



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
in the
ARCHDIOCESE
of NEW YORK



Catholic Schools Update for Pastors

REPORTING OUR PROGRESS: APRIL 2016

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



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Dear Pastors,

Thank you for your support of our Catholic schools this year, and particularly our regional schools. As you know, as a result of the Archdiocesan Voluntary Early Retirement Program, we opened the academic year with dozens of new teachers and principals. I'm pleased to report the transition was smooth, in part because of your willingness to share your wisdom, time and experience with our new school leaders. The newcomers also told us how valuable it was to have a spiritual retreat experience included in their orientation. For me, that was another reminder that an appreciation of one's own faith journey is the most important component in the vocation of the Catholic educator.

To that point, I am indebted to you for your help in supporting and maintaining the Catholic identity of our schools. Quite literally, we can't do this without you. When you are a part of the daily life of the school, your presence sends a message almost as strong as what you say. Your willingness, when you are called upon by your local regional school principal, to participate in their school life, is also needed and appreciated.

In this update, I've detailed some of the steps we've taken to strengthen our schools and heighten our Catholic profile. Our schools are a treasured resource in our communities. Thank you for making them shine.

Timothy J. McNiff, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

HOST PASTOR FATHER MATTHEW FUREY REFLECTS ON HIS ROLE

"Regionalization hasn't changed what we see as our duty and purpose here," Father Matthew Furey said. "The school is fertile ground for evangelization and faith formation." Father Furey is the pastor of St. Francis



Xavier Church in the Bronx, and host pastor to St. Francis Xavier Regional School.

"We see the school as a sub-mission of the parish," he said. "The community includes the school and the church and it would diminish the vibrancy of our Catholic life if there was a disconnect."

"You've got a school on your property with 300 kids and their families. It's an extension of parish life. Even if it's not technically a parish school, it's still our school and these are our families and kids," he said. In his view, host pastors, at a minimum, should visit schools regularly and celebrate First Friday Mass.

Father Furey greets students and families in the schoolyard every day. He attends school plays and athletic contests. He teaches 8th grade religion. He and his associate lead Eucharistic adoration and offer First Friday Mass. They celebrate Reconciliation.

"Presence is the main thing," Father Furey said. "Everything flows from faith and the Eucharist. You hope

the families will see you on Sunday and at school." He also noted, "It's a golden opportunity at the beginning and end of the day. (When you are) with parents (informally, during drop off and pick up times), things will come up that you might not otherwise hear."

St. Francis Xavier School also has a thriving, free Universal Pre-Kindergarten program. Father Furey said the secular requirements of the program, conducted in the Catholic school, were "a difficult pill to swallow." Nonetheless, the parish created a "net plus" by offering participant families a weekly after-school religious education program. Thirty-eight young students signed up.

Wednesdays with Jesus is a lively, musical, age-appropriate introduction to faith and scripture created by the parish religious education program and the resident Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal. The four-year-old children love the program and "have the ability to absorb it in a way that we as complicated



adults don't," Father Furey said. "It's a hook into families we never would have had. Those families are coming to church, we have invited them to register for kindergarten and we now have a list to reach out to for religious education," he said.

Another plus is the potential opportunity to help families and children prepare for and receive their sacraments on schedule, Father Furey said.

St. Francis Xavier School principal Mrs. Angela Deegan said parents responded enthusiastically to *Wednesdays with Jesus* because it "made them feel the children were part of the elementary school and were getting a formal introduction to religion."

PASTORS ARE THE KEY TO CATHOLIC IDENTITY

At the end of January 2016, Cardinal Dolan sent a letter to pastors and parochial vicars to "welcome, encourage, appreciate and applaud" their essential participation in the ministry of Catholic education.



As a follow up to this letter, each Regional Catholic Identity Subcommittee created a list of local priests for principals to invite to participate in the life of their Catholic school. Our hope is that all priests will be able and willing to provide a regular priestly presence in our schools. Some examples of how priests can contribute to the school communities can include but not be limited to:

- Celebration of Masses, Reconciliation, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Visit students informally during the lunch period
- Offer to be a guest speaker in classes
- Help support service projects for Catholic organizations
- Lead faculty prayer services and/or retreats
- Support celebrations of important feast days, especially holy days of obligation

You'll recall the Cardinal said in his letter, "In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, let us all be mindful of Pope Francis' encouragement to seek opportunities for us to do the works of mercy through education."

ARCHDIOCESAN CATHOLIC IDENTITY COMMITTEE SUPPORTS ALL SCHOOLS

The effort to celebrate Catholic identity in every school is supported by the Archdiocesan Catholic Identity Committee, a special initiative that is coordinated through the Superintendent's office. This group of 10 pastors promotes ongoing collaboration and new opportunities for engagement in our Catholic schools. We have called on their wisdom and experience to help us devise specific ways to strengthen the Catholic culture of our schools as we move forward.



Archdiocesan Catholic Identity Committee, pictured L to R: Fr. Stephen Norton, Msgr. Kevin O'Brien, Fr. James Cruz, Fr. Joseph McLafferty, NOT PICTURED: Msgr. Thomas Kelly, Fr. Joseph Bisignano, Fr. Thomas Byrnes, Fr. Robert McKeon; Fr. Edward K. Russell; Fr. Rich Veras

We have long held that Catholic identity is the single most important distinguishing feature of our schools. Catholic schools look and feel Catholic because they incorporate our values and traditions into every subject and in every aspect of education. The school day begins and ends with prayer and everyone is treated with courtesy and respect. Children have frequent opportunities to attend Mass, and lessons and interactions in the classroom are suffused with Gospel virtues. Catholic schools support family values and help strengthen parish and local communities by developing character and a moral compass that helps guide children as they grow and face an increasingly complex world.

Additionally, Regional Catholic Identity Subcommittees have added more pastors this year. They are actively seeking the participation of host and non-host pastors in the regions to strengthen student faith formation, new principal search and selection, and identify specific opportunities for pastors to help Catholic schools proclaim and live their Catholic identity at every grade level.



On Staten Island, the St. Teresa's School community led a festive "block walk" through the Castleton Corners neighborhood. Led by pastor Msgr. William Belford and principal Anna Simione, the enthusiastic group of 60 folks dressed in school spirit wear, walked behind a banner carried by members of the Class of 2016. They distributed fliers to local businesses advertising the school's upcoming Touring Tuesday open house events and called attention to St. Teresa's 60th anniversary as a quality, faith-filled school for Staten Island students.

MANY WAYS TO PROMOTE CATHOLIC EDUCATION

One of the broadest-based efforts to help pastors support Catholic education is through the English and Spanish bulletin announcements. Regional Directors of Enrollment (Marketing Specialists) write and submit these announcements about Touring Tuesdays, and other special school events as they are scheduled.

INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH PARISHIONERS: DID YOU KNOW?

- Catholic school students are more likely to pray daily, attend church more often, retain a Catholic identity as an adult, and donate more to the Church.
- More than 98% of Catholic high school seniors graduate and go on to attend college or other post-secondary education.
- 46,376 pounds of food were collected by our Catholic schools for the hungry through the Catholic Charities Feeding Our Neighbors campaign.

We have also encouraged Catholic school students, families and teachers to conduct community outreach student recruitment programs in neighborhood locations parents frequent, as a warm and friendly way to invite neighbors to consider our schools.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT INITIATIVES

We are making it easier than ever for families to apply to our schools and access financial aid at the same time. A simple, free online application can be found at www.CatholicSchoolsNY.org or by calling 646-794-2885 between 9:00-5:00 pm for assistance. Once applications are received, families are invited to come to their school of choice for an in-person interview. Families will learn of their child's acceptance and about any scholarship or tuition assistance they will be receiving after the interview has taken place and all supplementary documents have been submitted.

Scholarships and financial assistance for the 2016-2017 school year will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Last year more than 8,100 scholarship/tuition assistance awards averaging \$2,100 were distributed across the archdiocese. This year, we expect to make several hundred additional awards, based on demand and established criteria.

SOPHIA INSTITUTE

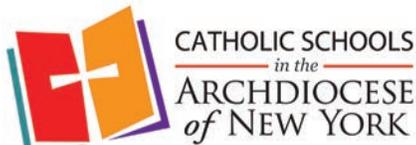
Our schools have been enriched by a successful partnership with The Sophia Institute for Teachers. It is an organization founded by Catholic teachers to promote professional development and make effective use of educational materials and preparatory time.

The Sophia Institute specializes in blending content, pedagogy and faith renewal for K-12 Catholic educators. It has conducted professional development days for teachers throughout our schools. Most recently, it released a new six-minute Confirmation video to help teachers and catechists explore Pentecost as the scriptural origin of Confirmation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that perfects baptismal grace.

- 6 of the 9 Supreme Court Justices (including Antonin Scalia) went to Catholic school.
- 36 of 63 seminarians went to a Catholic school.

Some of the Church's documents on Catholic education are listed below for your review:

- *Gravissimum educationis*, Pope Paul VI (Vatican II), 1965
- From the Congregation for Catholic Education: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/index.htm



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