

VISION



NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

December 2, 2009



THOUGHT OF THE MONTH!

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
you have given the world its true
light, Jesus, your Son – the Son of
God. You abandoned yourself
completely to God's call and thus
became a wellspring of the
goodness which flows forth from
him.

Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
Teach us to know and love him,
so that we too can become
capable of true love and be
fountains of living water in the
midst of a thirsting world. Amen.

Prayer of Benedict XVI



desire to become lifelong learners. I ask that each school continue their commitment to the challenge of improvement through PLC's. If you need assistance in furthering your practice of PLC's, contact my Office and we will be able to serve and assist you.

On Common Ground:

The Power of Professional Learning Communities

In May of 2007, the concept for establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) in our schools was introduced. My message this month continues to highlight the importance of PLC's as explored by Richard DuFour, Robert Baker, and Rebecca DuFour in the book, *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities*.

"The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught, but to ensure that they learn" (p. 32). Richard DuFour provides the essential principles in order for PLC's to be successful in schools. He makes the case for the purpose of PLC's; to ensure that students learn most effectively when educators create a culture of collaboration that focuses on results and accountability. "The rise or fall of the professional learning community concept depends not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of any school – the commitment and persistence of the educators within" (p. 42).

On Common Ground is a must read for educational leaders interested in improving the practice of PLC's in their schools. The book is engaging and clearly provides practical ways in which schools should embrace the PLC model. Not only will new ideas emerge; it will also provide affirmation for the great work currently being realized with the implementation of PLC's. We take great pride in being a high-achieving network of Catholic schools offering excellent educational programs and celebrating our teachers, who are primarily responsible for these achievements. Teachers should have a more prominent role in creating instructional programs to ensure a higher level of student learning. Educational leaders must model best practices and provide opportunities and resources for PLC's to occur.

The success of each generation of students will depend upon the collective experiences, shared commitments, shared wisdom, and purposeful actions of educators who shape students' school experiences and encourage

The Thanksgiving holiday is now over and last Sunday we began our observance of Advent marking the beginning of the Church's liturgical year. Advent is a unique season with a blend of repentance, muted joy, and anticipation. One of the beautiful traditions of the season is the Advent wreath. Both the circle and the green remind us of life, especially unending life. Wreaths were also used in ancient times as signs of glory and victory; for us, victory over death and the Glory of God. But there is more to this wreath – the contrast between light and dark. Jesus is the light that came into the world that could not be overcome by the darkness (John 1:5). Each week we light an additional candle so that just as the days become shorter, we illuminate the darkness until all four candles are burning, and we celebrate the coming of Christ – our light and life at Christmas. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) provides resources for us to use during the Advent season. The Office of Catholic Schools home webpage provides a link to these USCCB resources.

May God bless you and your school community as you celebrate the season of Advent, and anticipate the joyous season of Christmas. **Merry Christmas!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONGRATULATIONS:

The following schools have met the eligibility requirements to be nominated as **National Blue Ribbon Schools**, and have submitted applications to the **United States Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Program**: St. Martha, Enfield; St. James, Manchester; St. Mary, Simsbury; St. Dominic, Southington; St. Timothy Middle, West Hartford; and Corpus Christi, Wethersfield,

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

the speedy recovery of **Rev. Christopher M. Ford**, Pastor of St. Mary, Branford, and member of the Archdiocesan School Board.

the repose of the soul of **Lisa Deshais**, the mother of Matthew Amoroso, a second grade student at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School, Meriden, who passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, November 26, 2009. May the soul of Lisa Deshais rest in peace and may her family find comfort and peace this Advent season.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

The Prayer of the Month, written by **Benjamin Bischoff**, a sixth grade student at St. Joseph School, Meriden, will be featured on the Office of Catholic Schools' website for December.

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: The Catholic School: The National Catholic Educational Association's (NCEA) website provides a new translation of the original document published by Dicastery *Congregatio De Institutione Catholica* in 1977 using inclusive language. Dr. Karen Ristau, President of NCEA, is the editor. It has been reviewed and approved by the Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans.

Adult Faith Formation Registration: Registration is now open for the next cycle of faith formation courses offered by University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community, and will remain so until classes begin on January 6, 2010. Courses currently available include: Catholic Beliefs; Sacraments; Old Testament; and New Testament. Register directly on their website at <http://vlc.udayton.edu>.

Adult Faith Formation Clarification: In response to several calls to the Office of Catholic Schools, participants do not need to sign up for the "Certificate in Catechesis" on the University of Dayton's website. Upon completion of the six courses listed above, the Office of Catholic Schools will issue its own certificate.

However, educators may decide to complete the University's certificate program once the requirements of the Archdiocese of Hartford have been met. Several of the required courses overlap both programs.

ADMINISTRATION

Criminal Background Checks: The State Police Bureau of Identification has increased its fees for processing fingerprint supported background checks to \$74 per applicant. This increase has affected all background checks that have been received by the Office of Catholic Schools for the 2009-2010 school year. If you submitted such a request, you will receive an invoice for additional funds to cover these expenses.

Principals are also asked to double check all requests being submitted to the Office of Catholic Schools. Each employee submission should include:

- Two fingerprint cards, one for the State and one for the FBI, with all the blocks filled out
- One – three page Authorization form that has been signed and notarized
- One check made payable to the Office of Catholic Schools at the rate of \$74 per person

Only volunteers should have the Mind Your Business form completed with a fee of \$18.50 per person made payable to Archdiocese of Hartford. Please do not combine volunteer and employee payments.

Volunteer Census: Based on the recommendations of the previous audit and the request of the Office of Safe Environments, we have developed a form for schools to report their volunteer census to us together with the volunteers' safe environments information. Please complete and forward this form to Larry Duffany at lduffany@adh-ocs.org by December 15, 2009.

Continuing Education Units (CEU's): All requests for CEU's that were submitted to the Office of Catholic schools have been processed, and the certificates were mailed to the respective schools. Please keep in mind that "Review" workshops and workshops repeated within 5 years are not CEU material. The Office of Catholic Schools is an authorized CEU provider and workshops focusing on curriculum, instruction, assessment, or learning are eligible for CEU's. The State Department of Education (SDE) is notified by the Office of Catholic Schools of such workshops.

CURRICULUM

Knights of Columbus Spelling Bee: The Connecticut State Council of the Knights of Columbus has announced their annual Catholic School Spelling Bee for students in grades four, five, and six. Principals should have received an announcement from the State Chairman, Ron Scoville, and are asked to inform him by December 23, 2009 of their intention to participate. In-school competitions should be held, and notification given to Mr. Scoville by January 22, 2010, as to the winner and the alternate for each grade. The winner will be invited to participate in the regional competitions which will be held in February and March. The state final competition will be held at the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary on April 11, 2010 at 1:00 PM. Contact Mr. Scoville at 860.745.6541 for more information.

2010 CT Private School Professional Development Summit: The Archdiocese of Hartford is honored to provide professional development to our Catholic school educators from some of the premier leaders in the field of education today. **Carol Ann Tomlinson, Jay McTighe, Jan Chappuis, and Tony Flach** will lead a two-day train-the-trainer workshop on topics that include differentiated instruction, data driven decision making, and formative assessment. Kindly RSVP by December 4 to assure a place at this academic summit for elementary and secondary private schools throughout CT. If you have not received an invitation via email, please contact Valerie Mara at vmara@adh-ocs.org or at 860.242.4362, ext. 138.

ADVANCEMENT

Parent/Guardian Ambassador Alert for Elementary School Principals: The next step in the parent/guardian ambassador effort will be a special workshop scheduled on **Wednesday, December 16, 2009 from 1:30 – 5:00 p.m.** at the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary, Alumni Lounge. This meeting will provide valuable training for all elementary school principals as they work with the parent/guardian ambassadors. Richard Burke, president of Catholic School Management, will share a sense of the essential documents that must be in place as resources, what kind of information is critical for parent/guardian ambassadors to share with prospective parents, and the best methods of presenting that information. All elementary school principals are urged to attend, and may bring along no more than two parent/guardian ambassadors and/or the school's Director of Advancement. Please RSVP by December 9 to Anne Clubb via aclubb@adh-ocs.org.

Service Projects: The many service projects undertaken by our schools on behalf of those in need will be highlighted as part of the Annual Report produced by the Office of Catholic Schools, which appears each year in the February issue of the *Catholic Transcript*. Information of this nature speaks to the value of Catholic schools in communities and to schools' commitment to Catholic social teachings. Elementary and secondary school administrators are asked to email brief (1-2 sentences) descriptions of school service projects by **December 14** to Anne Clubb via aclubb@adh-ocs.org.

Catholic Schools Month Stories for the *Catholic Transcript*: Roberta Tuttle, Managing editor of the *Catholic Transcript*, welcomes newsworthy items of impressive activities occurring at Catholic schools throughout the year. Sharing story ideas as Catholic Schools Month is celebrated is a great way to begin! For the January 2010 issue, please submit planned school activities no later than December 11. Please contact Roberta Tuttle by phone or email at 860.286.2828, ext. 1; rtuttle@catholictranscript.org, with your ideas to make the most of this effective marketing tool.

FINANCE

Preliminary Elementary Budget Template for 2010/2011: The budget template for 2010/2011, along with supporting documents, is projected to be on the Office of Catholic Schools' website by **December 15**, rather than December 1.

It is not too early to start planning for the next school year. Please consider some of the following changes in your planning based on the new policies effective September 1, 2009, which are outlined in The Archdiocese of Hartford Handbook of Policies and Procedures for Catholic Schools.

- Tuition rates for Catholic non-parishioners shall be the same as those for parishioners. If they are not registered parishioners in another parish, they may be charged higher tuition. **Policy 2.403**
- In setting tuition rates, consideration shall be given to families with more than one child in the school through the use of a sliding scale. **Policy 2.403**
- Schools shall set tuition and fee rates equal or comparable to other parish schools in their town/city. **Policy 2.403**

Preliminary High School Budget Template for 2010/2011: A new "standardized" high school budget template is being formatted; it is projected to be on the Office of Catholic Schools' website by **December 15**.

Energy Cost Savings: Schools could save between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per year by changing companies from Northeast Utilities or United Illuminating for the generation service portion of their electric bill. Schools will continue to receive only one bill from Northeast Utilities or United Illuminating. More details will follow in a separate email and will include a listing of companies from which schools may select any vendor. Savings of up to 18% on the generation portion of a school's bill are one, fifteen minute phone call away, with a potential total bill reduction of up to 11%. This subject was discussed in greater detail at the last PACE meeting, and representatives are able to answer most of questions.

DUE DATES

NOW DUE

Parent Student Handbooks due to liaison Assistant Superintendent

Faculty Handbooks due to liaison Assistant Superintendent

High School Class of 2009 Data due to Anne Clubb at aclubb@adh-ocs.org

Elementary Open House Dates due to Anne Clubb at dnewell@adh-ocs.org

Non-Public School Report, Connecticut State Department of Education, ED159, due to Leslie Nelson via U.S. mail

December

4 RSVP to CT Private School Professional Development Summit due to Valerie Mara at vmara@adh-ocs.org

9 RSVP to Parent Ambassador Workshop due to Anne Clubb at aclubb@adh-ocs.org

14 Elementary and Secondary Service Projects due to Anne Clubb at aclubb@adh-ocs.org

15 School Volunteer Census due to Larry Duffany at lduffany@adh-ocs.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

1 Teacher Performance Appraisal Committee, Office of Catholic Schools, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

3 District 4 Meeting, St. John the Evangelist School, Watertown, 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

3 CT Federation of Catholic School Parents, Board of Trustees Meeting, Catholic Center, Bridgeport, 6:00 p.m.

7 Archdiocesan School Board Meeting, Office of Catholic Schools, 6:30 p.m.

9 District 3 Meeting, St. Paul School, Berlin, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

9 Virtus Training, Blessed Sacrament School, Waterbury, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

10 District 6 & 7 Meeting, St. Mary Church, Parish Hall, Branford, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

11 New Haven Vicariate Meeting of Pastors and Parochial Vicars, St. Margaret Church Hall, Madison, 1:00 p.m.

14 Waterbury Vicariate Meeting of Pastors and Parochial Vicars, Lower Level of SS. Peter and Paul Church, Waterbury, 1:00 p.m.

15 Hartford Vicariate Meeting of Pastors and Parochial Vicars, Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield, Alumni Lounge, 1:00 p.m.

16 Parent/Guardian Ambassador Program Workshop, Archdiocesan Center, Alumni Lounge, 1:30 – 5:00 p.m.

16 Virtus Training, St. Thomas the Apostle Parish Center, West Hartford, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

24, 25 Christmas Holiday (Office of Catholic Schools Closed)

JANUARY

1 New Year's Day (Holiday – Office of Catholic Schools Closed)

5 Curriculum Commission Meeting, Office of Catholic Schools, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

5 Curriculum Subcommittee Meetings, Office of Catholic Schools, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

6 District 1 Meeting, St. Mary Church, East Hartford, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

7 District 2 Meeting, St. Thomas the Apostle Parish Center, West Hartford, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

13 Secondary Administrators' Meeting, Office of Catholic Schools, 10:00 – 3:00 p.m.

14 New Teacher Workshop, Part III, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., location TBD

18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Holiday – Office of Catholic Schools Closed)

23, 24 Archdiocesan High School Collection, all parishes in the Archdiocese