



Sacred Heart Catholic School names Matthew Weatherford as New Principal

On Wednesday, March 31, in the midst of Holy Week, Sacred Heart Catholic School (SHCS) joyfully announced that Mr. Matthew Weatherford had accepted its offer to serve as principal, beginning in the 2021-22 school year.

Since 2015, Mr. Weatherford has served as Assistant Principal at Dan River High School. Before that, he taught various technology classes and served as Department Chair at Chatham High School. He holds a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina (Greensboro) and an M.S.E. in Educational Leadership from Arkansas State University (Jonesboro).

“Of the many exciting things about serving as principal of Sacred Heart Catholic School, I think the most exciting is the opportunity to combine my faith and vocation in a way that supports the children and families of the Sacred Heart community,” Mr. Weatherford remarked. “My predominantly high school background places me in a unique position to assist students and their families as they begin to think about high school and post secondary plans.”

Mr. Weatherford lives with his wife, son and daughter in Blairs, and is an avid amateur radio enthusiast. His spiritual journey, inspired by his wife and fueled by a fascination with Church history, brought him to the Catholic faith, and he anticipates being formally received into the Catholic Church and receiving the sacrament of confirmation at St. Victoria Catholic Church in Hurt in the spring of 2022.

When Mrs. Kira Kania concludes her service as current SHCS principal at the end of June, she will have served nine years in this role. “Sacred Heart Catholic School is a great community of parents, teachers, and students and I have truly enjoyed my time as a both a teacher and as principal,” Mrs. Kania reflected. “I will truly miss my daily interactions with everyone, but I am confident Sacred Heart will continue to thrive under Mr. Weatherford’s leadership.” She is eager to have more time to dedicate to her family.

Rev. Jonathan Goertz has served as pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, which shares a campus with its parish school, since 2015. “Catholic schools are privileged to be able to teach the whole child, including the soul,” Fr. Goertz observed. “We are

blessed to be able to discuss spiritual realities, and to provide outstanding moral, ethical and religious formation which accompanies robust academic instruction. Matthew spoke earnestly about his desire to teach the whole child in this way, and I look forward to collaborating closely with him.”

In the coming months, SHCS will find safe and appropriate ways to thank Mrs. Kania for her outstanding leadership and to welcome Mr. Weatherford. “Without question, collaborating with Mrs. Kania has been one of the highlights of my ministry here,” Fr. Goertz remarked. “Her constant attention to the numerous facets of school life has challenged and inspired me in many ways.”

Dr. Jonathan Stoddard, Professor of Chemistry at Danville Community College, chaired the search committee for the new principal which fielded applications from across the country. “I hope everyone finds Mr Weatherford as friendly and approachable as I found him,” Dr. Stoddard said. “I look forward to working with him as a parent, especially since his collaborative approach to leadership will ensure cooperation and active involvement.”

Mrs. Kelly Lazarra, Superintendent of Schools of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, led the final round of interviews, accompanied by Fr. Goertz. “I am looking forward to working with Mr. Weatherford and having him get to know the Sacred Heart school community,” Mrs. Lazarra remarked. “His years of experience in education, combined with his degrees in education leadership and business administration provide a perfect combination to lead the school in all aspects.”

Sacred Heart Catholic School is the oldest non-public school in Danville. It was established in 1953 and led by the Sisters of Mercy until 1980, and by the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore until 1983. Mr. Weatherford will serve as the fifth lay principal in the school’s history. The school was originally located where the Averett University’s Blount Library currently stands, and moved to its current location across from George Washington High School in 1966. It was designated a Blue Ribbon School in 2006.

As the school prepares for the 2021-22 school year, there is already a waiting list for several grade levels. Having recently concluded its re-enrollment process, the school is experiencing a record 93% retention rate. It is among the few institutions in Southside Virginia which offered in-person instruction, five days a week, for all grade levels, beginning in August of 2020.

To learn more about Sacred Heart Catholic School, please contact Casey Scarce, Coordinator of Enrollment and Development, at 434-793-2656 or cscarce@sheartschool.com.