

## Parents' Meeting Questions Responses from Board of Education and Principal

### **Fundraising**

All fund-raisers need to be approved by the Board of Education. Several groups and organizations raise funds for their activities. A school parent group could have a committee to suggest fundraisers to the Board of Education.

Right now there are four fundraisers that are done school-wide. They are: Christmas materials; Kringels; Magazines; Hughes Chocolate. These do not include fund-raisers for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class trip, the student council or the Auction. Of the four fund-raisers, the Christmas Fund-raiser and the Magazine sales go into the Activity Fund or are designated for a specific item (50% of this years Christmas' sales went to the computer fund while the other 50% went into the activity fund). The Kringle sales and Hughes Candy Sales are budgeted by the Board of Education. The activity fund is set up for non-budgeted items such as: busing to events, speakers, assemblies and other items not in the school budget.

The auction money was designated to pay for the faculty to attend the National Lutheran Teachers' Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. While the amount budgeted was \$8,000, the actual costs were less than \$4,000. It was brought up that St. John's, Mayville received their money from No Child Left Behind. The Mayville School District allots over \$4,000 to St. John's, while our allotment is \$1,000 from the Horicon School District. We have used some of that money for other things.

Some of the auction money was also used to repair a mixer in the school kitchen. We also need to ventilate the computer lab and were planning on using auction funds for that. The remainder is to be used for financial aid.

The principal is usually directed by the Board of Education to look into grants or other government money that is available. Mrs. Roedel used the Seibert Foundation to receive money to start up our Child Care Program. Also Mr. Braun has filled out the forms to reduce the school and church phone bill by 50% through the government education rate program.

In summary, there are a lot of fund-raisers out there and many families believe we have too many of them. The Board of Education will be looking into setting up a parent committee to plan which activities to continue, which to add, and where to apply the proceeds.

### **Academics**

Both the Board of Education and the Principal disagree with the assessment that our academic program is not up to par with the public school. There are not a lot of ways that comparisons can be made. However in the state reading test given to 3<sup>rd</sup> graders every year, St. Stephen's students have outperformed the public school in 9 out of the last 10 years. This is in regard to the percent of students that scored either in the Proficient or Advanced category of the test.

This past quarter over 65% of St. Stephen graduates from the last 4 years were on the honor roll of

their respective high schools. Privacy issues make getting other information difficult.

Some parents have wondered why some students' grades increase when they transfer to the public school. St. Stephen's grading scale is as follows:

94-100%	A
85-93%	B
77-84%	C
70-76%	D
Less 70%	F

Van Brundt's grading scale is as follows:

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Less than 60%	F

As you can see the St. Stephen grading scale is more rigid and expects a higher level to attain each grade. This grading scale was set by a former board, but the present school board still likes the academic challenges of this grading scale.

Our curriculum is updated every year on a rotating basis. The area for update for 2005-2006 is reading. The faculty is currently beginning work on learner outcomes for each of the grades, pk-8. When finished these outcomes will be used to choose appropriate text and support materials for our reading curriculum. These outcomes will then be published for each grade level. Our goal, which we will need for accreditation, is to have a set of learner outcomes available for every curricular area which could then be published for parent information.

The principal has been in contact with parents, former students, and teachers at Horicon High School, Living Word Lutheran High School, and Brookfield Academy. In each instance St. Stephen graduates get high marks on their preparedness for high school. We plan on continuing that now and into the future.

As we plan for our second phase of accreditation, the faculty will be filling out a self-study report that helps to identify areas of weakness as well as areas of strength. We plan on correcting the areas of concern and continuing to build on those areas of strength. We all take our accreditation seriously and want to make our school a better place for Christian Education. We will attempt to use school parents on several of the committees.

### **Marketing/Public Relations/Enrollment**

We have not done exit interviews with families who leave our school unless they ask to meet with the principal. Unless families are leaving because of a move, most of the families do not let the school know that their children are not returning until we receive a transfer of records request. It is sometimes difficult to determine between rumor and fact with whether or not someone is leaving. An exit form needs to be developed and put into place. This will be done starting this spring. Again, it cannot be accomplished in a timely manner if families do not let the office know of their intentions.

We haven't had any families who have taken their students out return to St. Stephen.

The question of why enrollment is down is a complex one that probably has several answers. The stagnant growth rate of Dodge County, Horicon School District and St. Stephen Lutheran Church may have some bearing on declining enrollment. Cradle roll numbers at St. Stephen have been lower the last 5-10 years as families have fewer children.

In the last several years the principal has been in contact with other LCMS churches in the area to attempt to recruit some of their families. We currently offer "member tuition" to members of Peace, Beaver Dam; Pella, Waupun, St. John's Browns Corners; and the two churches in Burnett. We do have several families from these churches, but distance and lack of bus transportation has made it a difficult decision for families of these churches to send their children our way. We sent open house flyers to each of those churches and asked them to run our open house announcements in their Sunday bulletins. It is probably time to make a personal visit to these congregations again.

St. Peter Lutheran School in Kekoskee is merging with St. Matthews of Iron Ridge. Traditionally Wisconsin Synod and Missouri Synod churches have not "shared" students.

St. Stephen is currently not offering any inducement for families to enroll their students as St. John's, Mayville has. Several years ago we tried a 50% reduction for any families enrolling their students and had zero takers. While St. John offers zero tuition for the first year, they have a fund that makes up that money. They had 14 families take them up on this offer last year, they believe they will have 12 returning this year. They have 3 or 4 families for 2005-2006 that are taking advantage of this zero tuition.

Yes, there are envelopes that can be used to donate money. Unless specified the money goes into the general fund pot.

The Board will look into a small finders fee if someone brings a family to St. Stephen.

Both Mrs. Wrucke and the principal will be in the preschool for the parents' day. Pastor will be asked as well.

A welcome packet to hand out to prospective parents is a great idea. Some schools have a video. If any parents have ideas for what might be included into such a packet have them contact either the principal or a board member. These packets could then be distributed to local real estate companies or the Chamber of Commerce.

Preschool enrollment is limited by the size of the room, but we haven't had to turn anyone away in the last several years. Two years ago we had two sessions and we would do that again if needed.

The number of students in school doesn't have that much to do with making budget.

Martin Berk, who keeps our website has been contacted about adding other things to our website. I believe that the April calendar is on the website, but we are looking to add the Knights' Page and other information.

We do use the local media including PSA's to local radio stations.

The school board generally meets on the first Monday of every month beginning at 6:00pm. Parents are invited to attend, but may be asked to leave when discussions involve personnel.

We will put a blurb in the bulletin to see if anyone would sponsor a family.

## **Tuition**

The school board believes that the tuition scale is fair.

All deductions need to be made up with actual money.

Tuition was raised along with other measures. The board felt they needed to get the tuition increase out to the families in a timely manner.

For 2005-2006 full time teachers, pastors or music director's children receive a tuition reduction of 50%.

When families don't make payments on time they are sent a letter reminding them of their responsibility.

After two reminder letters a stronger letter is sent giving a deadline for payment or contact before parents are asked to remove students from school.

At the present time we don't have anyone who is more than one month in arrears.

As far as the principal knows we can only receive busing in the Horicon School District.

## **Board of Education**

A summary of the board of education minutes will be posted in the school office after they are approved.

The board believes we all have ownership of enrollment.

The complete school and church budget will be available to preview before the June voters' meeting.

The money goes to pay salaries, benefits, utilities, administrative costs, etc. A complete rundown of all boards is available in the Annual Report. It appears when all books have been audited.

Board of Education members are elected every two years. Members of St. Stephen may request to be put on the ballot. They are then elected by the congregation at the even year June voters' meeting.

## **Other**

All questions about voters' meetings need to be addressed to the congregation chairman or to Pastor Seehafer.

The church council and trustees have said that they will not increase the line of debt beyond \$250,000.

We are currently at \$228,000. We needed to address this deficit now and come up with a long range plan on how to deal with our deficit spending for the future of our church and school. We are not the only group responsible for the debt, nor should we be the only group responsible for its solution, but we must do our part if the majority of the budget is directly tied to the school.

Both Mr. Braun and the Board of Education would like to thank the parents who attended the meetings and expressed themselves through the surveys and in personal comments. These questions were taken very seriously and we tried to answer them to the best of our ability. Should you like further clarification or have other questions please contact either Mr. Braun or a school board member.