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Principals named for new Erie Catholic School System

The Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Erie is pleased to announce the names of the principals who will lead each school as it launches the new Erie Catholic School System this summer.

They are: Violet Kill at St. Jude School; Lisa Norton at St. James School; Lisa Panighetti at Our Lady of Peace School; Allison Reynolds at St. George School; Julia Strzalka at St. Luke School; and Jane Wagner at Blessed Sacrament School.

Four of the six schools will have new leadership. Wagner is in her second year as principal at Blessed Sacrament School, and Norton is currently interim principal at St. James School.

"We are so pleased with this strong team," said Jim Gallagher, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Erie. "Each new principal is prepared to create a school that is authentically Catholic and intellectually rigorous. Each principal also embraces our mission to form students who will help bring the presence of Jesus into the communities in which they live."

The principals will collaborate with Damon Finazzo, president of the Erie Catholic School System.

"I can't wait to begin working with these talented professionals," Finazzo said. "They each bring a passion for Catholic education, a diverse professional background and expertise, and a great love for children."

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The Catholic Schools Office has announced a series of “Meet the President and Principal Nights” to be held at St. Mark Catholic Center, 429 E. Grandview Blvd. Current and prospective parents are invited to attend one or more of the evenings as they finalize their enrollment decisions. Events are planned for 6 pm on each of the following dates: Monday, Feb. 13 for St. James School; Wednesday, Feb.15 for St. Luke School; Thursday, Feb.16 for Blessed Sacrament School; Tuesday, Feb.21 for St. Jude School; Wednesday, Feb.22 for Our Lady of Peace School and Thursday, Feb. 23 for St. George School.

Earlier this week the diocese named Finazzo as president of the Erie Catholic School System, and announced the first members appointed to serve on its new board. Within the next two weeks, administrators and principals will begin accepting applications to fill the teaching positions at each school, an effort they expect to complete by the end of May.

Information about the school system, a key component of *Building in Truth and Love*, the pastoral plan for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie, will continue to be updated at ChooseCatholicSchools.com.

A brief bio of each new principal follows.

Violet Irene Kill holds an MS in special education from Mercyhurst University, Erie; an ME in educational leadership from Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich.; and a BA in education from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich. She also earned her principal certification from Wayne State University. She has been an elementary and middle school educator since 1999. Her latest positions were at Villa Maria Elementary School and St. Peter Cathedral School, both in Erie.

Lisa Ann Norton holds a BS in elementary education from Villa Maria College, Erie, and a master’s in administration from Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, Ohio. She is licensed in early childhood, elementary K-6 and as an elementary principal. Norton has taught at St. James School since 1982, and was named principal there at the beginning of the current school year.

Lisa Panighetti earned master of education degrees in both educational leadership and reading at Edinboro University, Edinboro, where she also received her BS in elementary education. She is certified as a reading specialist and as a principal, and earned supervisor certification in PK-12 as well as curriculum and instruction at Gannon University, Erie. She has taught in both public and Catholic settings, and is currently principal at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School and St. Boniface School.

Allison Reynolds received her BA in elementary and special education at Mercyhurst University, Erie, and her master’s in educational leadership from Edinboro University, Edinboro. She is certified in special education supervision and has both elementary and secondary principal certifications. She has been working at the Robert Benjamin Wiley Community Charter School in Erie since 2008.

Julia Ann Strzalka earned a Bachelor of Music degree in music education from The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. She also holds a master's in education from Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, and her principal K-12 certification from Edinboro University, Edinboro. She has taught in both public and private schools, and has served as principal at Seton Catholic School in Meadville since 2010.

Jane Wagner received her BA in education from Mercyhurst University, Erie, and an MA in educational leadership as well as principal certification from Edinboro University, Edinboro. She taught at the elementary and middle school level at St. John/Holy Rosary School in Erie from 1999-2011, followed by 4 years with the Erie RISE Leadership Academy Charter School in Erie. She became principal at Blessed Sacrament School in 2015.

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