

A Partnership to Strengthen Catholic Schools



The Catholic Extension Society (Catholic Extension) serves mission dioceses by ‘building faith, inspiring hope and igniting change.’ In seeking to respond to the priorities voiced by the Bishops of mission dioceses, Catholic Extension has partnered with Catholic School Management (CSM) to provide a Catholic School Sustainability Initiative designed to enhance the viability and vitality of Catholic schools in mission dioceses. CSM, a division of Christian Brothers Services, is focused on the ministry of Catholic education. In its 40 years, CSM has helped more than 3,000 Catholic schools succeed, with the majority of client schools still open and providing students and families with the values and traditions of a Catholic education. To fulfill the goals of the Catholic School Sustainability Initiative, CSM utilizes one of its flagship services for Catholic schools, the Strategic Management and Development Program (SMDP).

Working for the Future of Catholic Schools:
Board members, parents and school leaders gathered in September at the Pastoral Center in the Diocese of San Bernardino for the introductory seminar of the Strategic Management and Development Program.



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Focused on building the capacity and collaborative efforts of school boards, school staff and other volunteers dedicated to the mission of Catholic education, the SMDP is implemented over a four-year period through a combination of annual seminars and six on-site meetings per year with school based committees. CSM consultants deliver a program of annual objectives that are sequenced to result in school sustainability:

Year 1: Clarify Foundational Documents; Prepare and Implement a Strategic Plan; Initiate Marketing and Enrollment Analysis and Strategies

Year 2: Prepare and Implement a Comprehensive Communication Program

Year 3: Establish or Enhance Programs of Annual Giving; Document Enrollment and Marketing Programs in an Enrollment Management Plan

Year 4: Establish or Enhance Programs of Planned Giving to Build Endowment

To deliver the SMDP, CSM’s partnership with Catholic Extension is truly collaborative with grant funding for the four-year program coming from Catholic Extension, along with financial contribution from CSM as well as a per school contribution from the mission diocese. Successful implementations of this partnership for the SMDP in its full version have completed or are underway in the following mission dioceses:

- Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina
- Diocese of Richmond, Virginia
- Diocese of Beaumont, Texas
- Archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama
- Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio
- Diocese of Marquette, Michigan (modified SMDP)

Inspired by the success of these programs, Catholic Extension opened another grant funding cycle for mission dioceses in the summer of 2015. Fall of 2015 also welcomed three new mission dioceses to the SMDP:

- Diocese of San Bernardino, California (six schools)
- Diocese of El Paso, Texas (six schools)
- Diocese of Superior, Wisconsin (15 schools) (modified SMDP)

The schools participating in the SMDP have formed committees of board members, administrators, teachers, staff and other volunteers to attend introductory seminar meetings regarding foundational documents, strategic planning and marketing the Catholic school. “The six schools and their boards are more excited and engaged than I’ve ever seen following the first meeting. CSM has ignited a spark of hope for the future. Our current and future students will see tremendous benefit from the foundations built during the next four years,” said Austin Conley III, director of advancement for the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of San Bernardino. Growing the understanding of school boards in their role and providing them with resources, tools and structures to perpetuate the best practices initiated through the four years of the SMPD is at the heart of its transformative ability. “I’m very excited about the opportunity to have this grant because we know that school board formation is key to the success of our schools,” added Patricia Vesely, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of San Bernardino.

Catholic schools are not only communities of faith and learning, but they are also communities of hope for many parents, grandparents and guardians living in high poverty areas of mission dioceses. The vision of Catholic Extension to partner with Catholic School Management in order to respond to the needs of mission dioceses seeks to ensure the long-term sustainability of these much valued schools. On a broader level, the continued existence of Catholic schools helps build healthier communities and provides opportunity to break the cycle of poverty through faith and education. ☼

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