



# C.A.S.E Study

## *Bringing Meaning into Catholic Area Schools*

By Mark and Jeff Sauter

*“Our vision is to provide a quality, faith-based education to our students. As administrators, it’s important we have a shared understanding of what this means.”*

- Joe Eisenhuth, President  
Catholic Schools of Eau Claire and Altoona, WI

In its simplest sense, education is about preparing students for future success. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. Budgets are being cut. Teachers are being asked to do more with less. Classroom demands are increasing. Technology is altering course curriculums and the manner in which they’re delivered. And, least we forget that students bring new challenges to schools, coupled with parents who have exceedingly higher expectations when compared to past decades.

The above is a short list, far from complete. Suffice to say; similar to other industry sectors, education is dealing with the effects of a changing world. As a result, educational leaders are being challenged to revisit historic practices and beliefs. They must be skilled at reconciling differences, dealing with variation and finding creative solutions buried amongst diverse – even opposing – viewpoints.

This was the situation facing the Catholic School System in Eau Claire and Altoona Wisconsin (C.A.S.E.). “We knew we needed to change, but frankly many of our past attempts under-delivered,” said Joe Eisenhuth, President of C.A.S.E. “We needed to establish a shared understanding and focus, which cannot be mandated. Collaboration and shared decision making are key factors of this change process.”

### Process versus Event

C.A.S.E. leaders were seeking ways to improve system performance and institutional vitality; *Bringing Meaning into Monday™* provided them with a multi-step process to achieve it – *applying* timeless concepts to *existing* priorities.

Greater meaning develops from aligning individual agendas with shared priorities – priorities focused on producing value. To achieve this, C.A.S.E. leaders had to establish a sense of shared purpose and in turn, streamline the decisions, services and systems necessary to achieve it – replacing low-value and/or antiquated beliefs and practices. In addition to improving system-wide performance, this unified sense of focus will build

increased accountability and better tap the diverse talents of individuals – improving creativity, teamwork and their emotional sense of connection.

While utilizing their existing vision, this process helped C.A.S.E. leaders define the critical success factors necessary to achieve it. Once defined, goals were established and a short, yet shared list of prioritized actions was agreed to. “When we began this process our Leadership Team had different definitions of success,” stated Luke Kempen, C.A.S.E. Business Manager. “In order to better leverage system-wide resources we needed to identify and commit to a short-list of shared goals.”

### Early Indicators of Progress

The initial goal of this process is to build unity; therefore doing less will often result in more – momentum will grow naturally. With this in mind, the process yielded two goals – one economic and one cultural.

Economically, renewed life was breathed into their SCRIP program (a cooperative effort with local retailers). Historically, this program had fallen well-short of comparable best-in-class systems. To date, early indicators have shown a 150% increase in revenue, with 2-20% of the overall sales redirected toward improving C.A.S.E.’s financial health.

Culturally, a revised set of *shared* values was introduced system-wide. While these core values will improve academic outcomes, consistency, respect, relationship quality and discipline within the school system, they will also strengthen the moral readiness of the students and reinforce the community image C.A.S.E. wants to convey.

“While we’re early in this process, our Leadership Team has banded together. We are beginning to see the fruits from our labor,” stated Joe Eisenhuth. “This process is clearly about application ... with that said, we’ve only just begun.”

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