

“STATE OF THE SCHOOL ~ 2011”

Catholic Identity of St. Agatha School: Members of the school board spent much time this year in review of the parish mission statement to ensure that the parish school’s mission supports the mission of the whole parish and that the mission statement, as written on the front of the parish bulletin, remains true and relevant in all areas of parish life, including its school. Together, members of the parish and school fulfill the ministry of the whole parish “by proclaiming and celebrating God’s presence on earth.” St. Agatha School provides its students and staff opportunities for daily communal prayer, religion classes, and monthly liturgies. All lessons are taught in the context of God’s Word. As members of the parish community, school membership is “open and welcoming to all.” St. Agatha School welcomes families of all races, creeds, and socio-economic classes. SAS also has developed a Resource Department that provides the opportunity for children with learning disabilities to remain in our school after their diagnoses. The parish and its school reach out “to our sisters and brothers near and far.” St. Agatha School collects monies and goods to support those in need. Such Christian service includes, but is not limited to: the clients of Fr. Bill’s Place, Eventide Nursing Home, Cradles to Crayons, local food pantries and shelters. This year, school missionary efforts assisted victims of poverty and natural disasters in Haiti, Africa, South America and Japan. St. Agatha parish, and so its school, provide “opportunities for prayer, service, education and recreation.” The school’s motto: “**Excel in Education ~ Celebrate Christian Values,**” defines the staff’s commitment to academic excellence. Much effort and expense is given to choosing the best available academic resources and professional development opportunities to improve the teaching and learning in our parish school. Opportunities are offered for student enrichment and recreation through extracurricular programs, such as: drama, sports, including winning basketball teams (Gr. 5 & 6 girls’ team made it to the league finals.) and floor hockey, newspaper, chess, Lego, band instrument and piano lessons, Irish Step Dancing, are but a few of our latest offerings. In living this mission as part of St. Agatha parish, the school community “accepts its responsibility for giving witness to The Gospel of Jesus Christ” and thereby continues to strengthen its Catholic identity.

ENROLLMENT: Re-registrations for the coming school year, 2011-12, indicate that enrollment will remain stable with over 600 students attending our school again next year. As a result, a third Grade 7 classroom will be added to our structure for the 2011-2012 school year. Despite the increase in students, the admissions process continues to ensure “that those students who enroll are appropriate, given the school’s mission, and are likely to benefit from their experience at the school.” (See school handbook.) It should also be noted that most new students are enrolling in our intermediate (Grades 3-5) and middle school (Grades 6-8), while numbers in the primary level have not increased significantly in two years. This trend mirrors the fact that children, aged 4-6 years, are the lowest demographic in our local area. Because it is expected that numbers in this age group will increase within two to three years, the school administration has determined that it would be wise to maintain three classrooms in K-2 through Grade 2. Classroom size in K-1 and Kindergarten 2 remains at 26 and 18 students, respectively. In Grades 1 and 2, 19-20 students are expected in each classroom, while in the upper grade levels, classroom sizes will be 23-27 students, which is still lower than many area public and Catholic school class sizes in our diocese. It should also be noted that more students are choosing to remain in our middle school each year than ever before. This may be because of:

- an increasingly expanding school program, which includes subjects not available in local schools, i.e., Algebra, Pre-Algebra, and required Latin and Spanish courses, and weekly current events lessons;
- the cyclical updating of all academic resources and ever-increasing technological resources;
- the Resource Room staff, who offer learning support to those needing it throughout the year;

- the quality of teaching which is maintained through on-going professional development;
- the success of our students, who placed first in many local writing contests (Lincoln Essay Contest), state-wide contests (Boston Historical Society essay contest), and national writing contests (Creative Communications poetry contest/Maryknoll Bros. essay contest), and also earned two of the nine awards in the regional science fair this year, and who are accepted to prestigious middle and high schools;
- the immediate response of the administration and staff to any parent/student concern;
- the satisfaction of families who are enrolled in our school and so, publicly promote the school to their neighbors and friends;
- the lower tuition costs, which include no additional fees, when compared to other Catholic and private schools.

New Staff: This year, we opened another Grade 6 classroom. Mrs. Edstrom, former teacher at St. Ann School, was engaged to teach Social Studies to all sixth graders. Miss Jennifer Mara was hired to teach Math in Grade 6, which was formerly taught by Mrs. Sheila Sullivan, but who now teaches Grade 5 Math and Language Arts. This change was because of the increasing numbers in our Grade 6 classes, i.e., no one teacher could teach two grades any longer. Mrs. Christine McQuaid, former Grade 4 teacher, returned to our school this year, and now teaches Science and Language Arts in Grade 6, while Miss Stapleton, who taught Science in both Grades 5 and 6, became a Grade 5 Science and Language Arts teacher. Such change has brought much energy and enthusiasm into our middle school. In K-2, Sr. Cecilia Corbett, CSJ, retired from full-time work in our K-2 program, and Miss Erin McVeigh, a former Kindergarten teacher at St. Ann School, was hired to for the KB classroom. Sr. Cecilia then agreed to remain on staff as a part-time teacher in K-2 and Gr. 1. Sister now divides her time equally between all six classrooms and assists students in basic skills and often helps teachers with special projects. What a gift to both teachers and students Sister has been! Another wonderful resource on our staff this year has been our writing specialist, Mrs. Corrine Kalaijian. Mrs. Kalaijian spent most of this year working with teachers in Grades 2, 3, and 7. Because of her experience, she was most helpful in assisting all teachers with the Collins Writing Program. This writing-across-the-curriculum program was introduced into our school program in September, and children's enthusiasm for the program is evident in their improved writing skills. This program will continue in the coming school year. We also added a four-year-old program to our school structure this year. Our three K-1 teachers, Mrs. Mary McDonald, Mrs. Amy Chrisom, and Mrs. Patricia Cook, have developed a wonderful program and have already begun plans for 2011-12 program, which at the time of this writing now has full enrollment. We are grateful for the efforts of, Mrs. Katherine Cronin, our former Asst. to the Principal, who planned and supervised the development of this program, before she resigned in August. Mrs. Teresa King, former secretary of St. Ann School, Quincy, was then hired to serve as the Assistant to the Principal. Mrs. Michelle Tierney, part-time school librarian, expanded her duties to become a full-time staff person. In addition to her library duties in K-5, now also coordinates special events and activities for our school.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Last summer, a group of teachers were invited to meet with the Principal, who then asked them to read the ASCD text, Developing Professional Learning Communities. After reading this text, they were asked to serve as team leaders of St. Agatha School's PLCs. Because of their commitment of time and energy, these teachers helped fulfill the school's long-time goal of establishing PLCs among faculty members. PLCs were formed based on grade-levels or subject areas taught. Presently, we have developed PLCs among K-1 and K-2 teachers, among Grade 1 and 2 teachers, and also among teachers of Math, Social Studies, Language Arts, and Science. Mrs. Banks, ECC, facilitates weekly meetings for the K-1 and K-2 PLC, as well as the Grade 1 and 2 PLC. Mrs. Casinelli facilitates the Math teachers' PLC; Ms.

Jean Mara, the Language Arts PLC; Mrs. Ann Louise Sullivan, the Social Studies PLC, and Mr. Corcoran, the Science PLC. Because of the increased number of school staff in recent years, we were able to schedule coverage for classes, allowing teachers to meet with their PLCs. These meetings have fostered a new energy among our teachers, who now have time to meet to exchange ideas that have helped to better integrate the curriculum in all subject areas throughout the grades, improve test-taking skills, and coordinate special activities. Some PLCs also used this time to read the text, Improving Reading Strategies Throughout the Grades, this year. All teachers now have copies of this text, which is full of suggestions intended to improve reading across the curriculum. PLCs have proven an effective means to improve teaching and learning at St. Agatha School, and teachers will continue to develop their individual PLCs in the coming school year.

Tuition Collections: To date, over 92% of the projected tuition income has been collected in the 2010-11 school year. We thank our parents for the commitment and sacrifice they make to provide a Catholic education for their children. In this difficult economic time, such support is even more appreciated and necessary. Given our increasing operational costs each year, tuition rates must increase for the 2011-12 school year by \$200/single student. To minimize the impact of this increase on multiple children families, tuition rates are discounted commensurate to the number of children in the family. For a number of years, the school's fiscal year has ended with a small surplus of funds. That will not be the case this year due to an unanticipated, and very large, increase in insurance costs. Although the school administration projects an annual 10% increase in this line item, this year's increases exceeded this projection, and so a surplus in this year's budget is not expected at the end of the 2010-11 fiscal year.

Fundraising: Bingo revenues will meet and perhaps exceed projections again this year. This may be because of an increase in parent volunteers at Bingo this year. The more volunteers, the more tickets that can be sold, and so the higher our revenue will be each week. All parents must fulfill their Bingo service of one night a year, or "buy out" of this service by remitting \$300 (the savings per student in tuition generated by Bingo each year) to the school office before the end of this fiscal year, June 30, 2011. In the same way, those who do not fulfill their 20-hour service requirement are expected to remit \$400 before June 30. This requirement is meant to ensure that all parents contribute equally to the community's fiscal well-being. While the expense for our daily hot lunch program is very high, costing over \$64,000 to date, this program has presently grossed over \$123,000. The fall fundraiser with Meadow Farms netted almost \$12, 000, the Joker's Wild social and Christmas Shopping Night- over \$4, 000 each. The Winter Windfall Calendar grossed over \$18,000, and this year's Auction gross income is equivalent to past years (\$58, 000). We appreciate that all fundraising committee members work to keep expenses to a minimum so that most of the gross income generated by any school fundraiser is real income for our school. This year, under the direction of resource teacher, Mrs. Janine Winters, and with the help of many staff members and parent volunteers, our students produced the school's first dramatic production. This event not only raised funds for our school, but also served to foster a partnership between our school and Fontbonne Academy, where our play was staged. Mrs. Winters has been asked to direct a drama summer camp at Fontbonne Academy because the administrators there were so impressed by her direction of our school play. We thank our school parents, especially Mrs. Butts, Mrs. Cimino, Mrs. Mazza, Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Fahey, Mrs. Dinah McDonald, Mrs. Fahy, Mrs. Kenney, Mrs. Raimondi, Mrs. Ferrante, Mrs. Canale, Mrs. Santilli, Mr. DePalma, and ALL who assisted in these fundraising efforts for their continued efforts to raise much needed funds for our school. Without the help of our school parents we could not be such a vital, viable school.

School Tax: All parishes without schools are expected to contribute 6% of their annual offertory collection to the support of Archdiocesan Catholic schools. Those parishes without schools, but

whose parishioners attend area Catholic schools, may choose to send this tax directly to schools, or directly to the Archdiocese, which then sends allotments to its schools. This year, the school received \$9049. from the diocesan tax, an increase of \$2,000 over last year's offering. The remaining monies from this school tax, which now total \$29, 347.88, have been received directly from St. Bernadette and St. Mary parishes in Randolph, Most Precious Blood parish in Hyde Park, and St. Elizabeth parish in Milton. We are grateful to these pastors, who recognize our school's efforts to provide quality Catholic education for their parishioners, and so send their tax directly to our school.

Mission Monies/Christian Outreach: To date, revenues from dress down days and monthly mission collections from each classroom have been used to support the Walk for Breast Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy, Mass Eye and Voice Research, Team Heart, Cradles to Crayons, the Red Cross Assn., to name just a few of the charities to which we have contributed. These fundraisers are suggested to us by school families who benefit from the work of these organizations. Mission monies have also been expended to transport Kindergarten students to Eventide and Grade 8 students to Fr. Bill's Place. This year, third graders sponsored a Bake Sale to assist those suffering from the devastating earthquake in Japan.

Extra-curricular activities: Lego Club was coordinated by Mr. and Mrs. Crowley again this year, and Mrs. Brinn coordinated a large group of parent volunteers so that our students in Grades 3-5 could participate in a before school national Math Club. Mr. Willis, our PhysEd instructor, offered an intramural sports program- floor hockey- for students in Grades 2-4 again this spring. This was so successful that two days were necessary to accommodate all who registered for this program. Our school teachers, Mrs. Meghan Grier and Miss Marisa Kelley, coached our girls' basketball teams, while school parents, Mr. Beamon, Mr. David, and Mr. Sullivan coached our boys' teams. We are so grateful for their commitment, without which we could not sponsor middle-school basketball teams. Miss Concannon, Grade 4 Science teacher, established a robotics team last year, and hopes to submit an entry in the National First League competition in the 2011-12 school year. New members joined our A-V "Studio One" Club, coordinated by our parish deacon, Rev. Mr. Dan Sullivan, via the school's closed circuit TV station. School parent, Ms. Every assisted the school in engaging an instructor for our new Chess Club, which will expand to include students in Kindergarten next year. Irish Step Dancing instruction is offered to students in Kindergarten and up. Newspaper Club, piano instruction, and voice lessons are also offered as after school activities. Opportunities for lessons in band instruments after school are now offered to our students, and so, with our new drama program, two long-held goals have come to fruition this year. All these programs are expected to continue in the coming school year. The school administration is always willing to work with parents and teachers to develop and improve extracurricular offerings at any time during the school year. THANK YOU to all parents and teachers who give so much of their time and talent to provide these activities to our students.

Facility Maintenance/Improvement: In the summer, 2010, in addition to the development of a K-1 classroom and Resource Room on the first floor, the cafeteria ceiling was replaced. New stalls were installed in the first floor restrooms. These restrooms were also painted this year. Blinds were installed on all classrooms facing the front of the building. For this summer, 2011, plans include the replacement of ceilings in some restrooms and school offices, and the replacement of stalls in restrooms on the second floor. These, too, will be painted and new sinks will be installed in these areas. Blinds will be installed in classrooms with windows on the side of the building. These blinds help keep heat in during the winter, and out during the summer. They also lessen any glare on our classroom TVs and whiteboards. Most maintenance/improvement expenses this year were for plumbing repairs and updating. Flush-o-meters were installed in some restrooms and more

installations of these water-saving devices are planned for the coming year. Other maintenance expenses, which totaled over \$57, 000 this year, included service on the fire alarm system, heating and electrical repairs, trash collection, installation of door locks and repairs on the roof. Because of the vigilance of our custodians, the school remains a safe, healthy learning environment for our students and staff.

Other Expenses: Because we sponsored four basketball teams this year, costs for this program greatly increased. To offset this increase, Mrs. Tierney has sold slush during lunch periods. We should, then, meet these unexpected expenses. As noted above, insurance costs were much higher than projected. Textbook costs continue to increase. It is hoped that with the installation of interactive technology, these costs will eventually decrease. This year, we purchased a new Math series throughout the grades as well as supplementary texts in subject areas like geography, primary science, and test-taking skills throughout the grades. Teachers report that these resources have been most helpful in building knowledge in these areas. Plans for the coming school year include supplements to build spelling and critical thinking skills among our students. Of course, we will continue to purchase materials to support all subject areas, but these are areas needing our attention in the coming year. Because we engaged instructors for on-going professional development, including two sessions of teacher instruction in the Collins Writing Program, costs for professional development increased slightly this year. However, most of the costs for professional development are covered by the federal Title II Improving Teacher Quality grant. The school received over \$6500 from this grant.

Standardized Testing/Curriculum Development: At the time of this writing, we are awaiting the results of the Stanford 10 standardized tests in Grades 2-8. However, the Grade 1 results have been returned and students in all three classes scored above the national average in ALL subject areas. Grade 1 students have never taken standardized tests before, but these results prove that they experienced little or no anxiety concerning these tests. Obviously, their teachers prepared them well for the actual testing. Secondly, the school's standard curriculum and the methods and materials provided by teachers meet AND exceed national standards. Congratulations to teachers and students for a successful year of teaching and learning in Grade 1. Much time is spent each year to improve our school program. Standardized testing is one way to measure the effectiveness of these efforts. So, it is hoped that scores in all grade-levels will be as good as Grade 1 scores when we receive them.

NEASC Accreditation: This year, to continue our NEASC accreditation, the school submitted a 20-page Five-Year Report. The purpose of this report is to assure the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) that the school continues to merit accreditation. The school must prove that all aspects of the school program continues to support its mission, as reflected in its mission statement; that enrollment is stable and of sufficient number to warrant continuing its operations; that the professional staff are all qualified and certified to teach in their given subject areas; that the school program meets the needs of all its students; that the governance of the school is effective; that the school has an updated multi-year plan for technology and the school program; that the school's financial management ensures the school will remain viable and vital for years to come. The preliminary review of our submitted report was deemed "excellent," by NEASC representatives. Notice of the official, final NEASC determination of St. Agatha School's continued accreditation will be received in late June or early July, 2011.

Technology Update: This year, software to supplement our new Math series, K-8, was purchased for each grade. In the media center, flash drives were also purchased for students in our upper grades. Licenses for use of the ever-increasing technology totaled nearly \$5, 000, while over

\$13,000 was expended to purchase and install hardware. Because of a matching grant from the Catholic Schools Foundation, we were able to install SmartBoards in 4 classrooms. ePads for 6 classrooms were also purchased this year. In its long-range strategic plan, the school board has determined that all classrooms, K-1 through 8, will eventually have technology installed to ensure that our lessons are truly interactive and engaging for our students. We are installing this technology in the same way that we update our hard-copy resources, targeting some classrooms each year until the project is completed. This summer, 2011, we will install interactive technology in the new Grade 7 classroom, the remaining Grade 5 classroom, the two Grade 4 classrooms, and the new Science Lab. This will mean that all classrooms, Grades 4-8, will have this interactive technology. Training teachers in the optimal use of this technology is on-going throughout the year.

Before and After School Programs: This year, over 120 students have accessed the St. Agatha Extended Day program. The program remains well-staffed with 4 five-day supervisors, who are assisted by other two-or three-day personnel throughout the week so that group sizes are no more than 9 students each. This year, many of our faculty assisted in this program a few times each week. Mrs. Winters assisted in the program throughout the year. Ms. McEvoy offered students after school cheerleading and yoga for physical exercise, and also helped with special arts and crafts projects. Mrs. Hart worked with intermediate students in their Homework Club, and Mrs. McQuaid did the same for middle school students. Mrs. McQuaid also served as Assistant Director of the program. Director, Mrs. Eastep, has worked to develop a creative, enjoyable program for our students in this program, which now includes activities like: cheerleading, yoga, homework club, newspaper club, arts & crafts, and mixed sports and games. This year, a Walking Club was introduced. Students have their own pedometers to measure their steps each week. Mrs. Sheila Sullivan, our Grade 5 teacher, supervises the Early Arrival Program. She provides space and time for students to quietly engage with one another. They play board games, draw, and read. Together, these programs serve over 20% of the school population.

Strategic Planning/School Board: Parishioner, Mr. Kenneth Caldwell, was appointed by the Pastor to fill the seat left vacant because of Mr. Reid Oslin's retirement this year. Mr. John Maus, another parishioner, was elected to serve as Chairman of the board, and school parent, Mr. Vincent Gratch assumed duties of board secretary after Mr. Oslin retired. In addition to an in-depth review of the parish school mission statement, and preparation of the NEASC Five-Year Report, much of the board's time and attention was given to discussions on marketing, PR, and development. Initial steps to access the Catholic Alumni Partnership (CAP), a program sponsored for 49 select schools in the diocese by the Catholic Schools Foundation (CSF), began here at SAS this year. "CAP is a groundbreaking initiative that is currently helping to create sustainable alumni programs in 303 Catholic elementary schools in New York and Connecticut. Since the inception of the partnership in November 2009, thousands of alumni in these dioceses have signed on, raising over \$1.4 million for participating schools. This summer, CSF became the first diocese outside of the pilot phase to expand the CAP Program nationally. 49 elementary schools in the Archdiocese of Boston were awarded grants enabling them to participate in CAP. Over 150,000 alumni records had been captured by the schools and are in the process of being screened for accuracy." (See CSF website.) Because of CAP and the grant from the CSF, over 4, 000 alumni of St. Agatha School have been identified. Now, these information sent to us concerning these alumni must be verified and updated. Mrs. King is coordinating this effort, and we hope to have this project completed before September, 2011. The school board will then work on ways and means to use this information to create an Alumni Association here at SAS.

Looking Ahead: Summer plans include moving the Science Lab to the first floor adjacent to the resource room so that a third Grade 7 classroom can be established in the present 6A classroom.

The present Science Lab will then be renovated to accommodate to develop a Grade 6A classroom. This will create a more logical grouping of classrooms in Grades 7 & 8, and also ensure that learning groups in the junior high school remain low. Because of the creative scheduling of Mr. Blake, our Latin teacher, we expect that there will be 4 learning groups of 10-12 students in Grade 8, and 3 learning groups of 18-20 students each. The creation of another Grade 7 classroom will necessitate engaging a third teacher for the middle school. The Collins Writing Program requires much correction of student essays, so the new teacher in this third classroom will be the Grade 7 Language Arts teacher. Mr. McDermott will continue teaching Grade 8 Language Arts courses. If there are any other unexpected changes in staff, they will be announced in the summer mailing.

And so, St. Agatha School remains a vital, vibrant parish school that provides an excellent academic program in a strong, nurturing, fiscally responsible, and Catholic environment...all because of the commitment and collaboration among all of the wonderful members-parents, students, faculty, staff, administrators, parishioners- of this great learning community.

Respectfully submitted,
Maureen C. Simmons, Principal
St. Agatha School, Milton, MA
May, 2011