

Vitality Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

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Will each school be able to adopt their own curriculum style or will there be a push to have all schools use the same curriculum Style?

Our three St Joseph Catholic grade schools (Cathedral, St Francis Xavier, St James) all follow a similar curriculum, based on high academic standards – defined by the Diocese of KC/SJ and equal to or exceeding Missouri and national benchmarks. Our high standards are based on truth, goodness, and beauty and are foundational to our common culture and academic expectations. Our three schools are all assessed and evaluated against these standards and expectations. Within these expectations, each school has some latitude in presentation style and delivery of these standards and curricular material. Similarly, just as every student is unique, the same holds true for teachers, so we allow our teachers, each of which has their own teaching style, some latitude in how they administer our curriculum. All our schools and teachers are aligned to these standards and accountable to our high academic expectations.

These common and high standards help to ensure that our eighth-grade graduates, from any of our middle schools, are well prepared and above entry level readiness to ensure their academic success, whether at Bishop LeBlond or other high schools.

Will more be done to include children of color and those of lower incomes?

Our schools, as well as the broader Catholic Church, have been serving lower income students since their inception. All of our schools offer scholarships and other financing options to ensure that financial ability to pay tuition is not the limiting factor for students to attend our schools. Every school has families that are benefitting from this aid. The Partnership and marketing efforts are intended to better inform the community of these financial aid opportunities.

Regarding diversity in our schools, Fr Hansen spoke during the Summit about how Cathedral and his hopes for long term diversity in our schools. He talks about how Cathedral will be offering targeted scholarships for children of color and lower incomes. This desire is supported by the Board and we believe this is best for St Joseph and our Catholic community.

Listen to his comments in this video (at 3:49): <https://youtu.be/wVCvLMETAow>

What will the role of the president entail?

Here is the job description that the Partnership board prepared for the President position.

The President oversees and provides direction for the following areas, on behalf of the Partnership and its Board. Key responsibilities include: 1) communicating and propagating the Partnership's Catholic identity and culture; 2) facilitates the education and curriculum for the Partnership and participating schools; 3) leads strategic planning activities; 4) oversees marketing and public relations; 5) leads development and fundraising on behalf of the Partnership; 6) ensure the Partnership and the schools are operating in a financially sustainable manner.

Are there plans to consolidate schools?

The overall hope of the Partnership Board is to continue operating all four schools as long as they remain operationally viable and their facilities can be cost effectively maintained. The Board will routinely assess the performance metrics from each campus to ensure ongoing feasibility.

Meanwhile, the board will be proactive in developing alternative structural models should some form of future consolidation be deemed appropriate. Throughout this process, the board vows to be thoughtful and deliberate in making an informed decision based on a thorough and objective review of all the relevant facts and data.

You can hear Brice Libel's, Partnership Treasurer, recorded comments:

<https://youtu.be/bYAWv2-3C00>

How is the Board assessing the viability of our schools?

One of the more immediate priorities of the Partnership is assessing the long-term sustainability of our current schools. The Board is working to develop a balanced scorecard approach to assess and monitor each school's performance in certain fundamental areas. Specifically tracking financial, enrollment, academic, and other key metrics to establish an overall picture of each school. The Board will then establish performance thresholds to continually measure and thereby hopefully improve each school's performance.

A final key analytic will be a facility assessment of each campus. This will serve to ensure our Catholic School facilities meet the basic expectations for educational, safety, comfort, technology, and spiritual needs. This will include understanding and addressing both the desired long-term capital improvements, as well as short term maintenance requirements at each campus.

Based on these assessments, the Board will look at opportunities for financial improvement. This will likely include increasing fundraising and development, and creating operational efficiencies, such as consolidated purchasing, sharing staff and resources, and eliminating duplicate expenses.

You can hear Brice Libel's, Partnership Treasurer, recorded comments about operational improvements: <https://youtu.be/s8sMn47ofyY>

Is there a plan for a capital campaign to support the facility and campus needs?

The Partnership plans to implement a capital campaign to help support our facilities, providing resources for both maintenance and major capital improvements needs.

What is Classical Education?

Classical education, sometimes referred to as Catholic liberal arts education, aims to include instruction on the virtues and a love of truth, goodness and beauty in ordinary lesson plans. Classical theory divides childhood development into three stages known as the trivium: grammar, logic and rhetoric. During the "grammar" years (kindergarten through fourth grade), children soak up knowledge. In the "logic" stage (roughly grades five through eight), children learn to analyze, question, discern and evaluate. Students learn to think through arguments, pay attention to cause and effect and begin to see how facts fit together. Finally, the "rhetoric" stage (grades nine through 12) concentrates on acquiring wisdom and applying knowledge. Students learn to express themselves persuasively.

In addition, here are a few things that classical education is:

- It is a focus and emphasis on teaching critical thinking, across all subject areas.
- It is cross-curricular instruction, shows how different subject areas are related.
- It is a continued infusion of our Catholic faith into classroom instruction.
- There are high expectations in all areas.
- It is teaching in story form to aid in student retention.
- It is the regular use of advanced questioning.
- It is teaching kids how to learn—so that they can apply this to new life situations.

Here is what classical education is not:

- It is not the return to the "one-room schoolhouse." New world problems are examined through the lens of tried-and-true, traditional methods.
- It is not strict, cold or constrained. Classically instructed students demonstrate a great love for learning.
- It is not a reduction in the teaching of math, science and technology—in fact, it is the opposite of this.

- It is not a lack of emphasis on the arts—it is an increased focus on them. Beautiful works of art illustrate perfectly the goals of classical education. Music serves not only as a source of inspiration, but as a strong link with and in support of the instruction of mathematics.

For those of you who would like more information regarding classical education, St. James is beginning a study of classical education in February. They will be hosting an informational meeting on February 25 th at 7:00 p.m. You are all welcome to attend.

You can hear Jennifer Saunders, Principal of St James, recorded answer about Classical Education: <https://youtu.be/pgY7RPp9tfs>

Are there plans for advanced technology, STEAM, foreign languages, robotics, and diverse electives?

All four schools are committed to using technology in their classrooms and to include sciences, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics in their curriculum (this includes St James and it's pursuit of Classical education). Currently there are differences within the grade school regarding foreign language offerings. The Partnership will be looking at opportunities for our schools to collaborate to offer more and stronger offerings of these and other electives.

What is your time frame for full implementation of changes to current school education models?

St James is the only school that has plans for a major change of their educational model. Fr Tottons said he expects that it will take five years to fully implement these changes. You can hear Fr Totton's recorded comments about plans for St James:

https://youtu.be/MPOEwYF_Odg

You can hear Darin Pollard, Principal of St Francis, for his recorded comments:

<https://youtu.be/BSmQYuexB80>

You can hear Fr Hansen, Pastor of Cathedral, for his recorded comments:

<https://youtu.be/wVCvLMETAow>

You can hear Ann Lachowitz, Principal of LeBlond, for her recorded comments:

https://youtu.be/wFlwx8fO_Dw

Are there any plans to partner with Hillyard Technical school?

The Partnership Academic Excellence subcommittee will look into Hillyard Technical school offerings and determine if there is an opportunity to collaborate with them.

Here is recording of the signing ceremony with Benedictine College:

Benedictine and signing ceremony

<https://youtu.be/HOnG6iE3pek>

Here are answers to questions during the Q&A session:

Hasn't this been tried before? What is the difference this time?

<https://youtu.be/tng5fy-DM-4>

What is Classical Education?

<https://youtu.be/pgY7RPp9tfs>

What Will be Different in the schools?

<https://youtu.be/m9dKqBOcdhg>

Are there plans to close some of our schools?

<https://youtu.be/bYAWv2-3C00>

What are plans for Cathedral school?

<https://youtu.be/wVCvLMETAow>

What are plans with St Francis school?

<https://youtu.be/BSmQYuexB80>

What are plans for St James school?

https://youtu.be/MPOEwYF_Odg

What are plans for LeBlond?

https://youtu.be/wFlwx8fO_Dw

Here are sections of the recorded Summit available to watch:

Welcome and opening remarks

<https://youtu.be/j3tGVpDmV7M>

Mission, Pillars & Culture

<https://youtu.be/gSFgBx3fmU4>

Academic Excellence

https://youtu.be/mEdkDe_g-mg

Operational vitality

<https://youtu.be/s8sMn47ofyY>

Diocesan perspective

<https://youtu.be/rysplr6lzbo>

Blessings and closing prayer

<https://youtu.be/D7LaeVp0kTk>

Closing comments

https://youtu.be/DKcuU_Vk2fE