



# THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

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September 8, 2015

Dear Parents:

There is always so much excitement and anticipation for our children at the beginning of a new school year with new teachers, new friends, new programs, and maybe even a new school! We share in this excitement as we too, as an alliance of diocesan schools, look forward to many things new this year.

We welcome two new principals to our team:

- Mr. Brian Kosmerick has been appointed principal at Hackett Catholic Prep in Kalamazoo, and will be assuming the position in an interim capacity this year. Brian was the former Assistant Principal and Dean of Students at Hackett; he will be assisted by Mr. Charles Heidelberg who assumes the roles formerly held by Brian;
- Mrs. Lori Pearson has accepted the principalship at St. Rose of Lima School in Hastings. Lori was the former assistant principal at St. Augustine Cathedral school in Kalamazoo.

In the area of Catholic Identity, we trained over twenty new Catechists for our *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program*, the nationally-acclaimed interactive early childhood Theology Program. These newly-trained catechists will soon be putting their skills into practice as they share Jesus' message with their students. We also look forward to the full implementation of our new diocesan K-12 theology curriculum, which was fine-tuned last year by a team of diocesan specialists who ensured that all standards and benchmarks were covered. This curriculum document is available on our diocesan website or at your local school for your review.

In the area of curriculum, this year the diocese will begin work on updating our science curriculum. We will be using the National Standards and Benchmarks for Science as the starting point for this document, and a team of diocesan specialists composed of diocesan teachers and administrators will align these standards with instruction and assessment by using the same tool that was used with the Theology standards. Using this tool will strengthen our science curriculum and also create stronger connections between these two curricular areas. As we begin this process, we invite you to review these National Standards which are available on our website and welcome your input and suggestions.

The diocese continues to provide ongoing professional development for all professional staff to strengthen their faith and to refine teaching knowledge and practices. Diocesan-sponsored professional development for our teachers and administrators this year include:

- An August 24<sup>th</sup> all-day conference for all teachers and administrators in Kalamazoo focused on identified best practices in teaching;

- Our October 24<sup>th</sup> Catechetical Conference where approximately 500 teachers and catechists from across the diocese will gather to integrate more fully the Gospel message into their daily lives, and explore how to share that lived message in their classrooms;
- Targeted in-services for administrators to assist them in evaluating math and language arts instruction as well as identifying high quality classroom management; and
- Several regional in-services designed by administrators to help address local issues.

In regard to school sustainability, the diocese has contracted with *Partners In Mission*, a company out of Westwood MA who specializes in assisting Catholic schools in enrollment management and student retention through the development of parent ambassador teams. Three all-day training sessions have been scheduled – the first on August 28<sup>th</sup> and the other two in November and March.

Other new initiatives from the diocese this year include:

- A study of our three northern schools designed to assess all aspects of school operations; information gained will be used to assist these parishes and schools in their future planning; and
- The full implementation of our diocesan St. Thomas Aquinas Scholarship Program, which is tied to our Capstone Project required of all high school seniors. The Capstone Project challenges our seniors to use the knowledge and skills learned throughout their four years in our schools to defend an article of our faith through oral and written presentations. Full details of this program are available through the high school offices.

In addition to our new programs, the diocese continues to provide the following programs for our school personnel:

- On-going catechetical training through our Catechist Certification Program;
- Training for new members of our diocesan school advisory committees;
- Training for all administrators and school secretaries in the handling of student medications;
- A three day seminar for teachers new to the diocese;
- A monthly in-service for all administrators new to our schools;
- Bi-monthly professional development for all diocesan administrators;
- Assistance to schools who are being accredited each year; and
- Other training as requested or needed.

As you can see, we have a very busy year ahead of us, both with new initiatives as well as our on-going programs. We look forward with partnering with you as we work together to grow closer to God and to educate, love, and protect your children. Thank you for trusting us with this awesome responsibility.

Sincerely,

**Margaret Erich**

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Superintendent of Schools / Diocese of Kalamazoo