



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Director of Education to Retire

(HOLLIDAYSBURG, PA) – Bishop Mark Bartchak has announced that Sister Donna Marie Leiden, S.C., will retire from the position of Director of Education for the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown effective June 30, 2018.

A native of Altoona, Sister Donna Marie has served as Director of Education since 2007. She was the Principal of Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown from 1997-2006.

During her time as Director of Education, Sister Donna Marie was part of the team that worked on the structure for the current independent model of Catholic high schools in the Diocese. She was also involved in the founding of Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy in Boalsburg in 2011 – now a thriving Catholic high school in Centre County.

At the request of Bishop Bartchak, a Diocesan-wide study of the elementary school structure began in 2011. The effort involved clergy and laity with assistance from Sister Donna Marie and the Education Office. The study led to the creation of the current quadrant model for schools and the regionalization of Catholic elementary schools in the Altoona and Johnstown areas.

“The Diocese has taken many positive steps to strengthen Catholic education over the past decade, and Sister Donna Marie played a key role in those efforts,” said Bishop Bartchak. “I am very grateful for all she has done to position our schools for success. She and I have a shared commitment to Catholic education, and I have truly enjoyed working with her. I wish her good health and many other blessings as she begins the next chapter in her life.”

Prior to coming to the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Sister Donna Marie served as a teacher and administrator in Catholic schools in the Dioceses of Greensburg and Pittsburgh.

“I was fortunate to have a wonderful Catholic education as a child growing up in Altoona, and I have been especially blessed to spend a lifetime sharing the gift of Catholic education with others,” said Sister Donna Marie. “It has been a pleasure to educate young people in the faith. I have enjoyed working with students, parents, teachers, board members, and everyone else I have met along the way.”

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown will begin the search for Sister Donna Marie's successor.