



October 09, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are excited to welcome everyone to our new 2020-2021 school year. We have responded to the overwhelming desire from our parents for their children to return to school this September. Thanks to the tireless work of our Diocesan School staff, the Regional staff, our principals and their staff, we are back! You can be confident that our efforts are focused on the health and wellness of our students and staff, in addition to our commitment to academic excellence.

#### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

Our principals and staff have been very encouraged by your children's adherence to CDC guidelines to wear their masks, practice social distancing and perform handwashing with regularity to keep themselves as well as their school community safe. Thank you for your reinforcement of these practices at home. We will continue to closely follow our plan regarding managing and minimizing our COVID-19 risk.

In addition to these important mitigating behaviors, our schools have been working very hard in providing a safe physical environment for your children. In addition to our comprehensive safety plans, procedures, and protocols, we have been very fortunate to have received \$85,000 in grants to purchase equipment to aid in instruction during this COVID-19 time. The schools have purchased Personal Protective Equipment (face masks, face shields, no contact thermometers), cleaning supplies (disinfectants, hand sanitizer), hardware (laptops, Chromebooks and tablets).

#### **SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**

In the midst of this pandemic, we are encouraged by our student retention as well as the influx of new students this year. To date, our K-8 student enrollment is at 97% of our 2019-2020. We have also welcomed 256 new students and their families this September to our five schools. On a regular basis, our principals receive calls from inquiring parents and guardians, as well as tour requests.

Our staff and parents have done an amazing job supporting and promoting our schools. Thanks to the diligence of many parents, our schools are shining through social media to inform and engage our larger community by sharing the successes and wonderful accomplishments and contributions of our students and staff. Our schools have taken advantage of using the outdoors as an opportunity to celebrate what God has provided to us and are embracing it as part of our curriculum. It has become more than a mask break or an opportunity for fresh air, with activities such as writing bible verses with chalk on the parking lot, building birdhouses from materials found on campus, writing words of kindness on rocks that they painted and shared as well as conducting nature hunts for science class. Additionally, the students have enjoyed some silent reading time outside in the beautiful sunshine on our wide-open campuses.

## **NEW BUSINESS MANAGER**

Our region welcomes Vince Scalamogna as our new NHRCES Business Manager. Vince comes to us from the Pittsburgh Zoo where he was the Director of Operations. He has a wealth of experience in general business management and finance. We welcome Vince to our team. At the same time, we want to recognize and thank Amy Condosta for her exceptional support of our Region during the tumultuous 2019-2020 School year. Amy worked persistently exploring all avenues of financial support through federal as well as private funding sources to support our schools. The region is better because of Amy's work.

## **FINANCIALS- Fundraising and Parish Subsidy**

The financial budget for NHRCES was formally approved by the board at the last board meeting. Fiscal responsibility is essential for short-term and long-term success. Key drivers of the budget remain tuition income, fundraising and parish subsidies as well as effective cost containment. Fundraising plans have been developed by each school's SAC and principals in coordination and collaboration with the region to achieve the required goal. Fundraising represents 11% of the total income budget and is essential to the financial health of each of our schools. Overall, the outlook for achieving fundraising goals is very good.

The financial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on our parishes has been substantial. The limited ability to attend Mass in person and increased unemployment has led to a reduction in offertory collections. The parishes directly associated with our schools have been very generous in their commitment to elementary Catholic education. The total subsidies represent 23% of the total budget. The regional staff is in regular communication with the business offices of the parishes to stay current on cash flow trends. Presently, the commitments from the parishes is very encouraging.

The unevenness of school subsidy contributions by each parish is about to be closely examined by the Diocese. The Bishop is assembling a blue-ribbon committee to address this issue. More information regarding the members and the initiatives of the committee will be shared as soon as possible. Solutions to this issue are expected within the current school year.

## **THE BOARD**

The NHRCES Board is now entering its fourth year supporting our Regional Catholic Schools. As a volunteer group of currently 10 members, with 2 open positions (5 lay and 5 priests), we serve 3 or more years, with our goal to provide operational, financial and spiritual support for our schools. Our monthly meetings include an extensive review of school operations, including academic progress, review of key initiatives such as Catholic identity efforts, parent and student feedback, staffing updates and student enrollment activities. Additionally, the board has a fiduciary responsibility to maintain financial oversight of the budget, including an overview of the school's financial position, fundraising and church subsidy updates.

Over the past four years, as the first Catholic Elementary School group to regionalize, we have worked to bring financial stability and operational consistency to our Region. At our most recent meeting on September 16, the following officers of the Executive Committee were elected for a 1-year term:

- Matt Petnuch, President
- Bob Kocent, Vice President
- Christine Mathews Long, Secretary
- Father Jim Gretz, Pastoral Consultant

Moving forward, the Board feels strongly that our role should continue to evolve to manage and drive key initiatives for the health and growth of the Region. To that end, the Board has established four committees to support the values and objectives of the Region:

- Marketing and Advancement: Chair: Jane Ann Regan; Member: Jeanne Riley
- Finance Committee: Chair: Bob Kocent; Members: Matt Petnuch and Christine Mathews Long
- Pastoral/Clergy Engagement: Chair: Father Gretz; Member: Matt Petnuch
- Strategic Planning: Chair: Matt Petnuch; Members: Jane Ann Regan, Anne Haus

Each committee chairperson is responsible for developing a short list of initiatives that can be acted upon within the next 12 months. Members of each committee may consist of current board members as well as other stakeholders within the region. Many of the initiatives may be the same as those from other regions within the Diocese. The board will be looking for opportunities to collaborate with other regions to discuss common challenges and opportunities, create efficiencies in execution and develop best practices for future success.

Thank you for your continuing support of Catholic education. Prayers and a commitment to achievement will see us through this challenging time. Our schools are a shining light in our communities. We have much to be proud of and to look forward to.

Keeping you all in our prayers,

NHRCES Board of Directors

Matthew Petnuch, President  
Rev. Dale E. DeNinno  
Rev. James R. Gretz  
Rev. John R. Rushofsky  
Rev. Robert J. Vular  
Rev. Timothy F. Whalen

Anne Monteverde Haus  
Robert Kocent  
Christine Mathews Long  
Jane Ann Regan  
Jeanne Riley

Cc: Very Rev. Lawrence A. DiNardo, Vicar General/General Secretary  
Sr. Patrice Hughes, Educational Consultant  
Anna Torrance, Esq., Secretary for External Affairs  
Michael Killmeyer, Regional Administrator