

Revitalization Continues – Ten Elementary Schools Slated to Close in June 2014

On January 15, 2014, after years of research which began with the [Meitler Report](#) in 2009 and was updated in 2013, and the [Verdi Report](#) in 2010 and its update in 2013; and after months of intense meetings among Pastors, principals, board members, parish trustees, and diocesan officials to discuss and plan for the reconfiguration of buildings, upgrading of programs and realignment of resources; and after parents and parishioners had the opportunity to meet with diocesan and parish leaders to gain information on the process, [express their views](#) and have their questions answered, Bishop Richard Malone announced that ten catholic elementary schools across WNY will close their doors for the last time in June 2014.

In the past decade, public elementary school enrollment in Western New York has decreased by 16 percent; and Catholic elementary school enrollment in the diocese has mirrored that trend. With too many school buildings running inefficiently because they are being occupied by a declining number of students, [the decision](#) was made to close several schools to help stabilize and strengthen those that remain.

The decision will impact approximately 1000 students, many from the southtowns, which had not been as greatly affected by school closings in the past. Diocesan wide, there are over 5,000 available seats in our Catholic elementary schools. As of early June, over 75% of the displaced students had found new homes at other Catholic elementary schools.

Looking forward, the diocese will focus on introducing Boards of Limited Jurisdiction at each of our Catholic elementary schools. The boards will be formed by the pastors, in partnership with the principals, as a way to increase participation of laypeople in the governance of our schools. These boards will be charged with developing and monitoring finances, policies and administration to ensure the future stability of each school.

This summer, our new STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, The Arts and Math) Coordinator, Jean Comer will begin training on-site teacher/coordinators for our [ten STREAM pilot schools](#). The goal of STREAM is to prepare our students to thrive in a 21st century world. From an early age, students will be engaged in the study of robotics, architecture, space exploration, technical design and other topics wrapped in our Catholic traditions and values. Students will participate in hands-on projects where problem solving, collaboration and the results of their efforts will make lessons more relevant than learning from a textbook alone.

All schools have the opportunity to become a STREAM Academy, where STREAM programming can either be offered as a club, as part of an afterschool, evening or weekend program, or “pushed-in” to the school day, by shortening the average length of each period during the school day to allow for an additional period specifically for STREAM.

And lastly, we will expand our newly formed BDFHSA (Buffalo Diocesan Federation of Home School Associations) to become a resource to educate and support parents in their shared role with teachers, as the primary fundraisers for their schools, as supporters of the STREAM initiative, and as a united voice to advocate for education and the welfare of school children of this diocese.

For more information on any of these topics, please visit wnycatholicschools.org.