



North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools



September 30, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Board of Directors of the North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools met in September to continue the important work of our schools' regionalization efforts. The successful beginning of the 2017-2018 school year – with three regionalized schools -- marks an exciting milestone that the Board, School Administration and Teachers and most of all parents should take great pride. At our September 13 meeting, we focused on the areas of Marketing, Fundraising, Finance and School Administration to continue to build on the momentum of an encouraging start.

Marketing

Tara Aiello, Development Consultant, and Father Nick Vaskov, Executive Director for Communications for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, provided an update on the NHRCES website that launched on September 5, 2017. The website (<https://www.nhrces.org/>) provides regional and individual school information. It is populated by a combination of parent volunteers and our school principals. Additional volunteers are requested for ongoing content updates and management of each of the school's websites.

This current website framework provides a good initial online presence and foundation for further development. There is a high level of interest on the part of the schools to ensure each individual school has the ability to create its own personality within the overall "umbrella" NHCRES website. The NHRCES staff and the board fully embrace this concept. Tara and Father Nick have requested that the current development and design provider, eCatholic, provide an overview of potential design and functionality templates from which a school can select to personalize. The school principals and their parent volunteers will evaluate the options along with Father Nick. An eCatholic presentation will take place before the end of September, after which a decision will be made by the group.

To support the marketing efforts going forward, a component of the eCatholic relationship includes services to refine the NHRCES branding (including logo development) and positioning. The Board plans to review the current Mission and Vision statements in preparation for the refinement. The goal is to focus the message of the NHRCES and to provide marketing support for individual schools in preparation for upcoming open houses as well as other promotional efforts.

Fundraising

Tara Aiello, Development Consultant, has provided valuable support in gathering information across all the NHRCES schools to understand fundraising operations and assess the opportunities for streamlining and standardizing the gift card program. The goal is to have the most effective and efficient program as possible by December 2017. Based on the information Tara has compiled, as well as the vital importance of attaining fundraising goals, a recommendation to fund a position that will manage both improving fundraising and enrollment efforts was proposed. The Board believes strongly that a Development and Advancement position is essential going forward. At this time, NHRCES Business Manager Andrea Vescio, along with Tara, will investigate current school-based support resources to address the fundraising component in particular.

Financials

Discussions continue between the Board and the Diocese regarding the financial implications of the school regionalization. Currently, the region is performing within the operating budget developed for this school year. The Board is intent on making sure the resources are in place to ensure the children receive a high quality Catholic education this year and going forward. Therefore it is important that the staffing, facilities, and marketing resources are addressed to meet short-term objectives and long-term growth.

Income for NHRCES comes from three primary sources: tuition, parish subsidies and fundraising. The Board's latest discussion with the Diocese has been on standardizing the subsidies from each parish as much as possible to ensure parish investments in Catholic education are equitable and plentiful enough to provide necessary funding. The Board and the Diocese have agreed to explore all options for funding sources as the rollout continues to ensure current and future needs will be met.

The Board feels strongly that we should continue to pursue a regionalized approach to expenses consistent with the regionalized approach to schools, particularly as the restructuring plan anticipated for parishes as part of the *Mission for the Church Alive!* approaches.

Christopher Ponticello, General Counsel for the Diocese, reviewed the proposed School Building Lease Agreements with the Board. The Board supports the language and terms as proposed and suggested that Chris review the terms with each of the pastors of the six NHCRES schools. The goal is to reach agreement and execute the lease agreement within the next month.

Administrator Update

- Region-wide Teacher In-service conducted on August 22 was well received.
- School openings were met with encouraging comments from parents with only a few startup challenges (Pittsburgh city busing issues) overall.
- Final enrollment and associated staffing implications are being managed by each principal to ensure optimum supervision and coverage.
- First Regional SAC Meeting will be held in October. Individual school SACs are very active and meeting regularly.
- Standardized testing (IOWA & Dibels) is scheduled for September 12-27.
- The Board requested an update on the continuation of extracurricular activities such as forensics, etc. based on the importance of these efforts in the education of our students.
- An update on the Tuition Assistance process was also requested.
- Temporary school signage has been installed on all buildings as of the start of the school year. Long-term signage is currently being researched by the respective pastors.

Next Meeting- The next board meeting will be on October 25.

Thank you for your continued support and patience as we forge this journey to revitalize Catholic Elementary Education.

Yours in Christ,

NHRCES Board of Directors

Rev. Kevin C. Fazio, Pastor, St. Alphonsus Parish, Wexford (President)
Matthew Petnuch, St. Teresa of Avila Parish, Perrysville (Vice President)
Judene Indovina, Good Samaritan Parish, Ambridge (Secretary)
Rev. John R. Rushofsky, Pastor, St. Sebastian Parish, Ross Twp.

Rev. Robert J. Vular, Pastor, St. Teresa of Avila Parish, Perrysville
Rev. Timothy F. Whalen, Pastor, St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Glenshaw
Rev. Paul J. Zywan, Pastor, St. Alexis Parish, Wexford
Anne Monteverde Haus, St. Alphonsus Parish, Wexford
Jane Ann Regan, St. Ursula Parish, Allison Park

Cc: Very Rev. Lawrence A. DiNardo, Vicar General/General Secretary
Dr. Michael Latusek, Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Dr. Lillian Naccarati, Assistant Superintendent
Michael Killmeyer, Regional Administrator
Sr. Patrice Hughes, Educational Consultant
Anna Torrance, Esq., Secretary for External Affairs