

ST. Cecilia Parish and School

Development Assessment Executive Summary September 2006

Presented by:

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

As part of the development and planning work, St. Cecilia and the Institute of School and Parish Development (ISPD) have entered into a ten-month process designed to invite and involve people from the parish and school in building a vision and a development plan for the future. There are several components to this process including the following:

- This Development Assessment
- Creation of a Core Team
- Development Education
- Input Sessions
- Formation of a Development Advisory Board
- Creation of a Strategic Plan for Development

As agreed, one of the first steps of this process is to conduct a Development Assessment of the parish and school. Stephanie Greenwood, associate of ISPD, will be the lead consultant assisting St. Cecilia through this development process. Mrs. Greenwood conducted interviews on Wednesday, August 9th and Thursday, August 10th. The Development Assessment will be presented to the parish and school on September 6th, 2006, by Stephanie Greenwood.

Scope of Analysis

The Development Assessment is a look at the parish and school in general and, more specifically, in the areas of leadership and planning, development, communications, organization, and revenue generation. Much of the emphasis is internal, seeking to understand the base of operation of development, the critical issues the parish and school face regarding development, and offering strategic recommendations in order for development to flourish in the future. In essence, ISPD is taking a development “snapshot” of the inner circle of St. Cecilia and assessing the strength of the development infrastructure.

Input for this analysis was received in the following manner:

- Initial meeting and discussion with core group of parish and school leaders (small group setting);
- Interviews with various members of the parish and school community;

- Assessment questions that were answered by the parish and school administration;
- Gathering of materials requested by ISPD.

Appreciation

The staff of the Institute of School and Parish Development wishes to thank the many individuals who took the time to meet with Stephanie Greenwood, ISPD associate, in an effort to share their concerns, opinions and hopes for St. Cecilia.

Special thanks go to Fr. Craig Eilerman, Jeff Kanowsky, Jackie Mulholland and the parish office staff for their assistance and cooperation, and all who helped in preparation with this report.

Development as the Frame of Reference

One of the major challenges Catholic parish and school leaders face is educating the key internal constituencies about the meaning of the word development. And, closely associated with the meaning is the understanding that development is a process, not a program to be plugged in only at specific times when money is needed.

Development is defined as **the meaningful involvement of people in your mission and vision for the future.** By the very definition of the word, development takes time — usually two to four years from the time development efforts are begun until a parish and school begin to see substantial results. This is key. You must be willing to invest time and money in order to attract resources for the parish and school.

The model that the Institute of School and Parish Development teaches throughout the country is called “The Seven I’s of Catholic Development.”

The Seven I’s of Development

- Identify:** Specifically the people, processes, values and goals that will be key to the development process.
- Inform:** Reach out to the key publics, informing them of the development process and the essential elements of your parish and school.

- Invite:** Ask key publics to take a close look at you as you look at them.
- Involve:** Involve people in the development process in meaningful ways.
- Implement:** Put into action, strategic plans that have been created through the involvement of people.
- Invest:** Arrange for involved people to invest in the future of their parish and school and their own personal future.
- Improve:** Implement an evaluative process to ensure longevity of your development process.

The Institute of School and Parish Development will be viewing St. Cecilia from this particular frame of reference: that is, from the context of the “Seven I’s” approach to development.

ISPD

The Institute of School and Parish Development is a national Catholic consulting firm headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana. The president of the firm is Frank Donaldson, who has a background as a Catholic parish and school administrator, development director and teacher for more than 20 years. There are seven associates — full and part-time — working with ISPD, along with a staff of two full-time team members.

ISPD works exclusively with *Catholic* schools, parishes and dioceses across the country through on-site consulting and workshops.

The company is eighteen years old and concentrates its consulting services in the following areas:

- † Present Situation Analysis
- † Long-Range Strategic Planning
- † Development Office Set-Up
- † Development Director Hire and Train
- † Building the Development Core Team
- † Strategic Plan for Development Efforts

- † Annual Funds
- † Major Gift Process
- † Endowment Programs
- † Board Development
- † Faculty, Parent and Board Unity
- † Mission and Vision Formation
- † Recruitment and Marketing
- † Publications
- † Capital Campaigns
- † Total Quality for Catholic Parishes and Schools

In our work with many schools, parishes, and dioceses, we are pleased that for the past eighteen years, our efforts have been successful.

With the experience of working with many Catholic schools throughout the country, and understanding what is working well and what is not, ISPD is pleased to present this Development Assessment to St. Cecilia.

II. Highlights

Area #1: Welcoming and Warm Community

- From the moment one steps foot on the St. Cecilia campus, it is evident that he is at “home”. Nearly every person that participated in the interview process talked about the caring atmosphere that is present in the parish. Parishioners truly view St. Cecilia as their family. Parishioners are quick to respond when someone is in need, and support each other without fail. This quality is not only seen as a strength of the parish, but to many, as its single most impressive aspect. ISPD applauds St. Cecilia’s commitment to welcoming newcomers, and making every parishioner and guest feel comfortable and welcome.

Area #2: Meaningful Homilies

- Many parishioners we spoke with pointed to Fr. Eilerman’s homilies as being outstanding. They appreciate his personal style and enjoy his interaction with the congregation. When parishioners leave Mass, they feel inspired and spiritually nourished by his homilies.

Area #3: Diverse Ministries

- St. Cecilia offers a wide range of ministries to its parishioners. Members of the community are impressed with the scope and quality of activities that take place in the parish. Several people mentioned that there is always something going on at St. Cecilia, and there is a place for everyone, at any stage of life, to “fit in”.
- The Bereavement Ministry is one group that was singled out as being particularly outstanding. Not only does this ministry boast 100+ volunteers who serve, but the quality of service that is provided to grieving families is personal, attentive and of the highest caliber.
- The newer Prison Ministry was also cited as an important outreach program at St. Cecilia. Parishioners are impressed with the parish’s commitment to service and outreach into the community of Columbus and beyond.

Area #4: Need for Greater Participation

- While St. Cecilia offers many opportunities for involvement, ISPD learned through the interview process that like many parish communities nationwide, there is a core group of people who consistently volunteer and participate as leaders in parish ministries as well as school activities. We heard from several

people that improving the level of participation and involvement is a key need for St. Cecilia. Having a larger number of parishioners assuming ministry responsibilities and developing new leaders for the future were also mentioned as being great needs for the parish and school community.

Area #5: Committed Faculty

- Just about every person that we spoke with cited the commitment and dedication of the faculty as either a strength or the most impressive quality of St. Cecilia School. Faculty members see their role as a true vocation, and demonstrate this attitude through their work in the classroom. ISPD commends the faculty for their dedication on a personal level to the students and parents in the St. Cecilia community.

Area #6: Need for Improved Communication

- Improved communication for both the parish and school was cited as a key need for St. Cecilia. Parishioners and parents appreciate the current communication vehicles that are in place, but feel that a better job can be done in communicating via e-mail, the website, and eyeball-to-eyeball.
- One key area that is of prominent concern is communication regarding parish and school finances. With the recent decline in bingo revenue and the increase in tuition costs, many in the parish and school community are concerned about St. Cecilia's financial status and planning for the future.

Area #7: Inviting and Welcoming Input

- Parishioner and parent input surfaced as a key theme throughout the interview process. While there are vehicles and avenues in place for people to express ideas and concerns, there is a perception that parishioner and parent input is not always welcome or valued. Many feel that important parish and school decisions are made without seeking opinions and thoughts from those whom these decisions will directly affect. Several people we spoke with indicated their desire to have parish and school leaders and advisory groups proactively and consistently seek input from members of the community so that all points of view can be considered before making key decisions.

III. Recommendations

Recommendation # 1: Invite, organize and begin to work with the Core Team.

- The St. Cecilia Core Team is currently being formed and will begin to guide the Strategic Plan for Development process in September 2006. ISPD recommends that St. Cecilia support the work of the Core Team in their mission to advance the parish and school development efforts.

Recommendation # 2: Create a plan to provide development in-service and education.

- In-service and education in the area of Catholic parish and school development and planning is an on-going process that needs to be put in place at St. Cecilia. Administration, parishioners, parents, faculty, staff, boards and alumni need to be consistently educated on what Catholic development is and what it is not.
- Development education is woven into the process of creating the Strategic Plan for Development (SPD); however, further education should take place after completion of the SPD in order to introduce the information to newcomers, build on the momentum of the plan and its strategies and reinforce the true meaning of Catholic development.

Recommendation # 3: Evaluate and improve the process for inviting and involving people.

- As in many parishes, one major area of concern for St. Cecilia is the issue of the same people being involved year after year. A core group of volunteers exists and these are the individuals who organize, support and spearhead parish and school ministries, groups, activities and events. During our interviews, several parishioners expressed their frustration at this situation and their desire to reach out to all members of the St. Cecilia community for involvement.
- ISPD recommends that St. Cecilia evaluate its current methods for inviting people to participate in parish and school life. From our observations, St. Cecilia relies heavily on announcements in the parish bulletin and other written/paper forms of communication. From the ISPD perspective, paper communication is necessary, but will not produce the most effective results. When informing people about parish groups and activities and inviting their participation, ISPD finds that the more personal the invitation, the more success you will have.

- Some suggestions to improve this invite process might include having Parish/School Advisory Council members personally call newly registered families and invite them to an upcoming event. Another option might be to pair new members with veteran members of the parish/school as “liaisons” into the St. Cecilia community. The veteran members would be reaching out to newcomers in a very personal way, inviting them to attend various parish and school activities and functions and getting to know their interests, hobbies and talents.

Recommendation # 4: Create a comprehensive development database.

- Currently, St. Cecilia tracks its various constituencies in several different software applications. There is no single central database that contains contact information for all publics in the St. Cecilia community.
- The creation of a centralized and comprehensive development database is essential to St. Cecilia’s development efforts. The database serves as the foundation for the development infrastructure; its quality will be in direct proportion to the success of the parish and school’s development efforts.
- All publics of St. Cecilia should be tracked in a software application that is specifically designed for development including:
 - † Current parishioners
 - † Current parents
 - † Alumni
 - † Parish staff
 - † Faculty and Staff
 - † Former faculty
 - † Grandparents
 - † Former parishioner and parents
 - † Business community contacts
 - † Friends
 - † Prospective parents and students
 - † Media contacts
- Processes need to be put into place in order to continually and systematically capture new contact information to build the database.
- Management of the database will be important in maintaining accuracy and updating constituent records.
- ISPD would suggest that several people, including paid staff as well as volunteers, receive formal training on how to enter and edit information in the database. This will be important for consistency and continuity.

Recommendation # 5: Establish an active outreach effort to school feeder sources.

- ISPD recommends that St. Cecilia School develop a comprehensive outreach program to all of its feeder sources. Area day-cares, Montessori programs, Mom's-day-out programs and preschools are all potential feeder sources for SCS. Cultivating relationships with the directors of these programs would be a great first step in establishing a bigger name for St. Cecilia School in the area community.
- In addition, establishing a database of prospects from these feeder sources would broaden the base of potential parents and students who would consider St. Cecilia School. Inviting these prospects to special events and an annual Open House could have a significant impact on the recruitment efforts of the school.

Recommendation # 6: Develop and organize a Parent Ambassador Team.

- Organizing a Parent Ambassador Team could greatly assist SCS in its recruitment and marketing efforts. This group can be the eyes and ears of the recruitment effort in the wider Columbus community. ISPD recommends the team be trained in order to best represent the school's mission and key selling points. All ambassadors need to be clear about their roles and responsibilities in promoting St. Cecilia School. They need to be armed with current and accurate data about the school's academic program, fees, extra-curricular offerings, spiritual development activities and any other important information.

Recommendation # 7: Implement the three phase model for Total Stewardship: Prayer, Ministry and Finance.

- When most people hear the word "stewardship" they think "money". In order to combat that stereotype and reach people on a deeper level, ISPD strongly recommends regular, effective measures in Total Stewardship education that emphasize the stewardship of prayer and ministry as well as finance. We would like to see St. Cecilia begin to use this three-phase approach for Total Stewardship education. Stewardship of prayer, ministry and finance are all part of our call to be good stewards and demonstrate our willingness to give back to God in all of these areas. Focusing on each of the three phases, at separate and distinct times of the year, will allow for the message of stewardship to be present in the St. Cecilia community on a year-round basis. It is important to teach the three components in the context of one another with the backdrop always being true development - *the meaningful involvement of people in the mission and vision of the parish.*

Recommendation # 8: Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!

- ISPD recommends that St. Cecilia continue publishing its regular bulletins and newsletter, and consider publishing a formal parish and school annual report. This report should include a year-end financial summary for the parish and school, and highlights and accomplishments from the past year.
- Another important key to the St. Cecilia communication effort will be for the Parish Council, Finance Committee and School Advisory Board to regularly provide parishioners and parents with updates. Individuals we spoke with are truly interested in moving St. Cecilia forward and want to be aware of the important issues that the parish and school face. ISPD suggests that St. Cecilia consider publishing the monthly minutes from these leadership meetings and insert them into the bulletin/newsletter for distribution. This will raise awareness of the role these leadership groups play in the parish and school, and allow for two-way communication.
- St. Cecilia should also begin sending a monthly development *Update* to all parishioners and parents. The focus of this publication will be to keep parishioners informed about the Strategic Plan for Development process that St. Cecilia is undertaking. Members of St. Cecilia's Core Team can also take part in the development communication effort by personally visiting key leadership groups in the parish and school, keep them up-to-date on what's happening with the planning process and invite their participation.

Recommendation # 9: Establish an Office of Stewardship and Development.

- ISPD recommends St. Cecilia establish an Office of Stewardship and Development as soon as it is feasible. This office will be an important part of the parish and school's organizational infrastructure and should include the following key components:
 - † A Director with a detailed job description focused on stewardship and development
 - † Day-to-day development operations
 - † Parishioner/Parent invitation and involvement
 - † Total Stewardship
 - † Parish/School communications and publications
 - † Long-Range planning
 - † Coordinating any parish/school fundraisers
 - † Planned giving
 - † New parishioner welcome

- † Annual Fund
- † Planned Giving
- † Major Gifts
- † Grantwriting

Recommendation # 10: Establish initiatives to seek parishioner and parent input.

• ISPD recommends that St. Cecilia consistently seek ways to invite parishioner and parent input on key challenges that the community faces. The Core Team will organize several input-seeking initiatives during the SPD planning process, including:

- † Input Sessions
- † Formation of a Development Advisory Board
- † Individual Input Forms
- † Case Questionnaire