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Office of Catholic Schools

D Labor Relations Committee
I Testimony on HB 2626
O Monday, August 18, 2008
C
E Testimony provided by the following:
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E Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Schools/Superintendent of Schools
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Testimony
August 18, 2008

Because it was faced with a fiscal crisis in the continued operation of its Catholic schools, the Diocese of Scranton began an intensive Strategic Planning Process in September of 2005. Professional educational consultants were engaged to assist in developing a plan for the preservation and advancement of Catholic education within the Diocese of Scranton. The goal of the process was to assure the long-term availability of authentically Catholic schooling on a stable fiscal basis.

The result of the Diocese's Strategic Planning process was a comprehensive reorganizational plan that required reducing the overall number of schools from 43 to 28 (24 elementary and 4 high schools). There had been 8 high schools prior to the reorganization.

Individual Catholic schools had been forced by economic circumstances to close in the recent past at an alarmingly frequent rate. Prior to the current restructuring, when a Catholic school closed the employees of that school were not assured of any position in another school. During the current restructuring process, for the first time every employee in the given geographic region (the system) has been afforded the ability to be considered for other available positions under a set of criteria which were established throughout the 2006-07 school year in consultation with the teachers and the Diocesan Director of Human Resources. Teachers unions were represented at these meetings.

The principal hiring criteria that were developed included the following:

- Seniority (continuous years of service)
- State Certification
- Religious Certification
- Pastor's letter attesting to the individual being in good standing

The canonical governance model for the Catholic schools was also restructured. Prior to the reorganization, the local pastor or pastors formed the governing bodies for the schools. As of July 1, 2008, all pastors were asked to relinquish their role in the administration of the schools (which required the execution of an appropriate canonical document by each pastor).

The restructuring also addressed a major concern that the Bishop has had since his arrival – the establishment and protection of the true Catholic identity of our schools. He established a high school religion curriculum and one textbook to be used in all of our schools to make sure Catholic lessons were taught consistently and accurately throughout the Diocese. Many other religious ceremonies have been added to our schools (i.e. Mass schedule, confession schedule, Holy Hours, etc...) to enhance the environment of reverence and devotion in each school.

This conscientious concern for the overall Catholic identity was not isolated to religion classes but extended to the full curriculum and to every other aspect of these teaching ministries in their day to day operation. With the fresh start that resulted from the Strategic Planning Process, the Bishop believed that the Diocese could better provide for the well being of all of its employees in an atmosphere of true cooperation, dignity and a shared respect for the ministerial purpose of the schools. Therefore, all groups of employees were accorded a representative voice at the same table - administrators, teachers, secretaries, maintenance staff, cafeteria staff and classroom aids, from each building. Within these employee councils, the vision of the Bishop to safeguard the religious integrity of our Catholic schools could also be given expression.

As of July 1, 2007, the Diocese was divided into 4 separate systems and each was civilly and canonically incorporated, with governing boards of specified jurisdiction. The Boards were appointed in the fall of 2007.

(ATTACHMENT A)

It is important to note that, prior to the reorganization, there was never just one union representing all the teachers in the Diocese of Scranton. Approximately 1/3 of the schools choose to organize at the local level and then worked with their local school only. At last count the number of teachers belonging to a local association was 219 out of 713 teachers (in 2007). Again, only teachers were represented. There was never one consolidated bargaining unit within the Diocese of Scranton.

After the Boards were formed, they reviewed the request of SDACT for recognition. Each of the Boards voted independently not to recognize SDACT as we began to implement our new governance model. A new employee relations model was then created with the desire to meet the needs of all employees, not just the teachers. Therefore, administration, maintenance, secretarial, cafeteria, aides, etc... were now able to be represented at all discussions impacting their respective employment.

(ATTACHMENT B)

The employee relations councils were therefore established and have been working to meet the needs of all of the employees.

The reorganization process, as a religious undertaking, is still in its infancy. It is at a delicate and vulnerable stage, even without the prospect of alteration by means of the coercive power of government.

The nature of the teaching mission of our Catholic schools demands that we the staff embrace this apostolate as a true means of evangelizing the faith. Therefore, we must be willing to view our roles in the same light as our predecessors (including the religious women and men who initially developed the schools).

The Church has an obligation to do all in its in power to be respectful of the individual employee. However, it must always safeguard the primary purpose of this vital mission,

which is to uphold and strengthen the faith. We are educating not only for temporal life, but for eternity as well.

At no time can our religious mission be reduced to punching a clock or limited to what is convenient. Rather, it is essential that each person take on the true commitment necessary to fulfill this most important work of the Catholic Church.

Prior to the reorganization, some disturbing departures from the norms required to further the religious purposes of the schools had crept into schools in which employee associations had been operating:

- Attendance at the Graduation Mass had to be bargained as part of a contract.
- Teachers had successfully bargained for a contract that did require them to attend Mass during their "free periods".
- Teachers walking out of religious presentations and educational presentations because they went longer than the normal time of dismissal.
- Christmas programs could not be held because of contract restrictions.
- In some schools with associations the division among the faculty members had become an obstacle to the religious atmosphere needed in a Catholic school.

In addition, throughout this time of reorganization, instead of cooperation by those associated with SDACT, the Bishop has been targeted repeatedly with the following disruptive actions:

- Picketing in front of the Cathedral
- An organized protest in the form of a prayer vigil in the Cathedral Rosary Garden
- Sick outs at three separate schools (teachers informed administrators the day before that they would be "sick"). This resulted in the closing of each school on these days.
- ¼ of the high school students walked out of school to protest the decision of the Bishop. Certainly, the Catholic teaching expects that the students be taught respect for the Bishop.
- Many articles and editorials were written challenging the right of the Bishop to oversee the Catholic schools and maintain their integrity (ATTACHMENT D)

The Catholic Church has always held educational institutions to be an important work in the spreading of the Gospel. The Church has done well throughout the ages to maintain these vital institutions. The Church's teaching institutions have always functioned best and in fidelity to their religious purposes when they have been free from governmental influence or interference. It is imperative that the Church's ability to maintain this important apostolate not be hampered by government intrusion into one of its most sensitive aspects – the right to order appropriate relationships among those who teach the message of Christ.

**Bylaws for
Holy Redeemer Regional School System
Diocese of Scranton**

ARTICLE I – NAME AND AFFILIATION

Section I.1 – Name

The name of the corporation is the Holy Redeemer Regional School System, hereinafter referred to as “Schools”.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

Section II.1 – Purpose

The schools shall have as their primary purpose the intellectual and spiritual development of students according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. As schools of the Diocese of Scranton, the Schools shall operate in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, and policies of the Roman Catholic Church as set forth by the Most Reverend Bishop and the Diocese of Scranton.

ARTICLE III – CORPORATION BOARD

Section III.1 – Members

The Members of the Corporation shall be the Bishop, the Vicar for Administration, Chancellor, Episcopal Vicar for the Pastoral Region, the Secretary for Financial Services, and the Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Schools, herein after referred to as “Members of the Corporation.” The Members of the Corporation shall meet at least once a year.

Section III.2 – Reserved Powers of Members of the Corporation

The Members shall retain the following “reserved powers”:

- 1. Ensure that the schools are faithful to their mission as Catholic schools.*
- 2. Approve all personnel structures, organizations and contracts pertinent to the operation of the schools.*
- 3. Approve any acquisition, sale, lease or encumbrance of property by the Corporation.*
- 4. Approve opening or closing of schools or significant changes within the nature of a school.*
- 5. Appoint and dismiss the System Director for the Holy Redeemer Regional School System after consultation with the Board of Directors.*

6. *Approve annual operating budgets as submitted by the Board of Directors.*
7. *Approve capital campaigns.*
8. *Approve all expenditures in excess of \$25,000.*
9. *Approve any changes to charter or bylaws.*
10. *Appoint and/or remove members of the Board of Directors.*
11. *Appoint auditors for the Corporation.*
12. *Appoint administrators for the Schools.*
13. *Approve any merger or dissolution of the Corporation and designate transfer of assets in the event of dissolution.*

All powers not reserved to the Members are delegated to the Board of Directors.

Section III.3 – The Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Scranton shall have the following relationship to the Schools:

1. *As the Bishop's education officer for Catholic schools for the Diocese of Scranton, the Superintendent of Schools is to see that the Holy Redeemer Regional School System operates in keeping with proper educational standards; provides excellent quality education programs; fulfills the mission of the Church to teach its religious and moral doctrine; has sufficient and appropriate faculty, staff and administrators; and functions in accord with Church and diocesan policy and State regulations for educational institutions.*
2. *The Superintendent of Schools has the responsibility to sign the System Director's contract and to evaluate the System Director annually.*

ARTICLE IV – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section IV.1 – Establishment

The Board of Directors is appointed by the Members of the Corporation.

Section IV.2 – Role

Subject to the reserved powers enumerated in Article III, Section 2, the Board of Directors shall govern the schools in such a manner as to assure a sound Catholic educational program, consistent with diocesan policies. Specifically, the Board shall be constituted as a board of limited jurisdiction and shall:

1. ***Develop and enact policy after consultation with the Superintendent of Schools and the System Director.***
2. ***Ensure that the schools provide a quality program of academic and religious instruction and formation.***
3. ***Oversee the general business and financial matters of the Schools.***

4. *Hold the System Director accountable for implementation of policies established by the Board, and for the overall operation of the Schools.*
5. *Determine tuition and other related fees and costs.*
6. *Establish an annual balanced budget for the Schools.*
7. *Establish policies for the use of grounds and buildings comprising the campuses, subject to the rights of ownership of the property by the individual parishes.*
8. *Develop a vision and long-range plan for the Schools in cooperation with the System Director and Superintendent of Schools.*
9. *Initiate and Oversee the raising of funds needed to support the budget.*
10. *Assist the Superintendent of Schools in the annual evaluation of the System Director according to criteria and process jointly approved by the Superintendent of Schools and the board.*
11. *Conduct an annual self-evaluation of board operation.*
12. *Recommend new candidates to the Members of the Corporation for appointment to the Board of Directors.*
13. *Regularly communicate the concerns, plans and decisions of the Board of Directors to the Superintendent of Schools and System Director.*

ARTICLE V – BOARD OF DIRECTORS RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER GROUPS

Section V.1 – Diocese of Scranton

Information from the Diocese of Scranton concerning diocesan policies that impact Catholic education shall be provided by the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Directors on a regular basis.

The Schools are subject to the statutes and regulations of the Diocese of Scranton, already stated.

Section V.2– Holy Redeemer Regional School System Director

The System Director is the Chief Administrative Officer of the Schools who shall:

1. *Evaluate the operation of each school to ensure there is adequate professional teaching staff and that there are effective administrative procedures in place.*
2. *Direct the principals in the development of the educational program and in the improvement of instruction in the schools.*
3. *Establish the annual operational budget with the Board of Directors and submit it to the Corporation Board for approval.*
4. *Assist the Diocesan Finance Office in the supervision of the business offices of the schools.*
5. *Cooperate with the Board and development personnel, in raising annual income.*

6. *Interpret System policies to all school personnel and the community at large.*
7. *Direct the implementation of diocesan policy within the Schools.*
8. *Provide regular and accurate program reports including academic, financial, and any other pertinent information to the Members of the Corporation, the Superintendent of Schools, and the Board of Directors.*
9. *Meet on a regular basis with parent organizations so that their concerns and issues are communicated to the Board of Directors.*
10. *Coordinate the use of parish facilities for school events with principals and pastors.*

Section V.3 – Faculty

The relationship between the Board and the faculty shall be characterized by mutual support, good communication, and cooperation. The System Director represents the faculty to the Board. From time to time, principals and teachers may be invited to share information with the Board on matters concerning the schools. The Board shall have no role in hiring, evaluating, or terminating teachers and staff.

ARTICLE VI – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERSHIP

Section VI.1 – Number of Directors

The number of voting members of the Board of Directors shall not be less than eight but shall not exceed a total of fourteen Directors.

Section VI.2 – Standing Members

The Episcopal Vicar for each region will serve as a voting member of the Board of Directors. In addition two pastors from parishes within the system shall be appointed by the Bishop to serve as voting members of the Board of Directors.

Section VI.3 – Appointed Members

Initially, lay members of the Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Bishop to serve for one, two, or three years. Thereafter, the lay Directors shall be nominated by the Board of Directors and recommended to the Bishop for appointment. Appointed members may serve up to two consecutive terms. Candidates should be recommended for their expertise in areas such as finance, planning, public relations, education, law, etc. Employees of the regional system and their spouses are not eligible to be appointed members of the Board of Directors.

Section VI.4 – Ex-Officio Members

The Diocesan Superintendent of Schools and the System Director shall be an ex-officio non-voting members of the Regional Board of Directors.

Section VI.5 – Term of Office of Appointed Directors

Terms of the initial directors shall be staggered; one year term for one-third of the total number of appointed members, two year terms for the second one-third of the total number of appointed directors, and three year terms for the remaining third of the total number of appointed directors. Directors can be appointed a maximum of two successive three year terms. As the terms of the appointed members expire, their successors shall each be appointed for a term of three years.

Section VI.6 – Vacancies on Board of Directors

All vacancies on the Board of Directors shall be filled for the unexpired term by a majority vote of the Directors then in office, subject to approval by the Members of the Corporation.

Section VI.7 – Removal from the Board

- 1. Any appointed member of the Board who is absent from three consecutive or more than one-half of the regular meetings during a year, unless excused by action of the Board, ceases to be a member.*
- 2. A member whose removal is imminent after the second consecutive unexcused absence must be notified in writing at least fifteen days before such an action is to take place.*
- 3. An appointed member of the Board of Directors may be removed at the discretion of the Members of the Corporation, in the event that the director constantly neglects assigned responsibilities, for actions that are contrary to the teachings of the Church, or for other reasons.*
- 4. Any member of the Board may resign by submitting written notice to the President of the Board.*

ARTICLE VII – OFFICERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section VII.1 - Officers

The Board of Directors shall elect a President and Vice President.

Section VII.2 – Election

The officers of the Board of Directors shall be elected at the Annual Meeting at which the term of those officers expires. A person elected to be an officer must be a Director at the time of election and, notwithstanding any other provision, shall continue as a Director with full voting rights during his/her term as an Officer.

Section VII.3 – Term

The terms of officers shall be one year.

Section VII.4 – Officer Vacancies

When a vacancy occurs, the office shall be filled by an election at the first meeting of the Board of Directors next occurring, which may be a special meeting called for that purpose. The term of the person elected to fill the office shall be the balance of the term of the vacated office.

Section VII.5 – Duties of the President

The President of the Board of Directors shall preside at all meetings for the Board and the Executive Committee (see section IX.2). The President shall be entitled to vote at all meetings. The President shall appoint special committees and shall appoint the chairs of such committees.

Section VII.6 – Duties of the Vice-President

The Vice-President shall reside at all meetings in the absence of the President and shall act as President should a vacancy occur, until the Board elects a successor President.

Section VII.7 – Duties of the Recording Secretary

There shall be a Recording Secretary who shall be an assistant to the President and who shall record the minutes of the meetings. The Recording Secretary need not be a member of the Board of Directors. Under the direction of the Board, the Recording Secretary shall have charge of all the minutes of meetings, records, and papers of the Board of Directors. The Recording Secretary shall be bound by the same rules of confidentiality as apply to members of the Board.

ARTICLE VIII – MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section VIII.1 – Meetings

There shall be at least six meetings of the Board of Directors held annually, one of which shall be designated the Annual Meeting. Special Meetings may be held at the call of the President of the Board of Directors or of the Executive Committee. For each Special Meeting called, there shall be advance notice in writing which shall itemize the business to be considered by the Board.

Section VIII.2 – Notice

Written notice of the hour, place, and date of every meeting shall be sent to each member by the Recording Secretary prior to the date of the meeting. The President may call a meeting at any time.

Section VIII.3 – Quorum

A simple majority of the Members of the Board of Directors then in office shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section VIII.4 – Order of Business

The order of business of all regular and special meetings of the Board of Directors shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

Section VIII.5 – Rules of Order

- 1. The Board shall make every effort to reach consensus on all actions.**
- 2. Where necessary, parliamentary rules may be employed using Robert's Rules of Order (latest copyright) as a guide. The President shall appoint a parliamentarian when appropriate.**

Section VIII.6 – Confidentiality Statement

"In order to serve as an effective governing body, the board needs its deliberations to be open and frank. To achieve this, board members pledge not to share what is said with those who are not part of the board. The issues dealt with and decisions made will be communicated to others through the formal minutes and through the president to the executive staff.

Strictly confidential matters will be discussed in executive session which may be called by the president or by any board member. This includes, but is not limited to personnel issues, legal matters, financial issues. The content, the discussion, and the decisions reached will not be shared with non-board members except as designated by the board." (NCEA Board of Directors)

ARTICLE IX – COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section IX.1 – Standing Committees

The following Standing Committees shall be appointed by the President:

- Finance Committee*
- Development and Marketing Committee*
- Facilities Committee*
- Nominating Committee*
- Long-Range Planning Committee*

In addition to Board members, non-board members with expertise in a particular area can be appointed to standing committees and ad hoc committees.

Section IX.2 – Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be composed of the two (2) Officers of the Board, System Director and two (2) members of the Board of Directors who shall be elected by a majority vote of the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee Members shall serve a term of one (1) year.

- 1. The Executive Committee shall prepare the agenda for Board Meetings and shall transact all necessary business of the Board of Directors during the interval between regular meetings of the Board of Directors, except that it may not fill vacancies on the Board of Directors, or take any action in any way which is contrary to the express policy of the Board of Directors.**
- 2. The Executive Committee shall keep minutes of its actions and copies thereof shall be forwarded to all members of the Board before its next regular meeting. Acts taken by the Executive Committee must be ratified by the Board of Directors at the next Board Meeting in order for them to be valid.**
- 3. The Executive Committee shall formulate policy, recommending it to the full Board for approval.**
- 4. The Executive Committee may establish ad hoc committees, when needed.**

Section IX.3 – Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall be composed of the System Director and at least two (2) Board members who shall be appointed by the President of the Board of Directors. The Committee will assist in the development of the annual budget for approval by the full Board of Directors and by the Corporate Board. After approval by the Board of Directors and Corporate Board, the Committee will oversee implementation of the budget and shall provide monthly financial reports to the Board of Directors. In fulfilling its responsibility, the Committee shall work with the business manager of the Schools. The Committee will review and approve expenditures in excess of the amount specified by the Board of Directors and for all expenditures not within the approved budget upon recommendation of the appropriate committee. The Committee will respond to the auditor's annual management letter.

Section IX.4 – Development and Marketing Committee

The Development and Marketing Committee shall be composed of at least two (2) Board members who shall be appointed by the President of the Board. The purpose of the Committee is to assist the System Director by: keeping the Board focused on the proper role and function of development in the Schools; informing the Board of plans and activities of the Committee; providing assistance, support and active leadership to the development efforts; assisting the development director (if this position

exists) and the System Director in such areas as public relations, student recruitment, annual fund, capital projects, etc.

Section IX.5 – Facilities Committee

The Facilities Committee shall be composed of at least three (3) members of the Board who shall be appointed by the President of the Board. The Committee shall with the System Director, provide oversight that proper care and maintenance is given the facilities and their surrounding properties; it shall recommend needed capital repairs; it shall investigate and recommend procedures and policies for efficient operation of the physical plants. Implementation of the facilities agreement with individual parishes will be monitored by this Committee.

Section IX.6 – Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall be composed of at least two (2) members of the Board who shall be appointed by the President of the Board. The Nominating Committee shall submit at appropriate times a list of nominees to be considered for appointment, consistent with bylaws, Article VI. Also, each person nominated to the Board must be approved by his/her pastor before their names are submitted to the Corporate Board for approval.

Section IX.7 – Long-Range Planning Committee

The Long-Range Planning Committee shall be composed of at least two (2) members of the Board who shall be appointed by the President of the Board. The Long-Range Planning Committee shall develop a comprehensive five-year plan containing achievable objectives and strategies that are consistent with the Schools purpose and the annual goals established by the Board. The plan will be approved by the Board. The Committee, working closely with the System Director, shall also establish a process for coordinating all activities involved with implementing, evaluating, and revising the five-year plan and its strategies.

Section IX.8 – Quorum of Committees

Except where it may be otherwise provided, a majority of the members of each Committee, but no less than two members, shall constitute a quorum for transaction of business.

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

Amendments to Articles IV through XII may be initiated by members of the Corporate Board or members of the Board of Directors.

Amendments initiated by members of the Board of Directors must be approved by the majority of the Board of Directors, provided that the amendment has been sent in writing to all Directors thirty days prior to the date of the meeting in which the amendment is voted upon. After receiving a majority vote by the Board of Directors, the amendment must be approved by the Corporate Board.

Attachment B

Employee Council:

The employee representative body for the Systems will be in the form of an Employee Council. The Employee Council will require three representatives from each school in the system. Two representatives will be faculty members while the third will be a member of the support staff. One of the two faculty members will be an individual with ten or more years of service in the diocesan school system while the other will be an individual with less than ten years of service in the diocesan school system. The representatives for each school will be chosen by their peers through a secret ballot process and upon completion, the System Board will be notified in writing of the names of the representatives. Terms for members of the Employee Council will be developed by and mutually agreed to by the System Board and Employee Council.

The Employee Council will meet quarterly with the System Board Executive Committee, representatives from the Office of Catholic Schools and the Diocesan Director of Human Resources. At the request of the System Board or the Employee Council, additional meetings may be required and will be scheduled as needed. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss general employment issues in the workplace. All relevant issues and recommendations will then be reported to the System Board or other appropriate entity for further consideration and resolution.

Wage and Benefit Committee:

Both the System Board and the Employee Council will select members to jointly serve on the Wage and Benefit Committee. The Wage and Benefit Committee will consist of three members from the Employee Council and three members from the System Board. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources will serve as an ex officio member of the committee. The committee shall meet quarterly with a goal to promote a constructive dialogue on the issues of wages and benefits in order to develop a plan that is fair and equitable for the employees and in turn addresses the commitment of the System Board to be fiscally responsible. Any recommendations from the Wage and Benefit Committee will be brought to the full System Board for further consideration.

To assist the System Board, the Employee Council, and the Wage and Benefit Committee, a human resource consulting firm will be retained to specifically deal with the area of compensation. Parente/HR Services, an extension of Parente Randolph Company, will work with everyone involved to address the compensation inequities that have developed in the

schools over the years. The consultant should be viewed as a neutral expert in the field that will represent the best interests of all parties.

Health Care Sub-Committee:

Both the System Board and the Employee Council will select members to jointly serve on the Health Care Committee. The dynamic nature of the health care industry and the impact it has on both employers and employees requires a committee structure dedicated specifically to health care issues. Again, the Health Care Sub-Committee will consist of three members from the Employee Council and three members from the System Board. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources will serve as an ex officio member of the sub-committee. The sub-committee shall meet as often as necessary to perform its functions. The purpose of the sub-committee will be to examine existing health care plans, benefits, providers and delivery mechanisms that will continue to provide high quality, cost effective health care benefits to eligible employees and their families. Any recommendation from the Health Care Sub-Committee will be brought to both the Wage and Benefit Committee and the full System Board for further consideration.

To this end, a health care consulting firm will be retained to work with the System Board, the Employee Council, and the Health Care Sub-Committee. Elite Brokerage Services, Inc. will serve as a neutral expert that will assist all parties in achieving established health care goals and objectives.

Grievance Committee:

In any school system or work environment in general, honest disagreements will arise. Accordingly, a procedure needs to be developed in order to provide for due process and to resolve complaints in a professional and respectful manner. The development of such a process will be achieved through the establishment of a Grievance Committee. The Grievance Committee will consist of three members of the Employee Council and three members from the System Board. The Diocesan Director of Human Resources will serve as an ex officio member of the committee. The members of the committee will work together to institute procedures for employees to file complaints and provide them the due process that employees deserve.

Members from the Employee Council and from the System Board can serve on no more than two committees.

EDITORIAL

THE TIMES-TRIBUNE

MARCH 18, 2006

YOUR OPINION

made standing in line for a long time more bearable. Thanks again for a job well done.

FRANK GRAMIGNA
SCRANTON

Union no help

Editor: I have been a teacher at Sacred Heart Elementary School for 15 years. I choose to teach in a Catholic school because I am dedicated to my faith and to the students.

I knew when I sought this position that I would not be earning a salary equal to that of public school teachers. This is called sacrifice, but it is not a great hardship considering that I work in a prayerful, caring, Christian environment enhanced by our entire school staff.

Our staff works together as a family for the welfare and education of our students. The employee councils newly instituted by the diocese will be a benefit to the entire staff of our schools, whereas the union will only represent teachers.

I have also worked in the manufacturing industry and have personal experience of the United Auto Workers demanding too much from employers and causing two plants in our area to close, leaving a few hundred people out of work. Is it union leader Michael Miltz's intention to have our schools close?

I also taught at Sacred Heart High School. The teachers there were in the union. Where was that union when the high school closed before the restructuring of the rest of the schools? I saw no one from the union at our prayer rally or trying to secure the jobs of the high school teachers. What good was the union then?

Mr. Miltz is causing a lot of worry and problems. Parents are wondering when teachers will walk out or call in sick to cancel classes. They also wonder if tuition will be raised.

I will not participate in any walkout or "sick-out." I believe I am part

of a silent majority of teachers who do not support a union.

Mr. Miltz is causing trouble, and your newspaper seems to support him at every turn. You should be ashamed of the disrespect you have shown to Bishop Joseph Martino.

PHILOMENA KOVALESKI
CARBONDALE

July 9

Writer says bill would rein in destructive power of bishop

For more than 30 years I have served as an officer/negotiator for the Bishop O'Reilly Education Association and vice president of the Scranton Diocese Association of Catholic Teachers (SDACT). During that time I witnessed a gradual acceptance by the Scranton Diocese of Catholic school unions.

In light of Church teachings on labor rights, previous bishops acceded to the dictates of ethics and morality and recognized our right to exist.

Hundreds of contracts and amicable relationships later, our current bishop has turned his back on the honor and decency of his predecessors.

Not one of the individual Catholic school unions that flourished over the past three decades ever saw its members get rich.

In fact, many accepted substandard salaries in recognition of the financial burdens of the parents of their students. The real goal of all our affiliated unions was (and continues to be) partnership.

Aside from salaries and benefits commensurate with community standards, our unions negotiated working conditions to maximize members' ability to provide an excellent education.

Because they had a voice in determining curriculum and class size, unionized Catholic teachers were able to create an atmosphere in which students thrived.

In fact, I've taught a multitude of children of parents who were also my students — parents who sought to replicate for their children the achievements they experienced.

The continuing support the SDACT has received from parents, students, the media, labor organizations and community leaders begs the question: What can possibly account for Bishop Martino's behavior? One man wielding absolute authority has contravened 100 years of his Church's teaching.

As a consequence, his standing as the spiritual leader of the diocese continues to diminish in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

The only way in which one man wielding such destructive power can be brought in line with reality is passage of House Bill 2626.

I urge all concerned with the continued vitality of Catholic education to contact their state representatives and senators and convince them to provide justice and dignity for our

teachers via this vital bill.

James W. Lynch Vice President Scranton Diocese Association of Catholic Teachers

Find this article at:

http://www.timesleader.com/opinion/letters/Writer_says_bill_would_rein_in_destructive_power_of_bishop_07-09-2008.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

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A LETTER ON PERSONNEL PRACTICES IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

My Dear People,

When it was announced several weeks ago that the Diocese of Scranton is implementing a new Employee Relations Program that will serve the needs of all employees in its Catholic schools, I knew that some would disagree and others, such as the group called the Scranton Diocese Association of Catholic Teachers (SDACT), would aggressively resist this plan. This association's leaders have reasons based on self-interest for wanting to retain their role in some of our schools. Nonetheless, it must be understood that many of their claims and accusations are misleading, inaccurate or simply false. And I have been disappointed by the invective and disrespect that have been unleashed against me through public statements and quotes in the media by SDACT's leadership and supporters both local and from Philadelphia and locales outside the Diocese of Scranton.

Therefore, as your Bishop, I am compelled to speak to you directly to address this issue, especially the claim that I am ignoring Catholic social teaching. I wish to allow no doubt that I uphold and teach the principles of Catholic doctrine on the right of people freely to choose and form unions for the purpose of collective bargaining. I know no better summary of this teaching than that found in the Second Vatican Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (no. 68). It reads: "Among the basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions."

I also uphold and teach, in conformity with Catholic moral teaching, that the implementation of this right, as in the case of many rights, is dependent on factors which must be considered by all concerned parties. For example, does the granting of this right negate or infringe on another party's right? Do those demanding the fulfillment of this right also recognize the obligations that come with it?

Let me be more specific. Parents make significant financial sacrifices to obtain a Catholic education for their sons and daughters. As Bishop of the Diocese of Scranton, I have the most serious obligation to establish the requirements for Catholic education and to see that they are accomplished in our schools. If I fail to do so, the rights of parents are grievously violated.

Labor unions seek to obtain increased benefits for their members. They should also seek, however, to act in a way that does not hinder the apostolic endeavor that provides their livelihood. Prior to the decision concerning SDACT's request for recognition, the history of this association, past contractual negotiations, and its public statements were reviewed. It became clear that, despite its current pronouncements about Catholic principles of social justice and its claims to support Catholic education, the primary goal of SDACT's leaders has always been the acquisition of the greatest financial gains and other contractual concessions it could obtain from the parishes that formerly governed the schools. The recent conduct of these same leaders has only reinforced this conclusion about their overriding interest.

Catholic education is an apostolate, and I have the duty to define and protect it. I also recognize my duty to respect the rights of all those employed by the Diocese, including the many dedicated teachers, administrators and support staff who work in our Catholic schools. So vital is the educational apostolate to the promotion of the Catholic faith, that the United States Supreme Court has exempted the Church from the requirements of the National Labor Relations Act and its provisions concerning unions in Catholic schools. Nor does the Canon Law of the Catholic Church require the recognition of unions in our schools. A union, then, is not required, essential or mandated. For example, teachers

laboring in the dioceses of Harrisburg, Erie and many other dioceses throughout the nation are not unionized. While unions are appropriate in some situations, they are not the only means to achieve justice for workers. Therefore, the decision to implement the Employee Relations Program will not be revoked.

I am convinced that we will accomplish justice for all employees in our schools through the reorganization of the school system that went into effect this past fall, and the implementation of the Employee Relations Program (summarized below). We will succeed – not with contentious rhetoric and disruptions of the educational process – but rather in a non-adversarial atmosphere of meaningful dialogue and sincere collaboration with all of the dedicated employees who share in our mission.

Through this commitment we will maintain a strong Catholic identity in our schools, an identity we owe in justice to both our parents and students. We are entrusting the faith and academic formation of our young people to the teachers and others who work in our schools. That provides all the motivation we need to treat those employees as fairly as we can.

This is a crucial and sensitive stage in the history of our schools. Everyone knows that the Church cannot rely on tax revenue or profits, and they should also realize that tuition costs which spiral endlessly upwards will be the death of our schools. Parents and others should consider these facts carefully when asked to sympathize with SDACT's leaders.

These references to SDACT are not a repudiation of labor unions, which have served a useful purpose in our society. The members of this community know all too well how unions have protected coal miners, factory workers and other laborers from being exploited by unscrupulous companies.

But an important distinction must be made here. Those companies were motivated by profit; the Diocese is not a company created to make a profit, and our classrooms are not coal mines. I encourage you to review the summary of benefits provided to our Catholic school employees. When SDACT's leaders refer to the legacy of John Mitchell and the history of the labor movement in this region, are they seriously asking you to equate the situation of our Catholic school teachers today with the deplorable conditions endured by coal miners, steel mill workers, and factory laborers a century ago? If so, they dishonor the heritage of our ancestors who faced real oppression.

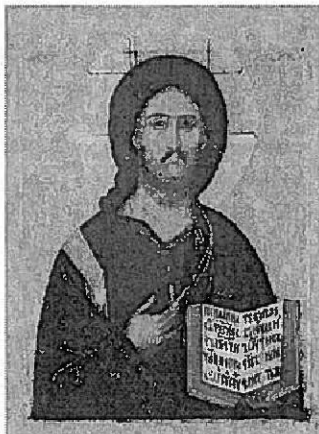
We all need to come together to support and foster affordable and accessible Catholic education in the Diocese of Scranton at this time. I look forward to seeing the Employee Relations Program as another kind of Pentecost moment throughout our Diocese. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our Catholic school personnel, representing the vocations of clergy, religious, and laity, will strengthen our fledgling Catholic school systems while addressing the just needs of our school employees.

As always, I thank you for your continued prayers and support.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Joseph F. Martino

Most Reverend Joseph F. Martino, D.D., Hist. E.D.
Bishop of Scranton



Christ the Teacher

In a Catholic school, everyone should be aware of the living presence of Jesus the "Master" who, today as always, is with us in our journey through life as the one genuine "Teacher," the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection. The inspiration of Jesus must be translated from the ideal into the real. The gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate.

— The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

2007-08 SALARIES AND BENEFITS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

For the 2007-08 school year, a new salary and benefit package was implemented for teachers and those school support staff such as teacher aides and clerical, bus, food service and maintenance personnel, who are classified as full-time regular employees.

- Each employee received a salary increase of 3 percent. Under the new employee relations program, a human resource consulting firm will be retained to specifically deal with the area of compensation.
- Parante/HR Services, an extension of Parante/Randolph Company, will work with everyone involved to address the compensation benefits that have developed in the schools over the years. The consultant will function as a neutral expert in the field to represent the best interests of all parties.
- Employees have quality health care coverage for themselves and their families through the Diocesan self-insurance medical program. This is the Blue Care PPO (formerly known as Access Care II) program administered by Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania (First Priority Life Insurance Company). The employee co-pay is \$20 for a routine doctor visit and \$30 for a specialist. The co-pay for prescription drugs ranges from \$20 to \$35, depending on the drug. The annual cost breakdown is:

	Cost to Diocese	Employee Contribution
Individual	\$ 6,394.68	\$ 960.00
Employee and Spouse	15,163.92	1,500.00
Family	18,032.40	1,500.00

- Both short- and long-term disability insurance are offered at no cost to the employee. Short-term benefits (70% of salary for 20 weeks) begin after employee has missed 9 full weeks of work due to illness or accidental injury (not work-related). Long-term benefits are 60% of salary. The Diocese pays \$216 per employee per year to fund these benefits.
- All current pension plans are being honored.
- Employees are allowed to carry over sick days they had accrued under the previous school structure. They will also be allowed to accumulate an established maximum amount pending the outcome of several ongoing arbitration cases. In any event, the minimum accumulation will be 45 days.
- All employees are offered dental (Dental Premier Plan) and vision (Davis Vision Plan) benefits. Employee must pay for this coverage.
- Children of teachers receive free tuition at any Diocesan Catholic school. For example, a student at Holy Cross High School (Dimmore or Scranton campus) whose parent is a teacher at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Scranton will receive free tuition at Holy Cross. Support staff are given a discount on tuition: \$500 per child in elementary school, and \$1,000 per child in high school.
- In most cases, the package offers more benefits than teachers and support staff had been receiving. It's true that some teachers now make a modest contribution toward their health coverage but this is now standard for employees in virtually every business setting.
- Total budgeted expenses for all Diocesan Catholic schools for 2007-08 are \$49,511,143. Salaries and benefits for teachers and other school employees are \$34,948,161, which is 70.58% of the total school budgets.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PROGRAM

This program involves the formation of Employee Councils, Wage and Benefit Committees, Health Care Sub-Committees and Grievance Committees for each of the four regional school systems that were established last year in the restructuring of Diocesan Catholic schools.

These groups, which will be comprised of teacher and support staff representatives from each school, will meet on a regular basis with members of the Regional System Boards, officials from the Diocesan Catholic Schools Office and the Diocesan human resources director to discuss wages, benefits, and grievances.

The new employee relations program will bring a consistent format to the entire school system. It will cover teachers as well as aides, administrators, office staff, food service and maintenance personnel. Employees at all schools will be able to provide input through their representatives on the Employee Councils and various committees for wages and benefits, health care, and grievances.

Representatives from Diocesan Catholic schools chosen by their peers to serve on the new Employee Councils attended an orientation session on Feb. 8. The majority of the schools were represented at the meeting.

Comprehensive information about the Employee Relations Program has been provided through news releases, articles in *The Catholic Light*, and is available at all times on the Diocesan website: www.dioceseofscranton.org.