

# Local Catholic schools to reorganize

■ The youngest students will attend **St. Michael**; students in second through fourth grades will go to **St. John**, and fifth-graders through eighth-graders will go to **St. Mary**.

BY MICHELLE SWARTZ

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Beginning next fall, the three campuses of St. Mary School, St. Michael School and St. John School will be known as Monroe Catholic Elementary Schools.

The reorganization will have infant, toddler, pre-school, kindergarten and first grade classes at St. Michael, grades two through four at St. John, and St. Mary School will serve students in grades five through eight.

The schools will be renamed St. Michael Early Elementary School, St. John Elementary School and St. Mary Middle School. Together, all three will be known as Monroe Catholic Elementary Schools.

An executive director will oversee the collaboration along with each pastor of the three Monroe parishes. Also, each school building will be managed by a principal.

"This moves us into the 21st century and keeps us ahead of the game," said Melody Curtis, current principal of St. Mary School who now serves

as executive director of Monroe Catholic Elementary Schools. "This is a new model that will keep Catholic education sustainable for years to come."

Sean Jorgensen, president of SMCC, said the reorganization will keep Catholic education moving in a positive direction.

"We feel we are implementing the best practice that allows us to grow because we will be sharing resources, which also will help us financially, too," he said.

The move has been in the works for several years. The Monroe Catholic Schools Commission formed in 2008 led by Jack Ready. After gathering information such as demographics, finances and enrollment trends, the commission talked to the community about their findings. Last year, the commission gave its findings to the pastors and principals of the three schools.

"The three schools actually showed a 22 percent increase in enrollment the last two years," Mr. Jorgensen said. "The new collaboration will allow the schools to grow another 24 percent and offer

more services at the same time."

With Mrs. Curtis serving as executive director, the duties of the other school principals will change beginning in August. Michelle Sontag, current St. Michael School principal, will serve as principal at St. Mary Middle School. Jacqueline Mojeske, current St. John School principal, will serve as the principal at St. Michael Early Elementary School. A building principal at St. John Elementary School will be appointed to the new position.

Before determining the use of each school building, the structures were looked into to see how what they had to offer.

"We also looked at capacity and class sizes when looking into each building," Mrs. Curtis said. "Class sizes at each school will stay between 20 and 25 students."

For the first time for any of the schools, an infant/toddler class will be offered.

"We're excited to be offering a new infant/toddler class because there is a need. It will have extended hours and will be offered year-round,"

Mrs. Curtis explained.

The three schools, located within a six-block radius in the city of Monroe, already have been sharing resources. Currently, students from each school are provided transportation to attend various classes at each of the schools, including St. Mary Catholic Central High School.

"We're already sharing resources so this transition will make it even easier on students and teachers. It also provides more stability," Mr. Jorgensen said.

The changes will not affect sports. Students will participate in Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) sports based on the parish where they are registered.

Mr. Jorgensen added that the pastors from each of the three parishes have received approval from the Archdiocese of Detroit regarding the collaboration.

*For more information about the collaboration, visit [www.monroecatholicschools.com](http://www.monroecatholicschools.com).*