide curricular and co-curricular experiences which are academically rigorous, relevant, research-based, and infused with Catholic faith and traditions.

Operational Vitality

To support and ensure viability and sustainability, Catholic schools must adopt standards for operational vitality in four key areas: finances, human resources/personnel, facilities, and institutional advancement.

Using this framework as our guide, this Strategic Plan identifies six goals we seek to achieve and a high-level set of actions, which we intend to be further defined by School Administration, IHM Staff, committees, and elected School Commission members for implementation.



Letter from our Principal

IHM School is a special community. With the support of parents, parishioners, and a dedicated faculty and staff, our students receive an exceptional Catholic education. Opportunities for faith and service, combined with academic excellence in the classrooms and outstanding extracurricular activities, provide for the education of the whole child. IHM truly builds a foundation of quality that allows our students to excel in high school and beyond. As the Principal of IHM School, I am excited to share our new Strategic Plan with you. Throughout the course of the school year, the School Administration worked collaboratively with the School Commission to seek stakeholder input and design 5-year goals in the areas of Mission & Catholic Identity, Governance & Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Operational Vitality. These four areas are representative of the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS). By aligning our goals to these standards, IHM School will continue to move forward, continuously improve, and be guided by a vision of excellence in achieving our mission of an exceptional academic experience grounded in making God known, loved, and served.

*Sincerely,
Chris Kolakovich*

IHM School Mission Statement

Immaculate Heart of Mary School provides an exceptional academic experience grounded in making God known, loved, and served.

Feedback and Analysis

Throughout the strategic planning process, IHM School staff, parents, and students provided a great depth of insight about the strengths and opportunity areas for IHM School. Over 400 stakeholders responded to feedback requests that helped to shape this Plan. Most of the feedback provided by students, staff and parents was highly favorable. We have a lot to be proud of and build upon for the future, including the following strengths:

1. **IHM School Mission is embedded.** 97% of students, staff and parents know and understand it. Many other elements that fall under the "Mission and Catholic Identity" aspect of the NSBECS framework are also strengths, including student and staff faith formation.
2. **Governance & Leadership perceptions are strong.** Nearly 9 in 10 parents and staff agree that school administration provides responsible oversight, cultivates a positive atmosphere and culture, and communicates effectively via newsletters.
3. **Academic Excellence is a strength for IHM.** 92% of parents and staff agree that IHM strives for excellence in all that it offers. Furthermore, 8 in 10 students, staff and parents feel that IHM School does a good job preparing students for high school. Parent involvement is strong and extracurricular activities are broad and highly valued.
4. **Operational Vitality.** Nearly 9 in 10 parents and staff agree that IHM School has well-qualified teachers/staff and that IHM School retains and attracts high-quality teachers/staff. 93% of parents agree that IHM School provides a fair overall value for their investment. The school building facility and student technology (Chromebooks, etc.) are also strengths.
5. **Strength of Community.** In addition to areas measured above, Community is a unique and important strength for IHM School. "Community" was mentioned by half of all parents and staff when asked to describe IHM School's greatest strengths.

Strategic Goals and Actions

Building upon the key strengths mentioned above, six strategic goals have been identified to ensure IHM School remains strong and healthy in the years to come, both in terms of enrollment and the experience of our students.

Goal 1: Community

Nurture the strength of our school community through activities that foster strong relationships among families, students, and staff.

Actions

- Continue to foster strong relationships in our school community for families, students, and staff through faith-based activities throughout the year
- Sustain a diverse and inclusive calendar of activities that strengthens our school community through parental involvement

Commentary

IHM School has a strong, well-established community that supports our rich Catholic identity. We seek to sustain and strengthen our school community through year-round initiatives that foster a welcoming environment for families, students, and staff. We recognize that parental involvement builds strong relationships and establishes a partnership that encourages the spiritual, academic, and personal development of our students. While strong communities cannot be measured, it is our belief that strong communities result in more well-rounded, resilient, and well-prepared students for high school and beyond.

Goal 2: Catholic Identity

As Catholics, we recognize that Jesus emulates the greatest example of 'whole human' potential. Excellent Catholic schools foster a personal relationship with Jesus and help bring to life the Gospel message of love and service to the world. In turn, our children learn about the role that faith can play in their daily lives and in the world at large.

Actions

- Continue to foster a positive, welcoming culture and look for opportunities, over time, to welcome a more diverse staff and student population
- Develop service programs that enrich faith formation and improve social justice

Commentary

IHM School will foster a welcoming and inclusive culture for current students and new potential families alike. We will also consider ways to attract a more diverse representation at our school, a concern that many current parents and staff have raised during the feedback process that shaped this Plan. We will seek out ways to teach and role-model inclusivity of all cultures, races, backgrounds, sexes, and ideological differences. We will also seek to identify and incorporate more service opportunities into the IHM School curriculum aimed at improving social justice. Our community strength comes from many sources, one of which is through the tremendous spiritual growth received by working together to serve others. In alignment with our parish strategic plan, special attention should be given to opportunities for families to serve together.



Goal 3: Communication

Streamline communication between school staff and parents.

Actions

- Work with staff and parents to learn Schoology (or another software system) so that information can be communicated via a more streamlined and uniform process
- Offer more transparency for parents on school financials, standardized testing, professional engagement by faculty and staff, School Commission, and social programs

Commentary

Work with staff and parents to increase knowledge and utilization of Schoology (or another software system) with a goal of streamlining access to student grades and communications from staff. Share information with families through weekly newsletters or principal emails using a schedule that aligns with school events. As an example, concurrently with standardized testing, share how test results are utilized by teachers to identify gaps and improve student learning, as well as information about IHM's comparative ranking on standardized tests. Also, provide additional communications from School Commission leadership regarding meetings and events. Increase communications related to the professional development engagement of teachers and high-level curriculum components, such as diversity, inclusion, and social awareness.

Goal 4: Academic Excellence

Part 1: Increase differentiation by leveling Language Arts classes in grades 5-8.

Actions

- Design a schedule that would allow more instructional minutes for Language Arts in grades 5-8
- Explore options for staff involvement in Language Arts instruction
- Use data to form student groups for leveled Language Arts instruction

Commentary

The Academic Excellence Committee sees an opportunity for leveling Language Arts instruction in Grades 5-8. This is something that IHM already achieves with Math. Leveling Language Arts would provide more opportunities for targeted instruction based on specific skills for groups of students. Our data tracker would continue to be utilized to measure growth.

Part 2: Increase connection, positive school culture, and outreach through the development of a K-8 enrichment cluster program.

Actions

- Design a schedule to allow for dedicated enrichment activities during the school day
- Create opportunities for all staff to provide an enrichment experience for students
- Provide enrichment experiences that cover a wide variety of life skills interests, and service

Commentary

The Academic Excellence Committee is excited to create enrichment opportunities for students during the school day. Students would have the opportunity to learn new and exciting skills and content from someone other than their regular teacher(s). Students would choose an area of interest for enrichment and participate in a small group instructional setting. The opportunity will also exist to utilize enrichment group clusters to provide community service and outreach.



Goal 5: Financial Transparency

Develop and implement systems and processes for regular communication and accessibility of key school financial metrics, namely, total cost per child and breakdown of percent of that cost met by tuition and other sources of revenue.

Actions

- Collaborate with Parish Office to determine total cost per child, including allocations for shared costs and budgeted amounts for non-recurring costs (capital improvements, facilities maintenance, etc.)
- Collaborate with Parish Office to determine all school revenue sources and amounts
- Establish communication methods, cadence, and financial materials

Commentary

Open and honest communication regarding cost-per-child financial metrics allows the school community (parents, staff, IHM parishioners) insight into the school's financial performance and stewardship of financial resources. While not representative of the entire value of a Catholic school education, communication of and accessibility to this information will assist current and prospective families in understanding the value proposition of an education at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic School.

Goal 6: Competitive Compensation

Evaluate fair salaries and benefits for IHM school administrators and staff to ensure competitiveness in recruiting and retention of high-quality individuals.

Actions

- Evaluation and comparison of current salaries and benefits as compared with local public schools, private schools, and Archdiocesan schools
- Fully understand parish budget and Archdiocesan pay scale guidelines
- Identify external sources of funding to aid staff incentives
- Track salary and benefits trends

Commentary

Competitive and fair salaries and benefits for IHM staff and administrators was identified as a critical area of concern among IHM staff and parents. Both the increase in salary and benefits for local area schools and the substantial increase in the cost of living makes this goal a high priority to recruit and retain the individuals tasked with education and the development of our youngest in the IHM community.



Summary and Call to Action

IHM School Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Mission: Immaculate Heart of Mary School provides an exceptional academic experience grounded in making God known, loved, and served.

<p>GOALS & ACTIONS</p> <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to foster strong relationships in our school community for families, students, and staff through faith-based activities throughout the year • Sustain a diverse and inclusive calendar of activities that strengthens our school community through parental involvement 	<p>Catholic Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to foster a positive, welcoming culture and look for opportunities, over time, to welcome a more diverse staff and student population • Develop service programs that enrich faith formation and improve social justice 	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with staff and parents to learn Schoology (or another software system) so that information can be communicated via a more streamlined and uniform process • Offer more transparency for parents on school financials, standardized testing, professional engagement by faculty and staff, School Commission and social programs 	<p>Academic Excellence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase differentiation by leveling Language Arts classes in grades 5-8 • Increase connection, positive school culture, and outreach through the development of a K-8 enrichment cluster program 	<p>Financial Transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with Parish Office to determine total cost per child • Collaborate with Parish Office to determine all school revenue sources and amounts • Establish communication methods, cadence, and financial materials 	<p>Competitive Compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation and comparison of current salaries and benefits as compared with local public schools, private schools, and Archdiocesan schools • Fully understand parish budget and Archdiocesan pay scale guidelines • Identify external sources of funding to aid staff incentives • Track salary and benefits trends

Immaculate Heart Of Mary School Administration, Staff, Committees and Commissions are responsible for keeping this Strategic Plan top of mind as they carry out their work and ministry, tracking process and providing feedback to the administration team when necessary. School families and parishioners at large are encouraged to support these efforts as well, identifying specific areas of interest that they are called to serve. May God continue to bless the Immaculate Heart of Mary community.