



May 2024

Dear Families and Stakeholders,

We're delighted to share our 2023-2024 State of the School Report, offering a comprehensive look at the exciting developments within our school this year, along with our vision for the future! Please take some time to read through it and reach out with any questions.

Mission Statement

St. Mary's Catholic School is a faith-filled community that illuminates the teachings of Jesus by using our hearts, hands, and voices as Christian witnesses while striving for academic excellence.

Financial Report

The estimated cost to educate a student at St. Mary's School will be \$6850 for the 2024-2025 school year. The following areas are the ways in which St. Mary's is funded.

Tuition:	First Child	Grades K-6	\$2300/year
	Second Child	Grades K-6	\$1950/year
	Third Child	Grades K-6	\$1675/year

Preschool:

5 full days:	\$500.00/month	
5 half days:	\$275.00/month	
3 full days:	\$330.00/month	available for 3-4 year old program only
3 half days:	\$195.00/month	available for 3-4 year old program only

Financial Investment: The Church of St. Mary supported the school with a \$160,000 subsidy for the 2023-2024 school year. They plan to give \$165,000 for the 2024-2025 school year. We will also receive \$70,000 from the Endowment Fund. The School Board and Leadership Council are working collaboratively to raise our staff salaries to 80% of the public school's salaries. We were close to 73% prior to the public school negotiating for their new contract. St. Mary's School administration meets with the School Board and Leadership Council monthly to discuss the operations of the school, including budget and financial projections.

School Board Members: Cory Ellering (chair), Bob Arceneau (vice chair), Ali Arzen, Cindy Hemmesch, Jake Primus, and Pat Christenson.

Endowment Fund: The Endowment Committee meets quarterly. As of March 2024, the Endowment Fund had reached \$1,481,395. Of this amount, \$886,580 is principal. As of May 2024, the Endowment Fund had given the school a total of \$586,000.

Donations: We are blessed to receive many donations from companies and individual people throughout the year to help St. Mary's School balance its budget and offer opportunities for us to add to our curriculum and experiences of teaching to the whole child.

Financial Report-continued

Catholic Foundation: The Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Saint Cloud was established in August of 2000 to serve its parishes, Catholic schools, organizations, Catholic families, and individuals throughout the Diocese of Saint Cloud through endowed funds. Money is raised for these scholarships through the Bishop's Annual Appeal and the Bishop's Annual Golf Fundraiser. Through this foundation, we receive donations from:

Stearns County Endowment Fund	\$949
Living the Promise Scholarship	\$1740 (Scholarship and tuition assistance)
Living the Promise Grant	\$1900 (Will be used for a new teacher laptop)
Annual Appeal	\$4675 (June 2023)

Stacy Meyer Scholarship Fund: The Stacy Meyer Scholarship Fund was started in memory of Stacy, a former St. Mary's Catholic School parent, who passed away in May of 2019. The 2024-25 school year will be the sixth year the Stacy Meyer Scholarship Fund is available to families who qualify for financial assistance. Each year we distribute around \$3000 in scholarships from this fund. This scholarship fund was started with the generous gifts of Stacy's family, friends, and community members who were touched by Stacy's giving nature. We continue to accept donations to keep the fund available for years to come.

Sponsor a Child: The Sponsor A Child program is for anyone who would like to make a contribution toward the education of a student attending St. Mary's Catholic School. The contribution could pay for a student's tuition monthly, quarterly, or the entire year. We are excited to report that this program is growing. We were able to assist 4 families this year, 2 more than last year. The students selected to participate in this program are based on financial need. The names of the student recipients are kept confidential. All contributions will be used strictly for the education of the students at St. Mary's Catholic School and are tax deductible. If you are interested in sponsoring a child, contact the school at 256-4257 or anelson@smsmn.org, or use your Sponsor A Child envelope in the collection at Mass.

Fundraisers: We are very thankful and grateful for the support of our families, parish, and community in raising funds during our fundraisers. Our goal is to have our fundraisers cover a third of our operating costs.

Fundraiser	Amount Raised in 2023-2024
Freeport Golf Classic (It was not able to be held, but FSB still contributed to each of the three parochial schools. It will be held again this summer at Meadowlark Golf Course.)	\$5000
Marathon/Prayer-a-thon	\$25,000
Catholic Schools Breakfast	\$7,600
Auction4Education (Including raffle)	\$154,000
Harry's Pizza (Fall and Spring)	\$20,825
Extra Programs that generate revenue	Amount Received in 2023-2024
Pop Cans	\$1,258 (as of 4/11/24)
Coborn's More Rewards	\$1,341
Arvig (Arvig has donated \$26,700 from this program since 2013)	\$2,335

Financial Report-continued

SMS\$4Kids: The total program rebate for 4/1/23 - 3/31/24 was \$9,933.46. St. Mary's School's profit was \$5,612 after expenses (not including \$4,320 that was given out in tuition reimbursements and other miscellaneous program expenses.) The SMS Cash for Kids program is a wonderful program used to raise funds for the school as well as help reduce your tuition commitment. The best part about the program is there is NO ADDITIONAL COST to the people using it. All users of SMS\$4KIDS have the option of designating 50% of profits raised through their use of the program to be applied to the tuition of a family or child of their choosing. Here are just a couple examples of the amazing funds families raised:

- **A SMS family used gift cards to purchase a family vacation and earned over \$1000.00 in tuition rebates just this year!**
- **A community member shopped locally for his groceries and gas and donated his \$600.00 earnings to a SMS family in need 😊**
- **A SMS family earned over \$6400.00 in tuition rebates over the 9 years their children were students at SMS - WOW!**

If you or someone you know would like to start using SMS\$4Kids, please contact the school at 320-256-4257.

Budget: Our operating budget income for the 2023-2024 year was estimated at \$636,000. The estimated income for 2024-2025 is \$700,000. The increase in income is from an increase in tuition and fundraising efforts. The expenses for the 2023-2024 school year are expected to be \$648,000. Expenses for 2024-2025 are estimated at \$745,000. The increase in expenses is the change in running all expenses through the operating budget. Previously, some expenses were run through a liability account. This information reflects our school budget as of April 30th. The complete school year budget runs from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

Enrollment

Projected 2024-2025 Enrollment (as of May 1, 2024)

Little Saints	29
Kindergarten	18
1st grade	16
2nd grade	17
3rd grade	14
4th grade	14
5th grade	16
6th grade	12
Total K-6	107

Registration is still open for the coming school year. If you know of anyone who might be interested in having their children attend St. Mary's School, please have them contact the school for a visit.

As a means of promoting continued enrollment increases at St. Mary's School and to reward existing families for their efforts in promoting our school, an Enrollment Referral Incentive Program will again be offered for the 2024-2025 school year. Any current SMS family whose outreach and referral efforts result in a new family registering their child(ren) at St. Mary's School for the 2024-2025 school year will receive a credit of \$100 in the spring of 2025 for each new family they refer.

Curriculum and Instruction

- St. Mary's adopted a new religion program for grades 1-5 called Discover. Our search led us to this program, which offers more hands-on learning, parent involvement, and student engagement. At least once a week, students in grades 1-6 use their Bibles to read and reference scripture to further their understanding of the messages within the Bible.
- We added the Junior Achievement program for grades K-6. We are grateful to Freeport State Bank employees for facilitating the lessons in each classroom about financial literacy, work and career readiness, and entrepreneurship.
- St. Mary's students had the opportunity to participate in a 4 day creative dramatics-themed art residency. Creative dramatics, also known as creative drama, is an educational and theatrical technique that combines elements of drama, storytelling, and improvisation to engage students in imaginative and expressive activities and games. It is often used in educational settings to develop creativity, communication skills, collaboration, and self-confidence in participants.
- We continued our instructional coaching experience through Northshore Learning. Teachers had the opportunity to work on individual skills they would like to focus on to improve their teaching with a trained coach.
- This was our first year with a new science program, Mystery Science. Evaluation by the teachers is showing the importance of a consistent curriculum across grade levels and hands-on learning.
- This was also the first year with our new social-emotional learning program, 2nd Step. The program helps students build social-emotional skills, including nurturing positive relationships, managing emotions, problem solving skills, and setting goals so they can thrive in school and life.
- We continued our enrichment program once a quarter called "Power Hour." Teachers focused on designing a lesson that introduced life skills while also incorporating academic learning, personal skills, and teaching to the whole child.

Faith Development and Dedication to Service

Throughout the year, our students have many opportunities to develop a strong faith and learn to serve others. These are a few of the activities our students participated in throughout this past school year that reflect our dedication to service and reaching out beyond the walls of our building.

- Students connected with residents at Pine Villa through cards, projects, and visits.
- Students prayed daily for those whose prayers we collected from our Marathon/Prayer-a-thon.
- Land O Lakes partnered with St. Mary's students during Advent to collect socks for area shelters. We collected over 2,500 pairs of socks.
- During the Season of Lent, the school children collected \$1122, which was shared with the Melrose Food Shelf, Fr. Schwieters, Fr. Ohmann, Simply Love International, and Food for Thought.
- 3rd grade students represented SMS in communicating via videos with Simply Love International. We used the \$400 from our Lenten collection to sponsor a 4-year-old girl, Catherine, from the Global Orphanage, to attend school.
- Students prepared baskets with treats and notes of thanks for Legion members and city workers in our community.
- We continued to join St. Mary's parishioners to pray the Rosary.
- The Living Stations continue to be an annual form of prayer the students share with our Parish community.

Faith Development and Dedication to Service-continued

- This year, St. Mary's staff focused on service. We helped the St. Nick's project wrap Christmas presents, packed food for Food for Thought, and performed our auction skit for the residents at Park View.

Maintenance Projects

St. Mary's School and the Leadership Council continue to collaborate on developing a budget for large maintenance projects.

- Thank you for the generous donations for our heating units. Expenses were paid by financial investments from the school, church, and donations. Donors contributed \$128,715.
- New flooring and blinds are being installed in the Title room and 5th grade classrooms this summer.
- The downstairs girls bathroom will be remodeled this summer.
- The roof will need to be replaced within the next five years. The estimated cost, as of right now, is near \$300,000. Repairs will be made annually to maintain the roof until it can be replaced.
- All the windows and doors are also original to the building, lacking the modern energy efficiencies that updated windows and doors would have. In the future, we will also need to update these items.

Successes

- We added a 3/4 year old preschool program with Heidi Hoppe as the lead teacher. Heidi is a great addition to our school and Little Saints program.
- SMS is incredibly grateful for the support of CSCOE (Catholic Schools Center of Excellence). So far this year, they've provided us with a \$5000 grant to be used to reward, retain, and recruit exceptional teachers and support staff, another \$5000 grant to be used towards our preschool program to enhance the resources used to teach our students, and most recently a \$6000 grant to improve our website. They are doing great things for Catholic Schools in the state of Minnesota. For more information, please check out their website at <https://cscoe-mn.org/>
- We were blessed to have a new kindergarten teacher, Jennarae Barten, and 1st grade teacher, Peggy Stowe, join our SMS team this year. They have been a strong addition to our staff and have helped us continue to build our mission.
- Ali Arnzen joined our staff as an interventionist, Brenda Primus as our lunch supervisor, and Roger Althaus as the church/school head custodian. They have all brought gifts to our school that have enriched who we are as individuals and as a school.

Accreditation

MNSAA (Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association): The Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association (MNSAA) has renewed the accreditation of St. Mary's School for the eligibility period of 2020 to 2027. The mission of MNSAA is to be a facilitator in improving the quality of nonpublic education in Minnesota through the accreditation process. Part of the improvement initiative that MNSAA requires of St. Mary's School is to produce a Strategic Plan that includes objectives, action steps, and a timeline. Progress on our Strategic Plan is reported to MNSAA on an annual basis. Our full Strategic Plan can be found on our website and SchoolSpeak, our parent portal.

Accreditation-continued

There are 4 main objectives in our Strategic Plan we continue to work on yearly.

- Objective 1: Using Hearts, Hands, and Voices, St. Mary's Catholic School will be a community of academic excellence.
- Objective 2: St. Mary's Catholic School will provide a safe, functional, and attractive learning facility.
- Objective 3: St. Mary's Catholic School will remain financially viable into the future.
- Objective 4: St. Mary's Catholic School will communicate effectively with stakeholders to increase enrollment and retention of students in the school.

Successes:

- The hard work of staff to review and implement new curriculum in the past five years has helped us build a strong academic foundation. Our next areas of focus will be on our social studies and health curriculum.
- We continue to work on identifying funds to support the maintenance plan of the school.
- We will continue to build our Support a Child program to help all families afford a Catholic education.
- We continue to connect with our alumni and find ways to engage them in the day-to-day life of SMS.

SMS Information

Alumni: Stay connected with everything SMS has to say at <https://mailchi.mp/3596b1349d3c/sms>

St. Mary's Facebook Page: St Mary's Catholic School - Melrose
St. Mary's Instagram Page: @smsmelrosemn
St. Mary's School Website: www.smsmelrosemn.org

I look forward to continuing to work with our stakeholders to live out our mission rooted in Catholic values, foster academic excellence, and build spiritual growth within a nurturing community. If we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here for you.

Sincerely,

Autumn Nelson, Principal

St. Mary's Catholic School is a faith-filled community that illuminates the teachings of Jesus by using our hearts, hands, and voices as Christian witnesses while striving for academic excellence.