Superintendent responding to the challenges

BY TANYA CONNOR  |  THE CATHOLIC FREE PRESS

When students, teachers and staff go back to school, some will meet new principals or pastors.
Also new are two positions that have been created to help schools increase enrollment, save money and improve efficiency by learning from, and collaborating with, each other.
Another new position is a dean of students at St. Bernard Central Catholic High School in Fitchburg.
Enrollment in schools has declined, with some exceptions, noted David Perda, superintendent of schools.
"We're trying to get ourselves in position to be stronger," he said. "It's sort of a multi-pronged approach to getting there. We have to ensure that our schools are financially viable."
"When you experience that period of enrollment decline, that affects the revenue that we use to purchase materials, carry out our operations, make sure schools are shining ... all those things that are attractive to families."
"We're in an era of school choice," he said; families have many options.
"We have our specialty - a top-notch education that's centered on Christ," but also have to be competitive with other schools in areas such as athletics, curricular activities, an array of courses, and high-quality teachers.
"Everybody has to do that, but we have to do the Catholic part too, and we have to do it at a time when our revenue is declining," he said. "So that's a real challenge for us and we all need to work together to respond to that challenge."
With that in mind, the diocesan Catholic Schools Office created a new position and broadened another.
In early July, Paula Kosky Hamann

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
NORTHBOROUGH - Deborah C. O’Neil, principal of St. Bernadette Elementary School, has been named a National Distinguished Principal by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA).

She is one of three principals in the country so named. Also honored are Matt R. Grosser from St. Mary School, Alexandria, Kentucky; Jack V. Nelson of St. George Catholic School in Prairieville, Louisiana.

Principals from public, private and overseas elementary and middle schools are nominated by their peers in public education and by special committees for private school and by the U.S. Department of Education overseas schools.

“Catholic schools are committed to educating the whole person – mind, body and spirit,” said NCEA Assistant Director for School Leadership Annette Jones. “The pursuit of excellence to this commitment is unwavering among these celebrated principals and inspirational to all Catholic school leaders. It is with heartfelt appreciation NCEA congratulates Matt, Jack and Deborah.”

Deborah C. O’Neil was guest speaker at this year’s Adopt-A-Student banquet.

The three will be honored at an awards gala Oct. 10 and 11 in Washington, D.C., according to a press release from NCEA.

This is the second national award Mrs. O’Neil has received this year. In April she was one of 27 educators - the only one from New England - to receive the 2019 Lead, Learn, Proclaim award from the NCEA.

In its press release announcing the National Distinguished Principals awards the NCEA said:

“Deborah O’Neil, M.Ed., became principal of St. Bernadette School in the Diocese of Worcester in 2005. As one of her first tasks, Ms. O’Neil instituted a successful student identification process where reading and math challenges as well as the need for supportive special education programs were identified.

“Along with newly hired specialists, classroom teachers also became certified specialists and collaboration with local schools on IEPs and 504 plans ensured all students’ needs are addressed. Her detailed attention to community building, discipline, academic excellence and faith formation helped increase enrollment with two and three classes for each grade level today.

“Testament to the academic successes came in 2014 when the school became a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. Committed to the Catholic faith, Ms. O’Neil is viewed as the school leader in Catholic truths and values. One nominee described her impact as 'enabling children to live meaningful lives consistent with the Gospel values of peace, justice, love and freedom.’”

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William R. Driscoll, formerly assistant principal for student affairs at St. Peter-Marian Central Catholic Junior/Senior High School, is the new principal of the school. He was appointed by Bishop McManus on the recommendation of David Perda, diocesan superintendent of schools. Mr. Driscoll has succeeded Denise Allain, who retired at the end of the school year.

He is a graduate of Austin Preparatory School in Reading. He earned a bachelor’s degree in English and philosophy from Assumption College and a master’s degree in educational administration from Boston College.

He was a teacher at St. Bernard Central Catholic High School in Fitchburg from 1996 to 2012. He then taught and completed an internship from 2012 to 2013 at St. Peter-Marian, after which he was named assistant principal.

He and his wife Christie live in North Brookfield.

Kelly Veilleux, former principal of Infant Jesus School in Nashua, New Hampshire, has been named principal of St. Anna School, Leominster.

She has a bachelor of science degree in early childhood education from Salem State College and a master’s degree in education from Rivier University in Nashua, New Hampshire. She also has been certified as administrator/principal.

In a short biography on the St. Anna School website, she said she grew up in Massachusetts and has lived in Connecticut and Washington. She now lives in New Hampshire. She and her husband have three daughters in college.

She said she has worked in the public sector and Catholic education, where she has had 20 years of experience. In her personal life she enjoys running, crafting, traveling and kayaking, she said.

“I look forward to serving as principal at St. Anna’s and I believe in creating a learning environment through collaboration between students, teachers, staff and administration,” she wrote.
New positions helping school department meet the challenges

FROM PAGE 2

started in the new position – director of enrollment management. She was previously interim director, and associate director, of enrollment at Worcester Academy.

She is now responsible for designing, implementing and monitoring enrollment and student retention programs for Holy Name Central Catholic Junior/Senior High School and St. Peter-Marian Central Catholic Junior/Senior High School, both in Worcester.

The admissions coordinator at each of those schools, who handles domestic and international enrollment, will report to her, said Michael J. Clark, associate superintendent of secondary schools.

On May 1 Daniel Millett, long-time facilities director at St. Peter-Marian, became facilities director of Holy Name too, Superintendent Perda said. Mr. Millett is responsible for designing, implementing and monitoring the management of those schools’ property and buildings, for safety, preventative maintenance, improvements and compliance with health and building codes. He is to propose annual budgets and vendors for these areas.

Internal restructuring and vacancies left at the schools made their positions possible without the need for additional revenue, Mr. Clark said.

“Rather than having the duplication of the same positions at the schools,” there will be one person for two schools in each of these areas, he said.

Filling the new position of dean of students at St. Bernard’s is Paul Constantino, formerly a teacher there. He will work with the new principal, Linda Anderson, another former teacher there. Mrs. Anderson succeeded Robert Blanchard, who is now doing part-time consulting with the school’s leadership team, as they help the school transition from a central Catholic school to a new governance model, Superintendent Perda and Mr. Clark said.

Mr. Constantino will supervise discipline procedures, extracurricular activities, and campus ministry, among other things, aided by his background in theology, the superintendent said. He is to promote a faith-filled learning environment, identify students’ needs and supervise the duties of faculty and staff.

Other schools with new principals are as follows.

- William Driscoll succeeded Denise Allain, who retired, as St. Peter-Marian’s principal. Mr. Driscoll was previously assistant principal for student affairs there. Succeeding him in that position is Timothy St. John, formerly assistant dean of students at Clark University.
- St. Mary’s Schools, parish-based elementary and junior/senior high schools in Worcester, now have co-principals: Monica Campbell, former assistant principal of the high school, and Cynthia Ahearn, former principal of the elementary school, who will keep these specialties, Mr. Clark said.

Not being filled is the position of president of St. Mary’s Schools, formerly held by Adam Cormier, who was also principal of the high school, Superintendent Perda said.

- Another parish-based school, St. Anna Elementary in Leominster, is getting a new principal. Kelly Veilleux is succeeding Bobbie French, now principal of South Street Elementary School in Fitchburg. Ms. Veilleux was formerly principal of Infant Jesus School in Nashua, New Hampshire.
Anna Maria College adds three undergraduate majors

PAXTON - Anna Maria College announced it is enrolling students in three new undergraduate majors for the fall semester. They are: Digital and Social Media Design, Video and Photographic Arts and Health Administration.

According to information from the college Digital and Social Media Design will teach students how to think clearly, critically and creatively in response to communication challenges through the use of digital media design.

Video and Photographic Arts focuses on the ways the human mind processes information in images across multiple platforms, including digital, web and print.

The Health Administration degree is an applied business degree that prepares students with the theoretical business foundations as well as the practical skills required for careers including health information management directors, business analysis, administrators clinical directors and health services managers.
The Catholic Free Press – 7

Trinity Catholic Academy partners with MIT

BY JOSIE CITTA
PRINCIPAL, TRINITY CATHOLIC ACADEMY

As the principal of a school many letters, brochures, and flyers pass across my desk, and every once in a while, one catches my attention. Such was the case with a letter from Lemelson-MIT. The letter was an invitation for Trinity to partner with MIT in its InvenTeam Program which was founded in 1994 by Jerome Lemelson, one of America’s most prolific inventors, and his wife Doro thy. This initiative is funded by The Lemelson Foundation and administered by the School of Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, institution with a strong ongoing commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for K-12 STEM education.

Partnering with LemelsonMIT to bring the InvenTeam program to Trinity will involve all our students in pre-school through grade 8 and will establish Trinity Catholic Academy as a STREAM (Science Technology Religion Engineering Arts & Mathematics) school. The program for pre-school through grade 5 is literacy based, with the added bonus of requiring students to build a working model of a story character they will create. Grades 6-8 will engage in a curriculum called “Design & Pattern Transfer” which requires students to design and build their own sneaker soles and will involve a variety of cross-curricular activities.

Trinity will be the first Catholic elementary school that LemelsonMIT has partnered with, and both entities are very excited to work with each other.

Five faculty members and I attended “Eurekafest” on June 20, a three-day event where high school, college, and graduate students from all over the world showcase the inventions they worked on and completed in the past year. It was very impressive, indeed, and infinitely inspiring. Some of the inventions have even been patented and gone to production!

At the end of July the Trinity faculty and I engaged in professional development at MIT in Cambridge so that we can bring this very exciting and meaningful STREAM curriculum to our school.
Notre Dame Academy has dual enrollment agreement with Assumption

Notre Dame Academy students can take courses at Assumption College this fall – for high school and college credit, with no charge for tuition. Notre Dame has entered into a dual-enrollment agreement with the college, for juniors and seniors who have a grade point average of 3.0 at the time they apply.

“Dual enrolled students will be able to further explore their interests in possible fields of study that they are considering for a college major,” said Kathryn Woodson Barr, Notre Dame’s head of school. “Students will also be able to explore a discipline that may not be available at our school or at the high school level.”

“To me, this partnership couldn’t be more perfectly aligned, not only because of our geographic closeness, but our commitment to the Catholic mission,” said Elizabeth Murphy, Notre Dame’s director of development and community relations.

Two parish schools get new pastors


On July 1, Father Grzegorz Chodkowski, former temporary administrator of St. Joseph Basilica Parish in Webster, became pastor there, succeeding Msgr. Anthony S. Czarnecki, who retired. The parish’s school is St. Joseph Elementary.

In June the Catholic Schools Office sent Father Chodkowski to the School Pastors’ Institute, launched by the Alliance for Catholic Education in 2011 and held at University of Notre Dame in Indiana, which helps pastors learn about best practices for working with Catholic schools today, Superintendent David Perda said.

“People love it,” he said, adding that a number of pastors in the diocese have attended over the years.

Private schools hire new principals

Private Catholic schools with new principals are Venerini Academy and Nativity School of Worcester.

At Venerini Academy Raymond Dewar succeeded Carol Polselli, who retired. He was previously principal of Cristo Rey Boston High School.

At Nativity School Emily Kent succeeded Sean Dillon, who became the assistant principal of the new middle school at St. John High School in Shrewsbury. Mrs. Kent, the first female principal for Nativity school, an all-boys middle school, was formerly a teacher and academic support coordinator at Bancroft School in Worcester. Earlier, she taught and was assistant principal at Nativity.

Private Catholic schools have no formal connection with the diocesan Catholic Schools Office. They “take what they need from my office,” Superintendent David Perda said.

St. Bernard Elementary School
Fitchburg
www.stbernardelementary.org
(978) 342-1948

Holy Family Academy
Gardner
www.holymiteacheracademy.org
(978) 632-8656

St. Aloysius Catholic School
Gardner
www.staloysiuscatholicschool.com
(413) 477-1268

St. Anna Elementary School
Leominster
www.stannaschool.org
(978) 534-4770

St. Leo Elementary School
Leominster
www.stleo.org
(978) 537-1007

St. Thomas Aquinas School
West Warren
413-436-5056

Assumption Elementary School
Milbury
www.assumptioncs.org
(508) 865-5404

St. Bernadette Elementary School
Northborough
www.bernadette.org
(508) 351-9905

St. Mary Elementary School
Shrewsbury
www.stmarysparish.org/school
(508) 842-1601

Trinity Catholic Academy
Southbridge
https://trinitycatholicacademy.org
(508) 765-5991

Our Lady of the Valley Regional Elementary School
Uxbridge
www.ourladyofthevalleyregional.org
(508) 278-5851

St. Joseph Elementary School
Webster
www.sjswebster.com
(508) 943-0378

All Saints Academy
Webster
www.allsaintswebster.org
PreK-Grade 4 - (508) 943-0257
Grades 5-8 - (508) 943-2735

Our Lady of the Angels Elementary School
Worcester
www.ourladyoftheangels.us
(508) 752-5609

St. Mary’s Elementary School
Worcester
www.smworcester.org
(508) 753-0484

St. Stephen Elementary School
Worcester
www.st-stephen.net
(508) 755-3209

St. Peter Central Catholic Elementary School
Worcester
www.stpetercentralcatholic.com
(508) 791-6496

Venerini Academy
Worcester
www.veneriniacademy.com
(508) 753-3210

Holy Name Central Catholic Jr./Sr. High School
Worcester
www.holyname.net
(508) 753-6371

St. Bernard’s Central Catholic High School
Fitchburg
www.stbernardcschs.org
(978) 342-3212

St. Peter-Marian Central Catholic Jr./Sr. High School
Worcester
www.spguardsians.org
(508) 852-5555

St. Mary’s Jr./Sr. High School
Worcester
www.stmarysworcester.org
(508) 753-1170

St. John’s High School
Shrewsbury
www.stjohnshigh.org
(508) 842-8934

Notre Dame Academy
Worcester
www.nda-worc.org
(508) 757-6200

Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School
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www.nda-worc.org
(508) 757-6200

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Lancaster
www.triviumschool.com
(978) 365-4795

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www.saintbenedict.com
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8 – Back to School 2019