

**Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System**  
**— March 2023 —**





OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON  
300 WYOMING AVENUE  
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

March 31, 2023

Dear Friends of Catholic Education,

Throughout the 155-year history of the Diocese of Scranton, teaching the Catholic faith to our young people has been one of our most fundamental missions. Providing students with the academic and moral fiber to live their faith and serve others has been a hallmark of our Diocese since its earliest days and we remain steadfast today to that commitment.

Over the last three years especially, we have marveled at the level of dedication that our students, families, educators, administrators and priests have shown to advancing the mission of Catholic education. Amongst many 'unknowns,' the 19 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton proved to be innovative, setting high standards and serving as a benchmark for others to follow.

With that in the forefront of mind, we must now look to our long-term future to ensure a Catholic education is available and accessible to the next generation of students. That is why we are pleased to announce a new strategic planning initiative for our Catholic schools: *"Our Faith. Our Students. Our Future."*

From being able to capitalize and embrace new opportunities that present themselves – to confronting the many challenges of operating a school system – the goal of this planning initiative is to give us a 'roadmap' for the future. We must be bold in our thinking, strategic and data-driven in our planning and always centered on Gospel values and virtues.

While our Catholic School System has seen many changes since the height of its enrollment in the 1960s – we want to be clear from the start – the goal of this process is not to be a wide-ranging reorganization of our current system. That has already taken place. Instead, *"Our Faith. Our Students. Our Future."* is about recognizing our current reality, defining our priorities, and developing a strong, financially sustainable vision that ensures our Catholic schools remain vibrant and viable.

This planning effort for Catholic schools is not being done in isolation. As you may know, for the last several years, all parishes in the Diocese of Scranton have been participating in our Vision 2030 Pastoral Planning Process. Through this process, we have reaffirmed our knowledge that vibrant Catholic schools help make vibrant parishes, and likewise, vibrant parishes help make vibrant Catholic schools.

No matter your current role in our Catholic School System, everyone will be encouraged to be a part of this strategic planning process – whether it is through surveys, interviews, participating in working groups, or simply praying for the vital ministry of educating the young people of our Diocese in the Catholic faith.

As you read the following document, prayerfully consider how you will help shape the future of Catholic school education as we aspire to be the best and not content with the status quo.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.  
Bishop of Scranton

Kristen Donohue  
Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education/Superintendent



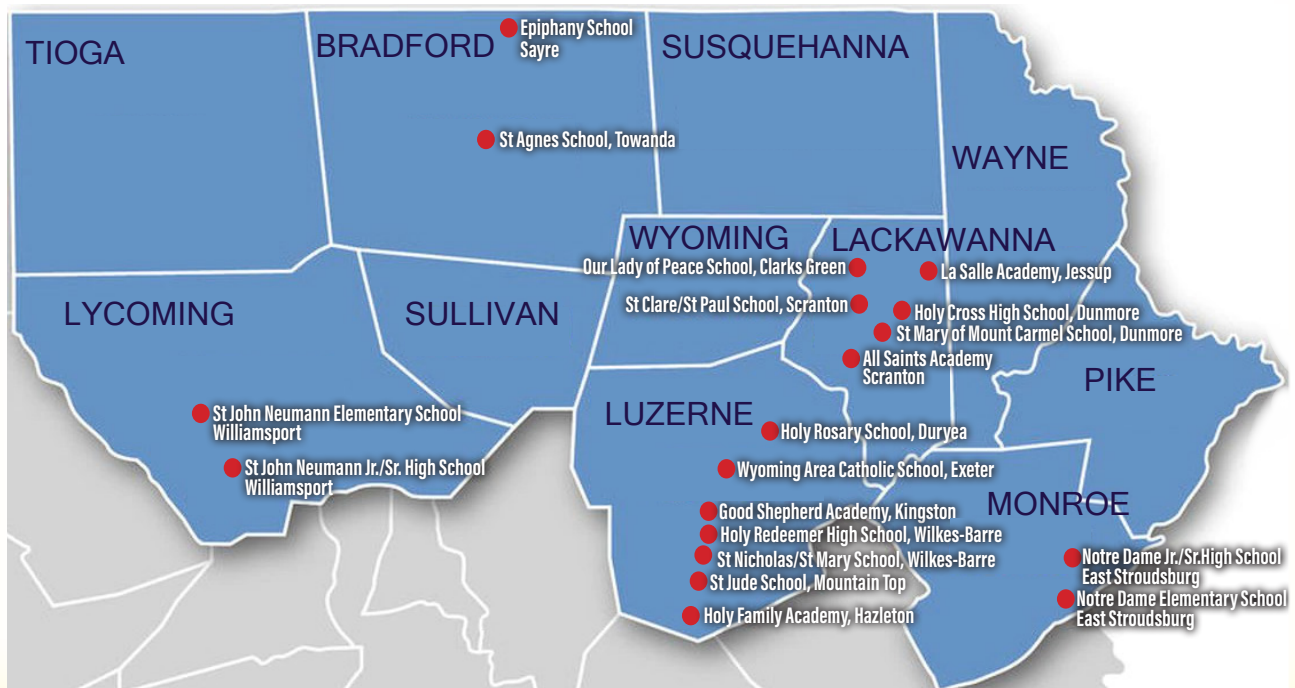


# DIOCESE OF SCRANTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Scranton, are committed to educating students and their families in the Catholic faith. We provide a Catholic education that is spiritually sound and academically excellent. We strive to prepare our students to be faith-filled leaders and life-long leaders dedicated to serving the church and society.

The Diocese of Scranton is proud of its 15 elementary schools and four high schools that provide a well-rounded education, offering an enriching curriculum that includes the arts, foreign languages, physical education and the latest computer technology to complement the core subjects of religion, math, language arts, social studies, and science.

Beginning with Pre-kindergarten and continuing through 12th grade, our curriculum is structured to enable each student to reach his/her God-given potential. Our schools are located in Bradford, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming, and Monroe Counties.







# Recent Accomplishments & Successes of Diocesan Catholic Schools

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton serve the mission of the Church by offering a foundation in faith and an excellent academic education. Catholic school students learn that God is present and active in their lives and in the world.

Over the last several years, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton have distinguished themselves in several different ways. Our school administration, teachers, and staff value each child and understand that every single day is important in the educational process. Here are some recent accomplishments:

## Forming Disciples in Christ

Each Catholic school in the Diocese of Scranton fulfills the mission of Catholic education through regularly celebrating Mass, sacramental preparation, inviting students to participate in daily prayer, and community service projects. Faith permeates everything within a Catholic school environment and is not simply relegated to religion class.

Catholic school communities in the Diocese of Scranton teach and promote the tenets of the Catholic faith and strive to form students as missionary disciples. All students are encouraged to form a personal relationship with Christ. With an understanding of the Gospel, students become productive members of our local, national and global community.



## Navigating COVID-19 Pandemic

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton served as a benchmark for other schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. When all schools in Pennsylvania were ordered closed in March 2020, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System quickly and seamlessly transitioned to distance learning the following school day. While other school districts struggled to begin virtual learning, Catholic school educators, administrators and families collaborated to ensure a continuity of instruction that was meaningful and appropriately responsive to the academic needs of our students. While students in many other places received little or no instruction, Catholic schools were able to finish out the 2019-2020 school year teaching new content.

When in-person learning was allowed to resume in August 2020, Catholic schools kept their students on track, in school and safe because of appropriate health protocols. Throughout the pandemic, Catholic schools continued to be innovative, implementing new technologies and new ways of learning, to make sure student academic growth continued.





## NWEA Assessments Focused on Growth Mindset

Administrators in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System firmly believe that all students can grow and learn. To help educators understand each student's skills and abilities, Catholic schools began using NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) Assessments in fall 2019. The assessments provide valuable data on each student three times a year allowing a student's growth to be measured over time. NWEA Assessments give educators the tools to deliver differentiated instruction in their classroom and allow administrators to track the growth of students as they progress each year by grade.

While there has been significant time and attention given to national studies regarding "learning loss" during the COVID-19 pandemic, three years of NWEA Assessment data for Catholic school students in the Diocese of Scranton released in December 2022 shows no significant learning loss during the pandemic – instead highlighting steady growth in reading and mathematics in almost all grade levels.

## STREAM

In an effort to best prepare students for the 21st century and beyond, the Diocese of Scranton announced an investment of \$1 million in October 2019 to incorporate the STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) model of learning into the curriculum of all of its Catholic schools.

Through hands-on projects, students are taught the 4 C's: collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication. STREAM is both student-centered and cross-curricular, meaning one lesson could potentially include all six components of the STREAM initiative.

Every school has purchased BeeBots, Spheros robotics, PadCasters and other technology to provide students the opportunity to practice computer coding and engage in video production and allow teachers to make lessons more interesting and interactive.



## Social Emotional Learning Skills

Social Emotional Learning is the process by which young people and adults acquire and apply knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals.

Rolled out first to faculty during the 2021-2022 school year, the initiative expanded to include students across the Diocesan Catholic School System for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Social Emotional Learning is a crucial part of a school's curriculum because it emphasizes empathy for others, while establishing and maintaining supportive relationships which leads to responsible and caring decisions. Social Emotional Learning has shown to have a positive impact on academic performance, health, relationships and citizenship.



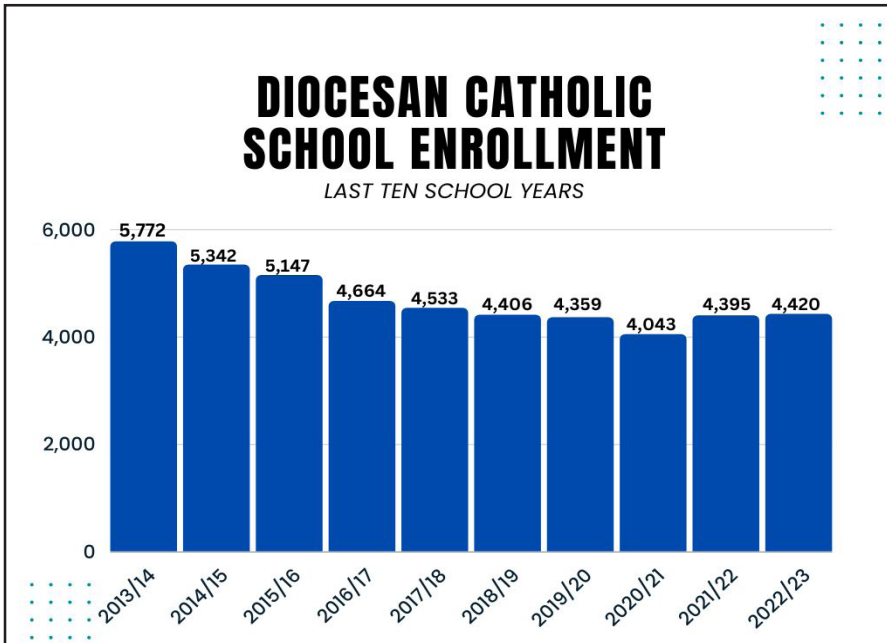


# Challenges that Lie Ahead for Diocesan Catholic Schools

While there have been many successes in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System over the last several years, as with any organization, there are also many challenges. Challenges are not always negative – they provide an opportunity to reflect, pray and plan on the basic question, “What is God calling us to do?”

Some of the challenges facing Catholic schools locally include:

## Enrollment



The viability of every Catholic school is directly linked to its enrollment. Because of the successes experienced during the pandemic, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton have seen an overall enrollment increase in the last two years. Administrators have been able to successfully retain students and recruit new ones. Administrators must work diligently to keep this positive momentum going.

The number of students enrolled in Catholic schools, however, is still down significantly from the height of enrollment in the 1960s when there were more than 35,000 students enrolled in 123 Catholic schools across the Diocese of Scranton.

## Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Our excellence in education depends primarily upon our teachers who have a strong commitment to our religious mission. The need for high quality teachers is timeless and universal.

Recent data shows that fewer students are entering the teaching profession overall. Fewer than 5,500 Pennsylvania college graduates received teaching certificates in 2020 compared to roughly 15,000 in 2010. With that in mind, we must continue to focus on strategies to improve teacher recruitment and retention.

Attracting and retaining new teachers will be critical in advancing the mission of Catholic education in the future. Over the last several decades alone, the number of clergy and religious being able to serve in Catholic schools full-time has decreased significantly. For example, in 1980, there were 63 full-time priests and 435 sisters teaching in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton.



## Aging Infrastructure

The physical structure of every school must be constantly maintained, updated and enhanced to ensure a safe and attractive environment that will deliver the best in a 21st century education.

Unfortunately, schools do not currently have a direct plan to fund any significant and costly repairs. Planning for the funding of long-term maintenance and capital improvements for school buildings needs to be part of the overall economic envelope, planned for, and funded annually.



# Affordability and Accessibility

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton should be accessible to all students wanting an excellent education, welcoming families regardless of ethnicity, income level and/or faith denomination.

We understand it is a significant financial sacrifice for some families to send their child (or children) to Catholic school but choose this option because of the values that lead us to be like Christ every day.

Catholic schools must also continue to be innovative. In a digital age, future generations of students will learn in different ways than they do today. They will need different tools to help them succeed. Catholic schools must be adaptive and ready to meet the changing realities of the 21st century while always putting faith first.

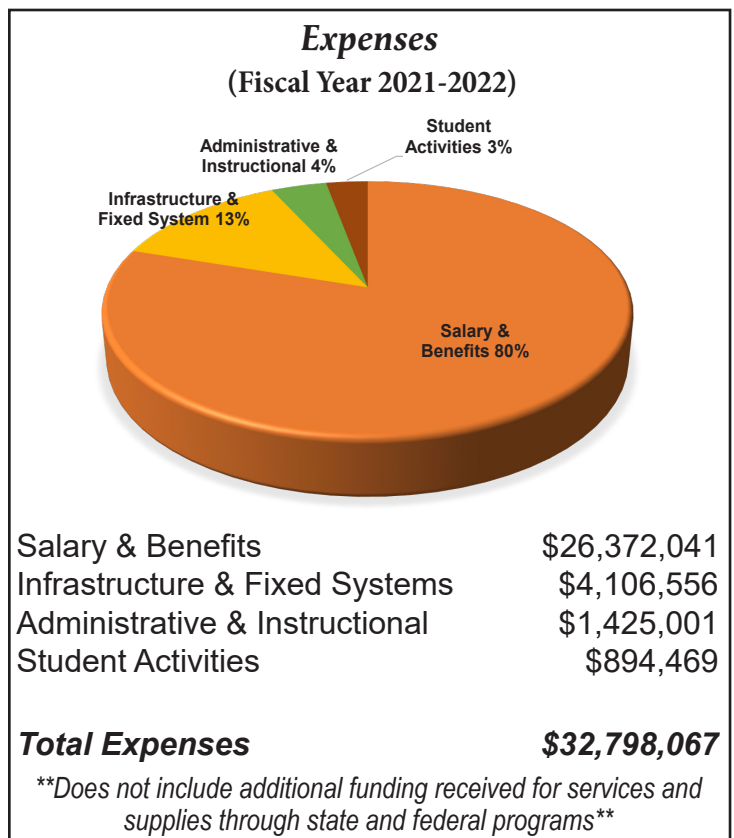
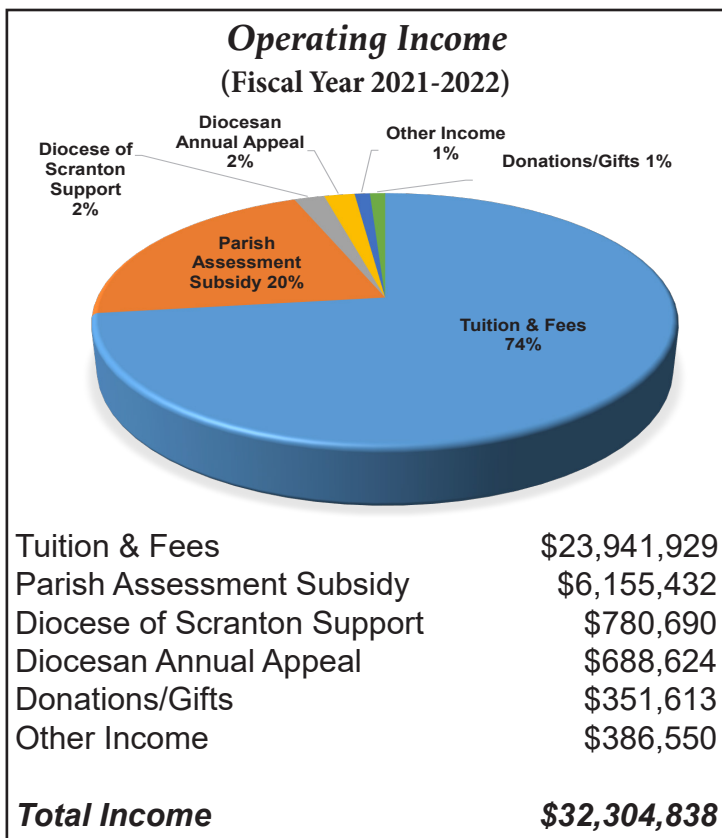


# Financial Stability

Financial stability for all Diocese of Scranton Catholic elementary and high schools is essential if they are to realize the indispensable mission of Catholic education. The financial stability of the Catholic School System as a whole is reliant upon a high level of operational vitality at each individual school.

The future of Catholic schools depends on the ability of all stakeholders to work together to meet the increasing costs to educate students and to assist families who are making sacrifices to provide a Catholic school education for their children. Developing/considering best practice models for financial management, tuition collection and expense control can all help to improve operational efficiency.

Tuition payments alone do not keep Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton open. A significant amount of funding is also provided from parish subsidies, the Diocesan Annual Appeal and fundraising/development efforts. In recent years, changing community demographics have impacted the ability of some parishes to keep up with current financial realities. That fact, along with the same demographics may also impact the Diocesan Catholic School System.



**Average cost to educate one high school student in Catholic School: \$12,074**  
**Average cost to educate one elementary school student in Catholic School: \$6,143**



## Why Do a Strategic Plan?

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Scranton allow our children to grow deeper in the Catholic faith, receive a quality education, develop a sense of purpose, join a welcoming community and feel secure in a dynamic future.

Planning for the future should always be done from a position of strength, not weakness. After having successfully navigated the COVID-19 pandemic, our Diocese is now in a good position to reflect, think, pray and plan for the future of our Catholic School System.

With that positive mindset, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System must continue to capitalize on the successes experienced in recent years and proactively address the present challenges to determine how best to thrive in an increasingly secular society.

By beginning this strategic plan, we have many opportunities. We have an opportunity to grow, to learn, to change, to improve and to move closer to the vision that God has for us. We will also have the opportunity to hear from parents, benefactors, staff members and many others. This input will help us create a roadmap for the future, build upon our strengths, establish targeted goals and initiatives to address our challenges, and ensure the mission of Catholic education for generations to come.



## Areas of Focus for a Strategic Plan

The strategic plan will include goals and action steps that evolve from surveys, interviews, research and demographic data analysis. The areas of strategic focus will align with the National Standards and Benchmarks of Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools.

### — Vibrant Catholic Identity —

Catholic schools invite young people to a relationship with Jesus Christ, insert them into the life of the Church, and help them see the role of faith in life.

### — Academic Excellence —

Catholic schools provide curricular and co-curricular experiences which are academically rigorous, relevant, research-based, and infused with Catholic faith and traditions.

### — Governance, Leadership, Engagement —

Catholic school governance and leadership based on the principles and practices of excellence are essential to ensuring the Catholic identity, academic excellence, and operational vitality of the school.

### — Operational Vitality & Financial Stability —

To support and ensure viability and sustainability, Catholic schools must adopt standards for operational vitality in four key areas: finances, human resources/personnel, facilities, and institutional advancement.



# Diocesan Partners in the Strategic Planning Process

As part of its strategic planning initiative, the Diocese of Scranton has hired Quandel Enterprises to conduct a comprehensive review of all of its school properties and provide a detailed accounting of infrastructure needs that are needed immediately, as well as in the short-term (1-5 years) and in the long-term (6-10 years). With more than 140 years in the construction industry, Quandel is an industry leader in performance that is also known for its commitment to safety.

The Diocese of Scranton has also contracted with Meitler, a company with a 50-year history of consulting with Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools and religious communities on strategic growth initiatives. Meitler brings significant expertise and experience in researching, collating and analyzing demographics, enrollment, development and financial data.

## Strategic Plan Process & Timeline

### *PHASE 1: Data Collection & Analysis*

(Approximately 7 months: March 2023 – September 2023)

- Data is essential to effective planning. Data research and analysis will include a comprehensive study of community demographics, parish demographics, school finances, facilities data and more to make an objective evaluation of the present state of Catholic schools.
- Analysis of enrollment will look at the population currently being served, enrollment history, enrollment patterns, sources of students, attrition rates, capacity of schools, class size, student-teacher ratios, waiting lists, cost to parents and tuition assistance.
- Interviews and school visits will be conducted to learn the present state of Catholic schools. Interviews and meetings may be virtual or a hybrid of virtual and in-person events.
- A Planning Task Force will be created whose members have a vision for Catholic education, objectivity, familiarity with schools in their area, leadership in the Church and community.



### *PHASE 2: Developing a Strategic Plan*

(Approximately 5-6 months: October 2023 – Feb/March 2024)

- Articulate a vision for the future of Catholic schools in the diocese and provide a picture of what Catholic schools should be in the next ten years and beyond. The vision will continue to be refined as the plan is developed and will be flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of schools throughout the diocese. This vision should serve to challenge and stretch the thinking of Catholic leaders.
- Materials will be written and reviewed with the Planning Task Force, a Steering Committee of key diocesan leadership, and other groups. This process will be repeated multiple times until there is confidence the plan is comprehensive, realistic and achievable. Provisions will be made to inform, consult and listen to key stakeholders as the plan is being developed.
- After the strategic plan is accepted by the Planning Task Force and Steering Committee of diocesan leadership, it will be recommended to the Diocesan Bishop for final approval and implementation.

### *PHASE 3: Implementation*

(Timeline: To be determined)

- After the strategic plan is shared widely throughout the Diocese, an Implementation Leadership Team will be established to provide oversight and direction for initiating and following through in moving the goals and action steps forward.





# Catholic Schools Change Lives:



## \$76 million

*Graduates in the Class of 2022 earned more than 1,400 scholarships, cumulatively earning this much toward their future schooling*

## 94%

*Percentage of high school seniors who continue their education in college*

## 15+

*Number of high school athletic team opportunities available. Five junior high opportunities also available*



## 55+

*Number of extra-curricular clubs and activities available for students*



## 45

*Number of elementary school musicals, concerts and plays held annually in elementary schools*

## 8

*Annual number of drama productions held at high schools*



# Catholic schools shape students who will shape a better world



## 40 hours

*Minimum number of service hours high school seniors must complete*

## 20 hours

*Minimum number of service hours high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors must complete*

## 26

*Number of Presidential Service Award recipients in 2022 (who completed 100+ service hours)*



## 221

*Number of high school students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses*

## 1,301

*Number of 5th-8th grade students that can participate in the Diocesan Forensics Program which helps develop public speaking skills and self-confidence*

## 61

*Number of high school students who are earning college credits through a Dual Enrollment Program*







# “Our Faith. Our Students. Our Future.” Prayer

*Lord, our God,  
You are the source of all knowledge and truth,  
and through your word all creation came to be.*

*You sent your Son, Jesus, as our Divine Teacher,  
instructing us in the ways of mercy and love.*

*Send your Holy Spirit upon us now, we pray,  
that we may discern the best path forward for our schools.*

*Give us the openness and wisdom  
to reflect on our strengths and seek opportunities for growth,  
while also embracing our current challenges with confidence in your grace.*

*May all students, parents, teachers, counselors,  
coaches, administrators, staff and clergy of our schools  
know your loving presence in their lives  
and glorify you in all they do.*

*Amen.*



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON**  
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