

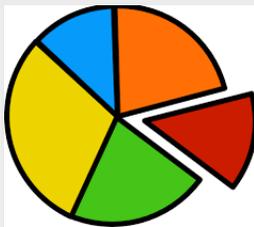
Office of Educational Services

CONSORTIUM CHRONICLE

The OES Mission

The Office of Educational Services has prime responsibility for the mission effectiveness of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools throughout the United States, Canada, and West Indies. Using the *Essential Elements of a Christian Brother Education* as guiding principles, OES promotes Catholic identity and mission integration through school leadership development and review processes, teacher training programs, Board formation, and periodic school validation visits. OES also oversees comprehensive immersion programs in North and South America.

Partners in Education Workshop Available on Google Meet!



Save the Dates!

East/
Midwest
9:00 am
EST

West PIE 1:00 pm EST, 10:00 PST and 8:00 am HST.

Click the arrow to open the sign up link!



Cristiana Ritchie-Bonomo, Ph.D.
OES Director

Christmas Message from OES

As the joyous season of Christmas approaches, All of us at OES extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your unwavering dedication and leadership in guiding our Edmund Rice Consortium schools. Your commitment to fostering a Christ-centered learning environment is truly inspiring, and we are deeply appreciative of your tireless efforts to ensure that every student experiences the transformative power of a Catholic education grounded in the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice..

Throughout the year, you have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability in navigating the challenges we face. You have embraced innovative teaching methods, harnessed technology effectively, and maintained a steadfast focus on the academic, social, and spiritual growth of our students.



More about the Partners in Education Workshop

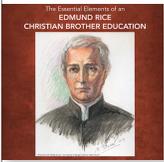
Congratulations to those who have already attended a workshop!

November 4th in New Rochelle, NY

Conor McManus, Bergen Catholic
Anthony Leo, Iona Prep
Peter Ippolito, St. Laurence
Michael Marcon, Bergen Catholic,
Rober Junkroski, St. Laurence

November 11, Midwest Zoom

Roseann Donaldson, Brother Rice,
Bloomfield Hills.



Essential Elements are Alive and Well at Palma School!

Palma recently completed their Essential Elements Validation Visit and the Visiting Team proudly recommended validation to the Board of Members of the Province. The Board of Members validated the visiting team final report. The team of Kieran Daly, Cris Bonomo and Maureen Wicken from Vancouver College was led by Br. Gennaro Sullo.

A few commendations included the following:

Capstone Projects in which students create a summative testimonial that articulates their spiritual and personal growth.

Attentiveness to the development of the whole person through the variety of supports and program offerings.

The return of the CTF Prison Program at Soledad.

Blessed Edmund's charism is a live and thriving at Palma!

Your leadership has been instrumental in creating vibrant and nurturing school communities where students feel valued, supported, and encouraged to reach their full potential. You have cultivated a sense of belonging and instilled in students a deep appreciation for their Catholic faith, preparing them to become beacons of light in our world.

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, We are particularly grateful for your unwavering commitment to living out the Edmund Rice message of presence, compassion, and liberation. You have instilled these values in your students, empowering them to make a positive impact on their communities and the world around them.

Thank you for being the embodiment of Christ's love and guidance within our Catholic schools. Your dedication to nurturing the minds and spirits students is a true gift, and we are incredibly blessed to have you as partners in this sacred mission.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Christmas filled with peace, joy, and the blessings of the season.

May God continue to guide and empower you as you lead with unwavering faith and dedication.

Sincerely,

Cris, Kieran, Br. Gennaro, Br. Tim, Br. Stephen, and Gabriel

Upcoming Essential Elements Retreats and Visits

Retreat

March 11, 2024 Tampa Catholic led by Cris Bonomo

April 24, 2024 Brother Rice Bloomfield Hills led by Cris Bonomo

Visits

November 29, 2023 Bishop Kearney, Rochester, NY led by Br. Tim Smyth. Team Members include Wendy Nuss, Teacher, Br. Rice, and Alex Muggeo, Teacher, Bergen Catholic.

January 10-12, 2024 Catholic Memorial, West Roxbury, MA led by Br. Gennaro Sullo. Team Members include, Cris Bonomo, Nick Corrado, Principal, All Hallows, and Maureen Wicken, Campus Minister, Vancouver College.

February 11-14, 2024, St. Thomas More Collegiate, Burnaby, Canada, led by Br. Gennaro Sullo. Team Members include Jennifer Wagner, Assistant Principal, Brother Rice Bloomfield Hills and Matt Prunkle, Dean of Student Life, Brother Rice Chicago

Note of Gratitude: Thank you to those who volunteered to serve on visiting teams! You are a blessing!

Happenings in Church and Society Impacting Schools

by Br. Brian Walsh CFC

CHURCH: A Special Report on the Synod

1. Evangelize Youth Within The Mission of the Church
2. Proclaim and Witness to Catholic Identity

SUMMARY OF THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

Session One: October 4-29, 2023

Session Two: October 2024

A. In Preparation for the Synod: Synod Means Walking Together

- Called by Pope Francis in October 2021 in his homily announcing The Synod on Synodality he quoted the French Theologian Yves Conger: “We do not need another Church....we need a different Church.”
- During 2021-2022 and 2022-2023: listening sessions were held on the parish, diocesan, country, several country levels to produce a preparation document that was then used for conversation and listening sessions on the same levels again. The main points of the preparation document:

“...Enlarge the space in your tent, Spread out your tent clothes unsparingly, lengthen your robes and make firm your pegs.”

Enlarge the tent for the most vulnerable by their lack of social or economic power, immigrant communities, ethnic minorities, the unborn and their mothers, disabled people, **women**, those marginalized by situations:

divorce

remarriage without annulment

LGBTQ

Clericalism in the Church

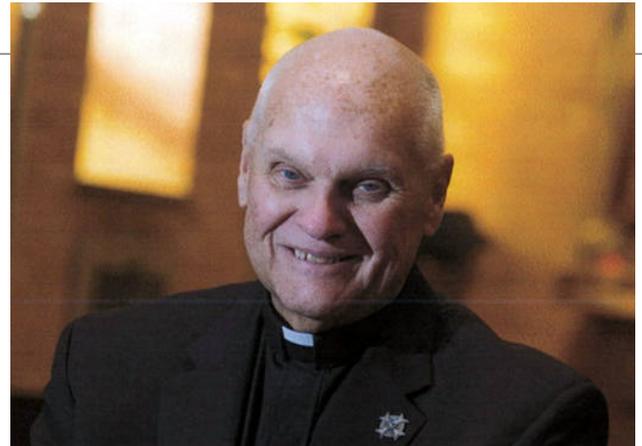
B. Just the Facts:

Started on October 4th (which is Pope Francis’s Feast Day) because on October, 4, 1962, Pope John XXIII went to Assisi to pray and seek the intercession of Saint Francis for guidance during the Second Vatican Council that was to start on October 11, 1962.

More Synod Facts:

- Number Attending: 450
- Number with Voting Rights: 365
- 27% of those voting were non-Bishops
- 54 Women had the right to vote
- 80+ non-voting members were experts and or facilitators.

Cont. on page 4



Br. Brian Walsh, CFC

Continued from Page 3

- For the first time, the meeting is not set up like a college lecture hall but was held in the Paul VI Auditorium with round tables.
- Eleven people were at each table and had a microphone and four video screens so that when anyone in the auditorium speaks they are seen and heard on each screen on each table.

B. Pope Francis’s Homily and Remarks on the First Day of the Synod: October 4, 2023.

“To refocus our case on God, to be a Church that looks mercifully on humanity. A church that is united and fraternal, that listens and dialogues; a church that blesses and encourages, that helps those who seek the Lord, that lovingly stirs up the indifferent, that opens paths in order to draw people into the beauty of faith . . .”

“...Jesus calls us to be a Church that does not impose burdens, and which repeats to everyone, ‘Come you who are weary and oppressed, come you who have lost your way or feel far away, come you who have closed the doors to hope. The church is here for you. The doors of the church are open for everyone, for everyone, everyone . . .’”



C. During the Synod:

There were four ‘Modules’(content areas) membership at a table was different for each module.] Each table used a method called:

Conversation in the Spirit

Begins with prayerful silence, all listen as each speaks when all have spoken, another period of silence, then each invited to share “resonances” that struck them...Then with a facilitator there was a free discussion identifying areas of agreement, disagreement, and a suggested way forward.

At the General Congregation at the end of each “module” the person selected by each table gave a three minute summary of their discussion. “Conversation in the Spirit” is tiring, difficult but for most of members was found successful.

The Report for the October 4-29, 2023 Synod is entitled:

A Synodal Church in Mission

It is 41 pages long, contains 81 paragraphs, each paragraph having been voted on by each member of the Synod. A paragraph had to receive at least 2/3 acceptance to be in the report.

The Report:

- Asked for more “theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the Deaconate” approved 279-67
- States: “in different ways people who feel marginalized or excluded from the Church because of their marriage, identity or sexuality, also ask to be heard and accompanied.”
- “There was a deep sense of love, mercy and compassion in the Assembly for those who are or feel hurt or neglected by the Church, who want a place to call “home”, where they can feel safe, be heard and respected without fear or feeling judged.”

•Openness to listening and accompanying all including those who have suffered abuse and hurt in the Church has made visible many who have long felt invisible.

The report insists that the purpose of Synodality is MISSION

As disciples of Jesus we have the responsibility of transmitting the love and tenderness of God to a wounded humanity.

“A profound spiritual conversion is needed as the foundation for any effective structural change” it said “sexual abuse and the abuse of power and authority continue to cry out for justice, healing and reconciliation.

Society

1. **Home Schooling, both Public and Catholic, is soaring in the U.S., yet Catholic schools struggle to recover from pandemic. (Catholic News Agency:November 18,2023)**
 - A. Home Schooling -Double digit increase in past 5 years: between 1.9 million and 2.7 million children are being home schooled
 - The Catholic Home School Organization: Kolbe Academy has grown 19% in 5 years
 - B. Catholic Schools
 - Enrollment is less than 1.7 million 60 of the 175 dioceses saw an increase of 1.0% since 2009-2010 Cont. on page 5

- nationwide Catholic school enrollment is 2.6% lower than pre-pandemic
 2023-2024 data from 1/3 of dioceses shows a less than 1% decrease in enrollment. Since the pandemic decline in enrollment has varied geographically
 : Southeast up 1.7%(went back to in-person teaching)
 : Midwest down 7.5% since 2019-2020

III. During the 2021-2022 school year **25%** of students were chronically absent up from **15%** before the pandemic (that's 6.5 million more students)
 -In poorer districts the number exceeded **61%**

How to Approach Absenteeism

Extensive evidence shows that **punitive methods do not work**

American students grow more alienated from school the longer they attend. The sense of disconnection stems from the sense that no one cares about them. One study showed

- 40% had persistent feelings of sadness
- 22% had considered suicide
- 10% had attempted suicide

Going Forward to Close the Learning Gap

- tutoring
- after school programs
- summer school courses

-data from 16 states show: the most effective way to reverse learning loss is to increase the pace at which students learn. One way is to put more students in the classes of the best teachers (who would receive extra compensation)

IV. Students Missing School at an Alarming Rate

(New York Times: November 18, 2025)

Post-pandemic absenteeism is widespread, it is worse in high poverty schools:

- 70% of highest poverty schools experience chronic absenteeism
- In 2021-2022 compared with 25% before pandemic chronically absent: at least 10% of the school year; 2 days a month
- a third or more of the student body is chronic
- in most affluent schools, chronic absenteeism increased to 14%

Post-pandemic up from 3% before pandemic

Widespread Absenteeism:

- Effects school culture
- Prevents students from taking advantage of interventions such as tutoring to help learning
- Makes it hard for students to make relationships with each other and students and teachers to make relationships that foster learning



Lincoln Snyder, President of NCEA:

“Catholic schools always have to be vigilant in guarding a strong Catholic ethos at the school... protecting that identity always has to be first and foremost for our schools.”

Essential Element #2 of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education states: Proclaim and Witness to Catholic Identity.

Lincoln Snyder, NCEA President

2. THE STARTLING EVIDENCE ON LEARNING LOSS IS IN

(New York Times: November 18, 2023)

[Based on work done by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes At Stanford University.

- A. The pandemic may have been the most damaging disruption in the History of American education:
 - set student progress in Math and Reading back by two decades
 - widened the achievement gap between poor and wealthy
- B. The long term effects of the pandemic:
 - diminished lifetime earnings
 - become a generation with a significant drag on the economy.
- C. Going Forward
 - I. Steps Needed:
 - Multidisciplinary approach.
 - Local officials will need to develop substantial resources.
 - To replace the pandemic aid that ends in 2024
 - II. Challenge Hindering Recovery
 - Absenteeism:
 - Millions of students are chronically absent (miss 10% or more of the days each year) in the early grades these students never master comprehensive skills.

From the Literature by Br. Brian Walsh CFC

The EdWeek Research Center during July & August 2023 asked a group of K-12 Teachers to review and rate the variety of time given in different schools for students and teachers. The first number at each time is rating how much that time is liked or not liked. The second number is the % of people who would change that time.

Student Lunch Times Rated by Teachers

Minutes	Liked	Not-Liked
11-21	20%	3%
21-30	55%	35%
31-40	19%	53%
41-50	8%	13%
51-60	2%	10%

Teacher Lunch Times Rated by Teachers

Minutes	Liked	Not-Liked
11-21	15%	2%
21-30	54%	25%
31-40	15%	37%
41-50	10%	21%
51-60	2%	17%

2) Ten top reasons (other than sickness) that High School students missed school last year.

(EdWeek Research Center: September 2023)

Bad Weather 23%; Anxiety 16%; overslept because stayed up late 17%; to relax at home 13%; I felt too depressed 12%; just overslept 11%; other 11%; To study/finish homework 10%; missed bus ride 10%; I was so behind didn't think I could catch up.

3) Factors that had a negative impact on teens' mental health.

(EdWeek Research Center: September 2023)

[Responses from high school students who responded to the opportunity to answer the question: **What, if anything, has had a negative impact on you?**]

Stress associated with school/home work	34%
Grades/Test Results	25%
Concerns about physical looks	22%
Anxiety about societal issues/news	21%
Concerns about future career	19%
Family	17%
Nothing	16%
Getting into college and paying for it.	14%
Friends	14%
Teacher at my school	13%
Romantic relationships	13%

4) From Readers Digest

1. As a Freshman at a Catholic High School, I was attending our First Friday Mass, so naturally I sang my heart out . Suddenly, the principal, Sister Matilda appeared by my side. She leaned over and said: "Mr Godfrey, the Lord will not mind if you mouth the words."
2. A man is struck by a bus on a busy street. As he lies dying, he calls out 'A priest. Somebody get me a priest'. A police officer checks the crowd and no priest, no minister, no man of God of any time. Then out of the crowd an elderly man comes over. "Officer" he says, I'm not a Catholic but for 50 years I've lived behind St. Elizabeth's Church, and every night I've listened to the Catholic litany Maybe I can be of some comfort for this man." The officer agrees and the elderly man kneels down over the injured pedestrian and solemnly intones: "B-4, I-19, N-38, G-54,)-72."

Reflect and Renew

Called and Gifted: A Retreat for Those Who Serve



3 Night Retreat At Linwood Spiritual Center

Monday, April 15, 2024 - Friday, April 18, 2024

Reflect and Renew in the Restful
Hudson Valley

Open to Administrators, Teachers, and Staff

Deadline to sign up is January 15, 2024

Contact Gabriel Guarente for further questions: gguarente@cbinsitute.com



[Click here to Sign Up](#)





Pilgrims in Peru

*For Administrators, Faculty and
Staff*

*Edmund Rice Christian
Brothers North America*



July 24-August 3, 2024

Walk with God's people and see the world through their eyes.
Create community as members of the Edmund Rice Family
Grow in your faith as you journey with the poor.

Maximum Participants: 8

- Five days of service in Canto Grande- Lima, Peru
 - Journey to Machu Picchu, Peru
 - Spanish Not Required

In their school, for service projects in Peru each participant raises

\$500

Applications

Apply Here

Due February 9, 2024

Br. Stephen Casey, CFC,
Mission Education Coordinator,
casey8195@hotmail.com



Cristiana Ritchie, Bonomo
Office of Educational Services-Local
Coordinator, crb@cbinstitute.org