

**STATEMENT OF JOSEPH CASCIANO
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON**

September 18, 2008

The Diocese of Scranton began a Strategic Planning Process in September, 2005. The preparation of an intensive written study was undertaken in the following months.

In January, 2006, Meitler Consultants, Hales Corners, Wisconsin arrived to begin the work with the local schools located in the Diocese of Scranton. Each school community had a Local Consultative Group which was to represent their school throughout the entire process.

In the following months each school was visited by either Alan Meitler or Sr. Mary Anne Heenan to discuss the information gathered namely: enrollment trends, baptismal data, local demographic information, public school trends, etc...

The financial situation in many schools and parishes emphasized the need to reorganize our schools. Many parishes were financially unstable and a number of schools were operating with debt and deficits beyond their means, and couldn't continue operating in that fashion.

In addition many buildings were in need of physical improvements and the parishes had no revenue to address these capital improvements. Heating systems, roofs, asbestos abatement and other major issues had to be addressed for the safety and well being of the students.

After months of research and meetings a preliminary plan for Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Wayne counties was announced in November, 2006. Immediately following these preliminary recommendations teacher representatives were gathered to discuss criteria for teacher placement in the new systems.

After several meetings with representatives from non-union schools, union schools and women religious a specific set of criteria was established. It is important to note that there was never one union representing all the schools within the Diocese of Scranton. Also, less than one third of the teachers in the schools were members of an Association at their local school.

The Diocesan Director of Human Resources met with the representatives and continued to work through the placement for the 2007-08 school year.

The criteria for teacher retention that were developed are as follows:

**Seniority
State Certification
Religious Certification
Pastor's Letter**

The established criteria were implemented for the 2008-09 school year and again for the 2008-09 school year.

Specifically at Holy Redeemer High School, a planning period was pursued during which the estimated enrollment and course selections on the high school level were examined. When the planning review of the high school for the 2008-09 school year was conducted, it was determined that 7 of the teachers would be reduced for the 2008-09 school year.

Mr. Milz was one of 9 faculty members in the social studies department of Holy Redeemer High School and only 7 were needed for the 2008-09 school year.

An early retirement incentive was offered for the first time to all employees who met the following criteria: 60 years of age and a minimum of 20 years of service. The offer included full health coverage until the age of 65 (single or family) and a % of the last salary divided over 3 years.

11 faculty members accepted the early retirement package and in the social studies department there was one individual who qualified and accepted the package. This allowed for 11 faculty members to be retained and not be laid off in the two systems.

Mr. Milz had been employed since August 22, 1975 and the most senior lay faculty member in the social studies department was hired June 19, 1968. Mr. Milz therefore did not have sufficient seniority for retention.

As was stated in previous testimony the decision to move to the Employee Relations Councils was made in an effort to provide for all employees. While the former associations only represented teachers, the newly established program has allowed the administrators, teachers and all support staff members to have representation to review the benefit and wage packages offered to all employees. An independent human resource consultant, Parente Randolph HR, has been hired by the Diocese to assist in establishing a plan for achieving equity in the treatment of all of the various positions.

The four school systems now have Employee Relations Councils and are meeting with the Diocesan Director of Human Resources to work out these matters.

The one major concern of the Bishop since his arrival has been that our schools must be true to Catholic teaching in all aspects. A new religion curriculum and textbook series were established for our high schools. A Chastity program for the elementary schools has been adopted. The Bishop meets annually with all high school religion teachers and the religion coordinator from each elementary school to ensure the integrity of Catholic identity within our schools. All areas of the curriculum as well as the total environment of the schools have been evaluated to preserve the true teaching mission of our Catholic schools.

Our administrators, teachers and staff members are not mere employees but rather an extension of the teaching mission of the Church. The role of a Catholic administrator, teacher and/or staff member goes well beyond the secular responsibilities of providing an outstanding education but more importantly that the Gospel message is instilled in every aspect of the school. The goal of our Catholic schools is the same today as it was when they were founded: to be witnesses of our faith. In addition, our responsibility is provide our students with a strong academic program but more importantly that they are instilled with the ability to live our Catholic faith throughout their lives.

We must recognize that as staff members of a Catholic school we must view our role as ministers of the faith. When that role is reduced to being a mere "labor" task performed it loses its connection to the primary mission of our Church.

Throughout the years prior to the reorganization of the schools, collective bargaining had, by its nature, resulted in many compromises. Unfortunately, finances were often limited, which then led to situations in which the union could exact concessions that undermined the very essence of our responsibilities within our schools. Some examples which happened are:

- Teachers walking out of religious and educational programs because the day was longer than specified in the contract.
- Religious programs curtailed because it was not specifically outlined in the contract; as an example Christmas programs were canceled.
- In schools with Associations there often was division among the faculty, militating against the development of a Catholic environment.
- Restrictions placed on administrators regarding evaluation and supervision of teachers.
- Extracurricular activities were difficult to provide in many instances because teachers did not have to chaperone and/or participate without compensation.
- Teachers not attending religious programs (i.e. Mass, penance services) during their "free" periods.
- Restrictions in scheduling which escalated the cost of the school and impacting tuition and parish subsidies.

Our Catholic schools are a vital part of the teaching mission of the Church. The Diocesan Bishop's responsibility for the Catholic integrity of the schools at all levels

is at the heart of the matter. We must remain vigilant in our duty to model the Person of Jesus Christ, to teach the Gospel, and to evangelize the culture. We must realize that cooperation at all levels is essential to the continued success of our schools. The Bishop must ensure that the Catholic schools remain invaluable instruments in proclaiming the Gospel message from one generation to the next. Catholic schools are a primary way of “initiating the hearers into a fullness of Christian life” and is “intimately bound up with the whole of the Church’s life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 5,7*).

The government has but one model of labor relations within our faith community to offer: a state-supervised adversarial process in which the adversaries are to negotiate from their own self-interests. In the Diocese of Scranton, that model led to the erosion of the Catholic identity of the schools. A new model had to be established, consonant with Catholic teaching and canon law. That new model is likely to evolve further, but it should be given a chance to work out its own processes within the Catholic faith environment.