

For over 135 years, Sacred Heart School (SHS) has faithfully educated the next generation of Christ-followers in partnership with Sacred Heart, St. Patrick, and St. John parishes and others. SHS works diligently to stay on the leading edge of evolving trends in education. Similarly, the way we fund Christian education at SHS has required adjustment over the years. We are writing to help you prepare for a transition that will impact some SHS families.

Why is a change needed?

For many years, SHS's tuition rates have been insufficient to fund its operation. The gap between the true cost of educating a child and the tuition rate has been bridged by Parish and Foundation subsidies, regardless of a family's actual financial need. This put the school in an impossible situation of becoming unaffordable for some families, while struggling to keep pace with fair and just salaries, building and grounds upkeep, technology integration, and more—all critical elements of an extraordinary Catholic education.

In forecasting for future years, *the SHS Leadership Team realizes that our current funding model is simply unsustainable*, even with hundreds of thousands of dollars of support from the churches and the Sacred Heart School Foundation. **After prayerful consideration of potential solutions, we have determined that a new tuition and financial aid model is necessary** for better alignment with our Catholic ministry philosophy and to ensure the viability of SHS for years to come.

The tuition model to which we are moving is based on biblical principles of Christian stewardship and is the prevailing model in the healthiest Christian schools of which we are aware. Conversely, our research revealed that our past/current tuition model is common among Christian schools that have *not* survived. Because we are strongly committed to seeing SHS thrive far into the future, we are implementing a needed change now – not because of a current crisis, but to avoid a future one.

What is changing?

Our vision is “Extraordinary Catholic Education. Through Christ. For All.” In accord with our Strategic Growth Plan, in the Fall of **2019** we will adopt an **exclusively need-based** financial aid model. Over \$500,000 in parish and Foundation contributions previously used for general subsidies will be shifted to need-based scholarships tailored to each family's financial circumstances. The highest *potential* tuition rate will be the true cost of delivering an extraordinary Catholic education, both for Catholic and non-Catholic families alike.

All SHS families, regardless of faith tradition, will have access to tuition assistance through our financial aid program. **The enclosed brochure** outlines our philosophy of financial aid, the timeline for applications and awards, along with answers to common questions.

For Fall 2018, SHS is honoring the currently published tuition rates—with one important caveat to help us **and** you plan for the upcoming **Fall 2019** transition: in order to enroll at this current rate, all families must complete the financial aid assessment by May 23rd, 2018.

Some families are ready and able to cover the true-cost rate of education now in order to help achieve the strategic quality goals all the sooner. Families who choose this option will **not** need to complete the financial aid evaluation. They will enroll this summer at the **Fall 2019** true-cost tuition rate and receive a gift tax deduction for the difference between the advertised Fall 2018 and the true-cost Fall 2019 rate.

*We want to make
extraordinary
Catholic education
possible for every
family that
believes in our
vision and values,
including your
family, in a way
that is fair to all
families.*

What remains the same?

High Quality Catholic Education. Our new model will help ensure that we can achieve the vision of “Extraordinary Catholic Education” We must both retain and attract exceptional faculty and staff, while improving our facilities and technology. As the enclosed brochure shows, even at full-cost tuition, SHS is a *great* value.

Our Commitment to Support You. If anything about this announcement alarms you, please be assured of this: we will make every effort to make SHS possible for families who are willing to prioritize their children’s Christian education.

No family will be required to pay more than they are now if they truly cannot afford to do so.

We understand that many families operate on already-tight budgets. If this adjustment causes you to question whether you can still afford to send your child(ren) to SHS, we encourage you to apply for scholarship assistance through our confidential financial aid process. *SHS leaders are prepared to meet with every family who needs clarification regarding this transition to ensure that your financial needs are given full consideration.*

The combined effects of a portion of our families paying the full cost of educating their children, the generous subsidies from the Parish and Foundation, new ways of offsetting costs and transitioning to professional management of school and parish finances, will greatly improve our financial status and provide the funds to make significant improvements.

Three important requests from the SHS Leadership Team

We realize this is a significant announcement, which SHS parents will discuss with one another. However, we ask three things of every parent:

- First, please do all you can to support this step, even as you are coming to understand it. We are not asking you to make this adjustment without explanation or follow-up conversation. In fact, we *want* to hear your questions and respond to your concerns. Please invest some time absorbing this information and praying about any needed conversation before scheduling it with us. However, we do urge you to give us an opportunity to help. We will meet one-on-one with parents to ensure your specific concerns are addressed.
- Second, we all know that social media is a forum in which many people process their concerns and disappointments. *For many good reasons*, we ask SHS parents to refrain from using social media to comment on school concerns. Communication is vital during a season of change like this one. As a community based on biblical values, let’s all commit to discuss our concerns in mature and gracious ways. We believe this manner of conversation will prove most helpful as we strive to honor Christ and preserve our healthy partnership between parents and the school.
- Finally, *help extend our Christian mission to even more students*. We all likely know of a child or family that would be a wonderful addition to our school family that never applied because they assumed they could not afford Catholic school tuition. This new financial aid philosophy is tailored to meet each family’s unique financial situation.

We value your trust and partnership. Please contact us right away with any questions or concerns and we will promptly arrange a time to meet and discuss.

Your Partners in Extraordinary Catholic Education,

Father Mark Miller

Dr. Mark Register

and the SHS Leadership Team