

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It was two years ago this month when our school community first began to think about the possibility of expanding our school to include a middle school. For the most part, it has been a slow process for a number of reasons. One, I wanted to do as much research and consult with as many people as I could to find out if it could (and should) be done. This has involved talking with people at the diocesan and vicariate levels, as well picking the brains of people involved with Catholic education on a national level.

Two, I wanted to talk to as many people here as I could. Two years ago, we held a town hall meeting. One year ago, many of you shared your thoughts about a middle school via a survey (almost 100 responded). I also spoke with the parish council and finance council about an expansion. Through it all, I have received a wide range of opinions. Some have been enthusiastically in favor of a middle school. Some have been vocally opposed. Most have been somewhere in the middle.

Dr. Brian Dougherty, superintendent of Catholic Schools has guided me through this process of investigation. He has helped me to contact those with whom I needed to speak. About nine months ago, we received permission from the College of Consultors (the Archbishop's chief advisory board) to have an architect draw up plans for a possible expansion and to get a rough estimate of how much the construction would cost.

Six months ago, a first round of meetings with the pastors (with schools) and principals of the Blue Water Vicariate was held to discuss the future of Catholic education in our vicariate. Because these conversations were going on, we put our plans on hold out of respect for this process. This past January, a second round of these meetings was held. There may be similar meetings in the future. While the pastors and principals had questions about our expansion investigation, none who were present expressed opposition.

As a result, we were invited to approach the College of Consultors in person. Last month, Mrs. Nancy Appel (principal), myself, and one representative each from our school and parish met with the Consultors. We have not been given any permission to go ahead, but to put together a five-year fiscal and operations plan that would forecast the school's operation in five years to see what kind of financial impact a middle school would have on the parish. This is, in a nutshell, where we are today. The good news is that we have no debt and all our bills are paid. Our school is healthy, enrollment is the

highest that it has been since I've been here, and our school committee is working to find ways to draw more students to our wonderful school. We've had money available to repair and update many things in our church and school. We are certainly not wealthy, and we have to be prudent where we spend our money, but we are able to do what we need to do. Praise God and thank you all for your generosity!

I am writing this letter to you not only to fill you in as to where we are, but also to ask something from each of you. In order for us to present a plan to the Archdiocese, I need to ascertain the level of support that a future middle school would have here at St. Edward. And so, I once again need your input. In order to ensure long-term support for a middle school, we would have to create something of a fund to help with tuition and operations costs. We would be asking for help to build and sustain that fund. Below are some questions for you to consider. Please look at the ones that apply to your situation.

1. **For those who do not have kids or whose children are high school age and above**, would you be willing to support our school?
 - a. How much would you be willing to contribute to a school endowment fund that would go toward tuition and operations costs for the school (either a one-time gift or over a period of five years)?
2. **For those who currently have children in our school**, would you be willing to continue in our school, i.e., how likely would your child(ren) stay if we added a middle school?
 - a. How much would you be willing to contribute to a school endowment fund that would go toward tuition and operations costs for the school (either a one-time gift or over a period of five years)?
 - b. Would you be willing to speak to others about the merits of our school?
3. **For those who are not sending their elementary/middle school-aged children to Catholic school**, would you consider coming to our school if it had a middle school?
 - a. Did the absence of a middle school affect your decision not to send your children to St. Edward?
 - b. How much would you be willing to contribute to a school endowment fund that would go toward tuition and operations costs for the school (either a one-time gift or over a period of five years)?

4. **For those who have children who are not yet of school age**, would you be more likely to send your children to St. Edward if it had a middle school?
- a. Would the absence of a middle school negatively affect your decision to send your children to St. Edward?
 - b. How much would you be willing to contribute to a school endowment fund that would go toward tuition and operations costs for the school (either a one-time gift or over a period of five years)?

I ask that you *prayerfully* take these questions home with you this week. Discuss them with your family. Pass them on to other families that might be interested and invite them to answer these questions. Please be as thorough as you can be with your answers. You may remain anonymous, but please be honest (and charitable). I need to know how you truly feel about this and how much you would be willing to support this now and in the future. I also would like to hear from as many people as possible so that we can make the right decisions moving forward.

Please return your responses either to the parish office or school office by Friday, March 18. You may also email your responses to stedwardsurvey@outlook.com or fax them to (810) 385-6972.

Thank you for all that you do for our parish and school. Please pray for their continued success. May God continue to bless you this Lenten season as we prepare for the celebration of Our Lord's Resurrection.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Acervo