



Pittsburgh-East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, Inc.
108 N. Dithridge St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
diopitt.org/pgh-east

August 3, 2019

Dear parishioners of Saint Raphael Parish, school families, faculty and staff,

Over many years you have shown love and commitment to Saint Raphael School, especially over the past year when you have gone the extra mile to raise funds – which were used to support Saint Raphael’s 2018-2019 school year -- and attempted to increase enrollment, to keep it open. Your desire to provide a quality Catholic education for your children is inspirational.

As president of the board of Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, I can assure you that our foremost concern is to offer the best education possible for your children. The standard of the Diocese of Pittsburgh is to provide a school environment that supports academic, spiritual, social and emotional formation at every grade level.

Many long conversations have taken place over several months, beginning with the School Advisory Council, made up of parishioners, a teacher, a parent and clergy from Saint Raphael. Meetings were held with them in June, when, at their request, we granted them extra time to try to increase enrollment. On July 25, representatives from the School Advisory Council, the Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools board and the Diocese of Pittsburgh met again and learned of a total of 68 unconfirmed registrations for K-8. At that meeting, the School Advisory Council recommended that phone calls be made to verify registrations. Those phone calls produced 47 confirmed registrations, but that number has since dropped to 39.

Unfortunately, with only 39 students confirmed registered in K-8 for the 2019-2020 academic year, a quality Catholic education is not possible. All classes have fewer than 10 students, including two students each in fourth and seventh grade, three students each in sixth and eighth grade and four students in second grade.

With deep regret, the board voted on August 2 to recommend that Saint Raphael not reopen for the coming school year. Bishop Zubik, after conferring with his representatives from the board, accepted the recommendation. At the same time, the board enthusiastically endorsed continuing and expanding the early childhood education program at Saint Raphael.

We realize how difficult this closure is for many of you, who have such a deep love for Saint Raphael School. We understand that you are very concerned about where you can send your children for a Catholic education on such short notice. Be assured that nearby schools, especially Sacred Heart in your own grouping, are eager to welcome them. Places are available for all of your students. For assistance with this, please contact Joseph Rosi, the regional administrator for Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, at rosij@perces.org.

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Saint Raphael Parish

To further assist you, Father Joseph Mele at Saint Raphael Parish, who is deeply committed to Catholic education and to the families of Saint Raphael School, is offering the following support for your students: Any student who was enrolled at Saint Raphael School during the 2018-2019 school year, or who had confirmed their enrollment as a new student by August 2, 2019, will receive a \$1,000 scholarship for any other Catholic elementary school in which they enroll for the 2019-2020 school year. These scholarships will be supported in part by the remaining funds that were raised for Saint Raphael School through the extraordinary efforts of the School Advisory Council (SAC) and the Saint Raphael Parish community. This will be in addition to the regular tuition assistance that they may receive from the Bishop's Education Fund or other scholarship sources.

I want to recognize in a special way the hard work and dedication of the faculty, staff, school families and parishioners of Saint Raphael, together with your clergy. Thank you again for your love for Catholic education, which I know stems from your deep faith and your desire for your children to follow Jesus. You will be in my prayers as you seek a school home for your children.

With every best wish and prayers, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Father Kris Stubna". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Sincerely in Christ,".

Very Reverend Kris D. Stubna, S.T.D.
President of the Board, Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools