



**St. Bernadette Catholic School**

2300 Bell Avenue, Rockford, Illinois 61103

P: 815.968.2288 F: 815.987.9453

[www.stbernadetterockford.com](http://www.stbernadetterockford.com)

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Dear Families of St. Bernadette, St. Edward, St. James and Cathedral of St. Peter,

The Joint Schools Committee has some exciting news to share about our efforts to provide the highest quality, sustainable and affordable Catholic education for the city of Rockford.

**First, we want to welcome St. Edward School to our collaboration.** Adding the strengths, students, resources and ideas from a fourth school community to our effort is exciting. The involvement of Father William Vallejo, St. Edward's council leadership and St. Edward School's principal, Patricia Wackenhut, to our committee will be valuable as we shape our mission, decide on a school name and develop our enhanced curriculum, athletics and programs.

**We are also excited to share that in addition to St. Bernadette, St. Edward, St. James and Cathedral of St. Peter, we would like to welcome St. Anthony, St. Patrick, St. Stanislaus and SS. Peter & Paul parishes.** This brings the total support of eight parishes to our new school family!

- With the addition of four new parishes, our school will be blessed with even greater spiritual and financial support essential to our efforts to create programs that align with the mission and vision of our new school.
- With eight parishes supporting our school, we will be in a position to create an unmatched educational experience and be recognized as the Catholic school of choice in our community.
- The stability provided through our collaboration will be helpful for the long-term planning and recruitment efforts crucial to the growth of our school.
- Our governance committee will be working diligently to develop an inter-parochial agreement outlining support of the school and we will share details once completed.

**Building on the positive momentum of our efforts, the committee is pleased to share that St. James has been selected as the location for our new combined school in 2019 - 2020.**

- The committee completed an extensive and thoughtful facility assessment and presented its findings to pastors and diocesan leadership to make a final determination.
- While each school facility had strengths, the decision weighed a combination of facility size, structure, current and anticipated maintenance needs, amenities, location and other variables.
- In addition to best meeting the criteria in the assessment, St. James is also the most modern and "move-in ready" building. It is spacious enough to accommodate the anticipated enrollment.
- With the addition of St. Edward and the four parishes without schools (St. Anthony, St. Patrick, St. Stanislaus and SS. Peter & Paul), St. James also becomes the most centrally located building.
- It is possible that a second campus may be needed as our enrollment grows in the coming years, at which point we would evaluate locations.

**With the location identified, we are eager to bring together our new school community. As a first step in this process, we will be combining St. Bernadette, St. James and St. Peter's Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs at St. James starting in the 2018 – 2019 school year.**

- This first step allows us to provide the best experience for our youngest students, make good use of our resources and begin forming our new school family.
- Enrollment in these grades currently is not sufficient to sustain individual programs and we know how significant they are for our children's development and success.
- St. Edward's Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten has sufficient enrollment to support its own program for another year. Families may choose to remain at St. Edward School or attend the St. James program for the 2018-2019 school year.
- Grades 1 – 8 will remain at their current locations for the 2018 – 2019 school year. A communication will be going home to parents about the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten tuition, registration process and other details by the end of April.
- We will work with families to address any challenges and support a smooth transition this year and beyond.

The collaboration among the parishes provides us with opportunities to renew enthusiasm, build and strengthen relationships, and underscore our primary mission to provide children with a strong foundation in their Catholic faith and prepare them with the first-class education critical to their success and happiness. Throughout the next year, we will announce additional collaboration opportunities for the four schools and encourage activities and fundraisers for families, schools and parishes to honor current traditions as well as create new traditions together. We will be sharing details on committee opportunities in forthcoming communications and look forward to our families' involvement in the process.

Finally, we hope you share our excitement about this opportunity to provide an amazing Catholic educational and spiritual experience for our students and nurture them into faithful Catholic people and strong leaders of tomorrow. We are thrilled with the progress, and welcome and encourage your ideas as we continue to shape the school's future. Please forward any comments and questions to [FaihtForwardRockford@gmail.com](mailto:FaihtForwardRockford@gmail.com).

Thank you for your commitment to Catholic education and please pray that God continues to guide our efforts.

God Bless,

Joint Schools Committee