



Archdiocese of Newark
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

December 6, 2017

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Throughout my pastoral visits and deanery town hall gatherings that have taken place this year, one topic has come up in every meeting -- your concern for the future of Catholic education in the Archdiocese.

It is a concern I share as well. My siblings and I are products of Catholic schools. I served in parishes with Catholic schools as a parish priest and pastor. I have seen the great good Catholic schools produce, especially among underserved families. And as the shepherd of two great Archdioceses, it has been and is my deep desire and responsibility to ensure that our children and young people face the future with solid foundations in faith formation, superior academics, and strong financial support.

Some six years ago, the Archdiocese of Newark instituted a Catholic Education Commission, made up of lay people, clergy and religious with expertise in education, parish management, marketing, finance and other fields. The Commission sought to develop a program for Catholic elementary schools that could stem more than two decades of decline in the number of Archdiocesan elementary schools.

Lighting the Way, the result of that study, was implemented in 2014. Since then, not one elementary school has closed, and approximately one-third of our schools have earned National Blue Ribbon Schools designation, a distinction given to only a small number of schools annually. Curriculum Mapping and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) initiatives enable our schools to maintain our already extensive track record of achievement and success.

A New Study for the Future

Yet, like with any plan or program, it is important to take a step back and evaluate our efforts from time to time to make sure that we can continue to build on success and incorporate best practices and new ideas. We also need to examine if adjustments are needed.

Based on your conversations with me, as well as my own review of the state of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese, I believe it is time for a new analysis of our Catholic schools to ensure that we are doing the right things, and doing them right.

To help in this examination, the Archdiocese will be working with representatives of Catapult Learning, LLC, a nationally recognized provider of educational services with more than

Archdiocesan Center

four decades of experience in creating outstanding solutions that generate demonstrable academic achievement and better life outcomes for students.

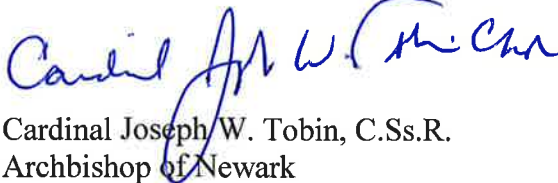
Directing this evaluation is Reverend Ronald Nuzzi, PhD., an Emeritus Faculty member of the University of Notre Dame and Executive Director of Equitable Access and Excellence for Catapult Learning. Father Nuzzi will lead a team of four professionals in this study. Together, the Catapult Team will work with parents, pastors and priests who minister in Catholic schools, principals, teachers, students and Archdiocesan staff to create a comprehensive summary of the schools of the Archdiocese. Through a series of surveys, focus group interviews, document reviews and benchmarking exercises, the Catapult team will draw for us a roadmap for the coming decades.

Catapult will examine all aspects of Lighting the Way – including governance, sources of funding and parish assessments, operations and management, enrollment and marketing and curriculum.

The project will take about six to eight months, and we anticipate that the team will begin its work in the Archdiocese in early 2018.

At many of the town hall meetings, I have said that the best selling point for Catholic schools is the ability of our schools to instill a formative, mature faith in children that will serve them throughout their lives. All Catholics need a greater sense of stewardship for schools – to “walk the talk.” I am very happy that you have shared with me your thoughts on the need to continue to plan for a bright future for our Catholic schools. I look forward to the recommendations of this study and a future flourishing of our schools.

Sincerely in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark