Executive Summary

Archbishop Rummel High School
Archdiocese of New Orleans

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Introduction

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.
Description of the School

Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

Archbishop Rummel High School is a Catholic all-boys school located in Metairie, Louisiana, a large unincorporated metropolitan suburb of New Orleans that includes the largest portion of Jefferson Parish. The school serves males in grades 8-12, with grades 8-9 considered as the junior high and grades 10-12 the senior high for purposes of both the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) and the Louisiana Department of Education's nonpublic school qualifications. The parish population in the 2010 census was approximately 433,000, with about 56% of the residents living on the East Bank, where the school is located. In the last three years, the school population has decreased from 871 to 725, a reduction of about 17%. A major factor in the smaller school population is the shrinking number of male grammar-school students in the feeder Catholic schools (the largest source of incoming students); as that population declines due to civil and church parish demographics (both overall number and the percentage of male students), the pool of available students to the area Catholic high schools is resultingly smaller. In addition, the increasing availability of magnet and charter public schools in the area offering a competitive curriculum has affected the school's recent population. New or significantly updated campus facilities at rival area Catholic boys' high schools have also attracted some Jefferson Parish boys away from Rummel, as the school is perceived on the outside as relatively outdated or neglected.

Rummel's all-male student body is currently 84% white, with African-Americans comprising 9% and Hispanics 5% of the student population overall. The junior high presently has a total of 246 students, with 9% African-American, 4% Hispanic, and 80% white; the senior high has 477 total students, with 9% African-American, 5% Hispanic, and 83% white. This ethnic breakdown has shifted slightly in the last three years, since in 2010-11 the school had 85% white students with proportionately fewer African-Americans but slightly more Hispanics. The enrollment among African-American students has risen since Hurricane Katrina, when schools in Orleans Parish were damaged in some cases beyond repair, and Orleans students - often for the first time historically - sought schools outside their parish of residence. Since then, more African-American students who reside in Orleans Parish attend the school while the proportion of African-Americans living in Jefferson and surrounding parishes has remained about the same.

In both the junior and senior high levels of the school, about 88% of the students reside in Jefferson Parish. The remainder of the students are from Orleans Parish (4% of students) or surrounding parishes (9%). Similar to the students, the majority of staff reside in Jefferson Parish. The staff is about 55% male and 90% white.

Approximately 10% of students attend on a partial work-study scholarship, based on the individual family's financial circumstances as determined by an outside agency. Some 12% of students are on a partial academic scholarship, based on performance in a national standardized high-school entrance exam for the initial award and continuing academic eligibility including high GPA for maintenance of the award.

The biggest challenge that the school currently faces is declining enrollment. As noted above, a big reason for having fewer students at the school is simple demographics. A compounding factor in that decline is the local economy. Many families who choose to send their sons to Rummel may struggle financially to pay for the total tuition and other costs. Although the school is able to subsidize a portion of tuition for about 10% of students, that partial funding is not enough to keep some students within the school, whether as returning students or as ones who had enrolled the previous year but were unable to begin school in August because of financial circumstances. In addition, even when
students pay the full tuition and fees charged, there remains a gap between the actual cost of educating students (staff salaries plus building and other costs) and the amount charged. The school leadership, particularly through the development team, is working to offset that difference by increasing various fund-raising activities, mostly through alumni and community donations, and by cutting expenses where possible. Because of the budgeting shortfall, between 2011-12 and 2012-13 the school did not renew the contracts of several teachers and other staff nor replace those who left voluntarily.

To increase enrollment for 2013-14, the school has announced a new scholarship program. Currently, the academic scholarships pay up to $1000 per year for students who initially qualify and then maintain the program’s year-to-year requirements. The new program will offset tuition by 50% for the highest performing recipients on the standardized entrance exam and by 25% for the second-highest group of performers. In addition to the upgraded scholarships, general recruitment efforts have also been substantially increased this school year through various forms of advertisement and by hosting events that bring potential students and parents on campus. Compared with interest from potential students in the past two years, this year’s number of potential students so far appears to be significantly higher, so that the school may return next year to a pattern of stable enrollment.

In the last two school years, alumni relations - both internally and in connection with the school - have improved dramatically. A strong alumni relationship to the school community is vital for the continuing success of the school, both in enrollment (particularly in attracting the high-school sons of alumni) and in funding. A new alumni director was chosen for this school year, and alumni have been actively invited to participate in a wide variety of school events.
School's Purpose

Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

The school's purpose is to educate young men in grades 8-12 in the Catholic Lasallian tradition. The mission statement is: "Archbishop Rummel High School educates each student according to the principles of the Catholic Church in the Lasallian tradition of faith, community, and service. In a caring, disciplined environment of social awareness and academic excellence, Archbishop Rummel High School challenges each student to recognize the dignity of life and to develop and share, to the best of his ability, his unique talents."

The school embodies its purpose through the three Lasallian mission expectations (called "charisms") of faith, community, and service. The faith component is carried out through monthly school-wide masses, the grade-level retreat program, mandatory Religion classes for each grade, a designated school chaplain who serves not only at the main masses but who also provides counseling and smaller worship services throughout the year, a director of religious formation who organizes religious events and directs the campus ministry program, and in special Catholic liturgies such as the Living Rosary. In the charism of community, the school has many treasured traditions that are celebrated both within the student body and by including community members such as parents and alumni; examples include the various homecoming activities such as Return to Severn and alumni participation in sports and band activities. The service component of the school mission is closely linked to both faith and community. Service is carried out through a designated service-hour requirement for each student, varying by grade level, and designed to provide direct assistance to the needy of the community. In addition, the entire school staff and student body participate in community service on the annual Rummel Day to provide manpower assistance to a range of non-profit recipients located in the surrounding area. These three Lasallian charisms are highlighted in the monthly President's Assembly, in which students and faculty are recognized and honored for their achievements in one or more of the three areas; community members are invited to witness the recognition of the students and to share their successes.

The school also embodies its purpose through its different academic programs. Three main academic tracks are available for students: Honors, Academic, and Core. Placement into an academic track is based on entrance exam (standardized test) scores and previous grades, but adjustments up or down are made whenever a student outperforms the track to which he is assigned or after individualized tutoring and counseling does not perform as expected. Thus, although the official curriculum shows the 4- and 5-year course sequences within the three tracks, many students follow a customized, hybrid curriculum that may include a higher or lower level for certain courses, based on the individual student's strengths or weaknesses in a particular subject or set of subjects.

The Honors program is designed to challenge students who excel academically, are intellectually curious, demonstrate high verbal and math abilities, and enjoy problem-solving. Students may be placed in the Honors track as new students to the school, based on standardized test scores and previous academic record. Other students who are recommended by their teachers and guidance counselors may be promoted to the Honors track. To graduate with an Honors diploma, a student must successfully complete all Honors-level courses for sophomore through senior years and take Honors or AP electives while maintaining a high GPA.

The Academic track is designed to meet the curriculum needs for students who generally succeed in school, who are able to learn at a typical high-school pace, and who are not yet ready for accelerated or highly challenging courses. The Core track has been carefully designed for students who struggle academically and need significantly differentiated instruction. A student is placed into the Core track based on a combination of standardized test scores, academic record, and professional evaluation such as that of a guidance counselor, child psychologist, or other specialist.
In addition, the school has a Resource program to assist students who have a documented learning disability or medical condition that qualifies them for special services. Students who are first admitted to the school and qualify through Jefferson Parish Public School System are mainstreamed in Core-level courses in all but one of their classes. In the Resource class, students receive remediation or tutoring in any areas where they are having difficulty. Currently, about 7% of students at the school are in the Resource program.

Finally, the school carries out its mission to educate the whole child by sponsoring a wide array of extra-curricular activities. Team sports include baseball, basketball, bowling, cheerleading, cross country, football, golf, powerlifting, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and field, and wrestling. Most LHSAA team sports are available for 8th-graders, 9th-graders, junior varsity, and varsity students. Club sports at the school are in-line hockey, intramural athletics, lacrosse, rugby, and ultimate frisbee. Other club activities focus on academics, community service, brotherhood, or leadership. Academic clubs include National Honor Society, National Jr. Honor Society, Raider Yearbook, Raiders’ Digest newspaper, Spanish Club, Latin Club, Mu Alpha Theta, Jr. High Math Club, Library Club, Chess Club, and Art Club. Community service organizations are Campus Ministry, Key Club, Operation HeadStart, Raider Ambassadors, Raider Hope, Student Council, Campus Ministry, Big Brothers, and Youth Legislature. Brotherhood/leadership organizations include Big Brothers, Operation HeadStart, Student Council, Campus Ministry, Paint Ball Club, Ping Pong Club, and Video Games Club.
Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Notable achievements in the last three years include three National Merit Scholarship finalists, one for each of the last three years, in addition to several semi-finalists. Over the past three years, the percentage of students earning the Louisiana TOPS award has risen from 65% in 2010-11 to 72% for the current year's seniors. The academic good standing of first-time freshmen in colleges and universities in Louisiana was 91% of graduates attending an in-state college in 2011-12 (the first year with individual school data; results from the 2011-12 year are not yet available). In community service, the school has won numerous awards for its huge participation in programs such as HeadStart and similar community outreach service programs, with various grants being awarded to the school to further such projects. In athletics, the varsity wrestling team won first place in the state of Louisiana in 2010-11, and the bowling team won first place in the state in 2011-12. Many other teams have also won district-level championships in the past three years.

In the next three years, the school is striving to improve in several key areas. First, the greatest need is to increase student enrollment. Current enrollment could increase by about 50 students without the school needing to hire additional faculty. Multi-pronged recruiting efforts are underway, including expanded academic scholarship awards designed to entice more high-achieving students to the school. Also, the school is closely investigating three new programs that will improve the overall quality of curriculum offered at the school, as well as - ideally - become a recruitment drawing card; these programs are four-year elective sequences in law, biomedical sciences, and engineering. All three new programs focus on problem-solving applied to real-life situations that enhance critical thinking; the programs also feature partnerships with professionals and facilities in the selected career area so that students develop a realistic understanding of and appreciation for a particular career cluster.

Another key area of needed improvement is the status of the school facilities. The main buildings were constructed around the time that the school opened in 1962-63, with little upgrade or modernization since then. The appearance of the buildings from the outside - where the public can see on a busy street in suburban Metairie - does not hold up favorably compared with rival Catholic boys' facilities in the area; ironically, because the school was relatively undamaged by Hurricane Katrina and was thus able to host displaced students from area schools afterward, Rummel - unlike its competitors - has received little money to upgrade since then. Beyond the school's physical appearance, the infrastructure is also aging and thus prone to breakdown. For example, Hurricane Isaac caused several major pieces of operating equipment to fail or break, setting off flooding and requiring emergency replacement of major equipment. Those unexpected costs came out of an already tight budget.

The third major area of improvement in the next three years is a stable source of funding to cover all expenses. Current tuition and fee costs leave a gap that is not steadily funded. The school is working closely with the alumni association and community partners to secure better funding, while at the same time planning carefully to minimize expenses by prioritizing or delaying expenditures. The budget restrictions also translate into the number and quality of teachers that can be hired, as current teaching salaries are not fully competitive with comparable (parochial or public) schools in the area.
On September 16, 2009, the Archbishop Rummel High School community marked the school's reassociation with the Christian Brothers and the Lasallian network of ministries. As part of the Catholic Lasallian Assessment Process (CLASP) that all Lasallian schools undergo, Rummel finalized its first CLASP evaluation in January, 2012.

Lasallian schools are guided and enriched by their commitment to the five Core Lasallian Principles. The five principles provide the lens that CLASP uses to understand, interpret, and assess the culture of a Lasallian school and to help a school plan for strengthening school culture. The Core Lasallian Principles are (1) faith in the presence of God, (2) concern for the poor and social justice, (3) quality education, (4) inclusive community, and (5) respect for all persons.

The 2012 CLASP survey findings for Rummel reflected strengths in all five core Catholic Lasallian principles. Among the greatest strengths of Catholic Lasallian school culture at Archbishop Rummel High School are the following, corresponding to the five Core Principles: (1) strong belief in the mission of the school; the school helps students develop a deeper relationship with God; and the spiritual life of the school community; (2) service opportunities; (3) strong academic programs; caring and accessible teachers; teachers who know their subject matter; and preparation for life after high school; (4) positive and supportive environment; and the variety of student activities, clubs, and athletic programs; and (5) sense of hospitality and welcome for all students; and the parents' and students' emotional commitment to the school.