



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

222 North Seventeenth Street · Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-1299
Telephone (215) 587-0506 · Fax (215) 587-4545

OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

January 19, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Catholic education has always been a vital ministry of our local Church. Through our Catholic elementary schools, high schools, and schools of special education countless children and young people have been formed as young men and women of character, Missionary Disciples poised to become servant leaders for Christ in the world around them. Catholic schools are a gift from God yielding lifelong benefits for those who attend them. Our local Church has a responsibility to nurture and sustain this gift in a prayerful and intentional way. So, I am pleased to announce the formation of the *Visioning Committee on Catholic Education*. Inspired by Saint John Neumann and the group of influential leaders he convened at Logan Square in the mid-1800s to create the blueprint for America's first Catholic school system, this Committee will function as a think tank and work extensively to determine what Catholic education may look like 25 years from now. That work is essential because we need to prepare for that time now.

I am deeply grateful to Brother Richard Kestler, F.S.C., who has graciously agreed to lead this exciting endeavor on my behalf serve as Chair of the Committee. Brother Richard is a veteran educator and school administrator. He previously served as President of West Catholic Preparatory High School (West Philadelphia); President of Archbishop John Carroll High School (Radnor); Administrator of Saint Gabriel Hall (Phoenixville); and Provincial Superior of the De La Salle Christian Brothers Baltimore District 1979–1985. In addition, his experience at La Salle College High School (Wyndmoor) included numerous responsibilities such as Teacher; Financial Aid and Future Planning Director; Vice President of Student Affairs; and President.

Over the next two years, the 18 members of the Committee will serve on six sub-committees with each covering a specific study factor. The work of the *Tomorrow's Needs in Catholic Education* sub-committee has already commenced. We expect their work to produce findings, conclusions, and recommendations, with the overall deliverable goal of a comprehensive profile of the projected Catholic education landscape across the five-county Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 2050.

In addition, we have entered into agreements with three organizations recommended by this sub-committee. They were selected following an extensive search process. All three will work independently or collaboratively dependent upon need to ensure project coherence and consistency:

- **Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Education Policy**- as overall project manager and investigator on such factors as school system models, curriculum and assessment, marketing, teacher preparation and professional development, plus taught curriculum in ELA and math across the archdiocese;
- **Abacus Education Partners, LLC**- as investigator on such factors as demographics, governance, finance and tuition, operations, enrollment management, institutional advancement, and facilities;

- **Sophia Institute for Teachers** - as investigator on religious education and Catholic identity, primarily through its Assessment of Religious Knowledge (ARK) research tool administered in more than 60 (Arch)dioceses, and mandated annually by many, across the country.


The second year of this project will be dedicated to conducting research in selected Delaware Valley area schools and analyzing resultant data to produce conclusions and recommendations. Currently, the focus of the comparative study will primarily be high-performing faith-based schools. School culture will also be explored as part of this process.

I am deeply grateful to the Ambassador's Fund for Catholic Education for awarding a generous grant to support this work.

Please join me in praying to Saint John Neumann that this work will bear great fruit for the students and school families we will serve in the future and the Missionary Disciples we will form for Christ in our world.

Be assured of my prayers and may God bless you abundantly!

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nelson J. Pérez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D. D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia