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## Catholic middle school hires new principal

WAUCONDA – A new principal has been chosen for the first Catholic middle school in Lake County.

Diane Vida of McHenry will take the reigns of Frassati Catholic Academy in Wauconda on July 1 in preparation for the new school's opening in August.

"We have hopes, and we have faith, and we will look at the mission of Pier Giorgio Frassati and pray he leads us to the best faith environment for our young people and provide them with a strong education," Vida said.

She was selected from a group of about a dozen candidates that were called in for interviews, said Renee Luhr, a member of the executive planning committee for the school.

Several things stood out about Vida, Luhr said. Her vast experience in the educational world – 35 years in Catholic and public school education and administration, plus a Doctorate of Education and Administration from Drake University – set her apart professionally, but her energy, enthusiasm and faith were just as important, Luhr said.

"I think the development of the spirituality of the school, the charisma, they call [it], the setting of the faith work, the ground work of the school is really important to us," Luhr said.

Vida agreed, and said establishing a faith-filled environment was the school's first priority. But academics would come in a close second.

"As a Catholic school, we're based on faith first, and then we raise the bar for academics and technology," Vida said.

The school already has 130 students enrolled, and an anonymous donation has allowed Frassati to purchase more than 125 MacBooks, Luhr said.

It's the hope that enough Macbooks can be purchased for every student in the school. But, for now, at least every seventh- and eighth-grader will have their own computer, Vida said.

SmartBoards have been purchased for classrooms as further proof that the school will place an emphasis on technology, as well as math and science.

"It's important to have a vision for your school, and it's important to have three- to five-year strategies to know what you want children to learn in the education process," Vida said. "We're looking ... to work together to build that vision and get our students prepared for the next level."

However, she said, technology alone won't help students at Frassati excel.

"We know what the research says," she said. "It doesn't matter if you have iMacs or SmartBoards. You have to have excellent teachers. It's not about the books; it's not about the environment. If you have the best teachers in place, you really don't need all the other [materials] in place. ... That's what we're doing. We're looking for the best teachers out there that will come to Frassati and model the Beatitudes and be a part of our faith-filled environment."

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