Being strategic is essential to the vision of being premier Catholic schools. The vision for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Green Bay strives for “strong leadership and faith-infused curriculum…in order to form life-long faithful disciples of Jesus who become virtuous leaders of society”.

The strategic plan for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Green Bay 2015-2018 sets forth priorities and goals to realize the vision; specifically, in the areas of Catholic culture and faith-integrated curriculum, leadership development, finance, marketing, collaboration, small community schools, and administrative services.

The Diocese of Green Bay will build upon this plan and move forward with implementation by addressing issues specific to the operational vitality of schools. The result will be an expansion of the current plan with a blueprint for individual schools and systems of schools to move forward. The planning process will proceed in support of the new vision and mission that Bishop Ricken recently unveiled which follows in the footsteps of Disciples on the Way.

Some of the major challenges in the Diocese that can be addressed through planning are:

a. Individual schools are not always tied to a common diocesan vision for Catholic education.

b. While parish support for schools is strong in many areas, the relationship between parishes and schools needs reaffirmation and definition for the long term. The lines of authority and accountability need attention in some cases.

c. K to 8 enrollment has declined in recent years. The decline seems to continue annually and has not shown signs of turning even though some schools are able to hold their own. Enrollment trends raise concerns about school viability, competitiveness and sustainability.

d. Families enrolled in schools may not always participate in parish life, attend Mass or be living the Catholic faith at home. This poses a challenge for the Church and an opportunity for evangelization.

e. Some concerns emanate from financial challenges both urgent and immediate as well as long-term sustainability. A high level of diocesan and parish investment is placing stress on the capacity to maintain funding within the current model. How much support should the Diocese and parishes give to schools? What is the right philosophy and approach for support?

f. Compensation of teachers and administrators in the long term needs to be at a competitive level to attract and retain the quality desired for strong leadership and outstanding educational programs.

g. Developing new sources of funds through institutional advancement may have significant potential but changes in approach are needed. Few schools, particularly elementary schools, have a high level of success with advancement programs.
h. Paying tuition is often cited as a barrier for parents to enroll their children. The tuition model needs to be examined in light of market competition, the true value of a Catholic education, and financial viability that sustains a healthy school.

i. Prior generations who established and supported schools will over time hand that responsibility to new generations. The attitudes about education and faith formation are different for new generations of parents, so the priority and value of Catholic school education must be continually clarified and renewed within the Church to ensure the continuation of Catholic schools in the future.

j. Some schools are operating in “emergency” or “crisis” mode and may be slowly reaching a point of being unsustainable. Can these situations be turned around and how? Is there a need to redesign the approach to Catholic school education so it will be available in particular communities? There is a need to address critical situations but also be proactive with schools that could become critical in the next few years if current trends continue.

k. How can parishes and schools collaborate more effectively in working toward a shared mission?

In response to these challenges and the current condition of Catholic schools, this next round of planning will seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Promote an understanding and acceptance of the vital and significant role Catholic schools play in enabling the Church to fulfill its mission.** Move Catholic schools toward being schools of discipleship that pass on the faith, form a Catholic worldview, and cultivate future leaders.

2. **Study the present and projected demographic trends affecting Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Green Bay.** Examine both external demographics in the community and internal demographics in parishes and schools. Bring to light the implications demographics have for school mission and school viability.

3. **Analyze enrollment trends and attendance patterns for existing Catholic elementary and secondary schools.** Evaluate enrollment potential, particularly in areas where population change has occurred or is expected to occur.

4. **Make recommendations regarding the number, location and structure of Catholic elementary schools to achieve long-term viability.** Evaluate situations in each region of the Diocese recognizing the history and uniqueness of each region. Recommend changes to current or new models if there is a compelling case to do so. Affirm those structures that work well and should continue. Identify creative solutions that will sustain quality Catholic education for as many students as possible.

5. **Develop a diocesan funding plan that will improve financial viability for Catholic schools.** This means addressing just and competitive salaries and benefits, investment in academic quality, successful development/advancement programs, and realistic support from parishes. Recommendations will emerge that either preserve/refine the current model and/or propose new models.
6. **Evaluate current models of governance and determine where current models will be viable or not viable for the long term.** Evaluate how governance is structured and how it functions in systems and parochial schools. Propose new governance models or changes to governance structures where necessary and compelling to do so.

7. **Review the organization, role, and authority of the Catholic Schools Division of the Department of Catholic Education.** The role of the office needs to be defined in a way that is aligned with the goals of the strategic plan. The office needs to be staffed, organized, and funded in a manner that produces the desired outcomes.

8. **Develop the plan through a process that involves key stakeholders at a local and diocesan level to achieve ownership and commitment to implementation.** Create a wide understanding of the issues and facts as well as an understanding of the proposed plan, particularly among persons in leadership or positions of influence. Build ownership and gain wisdom by seeking input as the plan is formed.

9. **Approach the planning process prayerfully and in a manner that seeks to accomplish God’s will for the ministry of Catholic schools in the Diocese.**

At the end of the process, individual schools and systems of schools will be able to use the diocesan plan as a blueprint for developing their local plan as every school is expected to have a rolling three-year strategic plan.