

Meeting Summary

Partners in Education Meeting, Wednesday November 8, 2017

Blanchette Catholic Center, Crest Hill, IL

The meeting was for School Board members and School Administrators for grade schools and high schools in the Joliet Diocese. The most exciting news of the evening was the debrief on the Invest in Kids Act, which is a Tax Credit Scholarship program for students in private schools.

State of Enrollment

Reverend John Belmonte, S.J., Ph.D., Superintendent shared the state of enrollment numbers for the Joliet Diocese. Enrollment is on a downward trend for grade schools across the Diocese. There are 5,000 empty seats in the Diocesan schools. High schools are less impacted. The Diocese has several marketing and outreach strategies to increase enrollment.

- Across the Diocese, there are empty seats in the schools, and we are working on filling those seats. Father shared the strategy to increase Hispanic outreach as a way to increase enrollment. This has worked well for many schools.
- Also, there is a Tuition Transfer Grant that has greatly contributed to enrollment numbers.
- Father also said that the Diocese Catholic Schools conducted a DuPage County Demographic Study and this revealed that there is a low projected population growth for the most cities in DuPage County. The demographic study will also be conducted for Will County.

Invest in Kids Act

The Invest in Kids Act became a law in August, 2017. This is a very exciting time for ICGS and other schools because of the potential to increase funding for tuition through tax credited donations. This is an unprecedented opportunity for Catholic education. The bill includes a new five-year program for Tax Credit Scholarships (TCS) for students in private schools to create more equity in school funding throughout Illinois. Under the TCS program, individuals AND corporations can make donations to a Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) that will distribute scholarships to qualified students. Joliet Diocese has joined other Illinois dioceses to create "Empower Illinois" as our SGO.

- **Who can donate?** Individuals and corporate donors will receive a 75% state tax credit for donations up to \$1 million made to an SGO. **GREAT NEWS!** Individual donors can designate their donation to an individual school, subset of schools or a school system such as the Diocese of Joliet. Corporate donations cannot be designated to a specific school, and instead will be distributed across the state.
- **Who can apply?** Students in grades K-12 may receive tax credit scholarships beginning in the 2018/2019 school year. To qualify, families must earn less than 300% of the federal poverty level. In the first months of the program, applicants with the greatest financial need and those families with significant challenges will be prioritized.
- Tax credits will be available on a first-come, first-served basis beginning January 2, 2018. There is a limit to the tax credits that are available.

- This is a brand new law, so the process is still being identified, and there are still many questions. The SGO is being created now. As soon as there is more information about how the scholarship application works, the Diocese will share the information.
- More information about how to donate to the SGO will be available soon.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.weteachmore.org>.