

**DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**



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Dear Friends in the Diocese of Harrisburg:

There is a rich tradition of Catholic education in our Diocesan schools. Humbled by our inheritance, we stand today on the shoulders of so many faithful men and women who have, since 1868, educated thousands of students in faith and in academics: bishops, priests, principals, school leaders, teachers, staff, parents, alumni, benefactors. Today, our 36 Catholic schools continue to strive for excellence in educating nearly 10,000 students across our Diocese. While grateful for our history and current success, we believe that Catholic education now is as important as it ever has been, and we feel the urgent need to chart a pathway for the future.

To that end, we announce today our effort to create a strategic vision for our Catholic schools in a process called “Christ Before Me: A Strategic Vision for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Harrisburg.” This phrase from the Breastplate of St. Patrick, the patron saint of our Diocese, is a sign of our wish to prayerfully follow Christ’s lead in this process. During this summer and the 2021-22 school year, we will study a rich array of data, and conduct surveys and interviews among many stakeholders in our Catholic schools. In the end, we will establish the concepts and direction needed to set a strategic vision to secure the future of our schools. We will use as a reference point the “The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools,” which include the following domains: Mission and Catholic Identity, Academic Excellence, Governance and Leadership, and Operational Vitality.

The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) is partnering with us in this effort, and Kathy Mears, formerly the Interim CEO of NCEA, is already holding some initial interviews in our communities. NCEA offers a partner with wonderful experience and national perspective; they will be an invaluable resource.

We ask for your prayerful support and your participation in the months to come. Our success will depend on it. There will be ample opportunity to be heard and to participate in this process. We expect this process to culminate in an announcement in May with the results of our work.

For additional information as the process unfolds, please visit gocatholicschools.org.

In Christ,

Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer
Bishop of Harrisburg

Daniel Breen
Secretary for Education