

New principals ready to lead schools

The Archdiocese of Baltimore is welcoming 14 new principals and one interim principal for the 2008-09 school year.

Virginia Bahr

Ascension School, Halethorpe

Improving technology at Ascension School is among Virginia Bahr's top priorities as she begins a new role as principal of the Halethorpe school. Ms. Bahr comes to the 200-student school after 17 years as a teacher at St. Margaret School in Bel Air.

"We're preparing our students for the future, and they need to be excellent communicators in a digital age," said Ms. Bahr, a parishioner of St. Margaret who served as religion coordinator for St. Margaret School. "Most career paths involve technology."

Ascension School has hired a technology teacher and is improving its Web site. A technology curriculum is now being formulated that will integrate technology into the classroom, Ms. Bahr said. Professional development opportunities will be provided to teachers, she said.

Describing Ascension as a "very caring and committed community," Ms. Bahr said she is impressed by the many people who work hard to support the school.

A native of Worcester, Mass., Ms. Bahr holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, both in education, from Towson University. She also earned a certification in administration and supervision from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland.

Amy Belz

Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Baynesville

After serving eight years as a teacher and assistant principal at Sacred Heart School in Glyndon, Amy Belz is excited to take on a new role as principal of Immaculate

Heart of Mary School in Baynesville.

"I'm very eager to continue the established tradition of Christ-centered education," said Ms. Belz, who has also taught at Mount St. Joseph High School in Irvington, Immaculate Conception School in Towson and the College of Notre Dame of Maryland.

"We have a very seasoned faculty and parents who are very committed to this place," she said. "There's lots of tradition here. It's a wonderfully established school."

Ms. Belz plans to enhance the use of curriculum mapping at Immaculate Heart of Mary and look for new ways of incorporating technology into the curriculum of the 500-student school.

"Curriculum mapping is a good way of keeping current," she said.

Ms. Belz grew up in Wilmington, Del., and earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland and a master's degree in education with a specialization in administration and supervision from Loyola College in Maryland. She is a parishioner of Sacred Heart, Glyndon.

Angela Calamari

St. Katharine School, Baltimore

Angela Calamari was attracted to St. Katharine School in Baltimore because she saw it as a school that can be a positive force in the community. Strengthening that community presence is a big part of the new principal's agenda.

This summer, St. Katharine offered a flea market open to the community, and the school is planning a back-to-school picnic. Area legislators and other leaders have been invited to the opening day of school. The principal also plans to initiate a service club in the school.

"I want to bring the joy of learning to the children," said Ms. Calamari, a New York native who served 18 years as a teacher at Resurrection-St. Paul School in Ellicott City. "When they enjoy coming to school, they learn."

The school is updating its restroom plumbing, improving its library and repainting walls for the new school year, Ms. Calamari said. Her colleagues at Resurrection-St. Paul gave her a farewell gift of 1,000 new library books to be donated to her new school.

Ms. Calamari, a parishioner of Church of the Resurrection in Ellicott City, holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Queens College in Jamaica, N.Y., and state certification from State University of New York at Stony Brook. Ms. Calamari is certified in education administration from The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and she holds certification and a master's degree in reading and special education from Loyola College in Maryland.

Ms. Calamari helped write the Success for All curriculum in science at Johns Hopkins. She is the former director of the GED program at St. Ambrose Outreach Center in Baltimore, she and has taught in New York and New Hampshire Catholic schools.

St. Katharine has an enrollment of 250 and is part of the Queen of Peace Cluster School with Ss. James and John.

Anthony Day

Loyola Blakefield, Towson

Getting to know the Loyola Blakefield, Towson, community is at the top of Anthony Day's agenda as he begins his inaugural year as principal of Loyola's upper school.

"My goal is to come in and learn about the culture and see what role I can play in moving us forward academically, spiritually and athletically," said Mr. Day, who most recently served as assistant principal at Regis High School in New York.

"Loyola is a very collaborative community, and it is very much driven by a commitment to Catholic, Jesuit education," he said. "It has a very rigorous academic program and I'd like to build on that."

Mr. Day grew up on the New Jersey shore. He was an English teacher at Fordham Preparatory School in New York.

The new principal holds a bachelor's degree in English from St. Peter's College in New Jersey, a master's degree in education from Fordham University in New York and a master of letters in romantic poetry from Drew University in New Jersey.

A parishioner of St. Joseph in Cockeysville, Mr. Day said he feels "very welcomed" by the Loyola community and looks forward to getting involved in the educational programs offered by the archdiocese.

Richard Fairley

St. Maria Goretti High School, Hagerstown

Saying he has been "warmly embraced" by the St. Maria Goretti High School community in Hagerstown, Richard Fairley is looking forward to getting to know the students, teachers and staff of the 230-student school.

Mr. Fairley, who most recently served as vice principal for academics at The Cardinal Gibbons School in Baltimore, said he plans to promote modest growth in enrollment at St. Maria Goretti.

"We need to have some growth to support the programs," he said, "otherwise, we're just raising tuition. Two hundred fifty students is probably a good number for us. We'll grow incrementally."

A parishioner of St. Katharine Drexel in Frederick who serves on the parish council, Mr. Fairley said the school is introducing a high-tech program called "Headline" that will allow greater communication between parents and teachers, he said. Teachers will be able to send personalized electronic reports to parents.

A native of Maine, Mr. Fairley holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and personnel management from St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and a master's degree in education from The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. He has also studied at the University of Maryland, College Park, and is currently enrolled in the education leadership certification program at Hood College in Frederick.

Mr. Fairley is the former headmaster of St. John's Catholic Prep in Frederick, where he also served as athletic director and dean of students. Early in his educational

career, he taught, coached and served as an administrator at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville.

Michelle Jones

St. Jane Frances de Chantal School, Pasadena

Calling St. Jane Frances de Chantal School in Pasadena a “vibrant learning community,” Michelle Jones said she hopes to build on the programs that are already in place at the 580-student school.

“My area of focus is always about the children and providing a Catholic environment where they can learn and grow,” said the new principal, a parishioner of the Shrine of St. Alphonsus in Baltimore.

Ms. Jones praised St. Jane Frances’ focus on Catholic identity, highlighting the school’s daily prayer, weekly Masses, outreach and other efforts.

“It’s what we’re all about,” she said. “It has to be throughout the curriculum.”

Ms. Jones grew up in Lutherville, earning a bachelor’s degree in elementary education at Loyola College in Maryland, and a master’s degree in administration and supervision, also from Loyola.

The new principal taught at Bryn Mawr School in Baltimore and was a child life specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children in Washington, D.C. She is a former teacher, assistant principal and principal of Holy Redeemer School in College Park. While in the Archdiocese of Washington, Ms. Jones served on the technology advisory board.

Paul Llufrío

Our Lady of Fatima School, Baltimore

Increasing enrollment, expanding the use of technology and increasing individualization at Our Lady of Fatima School in Baltimore are the top priorities of Paul Llufrío as he begins duties as the new principal of the 145-student school.

“We have a great school and we need to get the message out,” said Mr. Llufrío, a

parishioner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Essex.

To raise awareness and promote the school, Mr. Llufrío has already spoken at parish Masses, attended community meetings and visited area shopping centers and businesses. Our Lady of Fatima is also working closely with marketing professionals from The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, he said.

Mr. Llufrío is planning to network with area principals to provide more individualized education at Our Lady of Fatima. The school is also looking at expanding the hours for its before- and after-care programs to give parents more flexibility, he said.

An Essex native, Mr. Llufrío served 38 years in the Baltimore City public school system, including 28 years as principal. He earned a bachelor's degree in economics and geography from Towson University and a master's degree in education, also from Towson. He holds a certificate in human letters from Johns Hopkins.

Madeline Meaney

Immaculate Conception School, Towson

As Immaculate Conception School in Towson searches for a permanent principal, Madeline Meaney said she is excited to serve as the interim principal. She said she would "love" to be a candidate for the permanent position.

A native of upstate New York, Ms. Meaney is a former assistant principal of Immaculate Conception and has taught at St. Mary School in Annapolis and Towson Catholic High School.

"I want to make sure our students are as prepared as possible for high school," said Ms. Meaney, who has promoted technology at Immaculate Conception and Towson Catholic. In her new role, she plans to continue to advance technology.

Ms. Meaney said she hopes to strengthen the connection between the parish priests and the elementary school, appointing a teacher to coordinate opportunities for the priests to talk about the history and teachings of the church in the school.

The interim principal described Immaculate Conception's faculty as "fabulous," and

said she hopes to increase enrollment at the 540-student school.

“We’d like to start advertising more and offer more tours of the school,” she said.

Dennis Meehan

The Seton Keough High School, Baltimore

Dennis Meehan , a 22-year principal of Bishop Ludden High School in Syracuse, N. Y., said in a press release he is “thrilled at the opportunity” to be the new principal of The Seton Keough High School in Baltimore, “particularly because of the great academic, spiritual and extracurricular programs offered at the school.”

“It is a wonderful place for young ladies to learn in a single-gender setting,” he said.

Mr. Meehan holds a bachelor’s degree in education from St. Mary of the Plains College in Kansas and a master’s degree in educational administration from Kansas State University.

Mr. Meehan could not be reached for comment by The Catholic Review.

Gary M. Rand II

St. Clement Mary Hofbauer School, Rosedale

Raising greater awareness about St. Clement Mary Hofbauer School in Rosedale is one of Gary M. Rand II’s top priorities as he begins his duties as principal of the 300-student school.

“We want more people to know that our school stands for something and that we develop students spiritually and give them a great overall education,” said Mr. Rand, a parishioner of St. John in Frederick. “There’s a great history here. The community is really behind the school, and they want to see it succeed.”

St. Clement is updating its Web site and looking at ways of promoting the school in the wider community, Mr. Rand said.

Originally from West Palm Beach, Fla., Mr. Rand most recently served as dean of students at St. John’s Catholic Prep in Frederick. He also held roles as assistant dean of students, theology teacher and assistant coach at St. John’s.

Mr. Rand previously taught and served as assistant principal at Mother of God School in Gaithersburg. He was a teacher and administrator at St. Ambrose School in Cheverly and a teacher at St. Elizabeth School in Rockville.

Mr. Rand holds a bachelor's degree in education with a concentration in elementary education from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He is completing a master's degree in administration from Hood College in Frederick.

Angela Rebbert

Holy Family School, Randallstown

When Angela Rebbert was hired as principal of Holy Family School, Randallstown, in mid-July, she had just a month to get ready for the new year.

She has found herself at peace with the move from St. Clement Mary Hofbauer School, Rosedale, however.

"After the first day, I felt like I've been here forever," she said of her July 22 debut at the school, which included introductions to faculty. "The staff is wonderful. Things have been running along. I don't have to fix anything."

Previously, Ms. Rebbert spent six years as principal of St. Clement after 28 years at Our Lady of Pompei, which has since merged with other Catholic schools to become Archbishop Borders School in Baltimore.

She calls children "gifts from God who come in all shapes and sizes."

Ms. Rebbert received her bachelor's degree in elementary education and her educational management and supervision master's degree from Loyola College in Maryland.

She hopes to bring some of St. Clement's success in the technology realm to Holy Family, which she says is already impressive. Beyond bells and whistles, Ms. Rebbert wants to help strengthen the bonds between the church and the school.

"We are first and foremost a Catholic school," she said. "This is not a job. This is a ministry. I don't apologize for being Catholic because that is who I am and what the

school is.”

Alberta Rickets

Our Lady of Grace School, Parkton

As a parishioner of Our Lady of Grace in Parkton who was very active in helping establish Our Lady of Grace School eight years ago, Alberta Rickets is elated to serve as the 170-student school’s new principal.

“I feel like I have been working toward this for years and years,” said Ms. Rickets, who also served for seven years as chair of the Our Lady of Grace School council. “I feel that it is such a match for me, and I’m personally, professionally and spiritually so happy with the match.”

Our Lady of Grace is currently studying the possibility of adding a pre-school for 3- and 4-year-old children. Ms. Rickets said her number-one goal is to learn every child’s name and one good thing about each student. She also hopes to raise awareness about the school in the wider community to increase enrollment.

“It’s a hidden treasure,” she said. “Part of my job is to broadcast that we’re here.”

A native of Westminster, Ms. Rickets holds a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education from what is now Towson University. She taught in five public schools in Baltimore County for many years before retiring from the public school system in July. She has also served in her parish as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and a religious education instructor.

Dr. B. Curtis Turner

St. Frances Academy, Baltimore

Dr. B. Curtis Turner, the first African-American man to serve as principal of St. Frances Academy in Baltimore, said he is proud to be affiliated with a school sponsored by the Oblate Sisters of Providence – the first women’s religious order founded for African-American women.

“I want to make sure their spiritual heritage stays strong at the school,” said Dr. Turner, a lay associate member of the religious order founded by Mother Mary

Lange.

Oblate Sisters have served as his spiritual advisors, Dr. Turner said, and he is inspired by their commitment to divine providence. He plans to encourage all members of the school community to learn about the order's spirituality.

Dr. Turner will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the 320-student school. One of his goals is to make sure students with different learning styles have their needs met in the classroom, he said.

A former recipient of the Doris Musil Award for Excellence in Catholic Education and Leadership, Dr. Turner served most recently as principal of The Seton Keough High School in Baltimore. He is the former vice principal of the Washington High School of Science, Math and Technology in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Turner previously served on the faculty of the Williston Northampton School in Western Massachusetts and was an engineer for NASA. At St. Frances, he intends to teach a pre-calculus class.

Dr. Turner was ordained a permanent deacon for the Archdiocese of Washington in June. His home parish is St. Joseph, Largo.

Shirley Wise
St. Philip Neri School, Linthicum

As the new principal of St. Philip Neri School in Linthicum, Shirley Wise said she is honored to inherit an educational institution that is in "very good running order."

"I've been very impressed with everything I've seen so far," said Ms. Wise, former principal of St. Mark School in Catonsville and St. Martin School in Gaithersburg. "Everyone is very friendly and welcoming."

St. Philip Neri is looking at the possibility of opening a pre-school in 2009, Ms. Wise said. The new principal also plans to study ways of strengthening writing across the curriculum and enhancing professional development opportunities.

Ms. Wise said she plans to start off the year with a faculty retreat to get to know

teachers and welcome newcomers to the school.

A parishioner of Our Lady of the Chesapeake in Lake Shore, Ms. Wise holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education from the former Mount St. Agnes College in Baltimore and a master's degree in education management and supervision from Loyola College in Maryland.

The Baltimore native formerly taught at Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Baynesville and St. John Regional Catholic School in Frederick.

Mary Jo Warthen
St. Mark School, Catonsville

Saying she is "excited to be part of such a vibrant parish and school," Mary Jo Warthen is looking forward to her first year as principal of St. Mark School in Catonsville.

Ms. Warthen most recently served as principal of Holy Family School in Randallstown for four years, and she is a former principal of Our Lady of the Rosary High School in Fells Point.

She was the vice principal for academic affairs at Mount de Sales Academy in Catonsville and served in a variety of other positions in the school over 18 years. She also worked as a provider of a medical transcription service.

"My goal this year will be to increase awareness of the Catholic identity and educational excellence for which St. Mark has been known," said Ms. Warthen, a St. Mark parishioner.

Ms. Warthen holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and a master's degree in administration and supervision from Loyola College in Maryland through the Catholic school leadership program.

There are 581 students at St. Mark.

Patricia McDermott, interim principal of St. Mary School in Hagerstown, and

Melanie Conley, interim principal of St. Casimir's School in Canton, have also been promoted to permanent principals in their schools.

Matt Palmer contributed to this story.