

June 1, 2018

Dear Parents,

This has been an exciting time for the Joint Schools Committee, given the recent addition of St. Edward School and support from the parishes of St. Anthony, St. Patrick, SS. Peter and Paul and St. Stanislaus. As you know, the plan has been to combine the time, talent and treasure of these eight parishes and four schools into a new school, with a new name located on the campus of the current St. James School for the 2019-2020 school year.

As part of that plan, St. Bernadette, St. Edward, St. James and St. Peter schools were planning to operate individually for one more year before coming together as a new school family. The timeline allows for the Joint Schools Committee to finalize its plans and recommendations for facility improvements, curriculum, student life, activities and enrichment opportunities. This final year also would allow each school to celebrate its history and traditions while preparing students for *new* traditions at the new school.

It was our hope that all our school families would use the 2018-19 school year to honor their schools while being a part of our exciting transition. However, many St. Bernadette families have chosen other options for their children in this final year. In fact, only 30 students are registered for the 2018-2019 school year. Given registration numbers, St. Bernadette School cannot maintain the necessary resources to provide the optimum educational program and student experience for an additional year.

Therefore, after much prayer and consultation with St. Bernadette's principal, Ms. Renee Payne, our school and parish is forced to make the difficult decision to close St. Bernadette School and invite the registered families to transition to the new St. James campus a year earlier than anticipated. St. James will honor the current tuition rate set at St. Bernadette for 2018 - 2019. Students will also be invited to wear the current St. Bernadette uniforms. Ms. Payne will carry forward the traditions of St. Bernadette, allowing all students to integrate on the new school campus while preparing them, as well as students at St. James, for a new chapter and cooperation in Catholic Education.

While this is a difficult decision, we look forward to supporting our students as part of a new generation of Catholic young people fueled by the strength and collaborative efforts of eight Rockford Catholic communities. We want to thank the amazing teachers that have been a part of the St. Bernadette School and ask that you join us in prayer and thanksgiving for their wonderful work and sacrifice. The diocese will be assisting them in securing employment if they chose to pursue opportunities within our diocese.

We also ask you to continue to pray for our efforts to form a new school and future for Catholic education in Rockford.

Sincerely,

Father Kenneth Stachyra  
Pastor, St. Bernadette Parish