

Notre Dame Academy, Saint John's High School and Venerini Academy Join Forces to Provide New Opportunities for Students

The Alliance for Independent Catholic Schools Will Provide Scholarships, Enhance Offerings and Transportation Options for Families in Central Massachusetts

(Embargoed until 9:30 a.m., April 30) -- The boards of trustees at Notre Dame Academy, Saint John's High School and Venerini Academy announced today the establishment of the Alliance for Independent Catholic Schools, a formal partnership between the three schools that will create new academic, extracurricular and athletic opportunities for Central Massachusetts students from Pre-K through twelfth grade grounded in the Catholic tradition. While each of the schools will continue to operate autonomously—with separate administrative leadership teams, faculty, staff and boards of trustees—and will remain dedicated to their individual missions and sponsoring congregations, this new Alliance brings significant advantages to each school community.

"We are all very excited to launch this initiative that will benefit students and families in our community," says Alex Zequeira, Headmaster at Saint John's High School. "This alliance between three strong and independent Catholic schools will provide families with an option to educate their girls and boys from Pre-K through grade 12 in schools with strong histories and traditions of valuing the whole child—mind, body, and soul. Our collaboration will bring forth the best in all of our communities in the service of young people. This is an exciting time for independent Catholic education."

The idea for the Alliance was first discussed by Notre Dame, Saint John's and Venerini in 2017, and is grounded in a shared commitment to providing a holistic and high-performing Catholic educational experience for students throughout the entirety of their schooling. To that end, students who graduate from Venerini Academy in good academic standing will now be eligible for preferred admissions consideration and scholarships from Notre Dame and Saint John's.

"Notre Dame Academy is thrilled to partner with Saint John's and Venerini in this way," says Lisa Mancini '88, P'18, Head of School at Notre Dame. "With the landscape of Catholic education changing around the world, this partnership allows all three schools to build on our strong foundations and extend our missions and offerings to a broader community. While we will each remain true to our own unique histories, traditions and charisms, this new partnership will allow us to work together in creative ways to offer families in the greater Worcester area a holistic and high-performing Catholic education built on a common belief system."

The Alliance will also create opportunities for increased interaction and mentorship between elementary school students and middle and high school students, as well as new academic and extracurricular opportunities for students at all three schools. Beginning in the fall of 2020, the Alliance will provide shared transportation between the campuses so that students from all three

schools will have access to shared resources and facilities, including community, athletic, arts and academic spaces. In addition, families with students who attend different schools within the Alliance will be able to drop all students off in the morning at one campus where they will be able to access transportation to all other campuses.

Faculty and staff at all three schools will come together twice a year for shared professional development experiences designed to enhance understanding of children's academic, social and spiritual development from early stages through high school and to allow for the development of new programming between the schools.

"A major benefit for Venerini Academy students will be regular interaction with older students from Saint John's and Notre Dame, who can serve as mentors and role models, says Ray Dewar, principal of Venerini. "While something we have done informally for years, this new partnership will ensure more regular and strategic interactions. In addition, by having our faculties collaborate in new ways to share insights on the overall formation of each student as they progress through our schools, we will all be able to more meaningfully address each student's unique needs.

Longer term collaborations, including alignment on a curriculum designed to enhance the transition from elementary to middle and high school Catholic education, are also being considered.

The Alliance will be overseen by a steering committee that includes three representatives from each school (the head of school/principal, a member of the faculty/staff and a trustee) as well as Thomas Del Prete, Ph.D., professor of practice and Director of the Adam Institute for Urban Teaching and School Practice at Clark University, who shares a deep commitment to Catholic education. The committee will meet quarterly to explore options for further collaboration and growth.

For additional information on the Alliance for Independent Catholic Schools, visit:
<https://www.worcesteraic.org>

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