

**Auburn-Northern Cayuga School Sub-Committee**  
**St. Joseph School, Auburn**  
**Proposal - June 14, 2018**

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## I. Overview

St. Joseph School is a PK - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade school located next to St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn, NY. A school has been in existence at this site for over a century, operating under the names of St. Alphonsus and Blessed Trinity schools before becoming St. Joseph. The school is a regional school and is financially supported by all of the Catholic Parishes in the Auburn area.

St. Joseph School is accredited by the Middle States Association as part of a system of eighteen elementary schools throughout the Diocese. Eighth grade graduates from St. Joseph School enter a variety of public and private high school settings, including Tyburn Academy, an independent Catholic High School in Auburn. In the 2017-18 school year, St. Joseph School enrolled 161 students, having one section of students at each grade level.

In the past 5-10 years, St. Joseph School has faced significant challenges to its ministry. The three most prominent challenges include:

- Declining enrollment (down from a peak of 220 students in the 2015-16 school year)
- Financial instability (no money currently held in school reserve)
- High turnover in the leadership position

## II. Recruitment/Enrollment/Marketing

Goal: Over the next 5-10 years, St. Joseph School will strive to maintain the enrollment of students at or above 150 students.

Proposed Approach, Strategies, and Ideas to Consider:

- Marketing efforts should be focused on the recruitment of new students to the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs; Kindergarten should be marketed to students throughout the community enrolled in Universal Pre-K sites.
- Retention of currently enrolled students is a relative strength; continue to work on building relationships within the building and among families to ensure students are continuing onto future school years. Consider making the re-enrollment process simple and easy to complete; have a strategy to following up with families that are slow to re-enroll.
- Marketing materials (including a social media presence) should be used to share good news and stories about the school and students; use photography when applicable and target materials to specific audiences, for example, a kindergarten specific brochure or post.
- Update and personalize some areas of the school building to make it attractive to potential families; consider creating a warm and colorful primary department and a technology rich middle school environment.
- Build a stronger, more visible presence within our parishes; invite Pastors into the school on a regular basis, and invite families to weekend Masses; promote school events and news in weekend bulletins.

## III. Fundraising

Goal: Boost parental/volunteer involvement in coordinating school fundraising events; streamline current fundraisers to fewer, larger fundraisers throughout the year.

Proposed Approach, Strategies, and Ideas to Consider:

- Review the currently used fundraisers to maximize impact; schedule and discuss planning of fundraisers for the year early in the planning process.
- Communicate and coordinate fundraising efforts with other organizations that share the same stakeholders; use the timing of other community fundraisers to strategically schedule school fundraisers; potentially seek out opportunities to host joint fundraisers with other organizations.
- Fundraisers have historically been more successful when they have a clear purpose and support a specific cause; strive to include a goal, vision, and purpose for every fundraiser throughout the year.
- Aim to rebuild the school reserve by generating a surplus of at least \$10,000 each school year for the coming years.
- Mobilize all students and parents in fundraising efforts; make it easy to volunteer through the use of clear communication, clearly outlined roles/needs, and tangible outcomes.

#### IV. Ensuring a Pastoral Presence

Goal: Reimagine the Catholic Identity of the school through collaborative leadership efforts that enhance the spiritual life of students, staff, and families; see an increase in school families attending regular weekend Masses.

- Utilize the current First Friday Mass schedule to invite Pastors into the school community to celebrate Mass; schedule visits from Pastors throughout the month to visit classrooms for a specific lesson or topic.
- Invite the school students to participate/lead parts of the liturgy at weekend Masses; promote family attendance at Mass on the weekends.
- Utilize Priests to help in discuss/cultivation of social-emotional challenges students are facing.
- Work in collaboration (with Pastors, Faith Formation leaders, and Tyburn) to plan beginning and end of year retreats for students and/or staff.
- Invite Pastors to lunch/recess, concerts, assemblies, and other special events throughout the school year.
- Continue to foster relationships with the Faith Formation and Youth Ministry programs currently using the school building for their ministries.

#### V. Summary

St. Joseph School will address its three largest challenges - declining enrollment, dwindling financial resources, and consistent leadership - through a comprehensive approach to supporting the school through collaborative and united efforts. A focus on marketing and recruitment at the Pre-K and Kindergarten level will tailor messaging and invite new families into the school. Streamlining fundraising efforts and ensuring effectiveness of these efforts through clear communication and increased volunteerism will help restore financial stability. Continuing to focus on developing the spirituality of students and staff through collaborative efforts will help ensure a strong Catholic Identity within the school and parish.