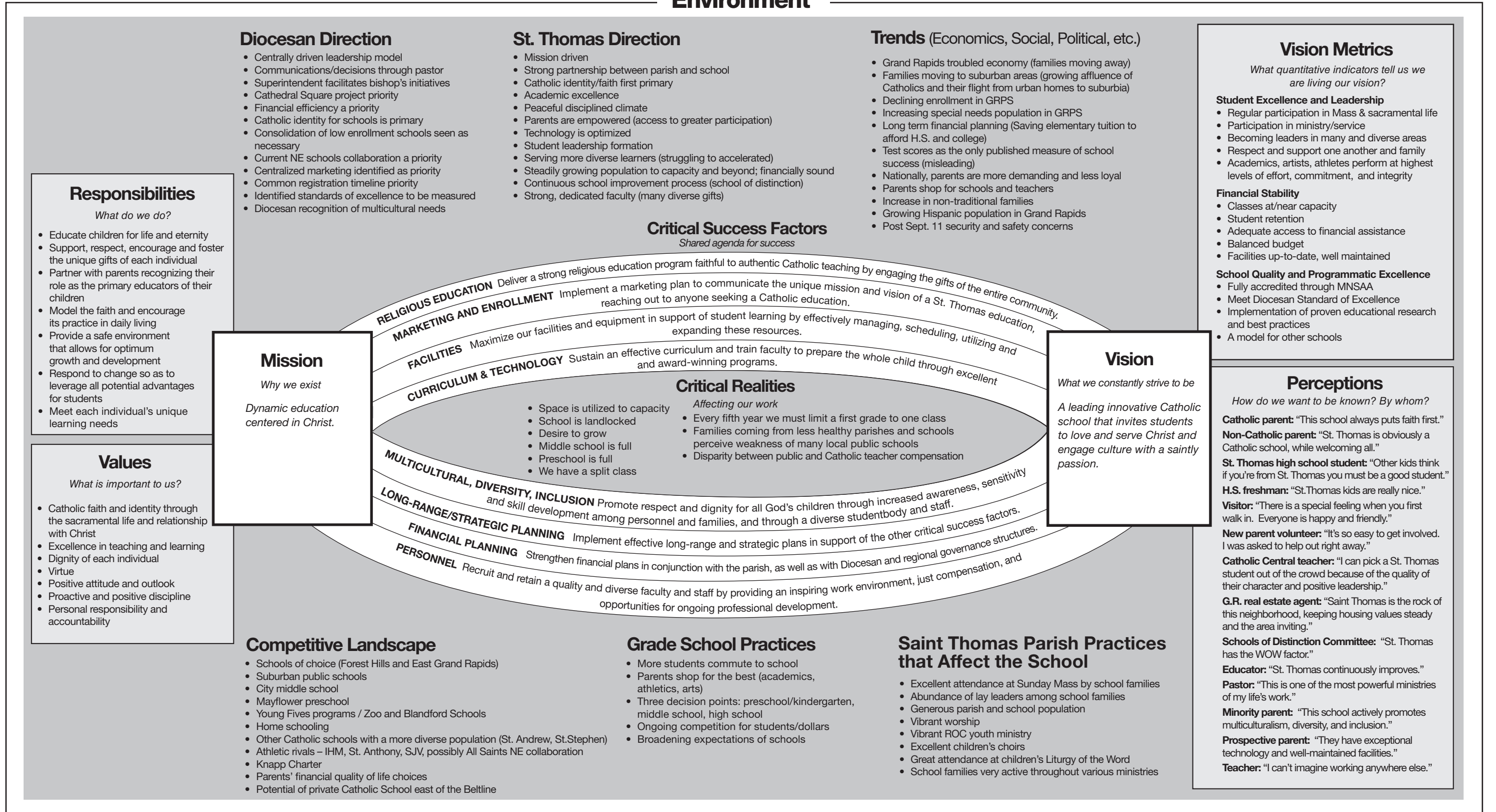


## Environment



### Diocesan Direction

- Centrally driven leadership model
- Communications/decisions through pastor
- Superintendent facilitates bishop's initiatives
- Cathedral Square project priority
- Financial efficiency a priority
- Catholic identity for schools is primary
- Consolidation of low enrollment schools seen as necessary
- Current NE schools collaboration a priority
- Centralized marketing identified as priority
- Common registration timeline priority
- Identified standards of excellence to be measured
- Diocesan recognition of multicultural needs

### St. Thomas Direction

- Mission driven
- Strong partnership between parish and school
- Catholic identity/faith first primary
- Academic excellence
- Peaceful disciplined climate
- Parents are empowered (access to greater participation)
- Technology is optimized
- Student leadership formation
- Serving more diverse learners (struggling to accelerated)
- Steadily growing population to capacity and beyond; financially sound
- Continuous school improvement process (school of distinction)
- Strong, dedicated faculty (many diverse gifts)

### Trends (Economics, Social, Political, etc.)

- Grand Rapids troubled economy (families moving away)
- Families moving to suburban areas (growing affluence of Catholics and their flight from urban homes to suburbia)
- Declining enrollment in GRPS
- Increasing special needs population in GRPS
- Long term financial planning (Saving elementary tuition to afford H.S. and college)
- Test scores as the only published measure of school success (misleading)
- Nationally, parents are more demanding and less loyal
- Parents shop for schools and teachers
- Increase in non-traditional families
- Growing Hispanic population in Grand Rapids
- Post Sept. 11 security and safety concerns

### Responsibilities

What do we do?

- Educate children for life and eternity
- Support, respect, encourage and foster the unique gifts of each individual
- Partner with parents recognizing their role as the primary educators of their children
- Model the faith and encourage its practice in daily living
- Provide a safe environment that allows for optimum growth and development
- Respond to change so as to leverage all potential advantages for students
- Meet each individual's unique learning needs

### Mission

Why we exist

Dynamic education centered in Christ.

### Values

What is important to us?

- Catholic faith and identity through the sacramental life and relationship with Christ
- Excellence in teaching and learning
- Dignity of each individual
- Virtue
- Positive attitude and outlook
- Proactive and positive discipline
- Personal responsibility and accountability

### Critical Success Factors

Shared agenda for success

- RELIGIOUS EDUCATION** Deliver a strong religious education program faithful to authentic Catholic teaching by engaging the gifts of the entire community.
- MARKETING AND ENROLLMENT** Implement a marketing plan to communicate the unique mission and vision of a St. Thomas education, reaching out to anyone seeking a Catholic education.
- FACILITIES** Maximize our facilities and equipment in support of student learning by effectively managing, scheduling, utilizing and expanding these resources.
- CURRICULUM & TECHNOLOGY** Sustain an effective curriculum and train faculty to prepare the whole child through excellent and award-winning programs.
- MULTICULTURAL, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION** Promote respect and dignity for all God's children through increased awareness, sensitivity and skill development among personnel and families, and through a diverse studentbody and staff.
- LONG-RANGE/STRATEGIC PLANNING** Implement effective long-range and strategic plans in support of the other critical success factors.
- PERSONNEL** Recruit and retain a quality and diverse faculty and staff by providing an inspiring work environment, just compensation, and opportunities for ongoing professional development.

### Critical Realities

Affecting our work

- Space is utilized to capacity
- School is landlocked
- Desire to grow
- Middle school is full
- Preschool is full
- We have a split class
- Every fifth year we must limit a first grade to one class
- Families coming from less healthy parishes and schools perceive weakness of many local public schools
- Disparity between public and Catholic teacher compensation

### Vision

What we constantly strive to be

A leading innovative Catholic school that invites students to love and serve Christ and engage culture with a saintly passion.

### Vision Metrics

What quantitative indicators tell us we are living our vision?

- Student Excellence and Leadership**
  - Regular participation in Mass & sacramental life
  - Participation in ministry/service
  - Becoming leaders in many and diverse areas
  - Respect and support one another and family
  - Academics, artists, athletes perform at highest levels of effort, commitment, and integrity
- Financial Stability**
  - Classes at/near capacity
  - Student retention
  - Adequate access to financial assistance
  - Balanced budget
  - Facilities up-to-date, well maintained
- School Quality and Programmatic Excellence**
  - Fully accredited through MNSAA
  - Meet Diocesan Standard of Excellence
  - Implementation of proven educational research and best practices
  - A model for other schools

### Perceptions

How do we want to be known? By whom?

- Catholic parent:** "This school always puts faith first."
- Non-Catholic parent:** "St. Thomas is obviously a Catholic school, while welcoming all."
- St. Thomas high school student:** "Other kids think if you're from St. Thomas you must be a good student."
- H.S. freshman:** "St. Thomas kids are really nice."
- Visitor:** "There is a special feeling when you first walk in. Everyone is happy and friendly."
- New parent volunteer:** "It's so easy to get involved. I was asked to help out right away."
- Catholic Central teacher:** "I can pick a St. Thomas student out of the crowd because of the quality of their character and positive leadership."
- G.R. real estate agent:** "Saint Thomas is the rock of this neighborhood, keeping housing values steady and the area inviting."
- Schools of Distinction Committee:** "St. Thomas has the WOW factor."
- Educator:** "St. Thomas continuously improves."
- Pastor:** "This is one of the most powerful ministries of my life's work."
- Minority parent:** "This school actively promotes multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion."
- Prospective parent:** "They have exceptional technology and well-maintained facilities."
- Teacher:** "I can't imagine working anywhere else."

### Competitive Landscape

- Schools of choice (Forest Hills and East Grand Rapids)
- Suburban public schools
- City middle school
- Mayflower preschool
- Young Fives programs / Zoo and Blandford Schools
- Home schooling
- Other Catholic schools with a more diverse population (St. Andrew, St. Stephen)
- Athletic rivals – IHM, St. Anthony, SJV, possibly All Saints NE collaboration
- Knapp Charter
- Parents' financial quality of life choices
- Potential of private Catholic School east of the Beltline

### Grade School Practices

- More students commute to school
- Parents shop for the best (academics, athletics, arts)
- Three decision points: preschool/kindergarten, middle school, high school
- Ongoing competition for students/dollars
- Broadening expectations of schools

### Saint Thomas Parish Practices that Affect the School

- Excellent attendance at Sunday Mass by school families
- Abundance of lay leaders among school families
- Generous parish and school population
- Vibrant worship
- Vibrant ROC youth ministry
- Excellent children's choirs
- Great attendance at children's Liturgy of the Word
- School families very active throughout various ministries