



Catholic Schools Office

Diocese of Baton Rouge
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Continuous Service Since 1845

December 5, 2019

Dear Friends of the Blessed Margaret of Castillo REACH Program,

The purpose of this letter is to share recent news about upcoming changes in the administration of the Special Education Program. Mrs. Bethany Robicheaux will leave the position of Director of Special Education on January 3, 2020 to join the staff of the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators. Mrs. Robicheaux has generously committed time each week after January 3 to support the program until a permanent administrator can be engaged.

We are grateful to Mrs. Robicheaux, who has worked diligently to expand the special education program for students with learning exceptionalities as well dyslexia/resource lab services. Since taking the position as director in August 2016, Mrs. Robicheaux has worked with the advisory board to set direction, connected with community to strengthen ties to resources, partnered with Catholic schools to establish classrooms and labs that serve students with special learning needs, and engaged talented faculty in service at each site. The program is both strong and stable, and we are thankful for Mrs. Robicheaux's efforts.

The search for a new administrator has already begun, and ads have been placed in key publications such as *The Commentator* and *The Advocate* as well as posted on websites such as that of the National Catholic Education Association. While the search process is underway, Mrs. Mary Clare Polito will serve as Acting Administrator for the program in coordination with Instruction Specialist Mrs. Dianne Talbot at the Catholic Schools Office.

Mrs. Polito has more than three decades of experience in education, and holds certification as a teacher, principal and school supervisor of instruction through the State of Louisiana. She began her service in school administration at St. Louis King of France School in 1996, serving as assistant principal and then principal. Mrs. Polito retired in June 2013, though she has returned twice since that time to help schools in need of interim administration. In 2004, Mrs. Polito was honored as the Distinguished Elementary Principal for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Known for her professionalism and generosity of spirit, Mrs. Mary Clare Polito is sure to be a gift for the special education program!

Plans are underway to introduce Mrs. Polito to key stakeholder groups and to thank Mrs. Robicheaux for her service. Faculty and staff members are meeting today with both administrators. Parents will be sent invitations to morning coffee meetings at each site to be held during the week of December 9, and at the end of the week a meeting will be held with the advisory board.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge Special Education Department has served families in the diocese since 1962. With a legacy of innovation and service, the department will continue to seek ways to provide outstanding educational and developmental experiences for students with exceptionalities as they enrich the lives of families, schools, community, and the Church.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we plan for a smooth transition and begin the next phase of growth for special education in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Blessings,

Dr. Melanie B. Palmisano, Superintendent of Schools



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