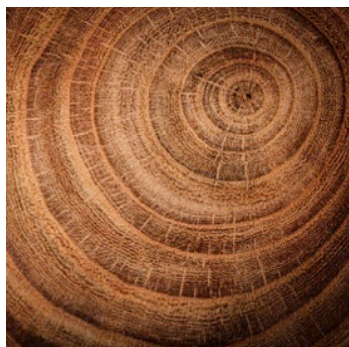


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# New School Studies

## Executive Summary

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**Diocese of Columbus, OH and  
St. John Neumann Catholic Church  
Sunbury, OH**

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*February 2023*



## V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The purpose of this feasibility study was to assess the enrollment potential of a new Catholic elementary and/or high school in the Sunbury, OH area. The following conclusions emerge from the analysis of the community demographic data, parish and Catholic school data, insights and experience of diocesan leaders, pastors, and New School Steering Committee members.
2. The desire and call for a new Catholic elementary and/or high school in the study area were expressed in the survey results. There is an opportunity to fill a new geographic niche among other educational options in the area. This will be an option to complement and provide a new opportunity for families that desire a Catholic school education.
3. Survey results indicate an interest in Catholic school education where parents are looking for a program that provides their children with access to superior academics with caring, qualified teachers in a Catholic environment in proximity to their home. Many respondents indicate they are willing and able to pay the tuition cost for what is believed will be a high-value education. However, a larger percentage of respondents indicate a need for tuition assistance for 25% to 50% of the tuition rate.
4. The potential pool of students in the general population of the study area is growing to support a new school(s) and is projected to continue growing. This trend, plus the number of children in the parishes not presently in a Catholic school, and additional businesses and industries moving into the area, can provide the critical mass essential to both opening and sustaining a new school(s).
5. General and school-age population projections indicate continuing growth or stability in the study area except for the 10-14-year-old age group. However, specific enrollment areas can be targeted that are expecting growth in this age group. Demographic data shows the current and projected population in the study area could support opening a new school(s). Effective marketing, recruitment, and tuition assistance opportunities could positively impact future enrollment.
6. There will be some competition for enrollment among local schools that will increase with a new school in the mix. Public and private schools could provide a level of competition for the proposed new school(s). Initiating and implementing effective marketing and recruitment initiatives along with a quality program, a clear mission, and strong leadership and faculty are imperative to increase or sustain market share and enrollment.
7. The number of children respondents indicated may transfer from their current school to the proposed Catholic elementary school is fair, with most indicating they are Likely to Enroll. Transferring after the portal grades of kindergarten and 6th grade is a challenge as students are engaged in a school environment, developed friends among their grade-level peers, and parents may be satisfied with the quality of education their children are receiving.
8. In considering a new school(s), the ability and willingness of parents to meet tuition expectations are critical. The majority of respondents selected a preschool tuition rate of less than \$7,000. However, we must consider that most preschool students do not attend school five full days per week. The majority of respondents who said they would definitely enroll their child in kindergarten and at the elementary levels selected a tuition rate within the expected \$6,000 to \$8,000 range. That percentage decreases for parents who selected "Likely Would Enroll/Transfer." Similarly, respondents who selected "Definitely Would Enroll" for 9th grade, are able and willing to pay the expected tuition rate of \$10,000 to \$13,000. That percentage decreases for parents who selected "Likely Would Enroll."

9. The potential impact on existing Catholic schools by the opening of the new elementary school is greatest at St. Paul in Westerville (losing approximately 20 students per grade). St. Mary in Delaware could lose approximately 9 students per grade.
10. The potential impact on existing Catholic schools by the opening of the new high school is greatest at St. Francis DeSales High School in Columbus (losing approximately 12 students per grade). The greatest shift at the high school level is students who would have attended public high school. Approximately 39 students per grade would select the new Catholic high school over the public high school. The demographics and growth in the area play a significant factor in whether the projected growth can minimize the impact on these schools as well as increase the number of Catholic children at the schools that do not currently attend.
11. Important to note is that the potential impact on the existing Catholic schools reflects just the DWE/DWT and LWE/LWT, without factoring in tuition reductions. If we applied the same tuition reduction percentages, these numbers might go down to 12 for St. Paul and 6 for St. Mary.
12. Projected enrollment for kindergarten shows an average of 26 students.
13. Projected enrollment for an elementary school program shows an average of 26 for grades 1 through 8.
14. Projected enrollment for high school shows an average of 67 students for 9th grade.
15. The enrollment potential based on the current community demographic and Catholic data along with the market research survey results shows a sufficient number of children to open and sustain a new Catholic elementary school at St. John Neumann Catholic Church beginning with one section of preschool and kindergarten. The 1st-8th grade enrollment potential is also strong and should be considered. There are many factors to consider in deciding to open the school gradually (for example, PK-2nd grade at first, adding one grade per year) or all at once (PK-8th grade from the beginning). Opening a school gradually makes it easier to build the culture of the school, find good teachers, and moderate the impact on the other schools. On the other hand, a financial analysis may say that running more grades is more efficient.
16. The enrollment potential based on the community demographic and Catholic data along with the market research survey results shows a sufficient number of children to open and sustain a new Catholic high school in the Sunbury, OH area upon opening in two or three years beginning with 9th grade, then adding one grade per year reaching full four grades, 9th grade to 12th grade. Therefore, Meitler recommends that the next phase of planning be undertaken – the cost analysis for the new high school which includes determining the level of funding that will be needed to plan, open, and operate (7+ year financial operating projection) the proposed new high school in the Sunbury, OH area.
17. Given that the demand for a high school is stronger than an elementary school, Meitler recommends that the focus is on building a high school first, then following that with the construction of an elementary school. When the elementary school is built, Meitler recommends building a single-section elementary school with the potential to be a double-section school in the future.