



North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools



June 27, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As summer commences, we hope that you are enjoying the warm weather, and the opportunity for vacation time too.

The Board of Directors of the North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools continues to work on the many aspects of schools' regionalization. At our June 7 meeting, we focused on the areas of fundraising, communication and finance.

Scrip Program/Fundraising

The board received an update from our development consultant, Tara Aiello, on the Scrip program. Each school runs its Scrip program differently and this will not change for the 2017-18 year. Some parishes also have Scrip programs.

The goal is to develop a plan by spring of 2018 to streamline the Scrip programs. Mrs. Aiello will meet with representatives from two Scrip program providers as well as Scrip coordinators from each of the seven schools in June to investigate and establish best practices and other aspects. Potential actions being pursued include:

- Re-establish Scrip programs at schools / parishes where they have been discontinued.
- Make online sales available for each campus.
- Set up online ordering that allows consumers to buy, download and use gift cards immediately.
- Expand the Scrip program to allow parishes without schools to establish their own program in time for holiday shopping.

Additionally, please note the attached 2017-18 fundraising master calendar of festivals and fundraisers for some of the North Hills schools and parishes. We encourage all to have an "On Mission mentality" and support neighboring parishes' and schools' fundraising events. We hope that, in time, there will also be regional fundraisers that include participation from all of the parishes in the North Hills.

Communications/Marketing

Fr. Nick Vaskov, executive director for communications for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, shared his intent to assist with communications and marketing for Catholic elementary schools in the North Hills. At this time, the board strongly stressed the importance of creating an NHRCES website as well as websites for each of the newly formed schools – Blessed Trinity, Holy Cross and Blessed Francis Seelos Academies. The board decided to direct Mrs. Aiello to reach out to the principals and to work with Father Nick on website plans with a goal of establishing a website very soon.

Upon completion of the website, Father Nick suggested a number of ways to promote the schools including the use of social media, radio and billboard advertising, and brochures. He also suggested having Catholic school students speak at Masses at all parishes in the region.

Finance Obligations

The board met with diocesan finance representatives that included Roy Cartier, MA, MBA, assistant superintendent for finance; Deacon Kevin Lander, director of operations and information technology; and Wayne Boettcher, director of the financial services office.

Board members and diocesan representatives provided insight into the outstanding payment obligations for the 2016-2017 school costs for the individual schools and parishes. Diocesan officials have approved one-year interest-free loans to parishes that do not have funds available in July and August to cover teacher salary and benefit expenses.

Although the fiscal year for parishes and schools begins on July 1, teachers' salaries and benefits from 2016-17 are paid from parish accounts during July and August. In the future, the NHRCES corporation will be covering these payments.

This transition year is an anomaly in that the parishes need to pay the expenses without the advantage of having tuition deposits and payments for the 2017-18 school year to help offset those costs.

Additionally, the group identified the following areas as needing further discussion

- lease agreements between the parishes and the NHRCES corporation for the use of the school buildings;
- allocation of church and school personnel and space;
- utility costs;
- office equipment leases.

The board and the diocesan representatives agreed that these issues should be discussed individually within the 10 schools affected by the regionalization, as each has specific financial situations and implications.

These meetings will be scheduled by the diocesan finance group by the end of June and include pastors, their business managers and bookkeepers and their Finance Council representatives as well as a member of the NHRCES board.

This continues to be a learning process for the North Hills schools as they are the first to go through the regionalization process in the diocese and it will require a great degree of patience as we work toward greater clarity.

School Administrator Update

Holy Cross Academy Change in Configuration – North Hills School District will not provide bussing services to a school that has only a kindergarten and none of the upper grades. This has necessitated a change in configuration approved by the board whereby kindergartners will attend school at the St. Sebastian campus. Previously, kindergartners and preschoolers were assigned to the St. Teresa of Avila campus.

Holy Cross Academy Principal Appointment – John Benzig has been hired as the principal for the school formed by the merger of St. Sebastian and St. Teresa of Avila schools.

Blessed Trinity Academy Principal Resignation – Father Tim Whalen, pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption in Glenshaw, informed the board that Principal Judy Riegelneegg has resigned her position. Blessed Trinity was formed by merging St. Mary, St. Ursula and St. Bonaventure. The vacant position has been posted and we are in the process of acquiring prospective candidates' applications and vetting their qualifications. A Principal's Search Committee is being formed and interviews will begin shortly.

Regional Business Manager – Ms. Andrea Vescio has been hired to fill the position, effective June 19. She is a parishioner and finance council chairperson at St. James Catholic Church in Sewickley. Ms. Vescio previously worked as the senior accountant at GeoSonics, Inc. in Warrendale and the business manager at Parkway West Career and Technology Center in Oakdale.

NHRCES Regional Office – St. Teresa of Avila has offered to host the NHRCES offices at its Ross Township facility.

School Mascots – The three newly merged schools have been advised to submit their choices of mascots and colors to Regional Administrator Mike Killmeyer for final approval by June 30. The principals may call on their School Advisory Councils for advice on how to choose a mascot and/or colors.

Next Meeting -- The next board meeting will be on July 6.

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

2017-18 Calendar for Major Fundraisers at Some NHRCES Parishes / Schools

May 2017

5/29-6/3 St. Ursula Festival

June 2017

22-25 St. Sebastian Flea Market

20 St. Alphonsus Golf Outing

15-17 St. Mary Festival

July 2017

10-15 St. Sebastian Festival

August 2017

2-5 St. Alexis Festival

19-26 St. Teresa Flea Market

21-26 St. Teresa Festival

September 2017

8-10 St. Alphonsus Harvest Home Weekend

November 2017

11 St. Alphonsus/Alexis Night at the Races

January 2018

27 St. Alphonsus Trivia Night

February 2018

2/14-3/31 Lenten Fish Fry season