

School Merger Questions and Answers

With an understanding that changes to a school carry deep and emotional impact, we offer these questions and answers to help create a better understanding of the reasons for the necessary change.

1. Why is this happening?

Over the past fifty years, the regional population has dropped by about 30%. As a result, student population in public, private and our Catholic schools has reflected this trend. In addition, fewer Catholics and the increased cost of operating Catholic schools has meant higher tuition and unsustainable parish subsidies, which has also contributed to a steep decline in the student population.

Both St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin and St. Elizabeth of Hungary School populations have declined in the past few years. Additionally, the South Regional Catholic Elementary Schools (SRCES) Board of Directors projects that the subsidy from the newly formed Triumph of the Holy Cross and Our Lady of Hope Parishes would continue to increase at an unsustainable amount on the current path of the two schools.

In July of 2020, Bishop David Zubik established SRCES and its governing board of directors to look closely at these serious issues and develop a plan for the accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of Catholic education in the southern portion of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

2. How did each community share in the decision?

Immediately upon the constitution of the SRCES governing board, Fr. David Poecking, president of the board, met with the pastors, Fr. John Skirtich and Fr. Paul Zywan, to begin a discussion regarding the future of the two schools. Over the next several months, at multiple meetings, parish and school representatives met with the pastors and the board. Both pastors consistently spoke to the needs of their parish communities including those of the school families. They also represented their parishes abilities to financially support the school.

A full summary of the process and extensive financial, demographic, and consultative documentation was shared with the board in preparation for and prior to its December board meeting.

3. How was the decision made?

In December, during an extended meeting, the SRCES Board of Directors deliberated concerning the extensive data and consultation process. At that time, the board voted to recommend that the

two schools merge, and that the main campus of the newly merged school should be situated at the site of the former St. Gabriel School building.

4. What happens next?

With the decision made, we can now begin the exciting work of coming together to build sustainable Catholic education for our children through our newly merged school.

The regional administrator, Sharon Loughran Brown, will oversee the next steps which include forming an implementation committee to assist in gathering input from their respective school communities to inform decisions, identifying the enrollment process for the new school, and publicizing a tuition policy.

The implementation committee will have its first meeting in the very near future and will continue until a school advisory council is named. The implementation committee will also participate in the hiring process for the principal with the regional administrator and the Director of Catholic Schools. The existing diocesan process for the hiring of principals will be followed, including the internal posting of the position.

The principal of the newly merged school, once named, will select the faculty and determine the 2021-22 programming.

There will be several opportunities to get involved, starting with a request for you to join us in prayer for the success of the St. Elizabeth and St. Gabriel consolidated school. We also invite you to direct any questions to the SRCES office at info@SRCESpgh.org.