



Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Office of the Archbishop
222 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

January 6, 2012

Dear Friends of Catholic Education,

Today is a challenging day for all of us with news of the plan to restructure our schools. This plan requires many of our schools throughout the diocese to partner, regionalize or close in order to fortify and renew Catholic education in our Archdiocese. Please be sure of my understanding and support in what may come as difficult news. I'm very grateful for your commitment to Catholic education, especially as we plan for the future.

As you probably know, important trends are impacting Catholic education in the Archdiocese -- declining baptisms, an increase of charter schools, and the rising cost of education. These factors have led to declining enrollment, resulting in higher tuition costs for fewer families and parishes bearing the financial burden of heavy operating deficits. Decreased enrollment has also forced a reduction of full-time personnel in some parish elementary schools to staff programs such as art, music, library, world languages, honors math, physical education, technology and resource rooms.

The Blue Ribbon Commission engaged in a yearlong process to examine current programs at all levels with the goal of defining a strategic plan for the future. The Blue Ribbon Commission has provided a blueprint, not only to stabilize Catholic education in our Archdiocese, but to reinvigorate it. To achieve this, the plan makes some hard but necessary decisions. The Commission has recommended an ambitious restructuring plan designed to improve enrollment, while enhancing educational programs to ensure that the Archdiocese continues to deliver a high-quality Catholic education and faith formation for our area youth in the 21st century.

The restructuring plan includes the formation of an advisory panel that will provide greater oversight and effectiveness to the management of the schools. More support will go into the parish religious education programs that serve tens of thousands of students who attend public schools but come to the parishes to receive their Sacraments and Catechetical Formation. The plan also -- and crucially -- calls for establishing a foundation to support our schools and tuition assistance programs well into the future.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is committed to the Catholic faithful and the wider community we serve, and the move to reinvigorate our schools plays a vital role in that process. Please support our efforts to implement this plan, which ensures that affordable, high quality Catholic education in the Philadelphia region will continue. God bless you and thank you for your support of Catholic education.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Charles J. Chaput, of. m.

Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Philadelphia

