

“STATE OF THE SCHOOL ~ 2010”

Catholic Identity of St. Agatha School: Posted at each of the entrances to the school, a sign reads: “Let it be known to all who enter here that Christ is the center of all we do.” With these words, our mission is made clear. Our Catholic identity is demonstrated in many other ways: in the daily presence of our priests in the school, in the posters, pictures and statues which adorn the walls, in the prayers that begin and end our school day, and in the many celebration of the Sacraments throughout the school year. In what we do and pray, we demonstrate our commitment to fulfill Christ’s command to “preach and teach” in His Name is evident. At St. Agatha School we strive to “teach as Jesus did.”

Enrollment: St. Agatha School continues to add to its student population and staff each year. For example, in 2008, the school enrolled 484 students, in 2009, starting enrollment was 506, and looking ahead to 2010, the student population should be well over 500. St. Agatha School’s commitment to “excel in education and celebrate Christian values,” continues to appeal to many families wishing to provide their children with a quality education in a safe and nurturing environment. The majority of these students are parishioners, which means that our school remains an independent parish school. We are blessed by the trust that our school families continue to demonstrate in the administration, faculty and school program.

New Staff: This year, we hired new teachers in Grades 1, 4, 5, and 8. Miss Duffy, Miss Chapman, Miss Concannon, Miss Cervone, and Mr. McDermott have been great gifts to our school. We were also able to take the initial steps in the fulfillment of our dream to develop a Resource Department for our school. We now have three resource teachers, who work to ensure that any student with an IEP or 504 Plan receives the services required by these plans, either in the classroom or in our resource room. Students also visit the resource room as needed, i.e., students are able to receive help in organizing themselves to better manage their workloads, or for informal counseling. Moreover, resource teachers have spent much time this year attending workshops and other training sessions to ensure that we will soon be able to provide formal evaluations and assistance of students on site. This training includes administration of the Woodcock-Johnson Assessment and Wilson Phonics Program. This is a huge step in moving towards our goal of providing for each student according to his/her individual needs. We are most grateful to Mrs. DeBassio, Mrs. Cabral and Mrs. Winters for their commitment to improving services in our school. Looking ahead, we also plan to offer more programs for students who may need the academic challenges beyond the classroom. Next year, a new format for report cards will include grades for students accessing these services. Over the summer, a five-day program for the present four-day PhysEd and three-day Music programs will be developed to meet the needs of our increased population.

Tuition Collections: To date, over 93.5% of the projected tuition income has been collected in the 2009-10 school year. We thank our parents for their commitment and sacrifice to provide a Catholic education for their children. In this difficult economic time, such support is even more appreciated. Tuition rates were not raised and registration fees were waived in response to the national economic crisis of the 2009-10 school year. However, as announced last month, the rates for the 2010-11 tuition were increased by \$200/single student. To minimize the impact of this increase on multiple children families, tuition rates were discounted commensurate to the

number of children in the family. It is always difficult to raise tuition. The administration and school board members deliberated many hours before coming to this difficult decision. It was decided that the increased costs of improving the school program, maintaining our facilities, and hiring and retaining school staff, necessitated this step. Also, in order to ensure that monies are available for unexpected needs, such as a new roof or heating expenses, as well as the need for a tuition assistance program, it was determined that it would be necessary to increase the tuition for next year. That is, any additional monies generated by this increase will be used to establish capital expense and tuition assistance accounts, something the school has never had, but has certainly needed.

Fundraising: Bingo revenues are higher than projected again this year. These returns may generate as much as \$40, 000 more than anticipated by the end of the school year. While the expense for our daily hot lunch program is very high (over \$50,000 to date), this program grossed over \$116, 000 this year. The fall fundraiser with Meadow Farms netted almost \$12, 000, the Joker's Wild social and Christmas Shopping Night-almost \$4, 000 each. The Winter Windfall Calendar Drive netted over \$11,000 thanks to the coordinating efforts of Ms. Dinah McDonald. A major fundraising effort is the school's annual Auction. This year's Auction gross income is equivalent to past years (\$57, 000). We appreciate that all fundraising committee members work to keep expenses to a minimum so that much of the gross income generated by any school fundraiser is real income for our school. This concern and competence ensures that every fundraiser is a great success as does the support of our school families and parishioners. Because of these efforts, our school will again meet- and exceed- this year's budget projection for fundraising by at least \$20,000. Mrs. Lori Ferrante, our volunteer/fundraising coordinator, assists the administration in working with parents who wish to coordinate fundraising efforts for our school. I am most grateful for her-and the great team of volunteers- tireless efforts on behalf of our 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 \$7, 652 from the diocesan tax. The remaining monies from this school tax, which now total \$22, 413.83, have been received directly from St. Bernadette and St. Mary Churches in Randolph, St. Pius X and St. Elizabeth parishes in Milton, whose students attend our school. We are grateful to these pastors, recognizing our school's efforts to provide quality Catholic education for their parishioners, and so send this support directly to St. Agatha School.

Mission Monies/Christian Outreach: This year, revenues from dress down days and monthly mission collections from each classroom have been used to support the Walk for Autism, Walk for Breast Cancer, suicide prevention walk, Team Heart, Cradles to Crayons, to name just a few of the charities to which we contribute. 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. One dress down day also generated income for Ms. McEvoy's trip to Costa Rica to provide a week of Art classes for the poor children in that country. Of course, we continue to support the parish mission

to Haiti. Our Links for Love generated over \$5000 for earthquake relief and we look forward again this year to our Walk for Haiti, which will be held in May.

Extra-curricular activities: Lego Club, initiated by Mr. and Mrs. Crowley last year, continued to be a most popular activity for our K-3 students, serving more than 90 students with assistance from many parents and older students! Mrs. Brinn, with the assistance of many parent volunteers, coordinated a national Math Club for students in Grades 3-5 challenging math enrichment activities. Mrs. Leonard continues to offer Knitting Club to our students, and Mr. Willis, our PhysEd instructor, offered an intramural sports program for students in Grades 2-4 again this spring. Ms. McEvoy introduced coached a cheerleading team for our school this year. Mr. Ed Donovan and Mrs. Alyse Olivieri and Ms. Meghan Duffy coached our school basketball teams to winning seasons. Miss Concannon, Grade 4 Science teacher, established a robotics team, and hopes to submit an entry in the National First League competition in the fall. Our A-V “Studio One” Club, coordinated by our parish deacon, Rev. Mr. Dan Sullivan, via the school’s closed circuit TV station, opened and ended each school day in prayer and announcements for the whole school community. 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: This summer, the final stage of replacing all classroom ceilings will be completed. The cafeteria ceiling will be replaced this summer and plans for summer, 2011 include replacement of ceilings in two stairwells, thereby completing the replacement of all ceilings in the school. This past summer, the faculty room, including a new ceiling, was renovated, and the building hallways were painted in green and yellow, which, according to latest research, are the best colors for use in schools. Thank you to our Grade 8 Art elective class, who, supervised by our Art teacher, Ms. McEvoy, painted a colorful underwater mural in the entrance to the second floor restroom. To date, plumbing, electrical and heating repairs as well as increased expenses in trash collection were beyond our budget projections for maintenance of buildings. A great improvement to our school’s security was the installation of 16 security cameras in areas, like the back entrance and lot, Extended Day area, where it is difficult to maintain constant vigilance in monitoring visitors and activity.

Other Expenses: Because of the increase of students over and above our enrollment projections, there were additional, unexpected expenses. Some of these included extra textbooks (almost \$12,000 over projections to date), office supplies, desks, books and pamphlets, etc. Also, maintenance supplies exceeded expectations because of monies expended to ensure we were protected against the H1N1 flu epidemic. As a result, we purchased huge quantities of paper towels, antiseptic materials, including the addition of wipe dispensers in every classroom so that desks can be cleaned at the start of each school day. A TV ad campaign and a different way of inputting Catholic Schools Week expenses resulted in almost \$3000 beyond projections for development expenses. The ad ran in January and the resultant DVD we received from this company will remain a long-term, high quality development tool.

Standardized Testing/Curriculum Development: At the time of this writing, we are awaiting the results of the Stanford 10 standardized tests which were administered to all students in

March. The cost of these testing materials and scoring was budgeted almost to the penny! We are looking forward to these results for two reasons: 1) spring testing will help track progress of the present school year in time to make adjustments before school ends; and 2) summer plans will incorporate any curriculum development indicated by the results. A separate report on these results and how they will be used to improve our school curriculum will follow once these results are received in May. It is important to note that, because this is the first year of testing, and because the last diocesan standardized tests, *TerraNova*, were administered in October, 2008, these tests will only provide us with a benchmark from which to develop our school program to meet the standards assessed on this test.

NEASC Accreditation: In the NEASC Interim Report, the visiting committee recommended that the school work with the Archdiocese to develop a system of more formal, outside auditing of the diocesan schools. Although this would mean a new policy be promulgated by the diocese, the present policy requires that each parish must be audited by an outside agency every three years. St. Agatha Parish, including its school, was audited this past summer. The results were that, while records of all school finances and transactions are well-monitored and managed, some minor “best practices” were recommended. Of course, these will be/have been implemented since the audit as we continue to responsibly manage our school’s finances. This management has resulted in fiscal surpluses for the past three years.

Technology Update: Teachers now post homework on the school’s website and receive/send e-mails from home. The lack of computer access was the major reason that this has not been done to date. Again, we thank Deacon Dan Sullivan, who worked over the summer months to ensure that all teachers had new computers and addresses to allow for these innovations. This month, we will be installing the first of our E-Z Teach boards, which were chosen for use in our school over the SmartBoards because of their ability to provide more opportunity for the use of teacher-generated CDs and for the extra hours of teacher training provided by this company. This is another cyclical process, much like the ceiling and textbook replacement programs, which means that this year teachers in both Grade 7 and 8 classrooms will have a board in their classrooms, but one board will be installed in only one classroom in Grades 5 and 6, with the expectation that next year we will install boards in the remaining Grade 5 and 6 classrooms as well as one in a Grade 4 classrooms. Boards were placed in classrooms that have new ceilings on which the projector must be mounted, but will be shared by all teachers in a given grade until each classroom has an E-Z Teach board.

Before and After School Programs: Introduced in September, 2004, these programs remain two of the most successful programs in our school. There are 120 students enrolled in this year’s 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. The new director, Mrs. Eastep, has worked hard to offer creative, enjoyable programs for students. Such projects and/or programs include: cheerleading, yoga, homework club, newspaper club, arts & crafts, and mixed sports and games. Mrs. Sheila Sullivan, our Grade 5 teacher, supervises students who arrive early to school. She provides space and time for students to quietly engage with one another. They play board games, draw, and read. Although this program is intended as a service to our school families, whose

schedules necessitate early drop-off for our students, it also helps children quietly prepare for their school day. These programs are used by 20% of the school population.

Milton-Quincy Catholic Schools & Strategic Planning: In January, 2010, the RCAB Catholic Schools Office announced the merging of the three Catholic schools in Quincy to create one school: the Quincy Catholic Academy. This announcement marked the culmination of many years of panning among the five Catholic schools in Milton-Quincy. St. Agatha School will continue to operate as independent parish school. Although the Pastors and Principals will no longer meet regularly to determine a feasible plan for the 5 Milton-Quincy Catholic Schools, we will continue to pray with, and for, each other and for all those committed to Catholic education in our diocese, and especially for the success of the newly established Academy.

Strategic Planning/School Board: This year, as terms of service expired for many of our founding members, we welcomed new members to our school board. The first order of business for the new board was to appoint officers. Mr. John Maus, a parishioner and long-term supporter of St. Agatha School, is our new Chair, Mr. Reid Oslin, also a parishioner, is our Secretary. School parents: Mr. Thomas Crowley, Mr. Vincent Gratch, and Mr. Julio Hernando, round out our board membership. Most of the work to which these members have given their attention has been development of the 2010-11 school budget, including setting new tuition rates. In the months ahead, after establishing sub-committee membership, much time and consideration will be spent on reviewing and updating our strategic plan and school development.

Looking Ahead: Because of increasing school enrollment, new classrooms have been added to our school structure each year since 2005. This year, 2009, a third fifth grade classroom was added. In the coming 2010 school year, we will fulfill another item in our strategic plan: the establishment of a K-1 program. As announced in a letter to incoming K-1 parents, Mrs. Katherine Cronin, our present Asst. to the Principal, will serve as the Director of this program and additional certified teachers will be Mrs. Amy Chrisom and Mrs. Tricia Cook. The K-1 program will be housed in the present Extended Day/SAYO Game room. Throughout the summer months, this space will be completely transformed into a new, engaging pre-school environment. Our ECC, Mrs. Dotty Banks, will also serve as a resource for the K-1 team. Moreover, we will move beyond the expectations of the long-range plan by adding the final piece of our school's structure: a second Grade 7 classroom. As mentioned above, the Resource room will move to a larger space in the former Youth Ministry Office. Other classes, like Art, Music and Grade 8 electives will also be held in this area throughout the school year. Thus, the St. Agatha School structure is now complete to include three classrooms in each grade, K-6, and two classrooms in Grade 7 and 8. The Faith Formation Offices, including the Youth Ministry offices will move to the lower rectory, thus centralizing the parish offices for faith formation Pre-School through adult. The classes for Faith Formation for Youth will still be held in the school building, and an office will be maintained for use by catechists and administrators during these classes.

It has been another outstanding school year and the future promises to be promising, but only because of the dedication and continual support of all school constituencies, our Pastor, Parochial Vicar, Deacon, Business Manager, school administrators, faculty, parents and students, 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 of this great learning community.

Respectfully submitted,
Maureen C. Simmons, Principal
St. Agatha School, Milton, MA
April, 2010