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Staten Island Catholic School Region Hosts Workshop on Online Safety and Parent Partnership

STATEN ISLAND — Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York gathered parents, educators, and community leaders for a Parents as Partners Workshop on Wednesday, September 24, at the CYO MIV Center at Mt. Loretto. The session focused on helping families navigate the challenges of the digital world while deepening collaboration between schools and parents.

The event was co-sponsored by Catholic Charities of Staten Island and the Office of the Richmond County District Attorney. Together, presenters highlighted the responsibility schools and parents share in protecting children from online dangers while fostering environments of faith and trust.

Regional Superintendent Jann Amato underscored the importance of this collaboration. “All of you signed the handbook, and part of the handbook is the section Parents as Partners. I don’t want you to walk away with the catchy phrase from our handbook, but it’s the commitment that we make to you that you make with us. So, we can walk together, ensuring that your most precious gift is safe, protected, and filled with the Holy Spirit as they learn.”

She continued, “It’s so important that parents and teachers, principals and school staff, are here together to ensure that we give our students everything they need.”

Representing the Richmond County District Attorney’s Office, Agnes McBeth, Community Youth and Education Liaison, offered a clear assessment of online risks. “This conversation is not about taking away devices . . . I am going to give you as much information as I can so that you can make more informed decisions about what your children are exposed to online.”

Her advice to parents emphasized the importance of accountability and setting a good example. “What can we do to keep our kids safe? Make your children accountable for their online usage. Don’t just give them a device because they ask for it.” She added, “You know the best way to close the digital door, you unplug. Children mimic our behavior, and if we’re online all the time, and all we do is sit in our chairs and scroll . . . they are going to mimic our behavior.”

Former Port Richmond High School Principal and Catholic Charities Staten Island board member Timothy Gannon pointed to the enduring strength of Catholic schools. “So, when we talk about a



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Catholic education, you should feel great about where your child is. They are getting a foundation of Christ and the Gospels that is irreplaceable. You should feel great about the people and their dedication. Staten Island needs this; we need to work together.”

Throughout the evening, trust and communication were recurring themes. Amato encouraged parents to engage in conversations that went beyond surface-level discussions. “The question isn’t necessarily just how your day was, because you will get ‘fine’ ... We need to ask our kids questions.”

At the same time, she acknowledged the challenges that arise when communication breaks down. “Sometimes the struggle our teachers and principals are having is the conversations that are going home ... it's time for you to partner with us.” She added, “There is one person who wants your kids to have a better day in school than you do, and it's your principal. If there is one person in the world who wants your kid to be happier every day in school, it’s your principal.”

Gannon echoed the same point from his years as principal: “You have to trust me.”

Amato reinforced the message of trust, saying, “Instead of being fearful, trust us, ... all we want is for your kid to come in the next day and feel like he or she is loved.” Gannon added, “We have teachers who care, let's let them do their thing.”

Sister Mary Grace Walsh, Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of New York, concluded by affirming what sets Catholic schools apart. “This makes the difference in our Catholic schools. I won't say other schools don’t do it, but we do it very well. The point is the partnership and working together.”

She ended with a reminder of faith and hope. “We don’t need to be afraid. What did Jesus say? ‘Do not be afraid,’ we work together, we collaborate, we keep learning”

The workshop served as both a practical guide to online safety and a reaffirmation of the mission of Catholic schools: to walk hand in hand with parents in forming children who are safe, supported, and rooted in faith.

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See Next Page for Event Photos



Above: Speakers at the Parents as Partners Workshop on Online Safety, held at the CYO MIV Center at Mt. Loretto, included Timothy Gannon, former principal of Port Richmond High School and board member of Staten Island Catholic Charities; Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of New York; Jann Amato, Regional Superintendent of the Staten Island Catholic School Region; and Agnes McBeth, Community, Youth & Education Liaison from the Office of the Richmond County District Attorney.



Above: Agnes McBeth, Community, Youth & Education Liaison from the Office of the Richmond County District Attorney, speaks with parents and educators about the challenges of guiding children safely in today's digital world.

Continued Next Page



Above: Timothy Gannon, former principal of Port Richmond High School and board member of Staten Island Catholic Charities, and Jann Amato, Regional Superintendent of the Staten Island Catholic School Region, share practical guidance on digital safety during the Parents as Partners Workshop at the CYO MIV Center at Mt. Loretto.



Above: Parents listen attentively during the online safety session, reflecting the shared commitment of Catholic schools and families to protecting children.