



A collaborative planning initiative to support Catholic schools in the Des Moines region.

As the interim coordinator I am writing to provide you with an update on the progress that has been made since Bishop Joensen announced plans to regionalize the Catholic schools in the Des Moines area. I hope the information provided below will help answer some of your questions about what the region is, why this is taking place and the ways this will benefit our students and our Catholic schools. You can also find more information on the [regional planning website](#).

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Interim Regional Coordinator
President, Dowling Catholic High School

Regional Planning Update

- The region will consist of the eleven Catholic grade schools in Des Moines and Dowling Catholic High School. All of these schools will remain a part of the Diocese and will continue to function in their current locations serving the grade spans they do today.
- Parents, students and teachers will not see a monumental change in their day-to-day activities. Each school will maintain their individual uniforms, faith activities, athletic teams and other aspects that make them unique. Community events such as the annual gala and other traditions will also continue for each school as they have in the past.
- Over time business operations will be streamlined, allowing schools to leverage collective resources and implement best business practices. Each school will benefit from greater efficiency and consolidation of services such as human resources and accounting that each school is currently managing separately.
- Meetings have taken place with business operations staff from each school to establish a plan and timeline for implementation. A school will be identified to pilot the budgeting process and common chart of accounts during the 2022-2023 school year. All other school budgets will remain the same for the upcoming school year. In the fall all schools will be trained on the new budgeting process to be implemented for the 2023-2024 school year. Eventually, a common tuition model will be developed for all schools.

- Significant work has been directed towards researching and designing a governance and leadership structure for the region that will oversee operations and create policies. A regional board is being formed and the hiring process for a regional president is underway. The process is being facilitated by the superintendent and regional board members with the final hiring decision to be made by Bishop Joensen.
- The president and regional board will work together to create committees to lead and continue the research, planning and development of the region. Collaboration with local school boards, parent volunteer organizations, pastors and principals will continue throughout the implementation process.
- Increasing tuition assistance is also top priority for the new region and important steps have already been taken. For example, additional CTO funds are becoming available for the 2023-2024 school year. In addition, a new diocesan tuition assistance endowment, funded by the Ignite campaign, is projected to provide approximately \$1 million in tuition assistance annually to families in the Des Moines area when fully funded.

Why are we implementing a regional model?

- The increasing complexity of running schools and the cost to sustain an exceptional Catholic education requires a strategic approach. The regional concept is a proven model that has been successfully implemented in Catholic schools throughout the country. Centralizing business functions will free up more time for pastors and principals to focus on faith and education. This new approach will facilitate effective planning, efficient operations and the sustainability of our schools for decades to come.
- The regional model will not only protect the local culture, traditions and faith activities of each individual school, but will also provide a process for strengthening the mission and connection to the parish.
- Under the current model teacher pay, tuition and tuition assistance outside of CTO varies widely across the schools. The regional approach will eventually establish a common tuition model and teacher pay scale for the grade schools and Dowling Catholic. This approach will allow each school to retain and attract quality teachers which correlates with positive student outcomes.
- Increasing tuition assistance aligns with our mission of providing access for all who value and seek a Catholic education.