

SPALDING & GEHLEN CATHOLIC BOARDS OF EDUCATION

APPROVE UNIFICATION

God has blessed Spalding and Gehlen Catholic Schools with many strengths. Due to changing demographics, we must have a vision and plan for our future that is responsive to the realities and needs of our students, parishes, parents, benefactors and communities. Our primary goal is to strengthen Catholic education in Northwest Iowa. We believe that Catholic education is the best way we have to pass on our faith to our children and we wanted to ensure that remains a viable option for all of our families. Throughout the past months, we walked through a process of discernment to determine whether or not to unify Spalding and Gehlen Catholic High Schools.

After the announcement on September 5th, seven subcommittees were established. The committees included:

- Catholic Identity
- Academics
- Transportation
- Extra and Co-curricular Activities
- Buildings and Programming – which are Spalding specific
- Governance/Finance

As we started the process, there was a perception by some that the unification was “a done deal.” This was not the case.

Each **committee invested many hours** - beyond the outlined process - to discuss the critical issues and address the thought-filled concerns and input from our respective communities.

In October and November, joint public meetings were held both at Spalding and Gehlen Catholic to ensure no opinion or concern was left unaddressed. Input was also sought from key stakeholders throughout the process via personal conversations, email and other meetings.

On December 15, a proposal was presented to Bishop Nickless, in which the feedback of both communities was integrated. If you wish to see it, a copy of the proposal will be available after 9:00 p.m. this evening on our websites.

Gehlen Catholic graduate, parent, and volunteer, Steve DeRocher, described the unification process the best in an interview with KTIV in November. Steve said the unification process combines the best of both schools. It also opens more doors and possibilities – creating a vibrant new high school.

Tonight, the Spalding and Gehlen Catholic Boards of Education have met. We are humbled, and yet excited to announce: we both **voted to approve the unification** of Spalding and Gehlen Catholic High School beginning with the 2013-2014 school year. As we presented throughout this discernment process, the unified high school will be called Gehlen Catholic High School and will be located in LeMars.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 states, ***“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven....”***

As we enter into this new chapter of our future for Spalding Catholic we want to acknowledge there is also a sense of loss. Spalding is planning to celebrate the success it has enjoyed over the last 50 years through a

variety of upcoming liturgies and activities. They include Catholic Schools Week, the Spalding Catholic Gala, commencement, a 50th Anniversary celebration this summer and more. Spalding is looking forward to continuing to build upon and enhance our PreK-8 system.

Our next steps:

1. Now that we have completed the discernment process, we move now into **the implementation or planning process. Some of those components include:**
 - a. Spalding Catholic families with students in high school next year are asked to discern where they wish to enroll their child/ren in the coming year.
 - b. Families, regardless of where their child/ren may attend school, are encouraged to apply in the coming months for the Msgr. Lafferty Tuition Foundation, so no child is denied the opportunity to receive a Catholic education due to finances.
 - c. The faculty and staff of both schools are committed to making the transition smooth for Spalding Catholic **high school** families.
 - d. To make the transition easier for **elementary families looking forward**, the two schools will begin increased sharing at the elementary levels. We trust this endeavor will provide new and exciting opportunities.
2. Our **final steps** will be implemented in August 2013, when we enter the final phase of the unification process – which we will live out – as separate Spalding and Gehlen Catholic preK-8 systems with a commitment for sharing activities, and as Gehlen Catholic High School.

Brian Kolbeck, Gehlen Catholic School Board President: From Gehlen Catholic's perspective, we wish to acknowledge the amount of work accomplished by the Spalding Catholic School Board, volunteers, parents, and alumni. Spalding Catholic is renowned – both inside and outside of our diocese- for a strong Catholic faith, academics, and activities. We cannot fathom the amount of time, talents, and treasures Spalding has invested in planning and preparing the past several years. We applaud your efforts. We are humbled that you have reached out to us to expand our collaboration in such a dynamic way.

Jeanne Jungers, Spalding Catholic School Board President: We at Spalding Catholic wish to thank the Gehlen Catholic family for being more than just a willing and interested partner. We wish to acknowledge the blessings the Gehlen Catholic and the unification process have availed to our students and families. We anticipated Gehlen Catholic would be an inviting school to work with. We are grateful they have been. As part of the unification process, Spalding Catholic is able to strengthen our quality preK-8 system. We know many other gifts will be realized as the unification process unfolds. I also want to acknowledge the great gift that Spalding Catholic High School has been to our students, communities, families, faculty and staff. We are proud of our past achievements. With this change there will be sadness, but we also anticipate great things for our future. We trust the Lord is leading us into a new "season" for Catholic education in our community.