



## Good Counsel Academy Elementary

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January 5, 2017

Dear Families and Friends of Good Counsel Academy Elementary,

Please note that the following is of great importance and most difficult to deliver. Letter format was chosen so that information could be outlined and dispersed in a private and timely way to all involved. A meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 10 at 6:30 p.m. in the Holy Name of Jesus Church with GCAE Administration, Board and RDC Leadership to discuss in detail.

### Background:

Good Counsel Academy Elementary has operated and prided itself on our continued transparency, our resourcefulness and our timely communication with all our stakeholders since we received the news that the property which housed our school for 100 years was up for sale in 2014. Against all odds, and in an unbelievably short timeline, we successfully negotiated a lease, moved the school and found a new home at Holy Name of Jesus. Sustainability was forefront, always the goal and expectation of both the Academy and its owners, the Sisters of the Divine Compassion. Increased enrollment was mandatory. While we were negotiating our lease and planning our move, the Sisters were making the difficult and painful decisions of relocating their congregation, closing their beloved High School and selling their foundress' land. The RDC allowed us to open our doors in September of 2015 with enrollment of 82 students, 28 shy of the promised 120, which would allow GCAE to financially break even. While we have remained open at Holy Name, the sisters have been most generous with their support, financing our school as we continue to fall short of the promised student enrollment. The sisters continue to make the difficult decisions that come along with an aging religious population. They find themselves in a position where the majority of the RDC are no longer bringing in income, require assisted living, increased health concerns and longer life expectancy. Painful decisions about their ministries continue as they plan ahead for the future of their congregation.

### Reality:

Good Counsel Academy Elementary has done a remarkable job in the past three years. We have raised our student population from 82 to 109. We have created an atmosphere of academic challenge, community outreach and amazing parent involvement. The energy is palpable when you enter our halls. Our faculty, Board and families have worked very hard to get to this point and we could not be prouder. That being said, as we began to put the budget together for the 2017 -18 academic year, it became apparent, once again, that we would require significant financial support to even consider opening our doors. We were again going to ask our dedicated faculty and staff to forego a raise for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row, ask our families for an increase in tuition and need to seek a new enrollment of 50 students to make our 120 break even commitment. Graduating 15 students and taking into account our history of losing our Pre K 4 to public schools, the estimate of 50 new recruits was conservative. Updating our technology, along with new textbooks, resources and programs needed to keep our Academy competitive only added to the financial need. The GCAE Board submitted the 2017 -18 budget to the RDC Leadership in full transparency of needs, honest expectation and request for another year of significant subsidy. We also

asked for a decision to be made as quickly as possible, so that we communicate the outcome immediately to our faculty and families, positive or negative.

**Decision:**

The Leadership Team did its due diligence and returned the congregation's recommendation that they could no longer subsidize the Academy. This recommendation was made and received painfully, with much emotion and compassion on both sides. Our GCAE Board reluctantly, sadly, but realistically accepted the RDC recommendation after exhausting all other options. The bottom line is that the RDC are the sponsors, and would always be financially responsible for the Academy in any situation, positive or negative. The outcome is that Good Counsel Academy Elementary will close effective July, 2017. This news is beyond devastating to all involved. Administration, Board, Finance, Faculty, and the RDC could not have worked harder than we have. We truly left no stone unturned. GCAE families have been incredibly supportive, as has Father Phil and the HNJ parish. We are grateful to you all.

**Going forward:**

We chose to release this decision as soon as we received it, keeping with our tradition of open communication and transparency. This gives us 5 months to work with each of you to get the best placement possible. It is our promise to each GCAE family and faculty member that we will walk this journey with you and provide for you as much assistance as you need to transition in the most successful and positive way.

**How this information is received will color the rest of our school year. Good Counsel Academy Elementary has a proud tradition of getting through the most difficult of times with grace, dignity and compassion. There is no blame here, only the sad reality of finance and enrollment. There can be anger, frustration, sadness and fear. That is to be expected. Just remember, how we handle this as adults, will be what the children see and learn. This is a life lesson that does not get a "do over", so let us make sure we do it right.**

We are making the conscious choice and effort to celebrate these next 5 months. We have had a wonderful run of 103 years. Not many schools can claim that. GCAE did the impossible and added three amazing years to our program. We have made wonderful friends in the Holy Name Parish and Valhalla community. We are known as a school of excellence. This decision does not affect our level of academics, our expectations of our students' success or the wonderful things we have planned for the rest of the year. Make our tears be those of laughter and appreciation. Let us continue to make memories to take with us in June. Let us celebrate the gift that is Good Counsel Academy Elementary!

Sincerely,

Pamela Matott  
Proud Principal of Good Counsel Academy Elementary