



June 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There are many things you can say about the 2020 Spring session, but one thing for sure is that it was out of the ordinary. The pandemic changed our way of life, perhaps forever, and provided some unique challenges. Thanks to the efforts of so many, beginning with our students, their parents and guardians, our teachers, our principals, our administration, and our parish sponsoring pastors, our school year took on a new face... literally. The true sense of community, albeit virtual – continued to be the connection for us all. We fondly reflect on a few highlights.

- Google meetings
- Virtual morning announcements, prayer and mass
- 2nd Grade First Communion Virtual Retreat
- Virtual Spirit Weeks
- Virtual Field Trips
- Drive-by visits by teachers to their students
- Fundly appeal (Virtual Race for Education)
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- Eighth Grade Spotlights
- Student and Teacher Appreciation Videos
- Modified Graduations for our 8th graders

While we all would have preferred the normal school year, our faith-filled community is resilient and together we found a way to continue the important work of the Catholic Education of our children with your support, patience and perseverance.

As we close out this year we have some very important information to share:

- **First and foremost ALL OF OUR FIVE SCHOOLS WILL BE OPEN as we plan for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year.** To date, we have received a strong vote of confidence with more than 90% of this year's enrollment rate across our five schools. We will be entering our fourth year under the Regionalized structure and have continued work to create a sustainable Catholic Faith-filled organization and will continue to strive toward that end. To ensure proper staffing for the upcoming school year, parents are encouraged to complete the enrollment process with their school principals. as soon as possible
- **Catholic Elementary School Closings in other parts of the Diocese.** Unfortunately, due to the events faced by everyone this Spring, there are schools that will need to close within the Catholic Elementary Schools in the Diocese. We are saddened by this and continue to add our support to those regions and not yet regionalized areas of the diocese. We do recognize that as we all enter our fourth year as the North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, we are stronger as a region. We are committed to

working diligently with our families, our teachers and our sponsor parish pastors to continue the mission of providing a premier Catholic Education in the North Hills.

- **Financial Implications for 2020 -2021 School Year.** We will continue to work diligently to control costs and ensure the sustainability of our region.
  - The maximum class size will increase by three students, which is still under the suggested diocesan maximum class size of 35. Our new maximum class size will be twenty-five in grades K-3 and in grades 4-8 it will be twenty-eight.
  - Continue to provide our preschool offering while we work to create a breakeven proposition so that it can continue to be an opportunity for parents to access a Catholic environment for their young children.
  - Strong continued support from our sponsor parishes through subsidies that will remain at the level of this past year, even given the current challenges our parishes are facing.
  - The commitment of our school families to a fundraising goal as a clean slate for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year.
  
- **What will school look like in the Fall?** At this point in early June, we are not totally certain of the picture, while we keep in close contact with government, health and diocesan officials to gain more knowledge and plan accordingly. A Diocesan-wide planning team has been formed and is working on plans for the fall. A survey will be coming out shortly that will be asking for parental input to be used in the plan. Once the plans begin to take more shape, they will be reaching out to the Regional School Advisory Committee and local School Advisory Committees who in turn will be engaging with the local parents within their individual schools to gain feedback. The feedback will then be given back to the COVID-19 Diocesan Planning team to make final adjustments.

Through online meetings and collaboration, the Regional Board has met and worked to ensure that the efforts of our parents, faculty and administration over the last three years and the needs of our students remained as our focus. Fiscal collaboration, responsibility and sustainability was reconstructed during each and every meeting, to ensure that tomorrow's region would emerge stronger with a sound base to build upon.

Our core values of being faith-based, providing academic excellence, building relationships through service within a safe environment was tested and proven this Spring. Our strength as the first group of Regional Elementary Schools has led the way for the rest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Our leadership team beginning with Mr. Michael Killmeyer, our principals and strong faculty was a showcase for not only the diocese but for Western Pennsylvania from the outset in mid-March. They are all to be recognized for their role in carrying the NHRCES mission of *teaching the Word of God through academic and religious education, living the Catholic faith through service to each other and our community*, into the homes of all of our students. Imagine the possibilities moving forward!

Keeping you all in our prayers,

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