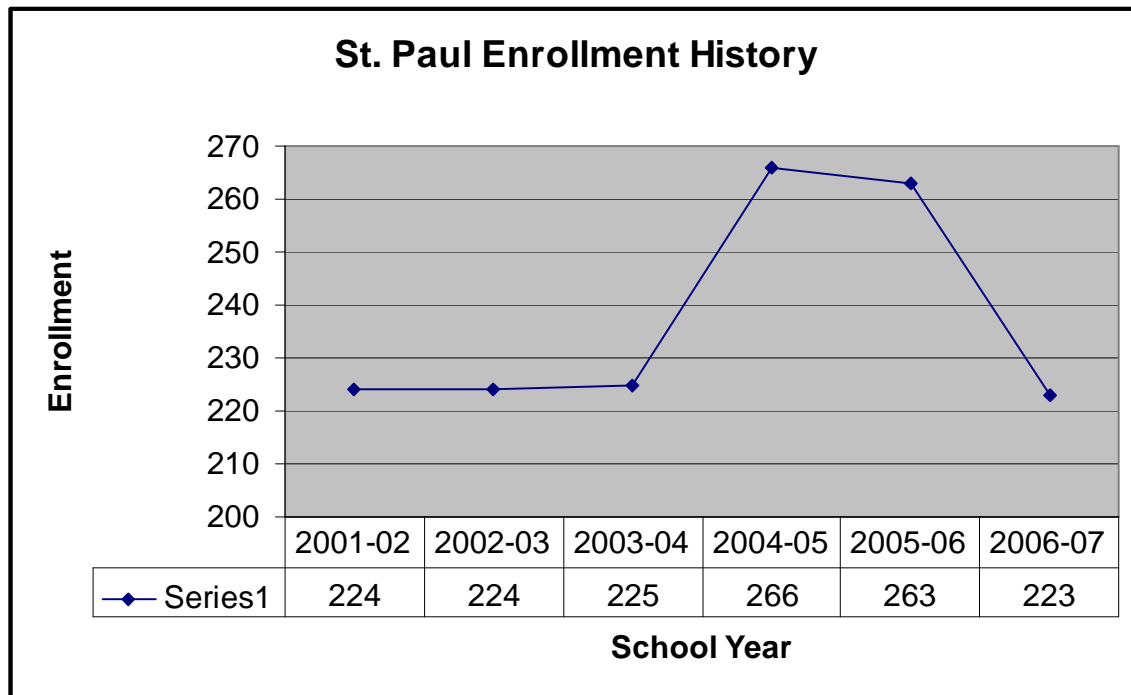


Factors Affecting Enrollment at St. Paul School

The purpose of this study is to determine why the sudden decrease in enrollment at St. Paul elementary school.

St. Paul enrollment data since 2001-02 indicate a steady enrollment until a 15% increase in 2004-05. This significant change can be attributed to the closure and merger of several area schools. Families who did not want to send their children to the new larger merged schools looked to St. Paul as a small single parish based school alternative and 23 new students were enrolled. In addition, in 2004-05 we started a Pre-K program that added 18 students to the enrollment. This increase maintained itself until 2006-07 when data indicates a 15% decrease in enrollment.



Enrollment Figures 2001-2006

2001-02

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Girls	0	7	11	13	10	14	12	10	16	16	109
Boys	0	16	6	14	12	13	15	15	11	13	115
Totals	0	23	17	27	22	27	27	25	27	29	224

2002-03

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Girls	0	11	9	12	14	9	15	13	9	16	108
Boys	0	11	15	8	14	12	14	16	15	11	116
Totals	0	22	24	20	28	21	29	29	24	27	224

2003-04

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Girls	0	9	11	11	12	16	9	15	14	9	106
Boys	0	13	11	14	9	14	13	14	15	16	119
Totals	0	22	22	25	21	30	22	29	29	25	225

2004-05

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Girls	6	10	15	14	10	11	14	13	14	15	122
Boys	12	11	10	16	14	14	15	20	17	15	144
Totals	18	21	25	30	24	25	29	33	31	30	266
Net (+,-)	18	-1	3	5	3	-5	7	4	2	5	41
											15%

2005-06

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Girls	10	16	10	11	13	10	14	13	14	14	125
Boys	10	14	12	11	15	13	14	15	17	17	138
Totals	20	30	22	22	28	23	28	28	31	31	263
Net (+,-)	2	9	-3	-8	4	-2	-1	-5	0	1	-3

2006-07

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Girls	6	11	11	7	6	9	8	14	14	13	99
Boys	10	12	11	9	12	17	12	14	12	15	124
Totals	16	23	22	16	18	26	20	28	26	28	223
Net (+,-)	-4	-7	0	-6	-10	3	-8	0	-5	-3	-40
											-15%
2 yr net (+, -)	-2	-2	0	-14	-6	1	-9	-5	-5	-2	-43
(+, -)											

NCEA (National Catholic Educational Association) is the largest private, professional education association in the world. Founded in 1904, the association membership represents more than 200,000 educators serving 7.6 million students in Catholic education at all levels. A recent study conducted by the NCEA indicates that Catholic school enrollment is experiencing decline due to 1) demographic shifts 2) weakening attachment to parish life 3) personal financial/cost factors and 4) availability of tuition assistance.

While these factors have a direct and indirect impact on the enrollment at St. Paul other critical factors need to be identified that specifically relate to St. Paul. Preliminary data concerning retention is charted below.

Data Concerning Retention 2006-07

Reason	Families	Students						
Moved	4	7						
New/no show	6	8						
Held back	1	1						
Financial	13	15						
Other	7	9						
	31	40						
Graduated	-31							
Pre-K	16							
Net Loss	-15							
Retention	-40							
Withdrawal	-3							
Total Loss	-58							
New K-8	18	K	7					
Net (+,-)	-40	1	2					
		2	0					
		3	3					
		4	2					
		5	1					
		6	3					
		7	0					
		8	0					
		Total	18					

The area of focus was presented to the school board (focus group) for initial reactions and brainstorming to help determine other critical factors that may have affected the decline in enrollment. The board was presented with 5 year enrollment statistics and graphs. The NCEA report was shared and discussed. Other critical factors identified included 1) change in tuition payment schedule 2) problems experienced by parents with certain teachers 3) uncertainty of the school's future based on recent parish studies and publications 4) parents not getting "value for their dollar" 5) Administration and management problems 6) sports issues (private vs. public) that have recently been discussed and published.

It was determined that any and all of the critical factors identified could be reasons for the enrollment decline. The next step was to determine which of the critical factors have the greatest effect. In order to narrow the factors it was determined additional data needed to be collected.

Additional data collection includes: 1) developing an exit interview that would be conducted by the archdiocese that would help determine why families chose to leave. A summary report would be provided. 2) Obtain two year enrollment figures from other area schools in order to compare their enrollment increases or declines. 3) obtain demographic and population data of the four major zip codes that historically have enrolled in St. Paul School.

Summary

Twenty four (24) families were sent surveys. 6 new families that registered but never enrolled were not included. 17 responses (71%) responded (9 written, 8 phone). 7 did not respond. Of the 17 that responded 10 indicated the school they were attending and only 2 students (1 family) were attending another Catholic School. The survey indicates strong financial concern (80%) as major reason for not returning.

Reason for Withdrawal

The majority of the responses indicate tuition (9) and concern regarding academic curriculum (10) as major reasons for withdrawal. Under “other” there were 11 qualitative negative statements. Upon further investigation it was discovered 3 respondents made these statements. In my opinion these 3 respondents had a particular “ax to grind” about a teacher and/or principal and used this survey as their opportunity to do so.

Aspects of the School

Responses indicated the families were **most satisfied** with fine arts, language arts, religion, facilities and technology. They were **least satisfied** with curriculum, foreign language, teachers, administration, special needs, and communication.

Other Areas of the School

73% felt welcomed and 66% felt they were treated with respect, except by the principal (2) 50% felt their concerns were handled in a timely fashion, informed about child's progress and appropriate amount of homework was given.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis is the most difficult to interpret because it uses narrative, descriptive approaches to data collection to understand the way things are and what it means from the perspective of the respondents.

Two questions were asked to collect qualitative data. "Was there anything that the school could have done that would have changed your mind about leaving? If so, what?" "If you were the principal, what changes would you make to improve the school?" Respondents were also able to provide "Other Comments" if they wished. As determined previously 7-8 individuals responded to these questions and other comments out of the 17 respondents (41-47%) Based on review of the quantitative and qualitative data the critical issues identified that need addressing are:

- Quality teachers
- Effective management of teachers and staff
- Confidence in teachers and administration
- Receiving value for the dollar

Three (3) of these issues were identified as critical factors by the school board (focus group) prior to completion of the exit interview. The issue with quality teachers was not overall but only with a few.

To determine the potential growth of these issues a current family survey was conducted. The information and data obtained will allow more recent data to evaluate and compare so future plans can be designed to address and improve critical issues.

There are currently 155 families and each family was sent a survey with a cover letter explaining the purpose and goal. Of the 155 survey's sent 117 (75%) were completed and returned. The survey used was the same survey used in 2004 and collected both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. The reason for this was to be able to compare 2004 results to 2007 results and determine trends that may have changed within the last three years. The survey would help identify issues in areas of school climate, public relations, communication, Christian formation, physical plant and facilities and instructional programs. Upon review of the tabulated information it was determined that a percentage of 85% agree and 15% disagree would be used as a benchmark to identify potential issues.

CLIMATE

Of the 16 questions asked in this section 4 received the percentage benchmark of 85%/15%. The questions were:

1. The teachers and the administration show respect for the students. (87%/13%)
2. The students show respect for one another. (80%/20%)
3. The discipline of the school builds up and supports a sense of self worth in students (84%/16%)
4. Discipline policies are administered fairly. (75%/25%)

Based on this quantitative data in it determined that **respect** and **discipline** are the most important issues with current families in the area of climate. Below is a comparison of the 2004 results to the 2007 results for the same questions.

<u>2004</u>	<u>2007</u>
97%/3%	87%/13%
94%/6%	80%/20%
96%/4%	84%/16%
82%/18%	75%/25%

Analyzing this data indicate an appreciable decline since 2004 in areas of respect and discipline further supporting the data obtained. While the percentage of respondents in 2004 was lower (42% vs.75%) the information is deemed relative for comparison.

To obtain qualitative data the question asked was "I think these are areas of concern". There were 13 responses to this and respect and discipline were stated in 5 of them.

It is apparent that the issue of respect and discipline are areas of concern for current families and therefore action plans need to be developed for improvement in this area.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Of the 4 questions asked in this section 1 received the percentage benchmark of 85%/15%. The question was:

1. The school has a good public image. (85%/15%)

Comparing this data to 2004 (97%/3%) it appears that the public image of the school has decreased. There were no comments concerning this as an area of concern therefore no qualified data could be used for analysis. It is determined that this issue needs improvement but not a determining issue for current families but rather in attracting new families to the school.

COMMUNICATION

Of the 4 questions asked in this section 1 received the percentage benchmark of 85%/15%.

The question was:

- 1) The administration, faculty and staff establish and maintain regular, open communication with parents. (84%/16%)

The qualitative data indicated 8 responses to area of concern. The responses were varied and included lack of communication to student behavior not being addressed in a timely manner. Comparing this data to 2004 (90%/10%) it appears that communication has declined. Proper communication is important and therefore action plans need to be developed for improvement.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Of the 2 questions asked in this section none received the percentage benchmark of 85%/15%. The only qualified data received was a comment that good deeds are recognized. This being the case it is determined that this is not an area of concern and therefore no action plans are necessary at this time. It is important that we continue to maintain this positive response.

PHYSICAL PLANT

Of the 3 questions asked in this section 2 received the percentage benchmark of 85%/15%.

The questions were:

1. The facilities are well-maintained. (84%/16%)
2. Classrooms are neat and conducive to learning (85%/15%)

The qualitative data indicated 2 responses to area of concern. The responses indicated both a positive and negative and therefore difficult to analyze. Comparing this data to 2004 (96%/4% and 92%/8%) it appears that to some the facilities maintenance has declined but to the majority it is not an issue. Proper cleaning and classroom maintenance is important and this issue will be addressed with the custodial staff but no further action plan will be taken at this time.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS/STUDENT LEARNING

Of the 20 questions asked in this section 11 received the percentage benchmark of 85%/15%.

The questions were:

1. Teachers encourage students to recognize and use their abilities to their full potential. (84%-16%)
2. The school succeeds at preparing the students for future work. (83%-17%)
3. The school meets the academic needs of the students. (85%-15%)
4. Students have adequate library/media resources to support the academic program. (83%-17%)
5. The programs meet the requirements of students with special needs. (71%-29%)
6. The administration, faculty, and staff are competent. (84%-16%)
7. Teachers encourage students to use decision-making and problem-solving skills. (85%-15%)
8. Students are taught critical thinking skills. (85%-15%)
9. Teachers offer a variety of learning activities. (83%-17%)
10. Classes seem to be interesting. (84%-16%)
11. For the most part I am satisfied with our school. (85%-15%)

Based on this quantitative data it determined that instructional programs/student learning is the most important issue with current families. Below is a comparison of the 2004 results to the 2007 results for the same questions.

<u>2004</u>	<u>2007</u>
93%/7%	84%/16%
94%/6%	83%/17%
94%/6%	85%/15%
92%/8%	83%/17%
68%/32%	71%/29%
96%/4%	84%/16%
94%/6%	85%/15%
96%/4%	85%/15%
92%/8%	83%/17%
94%/6%	84%/16%
100%	85%/15%

The qualitative data obtained indicated the greatest number of written responses (28). 14 responses included lack of confidence in quality of teachers and teaching methodologies. The most significant data obtained is the response to question 11, “for the most part I am satisfied with our school”. The response to this question when compared to 2004 and the comments made clearly indicate dissatisfaction with some teachers and the overall supervision and management provided by the principal. Upon further investigation of data it was determined that the majority of the dissatisfaction is being expressed by parents of middle school children. It is apparent that the issue of instructional programs/student learning is the area of greatest concern for current families and therefore action plans need to be developed for improvement in this area.

FUTURE ENROLLMENT

Enrollment comparisons from other area schools indicate declines consistent with St. Paul.

St. Nicholas Academy	05-06	06-07	Net (+,-)	%(+,-)
S	530	481	-49	-9%
N	273	230	-43	-16%
Total	803	711	-92	12.50%
Notes	Growth in only 3 grades 1 (+6) 3 (+2) 7 (+3). Substantial decrease in grades (K, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8), with greatest decline in grades 4 (-21) and 8 (-25)			
St. Andrew Academy	583	502	-81	13.80%
Notes	Growth in grade 7 only (+14). Substantial decrease in all other grades, with greatest decline in grades K (-18), 3 (-12), 6 (-17), 8 (-29)			

Our future enrollment depends on how well we can influence families with Pre-K age children to attend St. Paul and once enrolled retain them. We obtain the majority of our enrollment from four (4) zip codes. In these 4 zip codes there are 9,547 children less than five (5) years of age.

Zip Code	< 5yrs
40216	2456
40272	2409
40214	3072
40258	1610
Total	9547

There are 64 private Day Care programs and 51 have Pre-K and 12 public Pre-K programs in zip codes listed above. There are 2 paid programs, one in 40216 and the other in 40272.

CONCLUSION

The decline in enrollment can be associated in part to national and local demographics and financial trends. According to the NCEA from the 2003-04 school year to 2004-05, there was a decrease in national enrollment in Roman Catholic schools by a total of 2.6 percent. Some 136 schools were lost either through closures or consolidations. The data collected through surveys indicate specific issues and concerns at St. Paul. Based on the data collected for potential enrollment it is reasonable to assume that if the critical factors identified are addressed and corrected increasing enrollment is achievable. Despite the declining enrollment, the statistics have shown that approximately one-third of the nation's 7,799 Catholic schools have reported to have waiting lists for attendance. Guerra said that this growing demand is due to Catholics' support of their educational institutions. I firmly believe that the families in our community will pay for quality. If we show this quality the families in this community will support St. Paul and not only will we retain students and families but we will attract new ones. In addition, we will be able to attract new sources of income to help support our families. Archbishop John Foley, a top American official in the Vatican, said that not enough Catholics who can afford to donate money to the schools are doing so. Our mission and responsibility is to identify those in our community who can help support our school financially thereby decreasing the financial burden of the parish and families. At the same time we must ensure that all current families are doing their part by providing the level of stewardship necessary to support the parish and school.

The exit interview indicated four (4) areas of concern. Those areas are 1) quality teachers 2) effective management of teachers and staff 3) confidence in teachers and administration and 4) receiving "value for the dollar". Parents were least satisfied with curriculum, foreign language, teachers, administration, special needs and communication. Review of the current

parent survey results indicate parents are least satisfied with climate as it relates to respect and discipline among students and teachers and instructional programs/student learning. In addition, data indicates a decline in each of these areas over the past 3 years. While foreign language, special needs and communication are important issues they are determined secondary to the loss of families and students to the school.

The most important aspect of any school is to ensure it has quality teachers providing quality instruction. These teachers need to ensure they are teaching what needs to be taught and that students are learning what they are teaching. Teachers must assess the academic growth of each student while ensuring their behavioral, social and spiritual needs in groups and individually. Ensuring consistent discipline and respect are a must in every teacher's management plan. In doing this teachers must maintain communication with parents so that parents are aware of their child's progress and partner with the teacher.

The survey's conducted indicate that 15-18% of the current families have lost confidence in the quality of instruction at St. Paul. It is apparent that this dissatisfaction is not with all teachers. These families have also lost confidence in the administration because they have not seen positive changes in teacher quality or accountability and therefore assume that no actions are taking place for improvement. It is therefore apparent that if 15-18% of the parents feel this way they will question the reason for paying tuition to attend the school because they do not see the value. In addition, they will voice their concerns to others which will lead to even greater concern and potential for leaving the school.

ACTION PLANS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTION

1. Improve evaluation process of all teachers and provide regular and consistent follow up on instructional performance.
2. Improve supervision of teachers to ensure management plans address a consistent discipline and communication plan. Document areas of concern and develop action plans for improvement; if little or no improvement is observed place teachers on probation as outlined in Archdiocese handbook.
3. Conduct a yearly parent evaluation of teachers and principal to determine areas of strengths and concerns. Evaluations will become a part of the yearly performance evaluation and goals will be established for the following year.
4. Principal will conduct a beginning of year meeting with all parents to explain and discuss teacher, student and parent expectations.
5. Establish a School Improvement Committee made up of parents and teachers that regularly meet to address issues and concerns.
6. Ensure the needs of all students identified with learning and behavioral challenges are met. If resources are not available to address the student's specific need or improvement is not shown then alternative schools must be strongly suggested.

ACTION PLANS FOR FUTURE ENROLLMENT

1. Develop quality marketing letter to send to residents in market area.
2. Contact area day directors to begin building relationships.
3. Provide marketing materials for area day cares.
4. Develop "talking points" for potential calls that promotes value of Pre-K program.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I have always believed that the single most important ingredient to a good school was quality teachers and teaching. After completing this research I am increasingly convinced that quality teaching will overcome any other short fall a school may have. Issues may arise in areas of public relations, communications, facilities, cafeteria, etc. but these are secondary if parents feel their children are receiving quality teaching by quality teachers.

According to RTI International, one of the worlds leading research institutions, the quality of instruction in most America elementary schools is "mediocre" and does not depend on

traditional indicators of teacher qualifications. Their research concluded that classroom instruction is inconsistent and varies from classroom to classroom, and that teachers' instructional skill does not appear to be related to academic degrees or length of teaching experience. Dr. Renate Houts a research statistician and psychologist at RTI states, "Although the vast majority of the teachers we assessed met state standards for "highly qualified", they did not typically display behaviors in the classroom that would produce learning gains for children." High quality teaching challenges children to use reasoning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, with lots of teacher-student interaction. It involves emotionally supportive interactions and engaging activities but that kind of experience is not typical the study found. This study is based on an analysis of data collected for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of Early Child Care and Youth Development (NIHCD). The NIHCD study is tracking the development of more than 1,000 children recruited at birth from 10 locations across the country, observing children's behavior and characteristics of their homes and classrooms. According to Dr. Robert C. Pinata lead researcher and Novartis US Foundation Professor of Education at the University of Virginia School of Education, "any given child has less than a 20 percent chance of having a rich classroom experience consistently through elementary school". This is disturbing for educators and parents. Many parents expect good teaching every time and as educators we should provide it to the best of our ability.

If we commit and dedicate ourselves to our profession and to the children we teach I feel the quality we are all looking for will show and our enrollment will increase accordingly. This commitment must be designed to challenge children academically in a respectful environment and professing the gospel values that are apart of our mission and philosophy.

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