

The Advisory Council

For Catholic Elementary Education in Chester County



To: Catholic School Parents and Parishioners

From: Pastors, in coordination with the Principals and the School Advisory Board Presidents

Subject: Sustaining Catholic Elementary Education in Southern Chester County for Today and the Future

In recent years, you may have witnessed the various challenges facing Catholic Education throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Southern Chester County has been no exception. For this reason, the Executive Board of Elementary Education, spearheaded by Bishop Fitzgerald and leaders in the Catholic business and academic communities, formed an Advisory Council for Catholic Elementary Education for each county in the Archdiocese. The Advisory Council for Catholic Elementary Education in Chester County has been in place for over six years and has been working with our local schools to identify challenges and ensure sustainability, while executing strategies that promote ongoing growth and collaboration within our schools.

We are excited to share information with you about a local strategic initiative to engage with a professional educational consulting firm, Bloom Planning (www.bloomplanning.com), to assist in the development of a vision and roadmap for how to stabilize, improve, expand and fund our current Catholic school presence in the Southern Chester County area. This initiative will focus on near-term sustainability and, more importantly, a longer-term vision for the growth and evolution of Catholic Education in Southern Chester County, including recommendations for achieving this vision. Bloom has designed and will administer a multi-school research plan for Assumption BVM and Sacred Heart schools, including the surrounding parishes, which includes the gathering of data, review and analysis of enrollment, baptism, development, financial and operational data to inform future strategic planning efforts. In this process Bloom will also conduct a feasibility and market study, facilitate decision making around a future model and make recommendations.

This is a cross-parish, cross-school initiative, which involves key stakeholders throughout the Southern Chester County region including pastors, principals, members of each school's advisory board, surrounding parishes, local business people, as well as parents of children in Southern Chester County schools. Together this group makes up the Southern Chester County Steering Committee (SCCSC), supported by the Advisory Council for Catholic Elementary Education in Chester County and funded by the Foundation for Catholic Education. Please reference the attached listing of the current committee members on page 3.

To provide clarity for this initiative, Phase I has just started and is expected to last through the beginning of October. Phase I consists of research, data collection, school enrollment, baptism, facilities, demographic and financial analysis. During Phase I Bloom, in concert with the SCCSC, will construct and

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administer surveys to key stakeholders, parents of students, prospective parents of students and parishioners of Sacred Heart and ABVM. This survey will also extend to those in the broader Southern Chester County area, including St. Patrick's, St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother and St. Rocco's. We welcome and appreciate your participation in these surveys as they will be important factors of our research phase. There is work to be done to ensure the future of Catholic Education in Southern Chester County and, with your engagement, we are ready to take it on. A key to success will be insight from parents, parishioners and staff members. Broad opportunity for input will begin this month with surveys of school parents, staff and parish-wide community members. Subsequently Phase II and Phase III will consist of further workshops for the committee as they look to create a long-term vision and plan for the future of Catholic Education in Southern Chester County.

The Southern Chester County Steering Committee is committed to keeping everyone informed of our progress through the school websites, as we continue this collective effort of establishing a clear, locally driven, forward looking vision for Catholic Education here in the Southern Chester County area. To that end, we will post an FAQ list and timely updates on the school website to keep families informed about our process and progress. We are deeply committed and have a sincere sense of urgency about the needs for our children and that the presence of Catholic Education remains strong in the Southern Chester County area. Again, we thank you in advance for your participation and if you have any specific questions feel free to contact your school Principal, Pastor, or anyone on the committee.

Thank you, sincerely,

Father Brockson
ABVM Pastor

Steve Brunner
Sacred Heart Principal
Committee Co-Chair

Father Hennelly
Sacred Heart

Leo Parsons
Advisory Council
Committee Co-Chair

Danielle White
ABVM Principal



Steering Committee Member Listing

Pastors

- Father Scott Brockson, Assumption BVM Pastor
- Monsignor Frank Depman, St. Rocco Pastor
- Father Michael Hennelly, Sacred Heart Pastor

Principals

- Danielle White, Assumption BVM Principal
- Steve Brunner, Sacred Heart Principal

Advisory Board Presidents

- Bob Moran, Assumption BVM Advisory Board President
- Paul Vitelli, Sacred Heart Advisory Board President

Home and School Presidents

- Joan Chilcote, Assumption BVM Home and School President
- Danielle Mascali, Sacred Heart Home & School President

Parish Representatives

- Paul Crowley, Assumption BVM Finance Council
- Tony D'Amico, Assumption BVM Parent
- Kathy Dunkle, Assumption BVM and Sacred Heart CCIU Math Specialist
- Tara Hillegass, Sacred Heart Parishioner & Parent
- John Kozakowski, Sacred Heart Representative

Chester County Representatives

- Father Fitzpatrick, St. Peter, Dean
- Kristin Braca, Foundation for Catholic Education
- Bernadette Dougherty, Asst. Superintendent of Elementary Schools in Chester County
- Judi Neeld, Foundation for Catholic Education
- Leo Parsons, Chester County Advisory Council
- Nancy Sanchez, Coordinator of Hispanic Outreach



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is the strategic initiative being completed?

The Southern Chester County Steering Committee was created to address issues facing Catholic Elementary Education in Southern Chester County. The committee decided the best course of action was to pursue a strategic initiative to gather the data necessary to make informed decisions, and facilitate effective strategic planning for the future growth of Catholic Elementary Education in Southern Chester County.

Who is involved in the strategic initiative process?

The strategic initiative involves key stakeholders from Southern Chester County including pastors, principals, members of each school's advisory board, members of surrounding parishes, local business people, as well as parents of children in both schools. For those specifically on the committee please see the attached list of members.

What is a strategic initiative?

This strategic initiative, led by Bloom Planning (www.bloomplanning.com), includes the gathering of data, review and analysis of enrollment, baptism, development, financial and operational data to inform future strategic planning efforts. There will also be a feasibility and market study, facilitation of decision making around a future model, and recommendations.

What is my role in this strategic initiative?

We welcome and appreciate your participation in the surveys, which will begin in September 2017, as the surveys will be important factors of our research phase.

Your prayerful support is always appreciated. Maintaining an open mind as a vision for the future of Catholic Elementary Education is developed is also vital to the success of this project.

What is the time line for the strategic initiative?

The kickoff meeting was held on Aug. 31, 2017. Phase I will consist of research, data collection, school enrollment, baptism, facilities, demographic and financial analysis, and will last until the beginning of October. Phase II and Phase III, presented in November and December, will consist of further workshops for the committees as they look to create a long-term vision and plan for the future of Catholic Elementary Education in Southern Chester County.

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The elephant in the room – is my child’s school closing?

The goal of the Southern Chester County Steering Committee is to keep Catholic Elementary Education strong in Southern Chester County by addressing declining enrollment, budget deficits and the increasing cost for the parish.

The strategic initiative will provide recommendations for ensuring the future of Catholic Elementary Education in Southern Chester County, including near-term sustainment and most importantly the long-term growth and evolution of our Catholic Schools in Southern Chester County. The objective of the Southern Chester County Steering Committee is to continue providing quality Catholic Elementary Education in Southern Chester County. The committee is focused on conducting a locally led, professional, strategic analysis that is data driven and will lead to a vibrant sustainable Catholic Elementary Educational environment supported by our local parishes, that families throughout Southern Chester County can afford to attend.

Who is the firm completing the strategic initiative?

The Southern Chester County Steering Committee interviewed two firms and chose to go with Bloom Planning (www.bloomplanning.com) located in Philadelphia. Bloom’s mission is to customize a rigorous planning process to meet client needs and deliver high-quality, accessible products to promote purposeful change and social good.