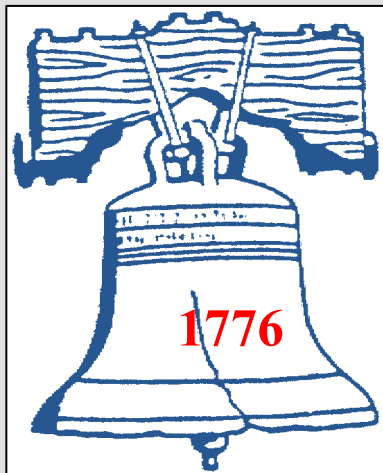




THE SPIRIT OF '76

The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

60 Years Strong
1966-2026

3070 BRISTOL PIKE, BLDG. 2, SUITE 101, BENSALEM, PA 19020- 215-568-4175 – VOLUME XXXXVII-No.1
Fax 215-568-8270 – email (act@act1776.com) - website (www.act1776.com) **SEPTEMBER, 2026**



From the President's Desk Welcome Back!

I hope everyone had a chance to enjoy the summer and recharge before jumping back into another school year. I know the first few weeks can feel like the longest, but once you get into your rhythm it will feel like you never left. Hopefully, at least, for all the positive reasons that you continue to do what you do for our students, schools, and each other.

I also want to extend a special welcome to all of our new teachers joining our faculties throughout the Archdiocese. Starting at a new school can be a lot to take in, so I encourage you to get to know the teachers around you and don't be afraid to ask questions. There is a lot of experience within our faculties, and your fellow teachers are one of your best resources. And do not be afraid to offer something new that you bring to the building as well.

As we get the school year underway, I want to remind everyone about the **Educational Grant**. This is a great opportunity for our members who are looking to continue their education, pursue an additional degree, or obtain a certification that can help them in their professional career to receive some reimbursement for the classes that they take. If you have been thinking about taking that next step in your education, or just bumping up your ACT 48 hours, I encourage you to take advantage of this benefit. More information about the grant, including the requirements and application process, can be found later in this newsletter.

(Continued on Page 2)

From the President's Desk . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

On my end, I have started scheduling my school visits for the first semester. My calendar for the next month is already filling up, and I am looking forward to getting back into our schools and seeing everyone. However, with elections for several Executive Board positions, including President, taking place this fall, some of those visits may need to be rescheduled. As a candidate for President, I cannot be out visiting schools during the election period, which will fall between the end of October and the first half of November, if someone else is running for the position. I appreciate everyone's understanding if we need to make some adjustments to the schedule.

As for the election itself, I do plan to continue serving ACT as President for as long as the members want me in the role. I am proud of the work we have accomplished together, and I look forward to continuing to serve and advocate for our members.

Finally, I want to remind everyone that the **Association of Catholic Teachers is always here to support you**. If you have a question or concern, please reach out to the ACT office or speak with your local representative. The more we hear from our members, the better we can understand what is happening in our schools and how we can best serve you.

I hope everyone has a great start to the school year. Here's to another successful year for all of us!

James

VERY IMPORTANT!

Representation May Be Crucial

Article III, Section 2 of the Labor-Management Agreement is short but extremely important. Please pay particularly close attention to what it has to say.

No teacher may be asked to attend a meeting with the school or diocesan administration without a representative of the Association being present if the teacher reasonably feels the meeting could result in disciplinary action against him/her.

Disciplinary action cannot be taken against any teacher unless the teacher has been apprised in writing of his/her right to union representation.

Should you “reasonably feel” the meeting could turn into one that involves you in disciplinary action, immediately get to your Senior Delegate for advice or call the ACT Office if you choose. Don’t let a relatively minor situation turn into a major one because you decided you could “handle” it yourself.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST UNION MEMBERS

Thank you for Joining Us!

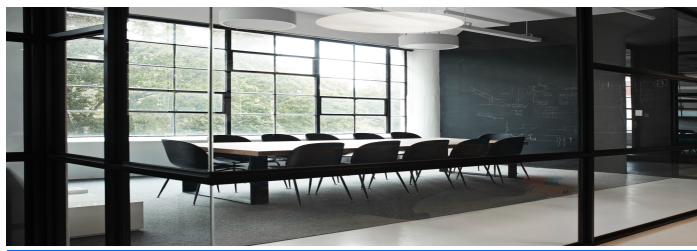
Paul Bendetti, SS Neumann – Goretti High School, **Ashley Bennett**, Archbishop Ryan High School, **Hichem Bouchamaoui**, Roman Catholic High School, **Emma Branning**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **Katharine Brien**, Msgr. Bonner-Abp. Prendergast High School, **Melissa Calcanico-Pollio**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **Sofia Colon**, St. Hubert High School, **Joseph Couchara**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **David Crowell**, Msgr. Bonner-Abp. Prendergast High School, **Madison Daly**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **Chase Davis**, Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls, **Sean Dineen**, West Catholic Preparatory High School, **Alan Dlugosz**, Conwell-Egan Catholic High School, **Brian Egras**, Roman Catholic High School, **Keegan Ernest**, Archbishop Wood High School, **Danyang Fang**, West Catholic Preparatory High School, **Michael Gioia**, Msgr. Bonner-Abp. Prendergast High School, **Peter Giumetti**, SS Neumann-Goretti High School, **Mary Greenberg**, St. Hubert High School, **Gregory Gutgesell**, Msgr. Bonner-Abp. Prendergast High School, **Mathias Hummer**, Msgr. Bonner-Abp. Prendergast High School, **Louisa Ikena**, SS Neumann-Goretti High School, **Alicia Ireland**, West Catholic Preparatory High School, **Karishma Jacob**, Father Judge High School, **Hanna Kelly**, Lansdale Catholic High School, **Karlee Koswick**, West Catholic Preparatory High School, **John Lafferty**, Archbishop Carroll High School, **Michaela LeBlond**, Archbishop Carroll High School, **Ally Mastripolito**, Archbishop Carroll High School, **Stefanie May**, St. Hubert High School, **Emily McKenna**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **Joshua Montesines**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **Hanna Palmer**, West Catholic Preparatory High School, **Lulu Peach**, Archbishop Wood High School, **Conor Porth**, Msgr. Bonner-Abp. Prendergast High School, **Kenneth Rosario**, West Catholic Preparatory High School, **Wendy Sanchez**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **Edward Schmitt, Jr.**, Archbishop Carroll High School, **Aidan Selmer**, Cardinal O’Hara High School, **Lee Speers**, Bishop Shanahan High School, **Jose Tejada**, West Catholic Preparatory High School, **Desmond-James White**, Msgr. Bonner-Abp. Prendergast High School, **Nicole Zorawski**, Father Judge High School.

The Executive Board of the Association of Catholic Teachers and its members welcome you and wish you a happy and rewarding school year.

UPCOMING SCHOOL VISITS

- September 23, 2026 – Lansdale Catholic High School
- September 30, 2026 – Saint Hubert High School
- October 5, 2026 – Archbishop Wood High School
- October 8, 2026 – Roman Catholic High School
- October 13, 2026 – Cardinal O’Hara High School
- October 14, 2026 – Archbishop Carroll High School
- October 19, 2026 – SS Neumann – Goretti High School

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTIONS



THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE BOARD OFFICES ARE OPEN FOR ELECTION THIS YEAR:

- PRESIDENT^[1]_{SEP}
- VICE PRESIDENT
- EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
- TREASURER
- LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE
- 3 MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

PETITIONS MUST BE FILED WITH THE NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE **NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 20, 2026.**

Mail your petition to: Association of Catholic Teachers
ATTN: Nominations and Elections Committee
3070 Bristol Pike, Building 2, Suite 101
Bensalem, PA 19020

Or email your petition to: act@act1776.com and in the subject line put **ATTN: Nominations and Elections Committee**, then put your original in the mail to the above address.

2026 ACT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

James Vernon	President
Kathleen Toenniessen-Innes	Vice President
Christine Hanley Maldonado	Treasurer
Matthew McShane	Executive Secretary
John Corrigan	Legislative Representative
Bridget Mierzejewski	Central Area Vice President
Michael Fischer	Northeast Area Vice President
Eric Wahl	Northwest Area Vice President
Rosanne Betham	Southwest Area Vice President
Robert Dill	Member-At-Large
Ellen O'Hara	Member-At-Large
(currently open)	Member-At-Large

Welcome Back!

2026-2027 ACT SENIOR DELEGATES

Matthew McShane – Bonner/Prendergast	Ellen O'Hara – Cardinal O'Hara
*Kevin Gallagher – Archbishop Carroll	Eric Wahl – Pope John Paul II
Christine Hanley-Maldonado– Conwell-Egan	James Flannery – Roman Catholic
John Masluk – Saint Hubert	Michael Gallagher – Archbishop Ryan
Mark Zataveski – Father Judge	Joseph Aquilante – Bishop Shanahan
Melissa Hart – Lansdale Catholic	Bridge Mierzejewski – West Catholic
Michael Clymer – Little Flower	Joe Webb – Archbishop Wood
Karen Elitz – SS Neumann-Goretti	

*Interim

Congratulations on Another Job Well Done!

(2025-2026 Second Semester Evaluation Data Results)

What impressive statistics!

The data from the Second Semester Evaluations is further affirmation of all that you accomplished during the 2025-2026 school year.

98.1% of tenured teachers received a Distinguished or Proficient rating from their administrative evaluator.
98.2% of tenured teachers received these ratings from their department heads.

88.8% of non-tenured teachers received a Distinguished or Proficient rating from their administrative evaluator. 89.3% of non-tenured teachers received these ratings from their department heads.

Congratulations to each one of you on your accomplishments during the second semester evaluation period.

Best wishes for a rewarding 2026-2027 School Year.

James

Education Grant

Applications are now posted in the schools for the Education Grant. The grant offers 50 percent tuition reimbursement up to a maximum of \$2500 per year for undergraduate coursework, \$3000 for Master's Degree coursework, and \$3500 for Doctoral coursework.

The grant can also be used as reimbursement for successfully passing the Praxis Series exams in a teacher's area of certification, or for reimbursing the costs of converting from a Level I Certificate to a Level II Certificate.

Grants are awarded based on system seniority and are available to any teacher with at least one (1) year of satisfactory teaching in the System. Teachers who have received a study grant for two (2) consecutive academic years may apply to receive it the following year, which will be granted if there are remaining funds after addressing applications from teachers seeking it in their first two (2) years of study.

Applications should be submitted electronically to Ms. Michele Shipton at mshipton@archphila.org. Applications for the study grant may be submitted on a rolling basis throughout the year, **at least four weeks prior to the start of the semester in which the teacher is seeking the grant.**

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

If you received an advanced degree or additional credits over the summer, which qualifies you for payment under a different column of the salary scale, notify your school accountant immediately.

You must also send proof (an original transcript) of the degree/credit to Mr. James Molnar at the Office of Catholic Education so that the change in degree/credits can be verified.

For your records, it is highly recommended that all documents be sent via certified mail, return receipt requested.

The five lanes of salary scale are

Bachelor's Degree
Bachelor's Degree + 18 Credits
Master's Degree
Double Master's Degree
Doctorate Degree

The teacher is responsible to provide timely notification to the System, with an official transcript.

Timely notification shall normally mean within one (1) year of acquiring the additional credits. Salary adjustments shall not be made retroactively for more than one (1) year.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

If at any time, you receive an email from the ACT Office or from anyone within this office that has a **vague subject line** such as "Document" or "Photos" **DO NOT OPEN IT**. These types of emails are usually spam and may contain viruses. Do not open the email or click on any links.

Legitimate emails coming from the ACT Office will always have a detailed subject line such as *ACT Newsletter – September 2026, Medical Open Enrollment Materials, BJs Open Enrollment, Voluntary Vision Plan Open Enrollment, etc.*

If you are unsure whether our office sent you an email, you can always give us a call or email us, asking if we sent anything out.

NEW CONTRACT BENEFITS

Sick Day Incentive Bonus Pilot: In each quarter, if Zero (0) Sick Days are used, members will receive a \$100 bonus.

Bonuses are paid out within thirty (30) days of the completion of each semester.

Sick Leave Buy-Back Program Pilot (2027-2028 School Year): Eligible bargaining unit members may elect to buy-back up to five (5) unused sick days.

Eligibility and Participation: Members who have accumulated at least thirty (30) days of unused sick leave **and who participate in the long-term disability program** shall be eligible. Members seeking to participate must submit a Request Form to the Payroll Department in the Office of Catholic Education by the last day of the school year

Compensation: Compensation for each day will be fifty dollars (\$50) per day. Payment shall be made within forty-five (45) days of the close of the school year. Buyback payments are subject to applicable taxation and withholding.

Members can elect to withdraw their applications each year if needed. Those days shall then remain in the accumulated sick leave balance.

SALARIES AND STIPENDS 2026-2027

STARTING SALARY FOR 2026-2027: The starting salary for the 2026-2027 school year is \$47,625.

SALARY INCREASE: There is a pay increase of \$2,025 for the 2026-2027 school year.

GUIDANCE DIRECTORS AND DEPARTMENT HEAD STIPEND: Guidance Directors and Department Heads in departments with three (3) or more full-time members shall receive a stipend of \$3,590. Department Heads in departments with two (2) full-time members who were appointed before the end of the 2022-2023 school year will receive \$3,590. Those department heads in departments with two (2) full-time members not appointed before the end of the 2022-2023 school year or newly appointed will receive a stipend of \$1,800.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES STIPEND: Schools with enrollment less than 700 - \$2,925; Schools with enrollment 700 or more - \$3,125.

TV DIRECTORS STIPEND: The TV Directors Stipend for the 2026-2027 school year is \$2,315.

ACT UNION DUES FOR 2026-2027

The Union Dues for 2026-2027 School Year are \$666.75. For those on Check-off, a deduction of \$31.75 will begin with the September 18, 2026 pay and end with the pay of June 25, 2027.

BENEFIT INFORMATION

Open Enrollment for the Dental and Medical Plans

During the month of October, you will receive an E-Open Enrollment package that will outline the benefits available to you as an Archdiocesan employee. You will be able to compare the three health plans available as well as select additional coverage such as dental, disability, cancer, and optional life insurance coverage, if you so choose.

It is important to know that teachers who opt out of the Medical Coverage are still eligible for the Dental Plan at no cost to themselves. However, you must enroll in the dental plan to obtain benefits.

The open enrollment period for the medical and the dental plan ends on October 31, 2026 with benefits going into effect on November 1, 2026.

~ Happy New School Year ~

Ways to Protect Yourself this Fall and Winter



- Get a Flu Shot
- Get a Covid Booster
- Get a RSV Shot
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise
- Get a good night's rest



RETIREMENT NEWS

Congratulations to **William Furgiuele** on his recent retirement from the Secondary School System. Bill retired after 11 years of dedicated service to the students at Archbishop Wood High School. The Association wishes Bill a happy, healthy and well-deserved retirement.

Thank you for your Service!

REST IN PEACE



John “Jack” Fitzsimmons, retired, Archbishop Ryan High School

ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO HIM O LORD AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON HIM. MAY HIS SOUL AND ALL THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED, THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD, REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

ACT OFFICE HOURS: The hours of operation are Monday through Thursday, 9:00 to 4:30 and Friday, 9:00 to 4:00.

ADDRESS CHANGES: If you are in the process of moving, or have already moved to a new address, don't forget to call the ACT Office with your new address and phone number.

EMAIL ADDRESS: If your [personal](#) email address has changed, please let us know as soon as possible. If you are not receiving our emails, please let us know.

INSURANCE CARDS: If you need a new dental, medical or vision card, contact Ginny at ginny@act1776.com.

WELCOME BACK



***WE WISH YOU A HAPPY,
HEALTHY, AND SAFE
SCHOOL YEAR.***