



April 11, 2014

My Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I am writing to you, the Catholic Community of the Hays area, to update you with specific issues related to Holy Family Elementary School and Thomas More Prep-Marian Jr. / Sr. High School, which I shall refer to simply as TMP. As you know, I established a ***Strategic Planning Committee*** for the school community several months ago. Every effort was made to have representatives from the many groups and organizations that directly affect the life of our school community. Our Superintendent participated generously with his time as well as representatives from Administration, Finance, Development and Alumni, the Board of Trustees, Parish Leadership, Residence Program, and input from various boards and commissions. I should explain that I established this ***Strategic Planning Committee*** for two reasons. The first is that upon my arrival to the Salina Diocese I found in the city of Hays two healthy schools and a growing sense of rededication and commitment to Catholic education in the area. The sense of profound good will for the schools was evidenced everywhere along with a strong desire to see them grow. At the same time I regretfully must note that I also found an administrative system experiencing some crisis. The issue appeared to be centered on a lack of clarity in leadership authority while a cluster of zealous and dedicated organizations seemed to be competing for resources and control of TMP. The result was considerable frustration on the part of the school's designated leadership as well as disunity as it relates to our schools' vision and immediate goals. It is my conclusion that for the schools to remain vibrant we must foster a unified vision among the many committed individuals and groups who support our schools. We likewise must empower the designated leadership and identify a clear plan and path into the future.

I wish to express my gratitude to the members of the ***Strategic Planning Committee*** who have spent untold hours in meetings as well as undertaking extensive research. Their commitment, along with the factual information they generated, will be invaluable for the future health and growth of the Hays Catholic schools. What follows below are conclusions that I have drawn from their exceptional work and which I am now directing to be implemented. I am certain that some in the community will be quite pleased with these decisions. Others may be disappointed. Please know that while I remain open to constructive criticism, it is nevertheless my hope and expectation that every member of the Catholic Community of the Hays area support this plan and do their part for its full implementation. Our motivation for doing so must be our love and commitment for our children.

1. **Middle School:** The decision to add a middle school (the 7th and 8th grades) to the TMP campus has proven to be a blessed addition to our school community. In light of that, many voices have asked why a middle school hasn't been opened in the old Kennedy school building on the St. Joseph Parish campus. It should be noted that the addition of seventh and eighth grade students two years ago increased the school system's annual budget by \$700,000. This has had a substantial impact on our finances. Moreover, it is

projected that the costs associated with operating a third site (the old Kennedy School building) would have added an *additional* \$750,000 to that amount. Essentially, the total cost of moving to a third building would be a yearly \$1.5 million operational expense. This amount does not account for the substantial capital that also would need to be raised to upgrade the existing Kennedy School building to the current codes and educational standards. After careful fiscal study it became unquestionably clear that a third site would cause us to go deeply into negative spending. In short, it would be irresponsible for school leadership under my authority to open a third campus for our local Catholic schools. For this reason the Catholic schools in Hays will remain in the two campus model. I would note, however, that in light of the strong enrollment trends at our schools, there does remain the possibility of new construction at either or both of our current campuses in order to better accommodate our students.

2. **Residence Program:** There has been a rich history and tradition of the residence program. What was once created to target boarding students from neighboring Kansas towns has evolved, out of necessity, to be an almost exclusively international endeavor. The original boarding program assisted families who lived at a distance from Hays and likewise helped generate income for the high school. In recent years the school community has been greatly blessed by the presence and gifts of the international students residing in Hays and attending TMP. While the Residence Program is a part of our mission, values and culture—and no dollar amount can be placed on the benefit it has been to the lives of our students—we can, and must, evaluate the fiscal ramifications for the school. What was once a vital financial endeavor for the school may now have become a financial burden. Clearly we are at a defining moment with respect to prioritizing a great many programs, services, and goals for our school. When we look carefully at the Residence Program we must acknowledge that the only way to ensure its long-term sustainability is to raise approximately \$1.3M to pay for the extensive and badly needed repairs to the residence halls. The Residence Program definitely will remain open for the 2014-2015 academic year. However, a decision on whether or not the program remains in operation after May of 2015 must be made no later than September 1, 2014, by the people of the Hays community. If \$1.3M can be raised immediately for the repairs and upgrades of the residence halls then the program will be retained. An alternative option is to have a substantial number of host families come forward to offer to care for international students in their homes. Barring one of these two decisions by the local community, the Residence Program will come to a close in May of 2015.
3. **Governance:** Effective July 1, 2014, we will implement a Hays Catholic School Governance structure that is consistent with Catholic teaching and Diocesan policy. An advisory council model is used successfully in many Catholic Parish/Diocesan School systems throughout our Nation. There shall be two separate School Advisory Councils. Holy Family Elementary School already has such a council which functions under the supervision of the pastor of the parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary. As a diocesan school, a School Advisory Council for TMP will function under the local authority of the

Pastor Designate appointed by the Bishop of the Salina Diocese. The Diocesan Superintendent, representing the Bishop, will also serve on the TMP school council as an ex-officio member. Please keep in mind that the governance structure of a public school system should not be used as a comparison of how Catholic schools are supervised. The advisory councils in question have a critical and highly significant role to fill in ensuring the quality education and Catholic formation of our students. They are not, however, a governing “school board.” Again, this structure is consistent with Church teaching and used extensively in Catholic school systems such as ours.

In addition, there shall be one Finance and Development Committee for both schools, which has largely been the role and scope of the current TMP Board of Trustees. Their task shall include the development and planning of each individual school budget with input from each principal. The TMP development office would also assist development activities for both schools including joint fundraising. The implementation of each school’s budget will be under the direction of each school’s supervisory pastor and principal, along with the advisory input of each school council. To be clear, the oversight responsibility of Holy Family School rests with the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish as it is their parish school. As a Diocesan School, TMP shall follow the financial policies and reporting systems outlined by the Diocese of Salina, including the approval of major expenditures. The Pastor over the elementary school, along with the Pastor Designate for TMP, shall be ex-officio members of the Finance and Development Committee.

Lastly, a search for a principal for TMP will commence in the late summer of 2014. The new principal will assume responsibilities during the 2015-2016 school year.

4. **Stewardship:** The concept of *stewardship* greatly exceeds the sole discussion of finance. However, finance is a key part of stewardship. From that vantage it should be noted that the current stewardship model is not going to be abandoned in the immediate future. However, a top priority emerging in our long-term strategic plan is to reinvigorate stewardship. For the purpose of this discussion it is crucial to note that stewardship is not an issue that belongs exclusively to the school community. This is first and foremost a parish issue. At the same time, the stewardship life of a parish clearly feeds and nurtures the Catholic schools which, in turn, produce committed Catholics who feed the parish. As critical as stewardship is for the life of our schools we must note that the goal of parish stewardship is to provide for the legitimate needs of everyone in the community and not simply a means to pay for the education of those attending our schools. It is the hope of the Strategic Planning Committee that school patrons will step forward and be of generous assistance in reinvigorating stewardship in their proper parishes as this as the best way to sustain our parishes and, through them, our education ministries. It must be acknowledged that stewardship alone might not be the long term solution for financial viability for our schools. In that case other hybrid models may be explored including a combined tuition/parish subsidy approach.
5. **Development and Endowment Issues:** while we anticipate that the current commitment to our Catholic Schools will continue to grow we likewise anticipate that our school’s

long-term wellbeing is greatly affected by our endowments. At TMP we currently draw greatly needed revenue each year from our endowment funds for essential operations. For this reason we believe it is critical that fund-raising projects for the schools need to include a permanent commitment to our endowments. The Strategic Planning Committee hopes to see a renewed focus on growing the endowment for Holy Family Elementary School as well as the continued effort to increase TMP's endowment as an essential part of all major fund-raising activities. It is also significant to note that a strategic emergency reserve must be funded for our schools' stability.

6. **Additional Emerging Issues and Goals:** the Strategic Planning Committee continues to research and evaluate a host of needs and desires that have been surfaced by many in our community: (a) the recruitment and retention of qualified faculty and administration by offering proper staff development and salary is an ongoing concern; (b) the renovation of the fourth floor of the main building at TMP is under consideration, having been made possible by the addition of the school's elevator; (c) a substantial renovation of the Field House and/or addition of a second gymnasium, potentially with classrooms for a middle school, has likewise been surfaced; (d) the conversion of space currently used by Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish into elementary school classrooms is seen as a strong possibility after the parish debt is reduced and the church basement is converted into usable parish space; (e) the demand for not only 21st century skills, but the environment, resources and technologies to support these skills remains essential for ongoing accreditation and student success; (f) and, as noted above, there is the possibility of substantial renovation of the residence buildings used by the Residence Program. These projects and concerns are among many that will continue to be researched and prioritized by the Strategic Planning Committee and, with time, will become the more stable responsibility of the two school advisory councils.

In conclusion, as I noted in the opening paragraph of this letter, the immense good will and renewed sense of commitment for the Hays area schools is a tremendous blessing. We have much for which to be thankful to God and to our ancestors who left us so great a legacy. Building upon this great treasure we must now pool our energies, come together in support of the designated leadership of our schools, and recommit ourselves to the youth of our community. Such is the task of true disciples in every age. With God's grace I pray that we will rise to the task so that we may build upon the great legacy of faith we have received from these excellent schools.

Very truly yours in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. Weisenburger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger
Bishop of Salina