

New leaders take helm in Catholic schools

Eight Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will welcome new leaders this fall. The four new principals, two new presidents one interim principal and one interim president include some with deep local roots and others with experience outside the archdiocese.

Chris Ashby

Holy Family School, Randallstown

In his new role as principal of Holy Family School in Randallstown, Chris Ashby brings a wealth of experience ministering to young people. He's a former coordinator for youth and young adult ministries at St. Philip Neri in Linthicum and an archdiocesan coordinator of youth ministry training and activities.

Ashby most recently served as vice president of student affairs and a teacher at The Cardinal Gibbons School in Baltimore.

"I'd really like to create an energy here and help folks realize what a great gift they have in this school," said Ashby, who was named interim principal of Holy Family in April before accepting the permanent position this summer.

"There's so much to offer in this school and parish," said Ashby, highlighting Catholic identity as one of the school's biggest assets. "It just takes someone to be willing to travel with folks and show them what they have because there's a lot to celebrate."

One of the new principal's top priorities is boosting enrollment at the 140-student K-8 school. Holy Family recently sent out 4,000 postcards advertising the school to families in the immediate zip codes. He also hopes to establish Holy Family as a "trendsetter" in its programming.

"We don't want to meet archdiocesan standards," he said. "We want to surpass them."

Ashby is completing a second master's degree in educational leadership from Loyola College in Maryland, Baltimore. He holds a master's degree in theology from the Ecumenical Institute at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Roland Park and a bachelor's degree in education from Towson University.

The Arbutus native is a parishioner of Church of the Ascension in Halethorpe.

Sister Anne Catherine Burleigh

Mount de Sales Academy, Catonsville

Dominican Sister Anne Catherine Burleigh couldn't be happier about her new assignment as principal of Mount de Sales Academy in Catonsville.

"Mount de Sales is in a very good place right now," said Sister Anne Catherine, noting that the all-girls high school is operating at its maximum capacity with an enrollment of 502 students.

"I want to listen and get to know the spirit of the place, because, from what I've experienced, there's a beautiful spirit of St. Francis de Sales that's coupled with the Dominican charism," she said. "The girls have a real sense of their own tradition, and that's really exciting."

Sister Anne Catherine said she hopes to build on Mount de Sales reputation as a school with strong academics and Catholic identity.

"I think Catholic identity is never something we can take for granted," she said. "We all play a part in building up Catholic identity. It's important to always speak about it with teachers, parents and students."

A Cincinnati native, Sister Anne Catherine holds a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Dallas, a master's of letters in literature from the University of St. Andrew's in Scotland and a master's degree in educational administration from Notre Dame University in Indiana.

Sister Anne Catherine has taught at Catholic elementary and high schools in Tennessee and Alabama, most recently serving as principal of St. Mary's School in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. She has also taught members of her religious community.

"I'm really excited about coming to Mount de Sales," she said. "Any of our sisters who have served there just love it. It's a very special place."

Dr. Jack Campbell

St. John's Catholic Prep, Frederick

Dr. Jack Campbell was happily retired from a long career in education when a call came to serve as interim president of St. John's Catholic Prep in Frederick.

"I wasn't looking for a job," Dr. Campbell said, "but I'm very much excited to be involved. When you're really committed to something, it's hard to say no when they ask."

St. John's is in the process of relocating to a new campus and Dr. Campbell's top priority is to make sure the 240-student high school moves forward with those plans. He hopes ground will be broken next summer.

"There couldn't have been a more dire situation than we faced with the economy tanking and the bond market going south," he said, "but we are undeterred. We are trying to break ground as quickly as possible."

Dr. Campbell will work with the school's development director to raise funds for the project. He will also serve as chair of the search committee that will seek a permanent president.

A parishioner of St. Katharine Drexel in Frederick, Dr. Campbell was vice president/provost for 17 years and then professor of education for 13 years at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg. He was the acting president for one year at Mount St. Mary's.

Dr. Campbell earned his bachelor's degree in English from Mount St. Mary's, a master's degree from the University of Delaware and a doctorate in special education from Penn State University.

The New Jersey native is a former high school teacher in Delaware and New Jersey who also substituted at St. John's Catholic Prep.

“Our school is the only Catholic high school in Frederick County – the fastest-growing county,” Dr. Campbell said. “It’s destined to thrive. We just need to get on the other side of this economic slowdown.”

Maggie Dates

St. Clare School, Essex

Ever since Maggie Dates took on the job of interim principal of St. Clare School in Essex in December, she has been impressed with involvement of families in the school and the support of the parish. Now that she has been promoted to a permanent position, she plans to spread the word about what St. Clare has to offer.

“We want to make sure people in the larger community are aware of the wonderful community that is St. Clare’s – both the school and the parish,” Dates said.

The school has already revamped its Web site this summer and has begun sending brochures to non-Catholic churches. In the fall, it plans to reach out to alumni, daycare centers and people moving into the area.

“We want to increase enrollment, but we want to do it purposefully,” said Dates, noting that there are 175 students in the pre-K-8 school. “We want to continue offering the quality programs we have and serve the students who are already invested here as well.”

Technology will be more fully integrated into the curriculum in the coming year, Dates said. Two new “smart boards,” a laptop cart and other technology will be introduced to help teachers and students.

“Our tagline for this year is, ‘empowering students to meet the challenges of a new century,’” Dates said.

Dates holds a certification in administration and supervision from Loyola College in Maryland, Baltimore. She has a bachelor’s degree in sociology and a master’s degree in education and school counseling from Lynchburg College in Virginia. She is completing a certification in independent schools from The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

A former guidance counselor at a public school in Virginia, Dates previously served as a middle school guidance counselor at Notre Dame Preparatory School in Towson and assistant principal of Cardinal Shehan School in Baltimore.

The parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Baynesville said she is looking forward to working closely with Father Lou Martin, St. Clare's newly appointed pastor.

"We have a similar vision for the school and parish and making sure the community continues to be viable," she said.

Monica Des Jarlais

St. Maria Goretti High School, Hagerstown

As St. Maria Goretti High School in Hagerstown prepares to complete a master plan, Monica Des Jarlais will be working closely with school leaders to ensure a bright future.

"We really want to become the regional Catholic high school in this area because we serve four states," the new president explained. "We need to look at that and say, 'is this the best place to be?' and 'what do we need to do to become an even bigger regional high school?'"

St. Maria Goretti has an enrollment of 230 students, but only has space for a maximum enrollment of 250.

Strengthening technology, raising money for financial aid and setting up standing board committees are the new president's top three priorities, Des Jarlais said.

Citing the high school's commitment to community service, Des Jarlais noted that the school is looking at collaborating with St. Ann in Hagerstown to allow students to participate in a mission trip to the Diocese of Gonaives, Haiti - the sister diocese of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Born and raised on the sugar plantations of Hawaii, Des Jarlais was educated by the Maryknoll Sisters and served as a teacher, vice principal and principal at several Catholic schools in the Aloha State. She came to the mainland in 2005 and was

president of Catholic high schools in Georgia and California.

Des Jarlais completed her undergraduate studies in education and sociology at Chaminade College of Honolulu and received a master's degree in private administration from the University of San Francisco, with 30 additional graduate hours in reading instruction. She is a parishioner of St. Ann in Hagerstown.

"St. Maria Goretti is a wonderful place," Des Jarlais said. "There's a wonderful group of people here - a great faculty and a very strong family spirit. I am definitely enthusiastic about being here."

Laura Peterson

Mother Seton Academy, Baltimore

Mother Seton Academy in Baltimore is making a big transition from a former convent in Fells Point to a newly renovated school building at St. Ann in Baltimore. One of Laura Peterson's jobs is to help make sure it goes smoothly.

"We're going to have tremendous upgrades in technology," said the interim principal. "All the classrooms will have smart boards and the media center will have a computer lab and a traditional library."

Peterson said teachers will be focused on incorporating technology throughout the curriculum.

The new building will also allow the 72-student middle school to add an athletic program, she said.

Peterson is a former teacher at Mother Seton Academy and director of its after-school program. She also taught and served as a campus minister at St. Frances Academy in Baltimore and worked in Delaware in an Americorps program.

A native of Lancaster, Pa., Peterson holds a bachelor's degree in English/writing and a master's degree in education, administration and supervision from Loyola College in Maryland, Baltimore. She is a former volunteer with the Mercy Volunteer Corps.

"I'm tremendously excited to get started," said Peterson, a parishioner of St. Joseph

in Cockeysville. “I went to graduate school in hopes of becoming a principal. It’s truly a dream come true to be the principal of my favorite school in Baltimore.”

Hariann Walker

St. John School, Westminster

Hariann Walker was beginning a career in children’s theater 32 years ago when she substituted as a teacher at St. Mary of the Mills School in Laurel, the same school she attended as a child. After standing at the front of the classroom, she knew her true calling was to Catholic education.

Walker served as a teacher at St. Mary of the Mills and St. Vincent Pallotti High School in Laurel before becoming principal of St. Hugh School in Green Belt and then Holy Redeemer School in Kensington.

The newly named principal of St. John School in Westminster said she’s elated to begin her new assignment. She is impressed by the strong support for St. John, a K-8 school with an enrollment of 407.

“We’re in a parish that deeply appreciates the fact that they have a school,” said Walker, a parishioner of St. Francis of Assisi in Fulton. “We have a very strong priestly presence in the school.”

Much of her first year will be focused on observing the culture at St. John, Walker said. She hopes to open the process for the school to be recognized as a “Blue Ribbon” school.

“I would love for St. John’s to achieve that status,” she said. “It’s one of the highest awards an elementary school can achieve.”

Walker holds a bachelor’s degree in communication arts with a concentration in theater from Marywood University in Pennsylvania. She also studied theater in a master’s program at the University of Maryland, College Park, before earning a master’s degree in Catholic school administration from Loyola College in Maryland, Baltimore.

Christian Brother Thomas Zoppo

Calvert Hall College High School, Towson

Christian Brother Thomas Zoppo is the newest leader of the oldest Christian Brothers school in the nation. Brother Thomas began his new role as president of Calvert Hall College High School in Towson July 1.

"I want to continue the extraordinary tradition that Calvert Hall enjoys," said Brother Thomas, who most recently served as principal of Christian Brothers Academy in Syracuse, New York, since 2003.

"I want to continue to promote its exceptional legacy," he said.

Calvert Hall is currently upgrading its main building to include new science labs and provide better energy efficiency.

The all-boys school has one of the strongest enrollments in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, with 1,212 students set to attend in the fall.

"I think that speaks volumes about the comprehensive education that we're able to offer," Brother Thomas said. "I'm in admiration for what we're able to do."

The new president said he is impressed with Calvert Hall's commitment to Catholic identity, campus ministry and service. He hopes to build on that legacy.

Brother Thomas served as a teacher, administrator and in other capacities at Catholic high schools and colleges in California and New York. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Villanova University in Philadelphia and a master's degree in school administration from Manhattan College. The Massachusetts native has pursued graduate studies in counseling at Manhattan, spirituality at Notre Dame University and school leadership at Boston College.