



NORTH HILLS REGIONAL CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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February 15, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we approach the one-year anniversary of our formation in March, the NHRCES Board of Directors continues to explore the best ways to develop, promote and support a regionalized approach to Catholic elementary education in the North Hills.

At our Jan. 24 meeting, we began to brainstorm “out-of-the-box” thinking to come up with creative ways to fund our schools.

Regional School Advisory Council - When the regional SAC held its meeting on Jan. 11, three of our board members – Father Paul Zywan, Jane Ann Regan and Matt Petnuch – attended. They were very impressed with how passionate and committed the group is. They also said the regional group is “thinking bigger” and asking about corporate sponsors for the region.

The regional SAC is composed of seven members – one from each of the NHRCES schools’ SACs. It acts as an advisory council to the NHRCES Board of Directors and regional administrator. The president of the regional council is Nick Colasante of Holy Cross Academy and the vice president is Mark Conklin of Seelos Academy. The secretary’s job of taking minutes will be rotated among members.

The regional SAC’s next meeting is set for Thursday, March 1, at the NHRCES regional office.

Advancement Coordinator Report - Advancement Coordinator Ellen Kline informed the board about a new “Day of Giving to Catholic Schools” organized by the National Catholic Educational Association for Catholic Schools Week. She said NHRCES is looking to build on this “Day of Giving” each year.

For the six schools in the region that have gift card programs, Ms. Kline has been working to make the programs uniform. By March 1 she plans to have written procedures communicated to all schools so the procedures can take effect April 1, when the new crediting period begins.

Ms. Kline is working with school principals and SAC representatives on fundraising, which is critical to support our schools and limit tuition increases. Income from schools is generated from tuition (51%), diocesan and parish subsidies (37%) and fundraising (12%).

Fundraising - Board members expressed concern that schools' fundraisers are "tapping into the same pockets" and the audience needs to be expanded. Otherwise, parish and school families can burn out on fundraisers.

With the regionalized approach, all parishes in the North Hills need to support their local Catholic elementary schools because our students come from those parishes. This is a fairly new paradigm. In the past, the parish's children attended the parish's school. It considered its school as part of its mission and would organize and support fundraisers for that school.

That has changed. Board members reiterated the need to lift the financial burden that is still on the parishes that traditionally sponsored a school. They suggested that other parishes could sponsor, host and / or support the schools' fundraisers.

Board members suggested that parents of children in the regionalized schools should approach their pastors and / or pastoral associates about supporting the school.

The parishes that traditionally supported a school still are paying the lion's share in subsidies. Those parishes' pastors are asking what they are supposed to do if their parishes can no longer afford to pay that subsidy.

Lease Agreements – NHRCES Business Manager Andrea Vescio said the lease agreements between parishes and schools are nearly ready for signatures.

Benefits for Employees – Currently, some schools give families a tuition discount or waiver if a parent teaches at the school. The board asked if a discount could be given if the parent worked at a different NHRCES school than his / her children attend. The board directed Regional Administrator Mike Killmeyer to come up with wording to allow discounts for employees in NHRCES and bring it back to the board's next meeting for consideration.

Tuition for 2018-19 Academic Year – The NHRCES staff is working on a proposal that will be brought before the Board of Directors at its next meeting.

Assumption / Northside Catholic – A task force of representatives from Assumption School in Bellevue and Northside Catholic School in Brighton Heights has been meeting to discuss the possibility of a merger and to come up with a recommendation. The schools are approximately two miles apart and roughly five miles away from another NHRCES school, Holy Cross Academy in Ross Township.

Instead of a definitive recommendation, however, the task force sent a letter to the NHRCES that asked the Board of Directors to review their findings "and make an objective site decision with the full support of the task force".

The board discussed different scenarios and issues regarding the two schools, but came to no decision. It was brought to the board's attention that some Northside students' tuition is paid by the Extra Mile Education Foundation. That prompted a brainstorming session in which board members questioned whether they should look for corporate partners to ensure long-term sustainability.

Diocesan Secretary of External Affairs Anna Torrance was asked to take this discussion back to diocesan officials to see if it would be possible to pursue this route.

Next Meeting - Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, February 21, at the NHRCES regional office on the campus of St. Teresa of Avila.

Have a Blessed Lent!

NHRCES Board of Directors

Rev. Kevin C. Fazio, Pastor, St. Alphonsus Parish, Wexford (President)
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Anne Monteverde Haus, St. Alphonsus Parish, Wexford
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Dr. Lillian Naccarati, Assistant Superintendent
Michael Killmeyer, NHRCES Regional Administrator
Sr. Patrice Hughes, Educational Consultant
Anna Torrance, Esq., Secretary for External Affairs
Andrea Vescio, NHRCES Business Manager
Ellen Kline, NHRCES Advancement Coordinator