

Q and A: Edmondson says schools are excited about future

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien appointed Barbara Edmondson to the role of interim superintendent of Catholic schools in July. The longtime principal of School of the Incarnation in Gambrills shared her thoughts about her new role with The Catholic Review.

CR: How can you help the school system?

Edmondson: I believe that my greatest asset as I assume the leadership for the Catholic Schools is my ability and desire to work in tandem with school leadership, Archdiocese of Baltimore leadership and the larger community to live our mission to provide a strong Christ-centered, academically excellent education that empowers students to reach their full potential.

CR: Do you think the Blue Ribbon Committee's strategic plan can revitalize schools?

Edmondson: I believe that with a collaborative effort in both planning and implementation of the recommendations outlined in the plan, that we can build a strong future for our Catholic schools and our students. I am confident that with the commitment of the archbishop to our schools that our future holds great promise.

CR: Does the sacrifice for families seem greater than ever?

Edmondson: For most families, choosing Catholic education for their children is choosing to make a financial sacrifice, but strong Catholic schools are worth the sacrifice.

CR: How is the archdiocese addressing the affordability issue?

Edmondson: Much time and hard work has been dedicated to identifying resources and sharing these resources with families throughout the archdiocese. It is understood that during these economic times affordability of Catholic education is paramount to our work. We want to find the resources to attract new students and to

retain those students so that they can be educated in both our elementary and high schools.

CR: What would you say to some people who might think it's a gamble to send their children to Catholic schools right now?

Edmondson: Choosing Catholic Education is not a gamble. Even those schools who continue to face the challenges of enrollment and limited financial resources are blessed with a team of dedicated teachers and administrators. They are committed to the success of their students and the well-being of their school communities.

CR: How important is it that the new Holy Angels School succeeds in West Baltimore?

Edmondson: Just as when I was starting out at Incarnation as principal, there were so many people – schools people, support people, development people – invested in creating something new. We want students to come there. We want to give them something to look forward to – good programs and good staff. We're going to have everybody involved in it.

CR: What do you feel is the 21st century mission of Catholic schools?

Edmondson: It's really building our mission – bringing the Gospel message to children we serve, reaching out to those who are in need and creating new people for our church. I think where we're shifting in the 21st century is the idea that parochial no longer exists in the fact that the young people we educate, we have to make sure we are preparing them for a more technologically advanced and global society. It's a different world, literally and figuratively.

When we talk about communities for young people today, we're not just talking about their school community or the neighborhood they belong to, because we belong to a much bigger world out there because of our mobility and the way we communicate. We're making sure we offer programs and opportunities so our children are prepared to face the challenges that await them in the 21st century.

CR: What do you enjoy about the start of the school year?

Edmondson: The anticipation and excitement of a new school year is infectious. The summer is spent preparing for arrival of students in the fall. When you see the beautiful faces of students entering the building on that first day, it is worth all that was done to prepare. As superintendent, I look forward to enjoying this same excitement at a host of schools this year.