



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE + ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON + DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Mid-Atlantic Consortium Will Develop Collaborative Approach to Catholic-School Challenges

The six Catholic (arch)dioceses of the Mid-Atlantic Region have formed a consortium to develop a plan for the future funding, leadership and governance of Catholic schools.

Called the Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium, the group will identify collaborative solutions to the challenges shared by the Catholic-schools served by the six (arch)dioceses in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware and the District of Columbia. The mission of the Consortium is “to make Catholic schools the schools of choice for Catholic children and families, and all who may desire an education rooted in Catholic tradition and Gospel values.”

“Through the Consortium, we hope to create an innovative forum for bringing together the most expert and creative minds and hearts from throughout our six dioceses to ensure the future viability of our schools” said Dr. Ronald Valenti, Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. “We believe the challenges we face demand this level of unprecedented collaboration.”

“The Consortium offers an extraordinary opportunity for genuine innovation in governing and financing Catholic schools in our region,” remarked Dr. Patricia Weitzel-O’Neill, Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Washington. “Because our dioceses face common challenges while serving such a broad diversity of school communities, our unified vision and action hold the potential not only to take full advantage of the extraordinary spiritual, political and financial resources that surround us, but to serve as a model and catalyst for similar innovation throughout our nation’s Catholic-school system.”

The six Mid-Atlantic (arch)dioceses include the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington, and the Dioceses of Arlington, Richmond, Wilmington, and Wheeling-Charleston. The six dioceses have worked in collaboration with the Maryland Catholic Conference to develop the concept and foundational structure of the Consortium.

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John Elcesser, Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Richmond, noted that the formation of the Consortium responds to the U.S. bishops' call in their recent statement, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium* for "the entire Catholic community" to take ownership of the enterprise of Catholic education.

The six diocesan bishops have appointed a Leadership Council of business, educational, and community leaders to advise the work of the Consortium. James McAndrews, III, Senior Vice President – Tax for HealthSouth Corporation, serves as Chairman of the Leadership Council. The six diocesan superintendents also serve as members of the Leadership Council. A search is currently underway for hiring an Executive Director for the Consortium.

Cardinals Keeler and McCarrick hosted an inaugural dinner for the Leadership Council and the six diocesan bishops in March 2006 at the John Paul II Center in Washington DC. The Council convened a May 2006 meeting for initial project planning, and will hold a subsequent planning meeting followed by dinner with the six bishops at Loyola College in Maryland on August 21, 2006.

The formative efforts of the Consortium have been assisted by the work of Rita Harmon of Harmon Consulting, LLC, who will continue to serve as primary fundraiser for the Consortium. Immediately prior to launching her consulting business, Ms. Harmon served as Executive Director of Fight For Children, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization. Fight For Children was instrumental in creating the three-sector coalition of public, charter, and private schools that achieved the successful passage of the DC Choice Incentive Act of 2003.

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