

**REPORT OF 5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TASK FORCE**

**DECEMBER 13, 2010**

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS:**

**DANIEL BLACK**

**KIMBERLY FOLKERS**

**PHILIP FROILAND**

**KAREN THALACKER**

**CONTENTS OF REPORT**

**I. INTRODUCTION AND COMMISSION**

**II. BENEFITS OF K-6 STRUCTURE VS. K-4/MIDDLE SCHOOL STRUCTURE**

**III. HISTORY OF 4<sup>TH</sup>, 5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE CLASS SIZES**

**IV. ACADEMIC STATISTICS AND INDICATORS**

**V. PARENT FEEDBACK**

**VI. EXPLORING PARTNERSHIPS WITH WARTBURG COLLEGE**

**VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**VIII. FINAL THOUGHTS**

**IX. ATTACHMENTS**

## I. INTRODUCTION

In April of 2010, the Parish Planning Council of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School passed the following resolution:

We authorize the School Board to commission a task force to study the opportunities and challenges related to the new [Waverly-Shell Rock] 5 – 8 building currently under construction.

After careful consideration, the School Board selected task force members who they believed understood the overall functioning of the church and school and also had significant connections to a variety of constituencies within the congregation. The task force members are Dan Black, Kimberly Folkers, Philip Froiland, and Karen Thalacker.

The Task Force began its discussions in June of 2010 and has been meeting regularly until the present time. Principal Christi Lines also joined us on several occasions to provide essential information and input.

We began our work by agreeing that there would be no pre-conceived notions about the outcome of the report – either positive or negative. Our plan was to collect data from as many sources as possible, analyze it, and then draw conclusions. Without question, the process of identifying opportunities and challenges has brought a greater appreciation for the mission and value of the school, the passion of the teachers and staff, and the commitment of the students and their families.

The Task Force would like to issue two (2) disclaimers.

One -- parts of this report highlight the accomplishments of current and former students of St. Paul's School. While St. Paul's School has played a pivotal part in their faith development and educational growth, we understand and celebrate that St. Paul's School is not the sole reason for the success of these students. Parents, grandparents, the community, and their home congregations all can and should share credit for these outstanding students.

Two -- where necessary, we have compared what is happening at St. Paul's with what is happening in the public school system. We value our relationship with the Waverly-Shell Rock School District and nothing in this report is meant to criticize or demean their work. This community is blessed with amazing public schools and we are grateful for their continued partnership and cooperation.

## II. BENEFITS OF K-6 STRUCTURE VS. K-4/MIDDLE SCHOOL STRUCTURE

A significant difference between St. Paul's School and the Waverly-Shell Rock public schools is that we have chosen to maintain a kindergarten through sixth grade structure. Although arguments can be made for both K-4 and K-6, we wanted to identify the major pros and cons of K-6 education. We enlisted the help of Kathy Book, Professor of Education at Wartburg, who provided several helpful articles that spoke directly to this issue. We also compiled additional articles. [See Attachment B]

### A. "Should Sixth Grade Be in Elementary School or Middle School?"

The article entitled, "Should Sixth Grade Be in Elementary School or Middle School?" by Grace Chen was helpful in focusing our discussion. The article begins as follows:

Sixth grade has been described as a major crossroads of a child's development. Thus, it would seem important to place sixth graders in the proper environment during this critical period. Curiously, a decades-long debate continues regarding whether sixth graders are better off in elementary schools or middle school. After looking at common characteristics of sixth graders, this article examines the pros and cons for each approach. Although a 2007 study concluded sixth graders in elementary school behave and test better than sixth graders in middle school, 75% of school districts in the U.S. place 6<sup>th</sup> graders in middle school. Moreover, school district decisions to place sixth grade in elementary or middle school are sometimes based on purely financial considerations.

Ms. Chen states that educators agree that "sixth graders are an unusually diverse group to which few generalizations apply. They are moving from childhood to adolescence, but each one seems to [be] moving at a different pace."

She listed the following five (5) factors which favor sixth grade in elementary school:

1. Sixth graders in middle school have more behavioral problems than their peers in elementary school.
2. Six graders in elementary school test higher than those in middle school.
3. Sixth graders in middle school are exposed to older teens which may have a negative influence on them.
4. Middle schools are usually larger than elementary schools.
5. Middle schools tend to be located further away from home than elementary schools.

Ms. Chen listed the following three (3) factors which favor sixth grade in middle school:

1. Sixth graders in middle school have greater access to extracurricular activities.

2. Placing sixth graders in middle school allows sixth graders more independence.
3. Middle schools may offer innovative programs in which sixth graders may be eager to participate.

Ms. Chen concludes her article as follows:

The sixth grade is a critical time in a child's education because it is a time of physical and emotional transition from childhood to adolescence. The real answer to where a sixth grader belongs depends on the particular sixth grader. There are some children who would be better off in middle school because they are mature enough to deal with the extra challenges. Other sixth graders are unprepared for such a drastic change and need the security of elementary school. When decisions have to be made for whole classes of sixth graders, however, the factors in favor of keeping sixth graders in elementary school seem to outweigh the reasons for placing them in middle school.

B. "The Importance of Emotional Intelligence During Transition into Middle School"

An article that appeared in the Middle School Journal in January of 2002 focuses on the importance of emotional intelligence for children experiencing transition. Children with emotional intelligence "have mastered the abilities that inoculate them against the turmoil and pressures they are about to face during life transitions." The author goes on to say that "[s]tudents who are emotionally competent will manage their own feelings well, recognize and respond effectively to the feelings of others, tolerate frustration better, and be less impulsive and more focused."

The article concludes:

Educators should be aware of the existence of transition trauma and its sources and develop a method of communication to become more attuned to students' concerns. They also should be aware of the existence of emotional intelligence and how important it is to incorporate emotional reasoning and emotional development into the understanding of young adolescent learning.

C. "Taking Middle Schoolers Out of the Middle"

An article that appeared in the New York Times in January of 2007 discussed a "national effort to rethink middle school, driven by increasingly well-documented slumps in learning among early adolescents as well as middle school crime rates and stubborn high school dropout rates." The article discussed K-8 models but highlighted many of the reasons given by St. Paul's parents for wanting their children to remain at St. Paul's for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The chief executive of the Philadelphia school system said, "The fifth to sixth grade transition is just too traumatic ... At a time when children are undergoing emotional, physical, social changes, and when they need stability and consistency, suddenly they're thrust into this alien environment." The article describes older children in K-8 schools turning to their teachers from earlier years when they needed advice or a hug during the school day.

Interestingly, there were several St. Paul's parents who specifically requested that 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Paul's be restored.

#### D. Other Information

In our discussion with several additional sources, two other factors emerged. One – the transition period for the WSR public school to the 5 – 8 building may be challenging and have some “hiccups” in the first several years. Two – an additional strength of the K-6 St. Paul's experience is what was described as a “continuity of education.” By having the same group of students for seven (7) years, the teachers have a keen awareness of what has been taught and where the individual students are at academically. This awareness and familiarity allows learning to begin on Day 1 of the school year.

#### E. Conclusion

There is a nationwide debate regarding what organizational structure is best for students in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade and this Task Force is certainly not in a position to resolve it. There is educational research to support both the K-6 and middle school model.

What is clear is that ages 10 – 12 are a critical time for both male and female students and there are many school districts across the country who are re-thinking their middle school structure. There are definite advantages to K-6 education and, based upon the comments of parents, students, and teachers, they want 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade to continue at St. Paul's so that during this critical time period there is additional intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth in a faith-based setting.

### III. HISTORY OF 4<sup>TH</sup>, 5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE CLASS SIZES

In the years to come as we measure and discuss the impact of the new WSR 5 – 8 building, the Task Force thought it might be helpful for this report to include the number of students in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Paul's over the past 7 years.

	2004 – 2005	2005 – 2006	2006 – 2007	2007 - 2008
4 <sup>th</sup>	21	23	23	20
5 <sup>th</sup>	12	22	23	24
6 <sup>th</sup>	16	12	23	22

  

	2008 – 2009	2009 – 2010	2010 - 2011
4 <sup>th</sup>	22	23	21
5 <sup>th</sup>	20	18	21
6 <sup>th</sup>	23	19	16

**IV. ACADEMIC STATISTICS AND INDICATORS**

Although we can examine some standardized test scores for K through 6 students at St. Paul’s and compare them to WSR, the state of Iowa and the U.S., much of the information is not publicly released. That being said, the data that is available does provide an excellent snapshot of how St. Paul’s students are doing.

We also do not have access to the information that would separate and compare the performance of St. Paul’s students in junior high and high school to the non-St. Paul’s students. However, there is also public information that is readily available that gives us a strong anecdotal view of how St. Paul’s students fare in junior high and high school. See Attachment C.

**A. Reading and Math Proficiency from Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) Fall 2009**

**1. Comparison of Achievement Data for 4<sup>th</sup> grade Reading and Math proficiency**

Data collected from ITBS and is publicly released to the Iowa Department of Education in Grades 4, 8, and 11. (Proficiency = 40<sup>th</sup> percentile or above)

	St. Paul’s	WSR	State	Nation
% of students proficient in Reading	95.7	93	78.5	60
% of students proficient in Math	100	93	80.1	60

**2. Achievement Data for St. Paul’s School for 5<sup>th</sup> grade Reading and Math proficiency**

% of students proficient in Reading	88.9
% of students proficient in Math	94.4

**3. Achievement Data for St. Paul’s School for 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading and Math proficiency**

	St. Paul’s	WSR
% of students proficient in Reading	89.5	88
% of students proficient in Math	94.7	93

**B. Overall National Percentile Rank for National School Norms and State School Norms on ITBS 2009 for St. Paul's School**

This compares St. Paul's classes with other classes statewide or nationwide. Comparison data from WSR for 2009 has not been released at this time.

	National	State		National	State
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	97%	96%	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	99%	98%
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	99%	99%	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	99%	98%
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	98%	99%	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	99%	99%

**C. Iowa Grade Equivalency for ITBS Math and Reading for St. Paul's School 2009**

Comparison data regarding Iowa Grade Equivalency from WSR and State is not publicly released.

The following information regarding Grade Equivalent or GE was obtained from the Education Department website at the University of Iowa:

The grade equivalent is a number that describes a student's location on an achievement continuum ... The GE is a decimal number that describes performance in terms of grade level and months. For example, if a sixth-grade student obtains a GE of 8.4 on the Vocabulary test, his score is like the one a typical student finishing the fourth month of eighth grade would likely get on the Vocabulary test.

In reviewing GE, the St. Paul's students were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of school when they completed the ITBS. As a result, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student's GE would be compared to his/her actual grade location at 4.3 (4<sup>th</sup> Grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> month). The Grade Equivalency shown reflects the class as a whole.

**St. Paul's Iowa Grade Equivalency (2009)**

4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	5.0
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	5.2
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	6.7
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	6.5
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	8.2
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	8.5

D. Examples of Academic Achievement in Junior High and High School

1. Most Recent WSR Junior High Honor Roll

The trimester honor roll for the Waverly-Shell Rock Junior High was released to the public on December 3, 2010. The Honor Roll is divided into three (3) categories: Straight A, A, and B. To be included on the Straight A Honor Roll, students must not receive even one A-. The A Honor Roll requires that a student's grade point average be at 3.5 or above. The B Honor Roll requires that a student's grade point average be at 3.0 or above.

Seventh Grade: There are 161 total students in seventh grade (18 St. Paul's graduates and 143 non-St. Paul's). Overall, 99 students were named to the Honor Roll. The breakdown is as follows:

16 out of 18 St. Paul's students or 88% were named to the Honor Roll

83 out of 143 non-St. Paul's students or 58% were named to the Honor Roll

Of the 99 students on the Honor Roll, 69 students were on the Straight A or A Honor Roll. The breakdown is as follows:

9 out of 18 St. Paul's students or 50% were named to the A or Straight A Honor Roll

59 out of 143 non-St. Paul's students or 41.3% were named to the A or Straight A Honor Roll

Eighth Grade: There are 130 total students in eighth grade (22 St. Paul's graduates and 108 non St. Paul's). Overall, 84 students were named to the Honor Roll. The breakdown is as follows:

15 out of 22 St. Paul's students or 68% were named to the Honor Roll

69 out of 108 non-St. Paul's students or 63% were named to the Honor Roll

Of the 84 students on the Honor Roll, 60 students were on the Straight A or A Honor Roll. The breakdown is as follows:

10 out of 22 St. Paul's students or 45% were named to the A or Straight A Honor Roll

50 out of 108 non-St. Paul's students or 46.3% were named to the A or Straight A Honor Roll

## 2. Academic Awards Ceremony at WSR High School

Each year an Academic Awards Ceremony is held for sophomore, junior and senior students who have achieved a 3.5 grade point average or higher for two (2) consecutive semesters. This year the ceremony was held on September 13, 2010.

**Sophomore Class:** There are 157 total students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade at WSR (20 St. Paul's graduates and 137 non St. Paul's). Overall, 66 students received the academic award. The breakdown is as follows:

10 out of 20 St. Paul's students or 50% received the award

56 out of 137 non-St. Paul's students or 40.9% received the award

**Junior Class:** There are 155 total students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade at WSR (12 St. Paul's graduates and 143 non St. Paul's). Overall, 55 students received the academic award. The breakdown is as follows:

6 out of 12 St. Paul's students or 50% received the award

49 out of 143 non-St. Paul's students or 34.3% received the award

**Senior Class:** There are 145 total students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade at WSR (14 St. Paul's graduates and 131 non St. Paul's). Overall, 50 students received the academic award. The breakdown is as follows:

8 out of 14 St. Paul's students or 57.1% received the award

42 out of 131 non-St. Paul's students or 32.1% received the award

## V. PARENT FEEDBACK

### A. Parent Survey

The Task Force contacted or attempted to contact every family in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade and asked the following questions:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "not satisfied" and 5 being "extremely satisfied", how satisfied are you with your child's experience at St. Paul's?
2. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "very unlikely" and 5 being "very likely," how likely is it that your child will attend St. Paul's next year?
3. Do you have comments or suggestions about 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade?

Responses were gathered from 20 of 21 families in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Responses were gathered from 20 of 21 families in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### 1. 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Responses

- a. In response to Question 1 above, the following answers were received:

12 of 20 responded with a 5 (extremely satisfied with child's experience at St. Paul's)

1 of 20 responded with a 4.5

4 of 20 responded with a 4

1 of 20 responded with a 3.5

2 of 20 responded with a 3

No family responded with a 2 or a 1 (not satisfied)

- b. In response to Question 2 above, the following answers were received:

13 of 20 responded with a 5 (very likely that child will attend St. Paul's next year)

2 of 20 responded with a 4

2 of 20 responded with a 3

1 of 20 responded with a 2.5

1 of 20 responded with a 2

1 of 20 responded with a 1

2. 5th Grade Responses

a. In response to Question 1 above, the following answers were received:

15 of 20 responded with a 5 (extremely satisfied with child's experience at St. Paul's)

4 of 20 responded with a 4

1 of 20 responded with a 3

No family responded with a 2 or a 1 (not satisfied)

b. In response to Question 2 above, the following answers were received:

14 of 20 responded with a 5 (very likely that child will attend St. Paul's next year)

2 of 20 responded with a 4

1 of 20 responded with a 3.5

1 of 20 responded with a 3

2 of 20 responded with a 1

3. Comments in response to Question 3

Overall, the responses were extremely positive. Without exception, parents who expressed concerns did so in a thoughtful and constructive manner.

a. Joys: Parents stated that they want the school to "keep up the good work." Many said that they "didn't want St. Paul's to change a thing." The parents value the faith-based education and the feeling of community that is fostered. Many voiced strong support of 5th and 6<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Paul's and appreciate the safe and nurturing environment. Several with older children who also attended St. Paul's School stated that they are grateful for the impact that St. Paul's School has had on their family. Many mentioned that they appreciated the teachers. One parent said, "[The teacher] helps the kids to find themselves."

Many commented that they love the worship and leadership opportunities for their children. They appreciated that Spanish is offered and wondered if it could be expanded. The EWALU experience was mentioned by numerous families. Several families mentioned that the reason that they became active members of St. Paul's Church was that they were so committed to the school.

b. Concerns: The concern voiced most often was regarding how the school will transport students for band and orchestra lessons. Several wondered if the educational quality equaled that of the public schools. Several who answered with a 3 in response to Question 2 regarding whether their child would return to St. Paul's wanted to know if their child's friends would be returning and whether

there would be a mix of boys and girls in the class. Several voiced a concern over whether we should have a part-time principal and whether students who have special educational needs get the assistance they need in a prompt fashion. One parent asked about the hiring of a development director to assist with obtaining financial contributions to the school.

Most of the families who expressed doubts about whether their child would return next year stated that their reasons had more to do with the needs of their individual child and was not specifically a reflection on St. Paul's School. One of the other reasons mentioned was dissatisfaction with a specific teacher.

c. Many families expressed a desire to see the report of the Task Force when it was completed.

#### B. Marketing Survey From 2009

The Task Force also solicited comments through the school newsletter and reviewed the marketing survey that was completed in 2009. The marketing survey was sent to three (3) groups: current parents, alumni and parents of alumni. A summary of the survey submitted to the school board included both perceived strengths and perceived areas for growth. According to the survey responses, the strengths of St. Paul's are: faith formation, academic preparation, leadership development, foreign language and diversity of the student body. The areas for growth are: technology access and use, orientation for new families, curriculum/teaching strategies, availability of the principal, Spanish program, financial compensation for teachers, and strategies to meet diverse student needs.

## VI. EXPLORING INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH WARTBURG COLLEGE

The Task Force met with Dan Kittle (Director of Center for Community Engagement, Wartburg College), Bill Soesbe (Director of Office of Student Field Experiences and School Partnerships Coordinator, Wartburg College), Lynn Brown (St. Paul's 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher) and Stephanie Rieckenberg (St. Paul's 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher). Dan Kittle provided an excellent summary of our spirited conversation which is included as Attachment D.

In addition to identifying existing partnerships between Wartburg and St. Paul's School, we explored several new ideas for expanded academic programs which may include such opportunities as 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade access to Wartburg science facilities or an expanded after-school program for Spanish or other foreign languages. We discussed the possibility of the involvement of the new Director of Church Relations at Wartburg and also their grant writer.

The involvement of an institution with Wartburg's facilities and reputation can only enhance the learning experience of St. Paul's students. For example, an after-school Spanish program may include St. Paul's graduates currently in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Public school students are not offered the opportunity to learn a foreign language until 9<sup>th</sup> grade and a program of this nature could provide our graduates in junior high with a helpful refresher course.

Parents would also be a great resource for suggestions regarding Wartburg partnerships. For example, while giving feedback for Section V above, one parent suggested that we have an after school writers workshop that would improve basic writing and research skills and also foster creativity.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents and families who choose St. Paul's understand that there are at least four (4) key differences between St. Paul's and the public school:

- a. The opportunity for daily faith development which leads to spiritual maturity and greater emotional intelligence
- b. The K-6 structure
- c. Increased leadership opportunities including public speaking and performing
- d. An introduction to Spanish

Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that the K-6 structure be maintained and that all of the areas listed above be strengthened and promoted. Specifically, the Task Force is convinced that the K-6 structure is valuable and functioning well. We believe there is a solid educational rationale and powerful anecdotal evidence that the K-6 structure provides security and stability to children in an often insecure and unstable world.

In addition, we recommend discussing the importance of "emotional intelligence" with our school families and also the congregation. [See Section II above] Because the teachers and staff at St. Paul's can deal with the entire child -including their spirituality – the maturity and attitude of our students as they enter 7<sup>th</sup> grade was frequently mentioned by both parents and educators as a distinct advantage of a St. Paul's education.

2. There seemed to be quite a bit of misinformation and rumors regarding the future of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Paul's. This has led to confusion and worry. The creation of this task force was the result of a pro-active approach by the PPC and the School Board and we hope a commitment to gathering and sharing accurate information continues.

Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that communication between St. Paul's School, the parents and the congregation be a priority. The more information that we can provide, the easier it will be for people to dispel any misinformation. Several positive steps have already been taken including the school board president writing a summary of the school board meetings in the school newsletter. Our parents and school families are some of our greatest resources. They care deeply about the mission of St. Paul's School and will work passionately and diligently to further its work. We recommend that the contents of this report be made available to interested congregation members and school families.

We further recommend that in November or December of each year the St. Paul's School Board (or a committee designated by the Board) make contact with every family with K-6 children at St. Paul's School. These contacts can be in person or by telephone and can follow the format used by the Task Force. [See Section V above] The Task Force cannot overstate the quality of the information and insights

received from families during our discussions. We hope that families both appreciated the contact and felt that their input was important and valued.

The Task Force also recommends that the Waverly newspaper be utilized to let the community know what is happening in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. It could be as simple as a student-written article with a picture of the class activity or trip. If the community reads about the school, they may be less inclined to believe any rumors they hear. The Lutheran Schools Week insert may provide a good opportunity for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade recruitment for non-St. Paul's School families who may not want their children to attend a 5-8 building.

The Task Force also requests an opportunity to present our findings at Sunday coffee fellowship.

3. We are confident that a unique partnership can be forged between Wartburg College and St. Paul's School. This partnership will strengthen both institutions and provide St. Paul's students with immediate and unprecedented access to innovative programming.

Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that a task force be created as soon as possible to expand and coordinate Wartburg partnerships. The task force should include the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers as either members or consultants.

4. St. Paul's parents and families want to make sure that their children are learning at a rate that meets or exceeds that of their public school peers.

Recommendation: In almost every category, the overall performance of St. Paul's students meets or exceeds that of their public school counterparts. [See Section IV] The Task Force recommends that the principal and school board compile and maintain ongoing statistical information that can be readily reviewed by the congregation and by prospective or current families to monitor academic progress at the school.

5. It is important to monitor the progress of our St. Paul's graduates as they progress through junior high and high school. Tracking academic performance through a variety of indicators will let us make improvements internally if necessary and can also be used as a recruitment and marketing tool.

Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that a list of academic indicators for 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students be developed. Because we do not have access to standardized testing data, we need to utilize public information whenever possible such as the Honor Roll or the Academic Awards ceremony. This data would be compiled and then made available to members of the congregation and to current and prospective families.

6. Although we cannot be certain, there may be some fluctuation -- either up or down -- in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class size in the first several years that the new WSR middle school is open. Certainly in the past, St. Paul's class sizes have not been uniform and no one should be surprised if that trend continues.

Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that patience and thoughtfulness be utilized when examining the “numbers” impact of the new 5-8 school. Based upon the survey of parents performed by the Task Force, it does not appear that the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes will experience significant or unexpected losses next year. There is certainly no indication at this time that 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade class sizes will fall below 2004-2005 levels. [See Section III above]

We should also note that current families in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades express a high level of satisfaction with their child’s overall experience at St. Paul’s. 90% (or 36 out of 40) responded with a 4 or a 5 (extremely satisfied). No family in the Task Force survey responded with a 1 or 2.

7. The WSR 5-8 building will most likely contain technology enhancements for the students in public school. Although St. Paul’s has made technology improvements such as document cameras and projectors in grades 2 through 6, it is the understanding of the Task Force that the Technology Plan formulated by the Technology Committee has not been fully implemented because the proposed financing of the Plan has not been approved by the St. Paul’s Finance Committee.

Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that an ongoing effort be made to evaluate the technology needs at St. Paul’s School. We are not recommending that every technological advance or gadget that is available at the public school be available to St. Paul’s students. However, the Task Force believes that a commitment to identifying and obtaining age appropriate technology enhancements is appropriate and necessary. The Task Force recommends that the School Board and Parish Planning Council work together to determine appropriate sources of funding for technology as soon as possible.

The Task Force further recommends that the teachers and staff be encouraged to attend professional development or other classes to identify and use available technology in the classroom. Currently, Principal Lines and three teachers are participating in Enhancing Education Through Technology and we encourage such efforts to continue.

8. Currently band and orchestra students walk to their weekly lessons at the junior high and they are taken by bus twice a week to Irving School for large group band or orchestra. With the junior high no longer within walking distance, a logistical problem exists regarding band and orchestra lessons. Families are concerned and need to know the details of how this will work. Principal Lines and the School Board Chair have been in contact with WSR regarding this issue and are working on a solution.

Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that a proposed solution be worked out as soon as possible so that it can be presented to families for their discussion and input.

## VIII. FINAL THOUGHTS

As our work progressed, it became apparent to the Task Force that support and passion for St. Paul's School is long-standing. It was striking to us as a group what the school has meant and will continue to mean to students and their families.

We are living in difficult economic times. As we discuss and debate our finances at St. Paul's, there should be no doubt about the value of our commitment to Christian education. This mission of St. Paul's which began in 1872 is not only our heritage – it is our future. It is not only an investment in our church – it is an investment in our world. The students at St. Paul's School understand that their faith permeates every part of their lives. At a time when "religion" is often an afterthought or relegated to Sundays, the students at St. Paul's School and their families are renewing their commitment to their faith each day.

As they grow older, our St. Paul's graduates will encounter pressures that most of the church members no longer have to face and they will be forced to make choices. It is essential that we as a congregation have an opportunity to arm them for the battles they will face. St. Paul's School is a place where "faith and learning go hand in hand" – not just until 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation but for a lifetime. That is the gift and the mission that St. Paul's congregation members have embraced.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Black

Kimberly Folkers

Philip Froiland

Karen Thalacker

## IX. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Basic facts about St. Paul's School including information from St. Paul's: The First 100 Years and 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary update
- B. Articles regarding K-6 and middle school structure
  - 1. "Should Sixth Grade Be in Elementary School or Middle School?" by Grace Chen
  - 2. "The Importance of Emotional Intelligence During Transition into Middle School" by Tommy Lou Richardson
  - 3. "Taking Middle Schoolers Out of the Middle" New York Times, January 22, 2007
  - 4. "Revival of K-8 School: Criticism of middle schools fuels renewed interest in a school configuration of yesteryear" by Priscilla Pardine
  - 5. "Stuck in the Middle" by Jonah E. Rockoff and Benjamin B. Lockwood, Fall 2010
  - 6. "Columbia University Study: Students do better academically in K-8 schools than they do in middle schools" September 1, 2010 by Maureen Downey
  - 7. NMSA Research Summary #8: Grade 5 in the Middle School
- C. Academic Achievement Data
  - 1. St. Paul's Lutheran School Annual Progress Report Self Assessment (2009-2010 School Year)
  - 2. Junior High Honor Roll December 2010
  - 3. Academic Awards program from Fall 2010
- D. Summary of discussion with Wartburg College written by Dan Kittle, Director of Center for Community Engagement
- E. Letter from Mrs. Jo Groth, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, St. Paul's School
- F. Notes from Mrs. Lynn Brown, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, St. Paul's School
- G. Notes from Mrs. Stephanie Rieckenberg, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, St. Paul's School
- H. Advantages to St. Paul's from the viewpoint of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, provided by Mrs. Rieckenberg
- I. WSR District Report Card for 2009-2010

## ATTACHMENT A – BASIC FACTS

1. The following information was included in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church & School 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book:

St. Paul's Lutheran School has been in existence as long as the church itself. When the first community of Lutheran believers in Waverly met on May 9, 1872, to consider starting a new church and school, they called a pastor who was also teacher for the classes that began on Sept. 1, 1872.

2. St. Paul's School is the only K-6 ELCA elementary school in the state of Iowa and is the oldest ELCA elementary school west of the Mississippi.

3. The St. Paul's school building was dedicated in September of 1964. Grades 7 and 8 at St. Paul's were discontinued effective Fall of 1969.

4. There are currently 140 students enrolled in K-6 for the 2010 – 2011 school year.

(K) 25, (1) 18, (2) 19, (3) 20, (4) 21, (5) 21, (6) 16

Of the 140 students, 77 are members of St. Paul's or 55%. This percentage has remained roughly the same for the last four years.

5. The cost of educating a student in the Waverly-Shell Rock School District was \$5,768 for the 2009-2010 school year. The cost of educating a K-6 student at St. Paul's was \$4,484 for the 2009-2010 school year.

6. Spanish education is offered at St. Paul's beginning in preschool and continuing through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Foreign language is not offered in the public school system until 9<sup>th</sup> grade.