

Strategic Growth Planning Process for Catholic Schools taking shape

SCRANTON – Just weeks after launching its Strategic Growth Planning Process, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic Schools Office has committed itself to providing ongoing communication updates to families and the rest of the Diocesan community.

“Our Faith. Our Students. Our Future” started in early April and the first communication covered what has taken place so far in the planning process.

With the help of the Meitler team, which is serving as one of our partners in this process, the Diocese held introductory “kickoff meetings” with school principals, clergy and members of the Diocesan Steering Committee and Planning Task Force. The meetings helped to explain the strategic growth process objectives, planning steps, timeframes and more.

Bishop Joseph C. Bambera and Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education/Superintendent, set the tone for these meetings emphasizing the overall goal is to help ensure Catholic education is affordable and accessible for a new generation of students in the decades ahead.

At the kickoff meetings, each group reflected on the following three questions relating to the strategic planning process:

- What expectations do you have of the planning process? What do you hope will be the result(s)?
- What are the key issues and challenges that need to be addressed through the strategic planning process?
- What is your vision for Catholic school education in the Diocese of Scranton for the long-term future?

Input from principals, clergy and steering and planning committee members included, but was not limited to:

- Providing students and staff with the safest learning environment possible
- Strengthening Catholic Identity while focusing on each student’s opportunity to grow to his/her God-given potential
- Making Catholic Schools centers

of evangelization to help families and all of the faithful come to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

- Monitoring academic growth through regular use of various assessments and data to provide responsive and appropriately rigorous, differentiated instruction
- Continuing to make Catholic education affordable and accessible to new generations of students
- Trusting that the strategic growth planning process will give everyone

a voice in shaping the future of Catholic School education throughout the Diocese of Scranton

- Providing financial stability for each school by addressing aging infrastructure, recruiting and retaining dedicated teachers and administrators, all while staying competitive within the local educational markets

• Creating engaging opportunities with alumni to garner their participation in each school’s future growth

• Better succession planning for each school and the Diocesan school system overall

• Doing a better job marketing the strengths of the Catholic School System: evangelization and academic excellence

The communication also covered what comes next in the Strategic Growth Planning Process.

The planning process will begin with the collection and analysis of community and Catholic demographics, school enrollment trends, staffing information and school financial information. Site visits to each school will be planned for the fall to help members of the Meitler team understand the unique experience of each school.

The Diocese asked for prayers and cooperative support as the process will continue to unfold over the next year.

More information on the Catholic Schools Strategic Growth Planning Process is available on dioceseofscranton.org.



Catholic school students create ‘birthday bags’ for local children in need

SCRANTON – For many young people, their birthday is cause for celebration. Due to high inflation and financial challenges, however, not every family is able to afford the ‘extras’ associated with a big bash.

Catholic school students from five elementary schools in Lackawanna County recently came together to make sure no local child will be without a proper celebration for their big day.

During different retreat days held in Lent, students at each school brought in items to create 188 “birthday bags” filled with boxed cake mix, icing, sprinkles, candles, balloons and a disposable cake pan.

“Each grade brought in something small to contribute and created the completed bags that we then donated to local food pantries,” Liz Devine, elementary school guidance counselor, explained. “The students also created personalized birthday cards to go in the bags.”

Second through eighth grade students, 811 in all, participated in the Lenten retreats and help to create the birthday bags. The schools involved in the project are Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore, La Salle Academy in Jessup, Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green, All Saints Academy in Scranton and St. Clare/St. Paul School in Scranton.

“Our retreat was based on the passage from the Bible of Jesus feeding



During Lenten retreats, students from five Catholic Schools in Lackawanna County created 188 ‘birthday bags’ for local children in need.

the 5,000,” Devine said. “We read the Bible passage and reflected on it. It was pointed out to the students how the boy in the story only gave a meager little meal to Jesus and Jesus created His miracle and even had extra left over.”

The day also included small group team building activities, prayerful introspection and guided imagery reflection.

Devine says many of the students recognize

who do not have enough money for regular meals, never mind a special birthday celebration.

“Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton distinguish themselves not only by their academic excellence but by how they incorporate a faith-filled duty to serve others,” she added.

Each school selected the local food pantry in which to donate the birthday bags created.

The recipients include Catherine McAuley Center in Scranton, Saint Ann Parish food pantry in Scranton, Saint Patrick Parish food pantry in Scranton, NEPA Youth Center in Scranton, Queen of Angels Parish in Jessup, and the Montdale food pantry.

In reflecting on the project, Devine considers it a big success because it “challenged the students to give of themselves to others, even in the smallest way!”

Diocese of Scranton

CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

FAITH • ACADEMICS • SERVICE

The Diocese of Scranton is committed to educating our students in an environment that is academically excellent and facilitates the development of moral judgment and Christian decision-making. We are proud to share the following successes of our students in the classroom and in their service to others. Each day, our schools are fulfilling their mission of preparing today's youth and young adults to become tomorrow's faith-filled leaders.

Bishop Bambera recently celebrated Mass with the students, faculty, staff and community of **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**, **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton**, and **All Saints Academy in Scranton**. During his homilies, the Bishop recounted stories from his trip to Ghana last summer and shared how he learned valuable lessons by speaking with school children in the African nation. He also explained as we draw near to the end of the Easter season, we should be reminded of God's great love for us and the sacrifices of His only son, Jesus. While we might look different, speak differently, and come from different parts of the world ... God loves us all and that is why we are made in His own image. To show God our love, we must love others in return and we do that by showing kindness and compassion in our schools, in our homes, and in our communities.



Saint Jude School in Mountain Top



All Saints Academy in Scranton



Holy Family Academy in Hazleton



The eighth grade class at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre** honored our Blessed Mother at their annual May Crowning.



The National Junior Honor Society at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** selected the "Jared Box" program as their Lenten service project. Started in 2001 by the children of Our Lady of Victory School in State College to honor their classmate, Jared, who battled cancer with courage and faith, a box is packed to bring a smile to the face of a child who is in the hospital. A total of 41 boxes were filled with toys, games, crayons, coloring books and fun activities by the NJHS members and distributed to patients at Geisinger-CMC.



Katie Apolinario, Lillie Kochis, Charlie O'Malley, Ben Mulvey, Geno Musto, Gavin Brennan, Giuseppe Pilone, Kevin Vincent and Nick Tunis, members of TRU at **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore**, gather outside during the "2023 Day at the Capitol" in Harrisburg. TRU stands for Tobacco Resistance Unit and is a movement to protect PA youth from all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.



Fourth graders read to their first grade buddies during “Read Across America Week” at Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green.



Fifth grade students at Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg test their homemade filters to try to purify water.



The fourth grade class of Holy Rosary School in Duryea dissected owl pellets cumulating their studies on the ecosystem and the food chain.



Students from Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre recently attended the 72nd annual PA FBLA State Leadership Conference in Hershey. Future Business Leaders of America is designed for students preparing for careers in business or just wanting to learn more about the free enterprise system. The conference allows members to participate in numerous competitive events, attend leadership development seminars, and “campaign” for state office.



Seventh and eighth grade students at Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg performed “Polkadots: The Cool Kid Musical JV” earlier this year.



Pre-kindergarten students at Epiphany School in Sayre start every school day with prayers.



Kindergarten through sixth grade students from Saint Agnes School in Towanda joined the celebration of National Day of Prayer at the Bradford County Courthouse on May 4, 2023. Their presentation included singing, dancing and praying. The Day is designed to remind people about the power of prayer.