

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **Planning group gathers to analyze key research findings**

Parish and school study on track

November 9, 2011 (Omaha, Neb.) – About 275 pastors, school principals and lay leaders met Nov. 8 to discuss preliminary findings of a Wisconsin-based consulting firm as it directs a study of Catholic parishes and elementary schools in east Omaha.

The meeting with Meitler Consultants in the gym at St. Cecilia School highlighted demographic and other facts to help forecast trends and determine needs and resources of 37 parishes and 18 schools largely east of 72nd Street. In addition, criteria for vital parishes and schools were discussed at the meeting.

The gathering is part of a nearly year-long study that began in June and will continue into next spring.

In the archdiocese and throughout the country, parishes have closed, merged or consolidated; many parishes share a pastor; schools have closed and experience declining enrollments; the Hispanic population has grown; facilities are aging; and several parishes have undergone a reduction in priest staffing. These realities have and will continue to affect all aspects of parish life.

Archdiocesan officials have said rather than passively react to those challenges they want to plan for the future by looking out 10 to 20 years.

Last month, the first meetings were held with 12-member parish and 12-member school steering committees, which are made up of people active in their parishes and communities and familiar with or work for the archdiocese.

Those committees are expected to work with Meitler Consultants and an archdiocesan leadership team through March and consultations on a final plan through April.

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Founded as a diocese in 1885, the Archdiocese of Omaha serves spiritual and human needs in a 23-county area of Northeast Nebraska. Through its 147 parishes and missions, the archdiocese reaches out to 225,000 Nebraska Catholics. With two Catholic universities, 56 elementary schools, 17 high schools and a parish-based religious education program within its boundaries, Catholic education enriches the lives of some 58,000 young people. The Archdiocese of Omaha is one of the largest private social service providers in the region. Catholic Charities and the Family Life Office lead a network that ministers to the broadest and most fundamental needs of our community. Generous support to the Annual Appeal is symbolic of the collective faith that allows the Archdiocese of Omaha to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. [www.archomaha.org](http://www.archomaha.org)