

ANSWERING THE CALL

Imagine. Evangelize. Transform.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | July 2018-June 2021



Entrust your works to the LORD,
and your plans will succeed.

Proverbs 16:3

Dear Friends in Catholic Education,

On behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee formed under the leadership of The Most Reverend Edward B. Scharfenberger, Bishop of Albany, I am pleased to present our strategic vision for Catholic education for the next three years.

This report is the result of the selfless work of members of the Strategic Planning Committee, the Diocesan School Board, and the Catholic School Office. As chair of the committee, I can affirm we are indeed blessed by so many people who have given their time and imagination to build this document.

As a result of the self study we completed during the AdvancED accreditation process which noted our strengths and areas of growth, the committee began to think dynamically about the future of our Catholic schools. We are confident that this plan addresses those areas of need. It dramatically emphasizes the need for our schools to be more fiscally sound and the ability to tap resources that will allow them to be so. We hope to provide additional support to our principals so that they can be the outstanding spiritual and instructional leaders we know them to be without the additional duties of development and fundraising. We also look to enhance our development program as a Diocese and provide both geographic and fiscal access to our schools



Father Robert Longobucco

for all our children.

Catholic schooling will be a concept with a far broader meaning in the next few years and we are ready for that challenge. We are excited by the promise of collaboration across the educational field of our Diocese so that we might never compete, but only enhance the mission of Catholic education.

As pastor of a parish blessed to have a school for the past 10 years, a member of the Diocesan School Board for the past six, and as Vicar for Catholic Faith Formation and Education in the Diocese of Albany, I truly see the Holy Spirit moving in our schools, transforming our young people and spreading the

good news of Jesus Christ.

We pray that this plan will truly allow Christ's plea to ring true, "Let the children come to me."

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "V- Rev Robert Longobucco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Very Rev. Robert Longobucco
Vicar for Catholic Faith Formation and Education
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee



Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

My personal experiences in Catholic education have shaped the man I am today – my many years as a Catholic school student, followed by my role as a Catholic school principal and today serving as your Superintendent of Schools for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany. The landscape of our Catholic schools has changed over those years and yet, we can feel confident knowing that the mission of our schools remains the same: to provide a transformative learning experience in an evangelizing community.

As Fr. Longobucco has noted, we are proud of our many accomplishments and yet we know that difficult decisions, rooted in an in-depth analysis and prayerful examination, are often necessary to move forward into a vibrant future. Several years from now, Catholic education may look very different than it does today. But one thing is certain, our schools will remain a sacred place where our students will grow in mind, body, spirit and heart as we prepare them to be the servant leaders of tomorrow.

We have been blessed with a gifted, dedicated



Giovanni Virgiglio, Jr.

group of individuals who took the lead in strategizing and asking the difficult questions. We are indebted to the Strategic Planning Committee for their commitment of time, talent and perseverance. We are also grateful to our Diocesan School Board for their unwavering support and participation.

I am truly excited by the enthusiasm and collaboration we have witnessed across our diocese as we roll out our plans for the next three years and look ahead with infinite optimism to the pursuit of re-accreditation by Ad-

vanced in 2022. We accept the challenges that lie before us with open minds and hearts, and we invite you to join us on this awe-inspiring journey.

With gratitude,

Giovanni Virgiglio, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools
@RCDA Supt

MISSION STATEMENT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS | THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY

Inspired by Christ the Teacher, the schools of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany provide a transformative learning experience in an evangelizing community.

MISSION STATEMENT | CATHOLIC SCHOOL OFFICE

As disciples of Jesus Christ, Lord and Teacher, we at the Catholic School Office provide leadership and guidance, give direction and assistance, and offer support and advice to all members of our diocesan school communities to ensure a future, faithful Church.

OUR VISION

We envision school communities imbued with Catholic values that inspire personal growth and social justice, recognize and nurture the spirituality of each individual, and provide a safe and loving environment.

OUR VALUES

Catholic education provides children with an education that cannot be matched, where we believe that we can unlock the power of Christ in each child and provide them with a values-based education that will transform them forever.

Student Centered – Educating the Whole Child

Our schools instill intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social values in our students – educating the whole child – mind, body, and spirit.

Collaborative Leadership & Governance

We leverage opportunities to share resources and collaborate in order to provide the best education for all children in the Diocese of Albany.

Accessible to Every Child

We strive to ensure that every child regardless of faith or circumstance has the ability to benefit from a Catholic education.

Caring & Committed Educators

We value a team of educators who are committed to creating a caring and nurturing environment to help young people achieve their full potential.


BACKGROUND

In spring 2016, The Most Reverend Edward Scharfberger, Bishop of Albany, tasked the Diocesan School Board with the formation of a strategic planning process. That process would incorporate a thoughtful and detailed evaluation of the current status of schools, previous planning initiatives, ongoing improvement plans, and acknowledgment of the contemporary challenges our schools face.

The Covenant to Educate, a multi-year planning initiative that was launched in 2010 under Bishop Emeritus Howard Hubbard, provided essential insight for the newly formed Strategic Planning Committee. In 2016, a five-year review of The Covenant to Educate indicated that the Catholic Schools of the Albany Diocese are viable and stronger today because of the “Strategies for the Future” that had been identified in the initial report: Catholic Identity; Governance; Teaching and Learning Excellence; Partnerships; Branding; and Church and School Alliance.

Also noted were areas that could be enhanced by greater collaboration, identifying and accessing resource opportunities, and maintaining a system approach to ensure that all schools are united in mission while retaining their unique characteristics. Building on the success of the Covenant to Educate, the schools embarked on their own lengthy process of self-review, setting new priorities for improvement that resulted in the drafting of the 2020 Vision Plan.

In the spring of 2017, the Diocese of Albany Catholic Schools was awarded system accreditation by AdvancED, the highly regarded and rigorous national accreditation program that signifies our commitment to the pursuit of educational excellence and continuous improvement. We are proud to be the first Diocese in New York State to successfully complete this protocol and achieve this noteworthy designation. Clearly, our system of schools has demonstrated its strength in working together, in concert with the Catholic School Office, as united we strive to fulfill the teaching mission of the Church.



“
By this is my
Father glorified,
that you bear
much fruit and
become my
disciples.

John 15:8

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to make known the strategic priorities we have identified following a thorough, conscientious review of the state of our schools.

We are well aware of the challenges our schools face with declining enrollment and a decrease in the number of school-aged children. In addition, our parishes have seen a decline in both membership and attendance at Sunday liturgies. Both our schools and parishes are being impacted financially and yet, we must persevere. To do that requires dramatic action as detailed in the following strategic priorities. As an evangelizing Catholic Church, we can and will answer the call, building a system that will succeed for all of our communities.

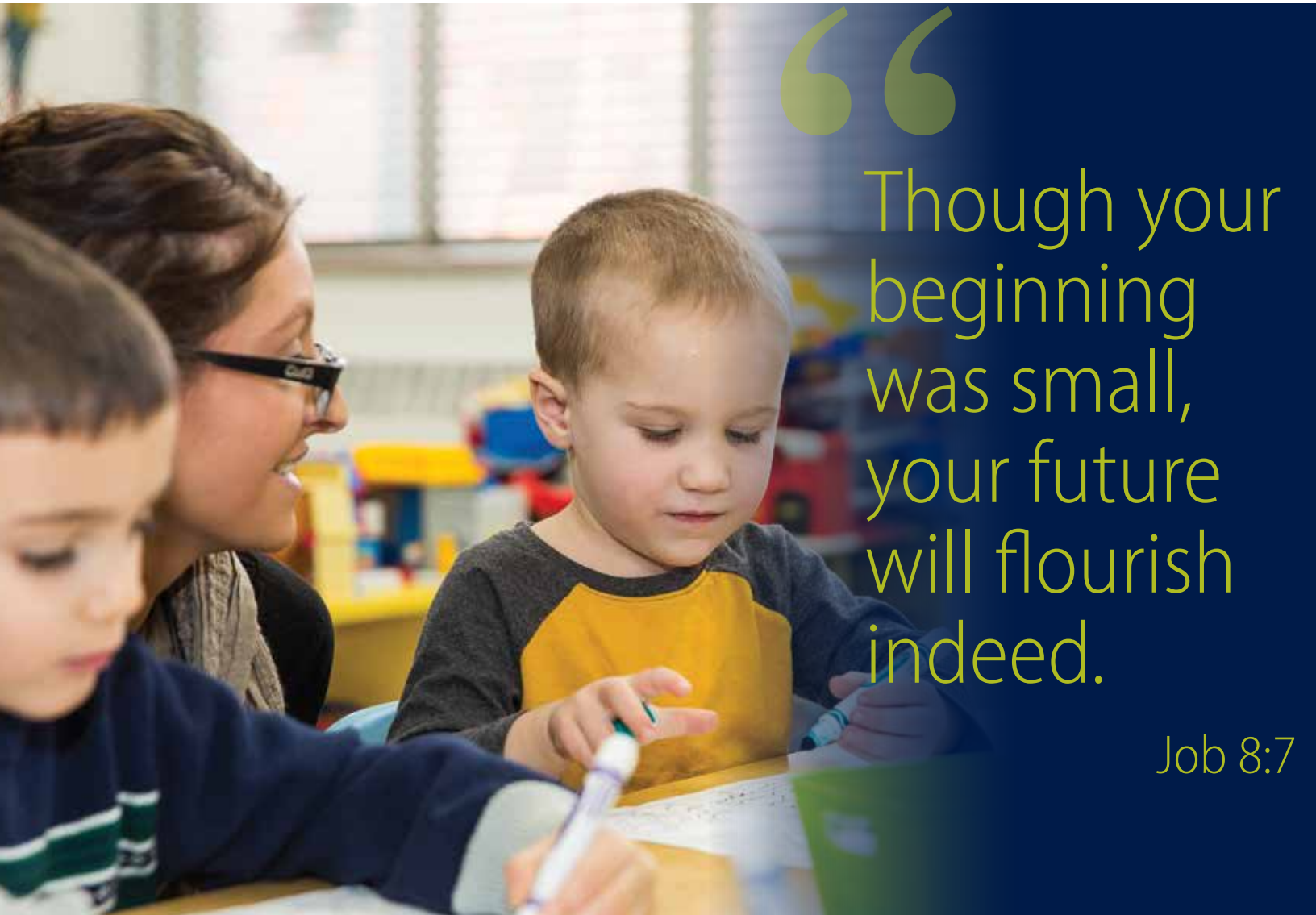
As we look to the future, it is our recommendation that the Diocese of Albany Catholic Schools focus on addressing four key strategic issues: declining enrollment, branding and differentiation, the need for collaboration, and the sustainability of resources, all of which are supported by findings in the AdvancED Accreditation Report.

Through the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, if no changes are made, the Diocese can expect to see a consistent decline in enrollment that will have a drastic impact on the sustainability of our schools and system as a whole.

In support of these strategic issues, it is the recommendation of the Diocesan School Board that our system of schools create three focus areas in order to address the issues outlined. We have highlighted key recommendations that we believe should be considered in order to achieve a path to sustainability.

Growing our Community

The Diocese of Albany Catholic Schools enrollment has been declining each year over the last ten years. It is recommended that the diocesan schools work to develop a targeted recruitment and retention plan that will reverse this trend. Specific attention should be placed on growing Pre-K enrollment and increasing the retention rate of students, particularly those moving from Pre-K to Kindergarten.



Though your beginning was small, your future will flourish indeed.

Job 8:7

Creating a System for All Children

This area of focus is predicated on the principle that in order to ensure the future of Catholic education for all children, there must be a network of schools that are sustainable and viable. At present, the Diocese of Albany Catholic Schools is a network of schools with varying levels of sustainability. It is recommended that each school create a three-year strategic plan incorporating the following priorities while evolving with the needs of their surrounding community. This plan should assess operational vitality, develop strategies which will reduce expenses annually, increase efficiency using shared service models, and introduce transportation as a means to increase access for all students. Ultimately, those schools that cannot achieve sustainability shall look toward consolidation or expansion of transportation services as a means to maintain students' access to Catholic education.

Investing in the Future

Managing enrollment and retention, and focusing on sus-

tainability, will be key to the future of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Albany. Equally important is our ability to raise and invest funds targeted for Catholic education. This must be accomplished. It will be important to ensure that clear communication exists with leaders and administrators regarding how this campaign will achieve a positive outcome for schools.

Contained within these strategic priorities is a set of objectives. Moving forward, these objectives will be more refined into specific action plans and in some cases will vary at a school level based upon needs. It is recommended that these local school-centered action plans collectively create an environment which will support a reversal in the declining enrollment trend, as well as a reduction in expenses. It will be imperative to create a plan that is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound, as well as the governance structure to ensure the success of this plan going forward.



For I know well the plans
I have in mind for you
— oracle of the LORD —
plans for your welfare and
not for woe, so as to give
you a future of hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

RESOURCES

1. Raise \$10 million over the next five years as a system of diocesan schools to bring financial stability utilizing marketing and development professionals.

Currently, our 22 schools are on track to collectively raise approximately \$15 million over the next five years. We expect to exceed that number by \$10 million connecting each and every school with a marketing and development professional who will recognize each school's niche in the market and its strengths, reach out to graduates through an annual appeal and provide the necessary expertise for growing healthy and prosperous Catholic schools.

2. Create a strategy to address the debts of our schools in a way that is mutually beneficial and fair to the Diocesan Investment Loan Trust Fund and to our Catholic schools.

The past debts of our schools have a paralyzing effect on our ability to meet our current financial needs. At the same time, there is a fiduciary responsibility owed to the Diocesan Investment Loan Trust Fund that has aided our schools so generously through the years. Through negotiations, we need to solidify debt agreements, reduce interest expense, and enable reasonable interest payment schedules, which will ultimately serve to replenish the fund while not saddling Catholic schools with an untenable debt service.

3. Retain teachers by providing unique financial incentives outside of salary structure: loan forgiveness, reduced fees for continuing education courses at local colleges, pathways to leadership in an expanding Catholic school universe, and price-advantaged housing.

While our teachers often cite their preference for teaching in Catholic schools and their reluctance to leave, our limited salary structure compels them to move on to the public sector. Any benefit that helps to close the gap will enable us to retain more of our teachers and offer incentives for training of future administrators.

4. Create incentives for students and graduates through collaboration among our schools and with outside partners.

A variety of enrichment experiences could be provided for students and graduates by exploring such programs as summer training and internships, leadership academies for rising juniors, high school mentors for elementary students, diocesan-wide scholarship application days, and external scholarship awards, as well as career experiences like job shadowing days.

5. Reduce cost of operations through procurement programs, budget processing and exploring opportunities for reductions in major expenses.

The cost of operations would be more efficient by exacting measures such as reviewing the budget process, auditing health care parameters, requiring participation in applications and database systems, examining regional distribution of school assessment funds, developing banking relationships, and partnering to reduce energy costs.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, continued

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

1. Re-imagine the definition of Catholic schooling to embrace specific missions, reflect the local communities, and show flexibility in the structures and hours of Catholic schools.

Given the vast diversity in our diocese and the resources available, the structure of Catholic schools needs to be flexible to assist the needs of various communities and the values and schedules of our parents. We will provide Catholic schooling in different frameworks, while guaranteeing the high standards and traditions our schools are best known for.

2. Establish a regional development model whose sole purpose is to promote the viability and well-being of Catholic schools organized by geographical region.

A regional development model of schools organized by geographical region will be the nexus of shared educators and resources, especially development and marketing experts and services. This will help coordinate schedules for fundraising and enrollment opportunities for each school. Representation would not only include schools, but an invitation would be made to all parishes in the area, so that they may be more closely aligned and invested in the mission of Catholic schools.

3. Establish a common philosophy and mission across all areas of Catholic education including Catholic schools, faith formation programs, campus ministry and all areas covered by the Vicariate of Catholic Faith Formation and Education.

As we look to the future as one unified entity, we have and will discover areas of cooperation and mutual interests that will serve to advance the mission of Jesus Christ. Opportunities for professional development, spiritual growth and promoting Catholic values and awareness can be simultaneously approached on multiple platforms. We intend to reach out to homeschoolers in our diocese so that we might all take part in the New Evangelization.

4. Establish a Summit on Catholic Education so that all segments of the Catholic community, including parishes without schools, might grow in awareness of the effectiveness of Catholic schools and how our schools might best serve our parishes.

Invite priests, parish leaders, homeschoolers and key members of our community to a summit so that all parties might have a voice in how best to accomplish our common mission.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, continued

ENROLLMENT, RECRUITMENT & MARKETING

1. Focus on the recruitment of Catholic students through furthering involvement in parishes with and without schools.

Increase the effectiveness of recruiting students in our local parishes through positive engagement, especially with the cooperation of faith formation programs, to offer hospitality to parents whose children are enrolled in catechetical programs. This will allow us to invite those who may not have been invited before, expose them to our mission, and gain allies within our parishes.

2. Recruitment of non-Catholic students using zip code targeting, identifying strengths and opportunities in local areas and showing tuition flexibility.

Realizing that a safe, excellent, and values-based education is a goal for many families, we need to reach out as evangelizers to those who do not share our faith or those who need financial assistance, so that Catholic education may be made available to all who desire it.

3. Utilize social media to market schools in our local communities.

Social media is the most inexpensive and yet effective way to market our schools in the immediate geographic community. We will develop and extend to each school social media marketing training and resources, as well as offer continued support on growing a social media presence.

4. Continue to increase enrollment and retention development and training.

Continue the Enrollment Planning Institute hosted by Siena College and follow up to ensure that every school has the necessary outreach, data and record keeping and retention programs so that each school can reach its enrollment potential.

5. Outline the successes of our Catholic school students and market their achievements to a public that may not be aware.

Parents may not realize the sound financial investment they are making when enrolling in our Catholic schools. For example, the Class of 2017 from our four diocesan high schools received over \$26 million in scholarship awards, and 97% of the graduates pursued college. An investment now can yield dividends for the future.

6. Market the feasibility of attending Catholic schools.

Continue to brand and market Catholic schools as accessible to families who may otherwise not consider it an affordable financial option.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Rev. Patrick Butler | Pastor, St. Edward the Confessor, Clifton Park
Dr. Maxine Fantroy-Ford | Bishop Maginn School Board Member
George Frany | Diocesan School Board Member
Rev. Matthew Frisoni | Tribunal
Dcn. William Henkel | Diocesan School Board Member
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Very Rev. Robert Longobucco | Vicar, Pastor, St. Kateri Parish & School, Schenectady
L. Stephen Lombard | Principal, Saratoga Central Catholic School
Carolyn Kelly | Diocesan School Board Member
Maureen O'Brien | Executive Director of Government Affairs, Motorola Solutions/Mater Christi Parish & School
Lauren Opphelt | Teacher, Notre Dame-Bishop Gibbons, Schenectady
Catherine Leahy Scott | Diocesan School Board Member
Kelly Sloan | Principal, St. Madeleine Sophie School, Schenectady
Dr. Teresa Snyder | Superintendent, Green Island Union Free School District
Gregory Vandenburg | Diocesan School Board Member
Giovanni Virgiglio | Superintendent of Schools

CATHOLIC SCHOOL OFFICE STAFF

Giovanni Virgiglio | Superintendent of Schools
Ninette Kondratowicz | Associate Superintendent of Schools
Patricia Ricchiuti | Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
Jo Ann Gamello | Director of Financial Operations
Stephen Mawn | Director of Catechist Formation
Nathan VanDeusen | Director of Educational Technology & Communications
Kathleen Yanas | Director of Advancement and Strategic Partnerships
Maureen Bernstein | Prevention Educator
Sal Carbone | Safety Coordinator
Bridget Frament | Personnel Services Coordinator
Daniel Jaromin | Accounting Associate
Eileen Keegan | Administrative Assistant
Solange Mandevu | Accounting Associate
Terri McGraw | Consultant for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Rosemarie Tobin | Consultant for Persons with Disabilities

DIOCESAN SCHOOL BOARD

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Gregory Vandenburg
Jeffrey VanDenburgh

CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**ALBANY**

All Saints Catholic Academy
Blessed Sacrament School
Mater Christi School

AMSTERDAM

St. Mary's Institute

BALLSTON SPA

St. Mary's School

DELMAR

St. Thomas the Apostle School

EAST GREENBUSH

Holy Spirit School

GLENS FALLS

St. Mary's-St. Alphonsus Regional Catholic School

HERKIMER

St. Francis de Sales Regional Catholic School

HOOSICK FALLS

St. Mary's Academy

LATHAM

St. Ambrose School

LOUDONVILLE

St. Pius X School

SARATOGA SPRINGS

St. Clement's Regional Catholic School

SCENECTADY

St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish School
St. Madeleine Sophie School

TROY

Sacred Heart School

WATERFORD

St. Mary's School

WYNANTSKILL

St. Jude the Apostle School

**CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS****ALBANY**

Bishop Maginn High School

SARATOGA SPRINGS

Saratoga Central Catholic School

SCENECTADY

Notre Dame-Bishop Gibbons School

TROY

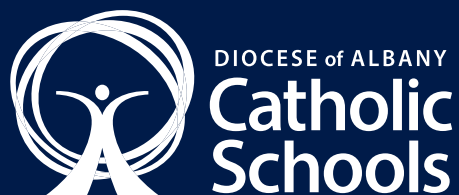
Catholic Central High School



“Such, you must know, is wisdom to your soul.
If you find it, you will have a future, and your
hope will not be cut off.

Proverbs 24:14

**To learn more, please go to
higherpoweredlearning.org**



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