The Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools Advisory Board continues their work of meeting with the elementary schools and the parishes in the East region and preparing recommendations for how Catholic education can best be supported in the region, both in the short term and in the long term.

Currently, the advisory board is concluding its meetings with each of the 14 schools in the region. These meetings have included the pastor and principal of each of those schools along with members of the parish finance and pastoral councils, school staff and parents, in addition to the representatives of the advisory board and the diocesan Schools Office.

These meetings have been very beneficial to the advisory board members as they learn about the strengths and challenges of each school. Enrollment trends, demographic and parish and school finances are critical elements of these discussions. These meetings will all the schools will conclude by the end of February.

The advisory board is working to analyze all the critical factors facing our Catholic schools and parishes in the East region in order to make their recommendations for the long term stability of Catholic education for families and students in the parishes and schools of the East region. The goal of these discussions is to strengthen the viability of our schools so that tuition is affordable and the educational programs are excellent in every dimension of learning.

The board is looking to offer short term recommendations which will address the more critical situations in the region but always with an eye towards the plan that will address elementary school viability for the long term. As an advisory board, these recommendations will not be final decisions to be implemented, but strong and thoughtful proposals that will help the diocese and the individual parishes and schools to make the necessary decisions for the good of our families and students.

The entire focus of this effort is to propose a path forward for how to best structure the schools in the region for success and strengthen them to provide excellent academic and spiritual formation for our young people well into the future. Clearly, some of the schools facing the most significant financial and demographic challenges will need to move ahead with changes for the 2018-2019 school year but these changes are being made in light of the long term plan for Catholic education in the region.

Please pray for the continued success of this initiative and for all those involved in this important effort on behalf of Catholic education in the East region of our diocese. Visit diopitt.org/pgh-east to stay informed.