



Updates from the CSO

Fall 2021

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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Contact us:

We want to hear from you! Tell us what's noteworthy in your school or system.

Send a short story or description of your event or program to Caryl Unsel at: cunseld@ErieRCD.org



Greetings Partners in Catholic Education,

I am very excited about the beginning of this school year and am pleased to bring you another issue of our *Updates from the CSO newsletter*. Despite the ongoing challenges of COVID we have many great things to report for Catholic education in our diocese. Our administrators, teachers and staff continue to demonstrate their strength, perseverance, and leadership. Evidence of this can be seen in our overall first day enrollment numbers, which are more stable than they have been in the past several years. In fact, thirteen of our schools experienced an increase in enrollment since last year. Another exciting development is the addition of Lisa Panighetti (former principal of Our Lady of Peace School in Erie) as the new Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. Lisa started in July and immediately began tackling the educational work needed to move our schools forward. Her experience, knowledge of curriculum and passion for Catholic education have had a noticeable impact on our team and on important educational initiatives. As was discussed in our previous newsletter, the Catholic Schools Office successfully completed the Middle States Accreditation process in the spring. This led to a renewed focus on mathematics and building a culture in our schools that values and uses student assessment data to promote student achievement and growth. The articles in this newsletter outline the key initiatives that will help our schools focus on increased student achievement and growth.

I encourage you to share this information with your teachers and families so they too can see the ways in which we continue to grow and strengthen the value of our Catholic schools.

May God continue to bless your work and the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Superintendent



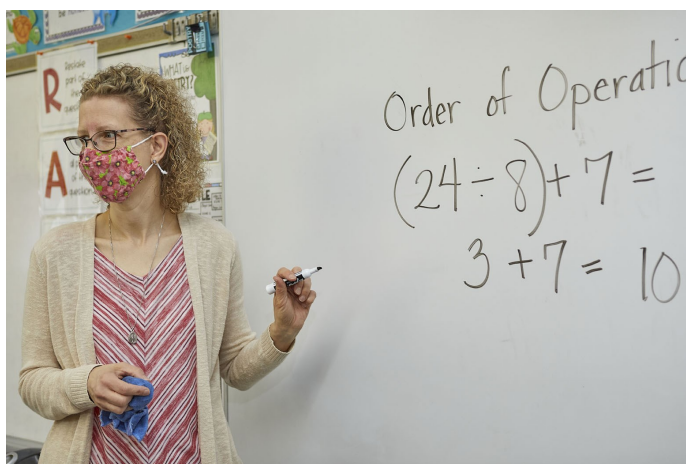
Professional Learning Communities

A consistent goal for all Catholic schools is to continually strive to increase student achievement. Researchers and professional educational organizations have identified the process of creating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as one strategy that can impact student achievement in a positive way. Many may ask: What is a PLC?

PLCs are groups of teachers who work together collaboratively to improve teaching and learning. Teachers do this by reviewing and analyzing assessment data and information from a wide variety of sources to help identify the strengths and weaknesses within their students' learning processes. Educators work together to study which strategies, techniques, and skills they, as teachers, need to develop to successfully teach what their students need to learn and understand.

This summer, teachers, administrators, and diocesan leaders gathered for the annual Catholic Schools Leadership Conference.

This year's theme was, *Building a Collaborative Culture: Learning Communities at Work*. Donna Whyte, a national education consultant and author, introduced the core principles of a Professional Learning Community and provided participants with the knowledge and skills needed to implement Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) in each of their schools.



Following the recommendation and data provided through the Middle States Accreditation process, the schools in the Diocese of Erie are working towards the common goal of ensuring each school's mathematics program is at a level where students are making a minimum of one year's growth annually or are at benchmark for grade level.

The PLC model emphasizes the importance of educators coming together in Professional Learning Teams. Throughout the first year of PLT implementation, teachers and curriculum lead teachers will be learning what it means to function as a cohesive unit. They also will design new strategies to establish a collaborative culture within the building, explore the curriculum and standards, while in turn enhancing student success, specifically in mathematics.

The Catholic Schools Office, particularly the director of curriculum, will be visiting schools, joining PLT meetings and supporting the curriculum, instruction, and assessment needs of each individual school.

The Importance of the Curriculum Lead Putting it together....

A big piece of the puzzle for increasing student achievement and growth involves Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and the teams that are forming in our schools. Research shows us that, “The use of PLCs is the best, least expensive, most professionally rewarding way to improve schools. ... Such communities hold out immense, unprecedented hope for schools and the improvement of teaching.”¹ This is exciting work, and we are fortunate to have 25 educators volunteer to help lead the way in our schools as Curriculum Leads.

A Curriculum Lead is a teacher who has expertise in a particular content area and has attended professional development to learn how to effectively facilitate a team. Volunteers at Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie attended a training in August that focused on developing specific PLC facilitation skills. Curriculum Leads will take a leadership role by supporting the school’s administrators and teachers in implementing best practices designed to increase student growth and achievement. They will do this by participating in continued training, having an interest and expertise in math, and helping to facilitate the school’s team meetings. It’s important that Curriculum Leads are willing to try new approaches to instruction and

assessment practices and to share their expertise, resources, and knowledge with their peers.



The ultimate goal of the Curriculum Lead is to help form and lead teams to achieve higher levels of student learning by improving classroom instruction. The Curriculum Leads will continue to be supported by the Catholic Schools Office and will receive ongoing professional development throughout the year.

Footnote:

¹ Schmoker, in DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour (Eds.), "No Turning Back," *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities* (2005), p. 137

New Assessment: NWEA Map Growth

The NWEA MAP Growth Assessment will be taking the place of the ACT Aspire assessment beginning in the fall of the 2021-2022 school year. NWEA is a research-based, non-profit organization that supports students and educators by developing assessments that accurately measure growth and proficiency. This assessment will be administered at different times throughout the year and will provide a detailed snapshot of how each child is growing academically during the school year and over multiple years. The information from the interim assessment will be analyzed and provide instructionally useful data to parents, teachers, and administrators. This valuable material will provide powerful insights to assist teachers in targeting instruction for each student and groups of students.

MAP Growth is a computer adaptive assessment, which means it adjusts to each individual student. If a student answers a question correctly, the next question will be more challenging. If he or she answers incorrectly, the next question will be less difficult. MAP Growth challenges top performers without overwhelming students whose skills are still developing. MAP Growth will be administered in grades 3-8 three times a year: fall, winter, and spring, and will provide assessment in the areas of reading, language usage, science and mathematics. MAP Growth will be administered in grade 9 a minimum of two times a year and will assess students in reading, language usage and mathematics. Science assessments are optional at the high school level and will vary from school to school.



MAP Growth measures what students know and what they don't know, regardless of their grade level. It also measures growth over time, providing evidence of a student's progress throughout the school year and across multiple school years. MAP Growth results are given as a score which reflects the student's academic knowledge, skills, and abilities. This score has the same meaning regardless of grade level, or age, so scores can be compared over time. With each MAP Growth interim assessment, a child's academic growth can be monitored and tracked. The MAP Growth assessments will yield useful and robust data to help inform the teams in our schools and the diocese to assist in curriculum development. The information gained will directly contribute to the strategic goal of increased student achievement.

