



NEWS RELEASE

DIocese OF ERIE

www.ErieRCD.org

6.10.2021

Catholic schools receive Middle States accreditation

The Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Erie has announced that its inaugural effort to secure certification as a group from the Middle States Association (MSA) has been successful: all 25 participating schools in the diocese have been accredited. The other five schools in the diocese will continue to be accredited independently.

“The MSA suggested we approach it this way,” said Jim Gallagher, superintendent of schools for the diocese. “Each of the participating schools did its own report and worked in tandem with the Catholic Schools Office (CSO) to establish meaningful goals. He said the coordinated effort already has paid dividends as the CSO has identified trends across its schools, providing data that will be used to set goals for the next five to seven years.

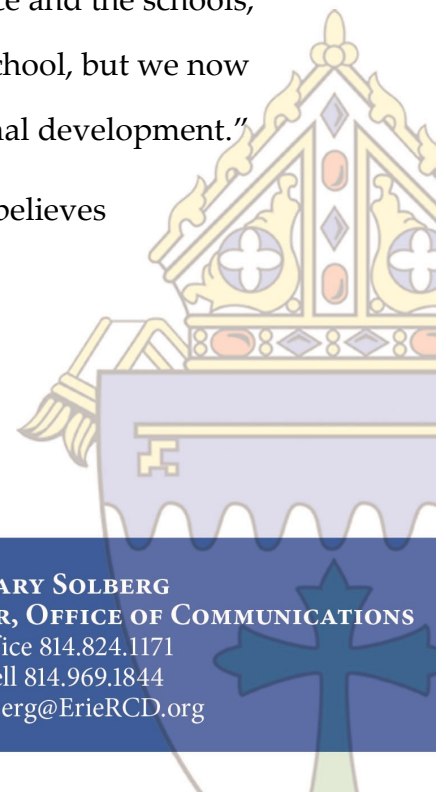
“The process strengthened the collaboration between our office and the schools,” Gallagher said. “We will continue individualized support for each school, but we now have common goals and can align our resources for better professional development.”

While Middle States Accreditation is not required, Gallagher believes it is essential.

- more -

ANNE-MARIE WELSH
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Office 814.824.1167
Cell 814.746.6889
amwelsh@ErieRCD.org

MARY SOLBERG
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Office 814.824.1171
Cell 814.969.1844
msolberg@ErieRCD.org



“It provides an objective set of eyes,” he said. “This is a review conducted by professionals who not only validate our strengths, but also uncover areas where we need to grow. Everyone has blind spots, and this process gave us honest feedback, which I consider to be key to our mission.”

The report praised the mission-driven focus of schools in the Diocese of Erie, noting that it is being lived out in a variety of ways across the 13 counties of northwest Pennsylvania. It also applauded the collaboration in place at all levels and the sense of ownership stakeholders experience. The organization cited the qualified, competent and dedicated staff, and was impressed by the response to COVID-19, including the comprehensive return-to-school plans that met the needs of all schools across the 10,000-square-mile diocese, no matter their communities’ infection rates.

The accreditation process involved the collection of data at the school and diocesan levels gathered from students, parents and teachers. In addition, the effort included a review of finances and policies. The diocesan plan developed through Middle States includes a strengthened focus on mathematics; greater emphasis on assessments as an important component of education — along with curriculum and instruction — and a honing of skills in governance and leadership at both the diocesan and school levels.

The Catholic Schools Office already has taken steps regarding mathematics, assimilating the Standards for Mathematical Practice (SMP) into current efforts. National consultants featured at this spring’s professional development day gave teachers of preschool through eighth-grade students a strong introduction to SMPs, which are designed to move students’ engagement with math beyond memorization, integrating it into real-life situations.

“I am deeply grateful to everyone involved in the Middle States accreditation, from the planning team to local administrators as well as staff in the Catholic Schools Office,” Gallagher said. “This is an enormous undertaking — at a time when we were also navigating the challenges of COVID. I am proud of what they accomplished.”

The Middle States Association is an international leader in accrediting schools and school systems. The official accreditation was given on April 16, 2021. The visiting team of educators from the Middle States Association included former administrators, a superintendent, and MSA staff. They conducted both virtual and in-person visits with each school as well as the Catholic Schools Office. # # #