

ICHS Planning Process
Summary of Results

Background

During the spring of 2011, Immaculate Conception High School asked its extended community to “weigh in” on (1) the state of the school today and (2) emerging priorities for the future. To do this, ICHS conducted an online survey, asking those in the school community to assist us in identifying areas where enhancements are needed. A total of 468 people took the survey. Results are attached.

In addition, ICHS hosted focus group discussions centering on plans for the school’s future. A cross-section of faculty and staff, students, current parents, alumni, past parents and friends were invited to attend one of six focus group discussions. 95 people participated in focus group meetings. Bill Acton of Advancement Partners facilitated the focus groups.

Focus Group Discussions

Participants received background information in advance of each meeting. The agenda for the discussions was as follows:

- I. Introduction/Context for the meeting
- II. Self introductions
- III. Review of background information
- IV. Group input and recommendations
- V. Discussion of next steps

The discussion at each meeting was lively, positive and candid. Participants were clearly committed to ICHS and eager to participate in its advancement. Many were long-time supporters of the school and were familiar with recent strategic planning initiatives. There were also several participants not as “close” to the school today, who were not aware of all that has been taking place.

Focus Groups: Common Themes

- Participants share a fondness for the school as it provides students with a “family” atmosphere built on moral values and a strong Catholic mission. There are positive feelings for the school, particularly its Catholic identity and the leadership opportunities it provides students in the areas of academics and co-curriculars.
- There is a common belief that ICHS is “strong,” and that the overall trajectory of the school is trending positively. That being said, participants still believe that the high school is in a position to advance. In order to compete in today’s market, the following areas were identified as needing our immediate attention and focus – academic and co-curricular programs, facilities, recruitment, and marketing. These feelings were shared in acknowledgement of the highly competitive market that our high school resides in, surrounded by other excellent public and private schools.

- Many discussions centered on the themes of recruitment, enrollment, marketing and “brand.” People stressed the importance of reaching an optimal enrollment size of 400 students.
- While the relatively new involvement of a board of limited jurisdiction is seen as a strength, not enough is known about the work of the board.
- Many believe that the relationship between the Parish, GS and HS needs continuous nurturing so that in working together all entities can experience positive growth. Focus Group participants were both surprised and pleased that the IC parish has not subsidized high school financial operations for the past few years, that the school recruitment efforts were drawing students from a wide geographic area and that the financial status of the school was very strong. A number of participants were unaware that we did not receive a subsidy. With this understanding, concerns were still expressed that the level of support (not relative to financial support) provided to the HS by the GS and Parish needs improvement. They suggested that the HS continue to work hard and find new ways to get out the “good news” of ICHS.
- There is strong support for improving facilities. Many saw “visible” renovations – particularly Plunkett Field – as necessary not only to enhance current programs, but also to stay competitive and help attract future enrollment.
- There was also strong support for continued investment in technology, improvement of the science labs and any “curb appeal” improvements (to the gym, gym entrance and Plunkett Field, in particular)
- Participants felt that there was a need to improve facilities in a balanced way – to include academic facility improvements (science labs and technology, for example) with athletic and/or co-curricular improvements (Plunkett Field and the arts, for example).

Bottom Line: Conclusions of Survey Data and Focus Group Discussions

- While there was no strong consensus on a specific facility need, there is consensus on doing “something” that will improve programs and facilities, as well as help ICHS in this competitive market.
- While there was support in the survey for endowment, the focus groups identified the needs of NOW – current programs and facilities – as a greater need at this time.
- It isn’t possible (or expected) that ICHS fund all of the facility improvements in the short term. But it is important for ICHS to improve facilities in a way that will (1) enhance programs and (2) help ICHS stay competitive in the market place.
- There needs to be a sense of urgency: The time for action is NOW. People are ready, and many would be willing to help fund improvements.







- At the same time that the school addresses facility needs, it must also examine how to take certain programs to the next level of excellence. In particular: (1) Academic programs, (2) athletics and co-curricular programs (3) recruitment and marketing. Enhancing these areas is just as important as improving facilities.

Next Steps

Over the summer, school leadership will conduct final interviews with key stakeholders who did not participate in a focus group. The board will also address three key actions:

- Reconciling the funding priorities with what is “doable.” (i.e. what should our first priorities be, given how much money we can raise?)
- Finalizing an improvement plan in concert with the IC parish plan for facility improvements.
- Create a strategic plan for non-capital enhancements to the school, including academic, athletic and co-curricular programs, as well as recruitment and marketing.






Survey Results

6. Affiliation with School:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Alumni		40.8%	191
Parent of Current Student		28.2%	132
Parent of Alumni		12.6%	59
Current Faculty/Staff		10.5%	49
Student		19.7%	92
Friend		4.3%	20







7. 1. What is your perception of Immaculate Conception High School's performance in the following areas:

	Excellent	Above average	Average	Below average	Poor	Rating Average	Response Count
Catholic Identity	58.3% (271)	33.1% (154)	8.4% (39)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (1)	1.51	465
Academics	43.9% (204)	45.6% (212)	9.0% (42)	1.1% (5)	0.4% (2)	1.69	465
Athletics	17.8% (82)	46.7% (215)	30.2% (139)	2.8% (13)	2.4% (11)	2.25	460
Fine and Performing Arts	12.8% (58)	30.0% (136)	38.4% (174)	15.9% (72)	2.9% (13)	2.66	453
Extra-curriculars (clubs/activities)	15.6% (71)	37.7% (171)	35.5% (161)	8.8% (40)	2.4% (11)	2.45	454
Buildings and Grounds	11.0% (51)	27.0% (125)	41.7% (193)	17.3% (80)	3.0% (14)	2.74	463







8. 2. In your circle of friends and associates, what do you believe their overall perception of ICHS is?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Excellent		17.9%	84
Above average		44.4%	208
Average		32.5%	152
Below average		4.1%	19
Poor		1.1%	5






10. 4. School leadership is considering an initiative to fund some of ICHS's most pressing facility and endowment needs. Those listed below have surfaced as facility needs. Which of the following would rank as the #1 facility enhancement required at this time:

		Response Percent	Response Count
Renovate athletic fields and fieldhouse (Plunkett)		31.0%	145
Renovate current gym locker rooms (Parish Center)		5.1%	24
Renovate 3 existing science labs		21.2%	99
Provide funds for continuous technology upgrades		27.1%	127
Create space for the visual and performing arts		11.3%	53
Repair and expand York Street student parking		4.3%	20






11. 5. Please choose your #2 facility improvement:

		Response Percent	Response Count
Renovate athletic fields and fieldhouse (Plunkett)		17.7%	83
Renovate current gym locker rooms (Parish Center)		12.8%	60
Renovate 3 existing science labs		23.9%	112
Provide funds for continuous technology upgrades		25.9%	121
Create space for the visual and performing arts		13.7%	64
Repair and expand York Street student parking		6.0%	28






12. 6. In addition, increasing endowment for a variety of needs has surfaced as a priority. Which of the following endowment needs would you rank as your #1 priority?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Endowment for faculty professional development		13.5%	63
Endowment for scholarships/tuition assistance		33.3%	156
Endowment for academic programs		30.1%	141
Endowment for technology		13.9%	65
Endowment for general operations		9.2%	43

13. 7. Which would you rank as #2?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Endowment for faculty professional development		19.4%	91
Endowment for scholarships/tuition assistance		20.3%	95
Endowment for academic programs		26.9%	126
Endowment for technology		22.9%	107
Endowment for general operations		10.5%	49

14. 8. Should the school move forward to fund its most pressing capital and/or endowment needs, which of the following best describes your attitude:

		Response Percent	Response Count
I would make this initiative my top giving priority		10.5%	49
An ICHS initiative would be in my top 3 giving priorities		38.5%	180
I would give to an ICHS initiative, but it would not be in my top 3		27.8%	130
I most likely would not donate		9.8%	46
If you are a current student at ICHS, choose this option.		13.5%	63