

# Catholic School Research and Studies

Updated Jan 2018

## Part I: Fast Facts for Catholic School Advocates

U.S. Catholic school enrollment reached its peak during the early 1960s when there were more than 5.2 million students in almost thirteen thousand schools across the nation. The 1970s and 1980s saw a steep decline in both the number of schools and students. By 1990, there were approximately 2.5 million students in 8,719 schools. From the mid 1990s through 2000, there was a steady enrollment increase (1.3%) despite continued closings of schools.

- In 2014, about 49.8 million children attended public schools; 5.4 million children attended private schools, with 1.8 million in Catholic schools. (NCEA, NCES)
- There are 152,883 staff teaching in Catholic schools; 2.6% are Religious or Clergy. (NCEA)
- The student/teacher ratio in Catholic schools is 12:1.(NCEA)
- 99% of students who attend Catholic high school graduate. Of those, 84% attend 4-year colleges. (NCEA)
- Currently, 6 of the 9 Supreme Court Justices went to Catholic school. (Boston.com)
- Since 1994, the percentage of schools with boards has increased from 14.35% to a current level of 84.8% (NCEA)
- The minority population accounts for 20.7% of the Catholic school population (16.8% Latino; 8% Black/African American; 5% Asian American; 6% Multiracial). (NCEA)
- 19% of Catholic school students are not Catholic. (NCEA)
- 45% of Catholic schools in the United States participate in Federal Nutrition Programs, which provide over 270,000 free meals to children daily.
- The mean cost per pupil at Catholic schools is \$5,936; the national per pupil average is \$12,054). (NCEA; National Center for Education Statistics)
- Catholic schools provide over 21 billion dollars a year in savings for the nation. (NCEA)

## Part II: Faith Life and Formation

- **ACRE Testing and Catholic Schools**
  - 2010 study, *What Do Our Children Know About Their Faith* by Dr. John Convey.

- Dr. Convey chronicled the success of Catholic schools in teaching the Catholic faith drawn largely from testing data from the Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education or ACRE<sup>1</sup>.
- The report indicated that students in Catholic schools, both Catholics and non-Catholics, score higher on faith knowledge than do students from parish programs.
- Dr. Convey gave various examples of ongoing success in religious education and catechesis in schools, including examples from different places: Dioceses of Arlington, St. Petersburg, Houma-Thibodaux, and the Archdioceses of Cincinnati and Atlanta.<sup>2</sup>

### **Part III: Academic and Civic Benefits**

#### **Catholic schools are good for the republic.**

- Catholic schools tend to operate as communities rather than bureaucracies, which links to higher levels of teacher commitment, student engagement, and student achievement.<sup>3</sup>
- The Catholic school climate, mission, and purpose positively impact student achievement and attendance.<sup>4</sup>
- A faith-based orientation builds coherence and integration of schools and school community.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Catholic Schools help students achieve academically**

- In Catholic schools, the student achievement gap is smaller than in public schools.<sup>6</sup>
- In Catholic schools, overall academic achievement is higher.<sup>7</sup>
- In Catholic schools, student math scores improve between sophomore and senior years.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> McDonald, Dale, PBVM. Ph.D. and Margaret Schultz, Annual Statistical Report 2013-2014, National Catholic Educational Association (NCA), 2014

<sup>2</sup> John J. Convey, What Do Our Children Know About Their Faith? Results from the ACRE Assessment, NCEA: Washington, DC, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Convey, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Marks, G. (2009). Accounting for school-sector differences in university entrance performance. *Australian Journal of Education*, 53, 19-38.

<sup>4</sup>Bryk, A.S., Lee, V.E., & Holland, P.B. (1993). *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Jaynes, W.H. (2007). Religion, Intact Families, & the Achievement Gap. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, 3, 1-24; Marks, H.M., and Lee V.E. (1989). *National Assessment of Educational Proficiency in Reading 1985-1986: Catholic and Public Schools Compared*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association.

<sup>7</sup> Coleman, J., Hoffman, T., & Kilgore, S. (1982). *High School Achievement: Catholic and Public Schools Compared*. NY: Basic Books; Sander, W. (1996). *Catholic Schools: Private and Social Effects*. Boston: Kluwer Academic.

<sup>8</sup> Covay, E., and Carbonaro W. (2010). After the Bell: Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities, Classroom Behavior, and Academic Achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 83(1), 20-45.

- Latino and African American students in Catholic schools are more likely to graduate from high school and college. <sup>9</sup>
- Students with multiple disadvantages benefit most from Catholic schools.<sup>10</sup>
- The poorer and more at-risk a student is, the greater the relative achievement gains in Catholic schools.<sup>11</sup>

**Catholic schools unlock the intellectual potential of the young people they serve while forming them for a personal and living encounter with Jesus Christ:**

- Catholic school students are more likely pray daily, attend church more often, retain a Catholic identity as an adult, and donate more to the Church. ([Sander, 2001, p. 9](#))
- Students in Catholic schools demonstrate higher academic achievement than their public school peers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Greeley, 1982; [Sander, 1996, p. 544](#))
- The more disadvantaged a child is, the greater the relative achievement gains he or she experiences in a Catholic school. (York, 1996)
- The achievement gap between students of different racial and/or socioeconomic backgrounds is significantly smaller in Catholic schools. ([Jeynes, 2007, p. 2](#))
- 99% of Catholic school students graduate from high school on time, and 85% of Catholic school graduates attend college. (McDonald & Schultz, 2014)
- A black or Latino child is 42% more likely to graduate from high school and 2.5 times more likely to graduate from college if he or she attends a Catholic school. ([Neal, 1997, p. 108](#))

**The Catholic school emphasis on lived Christian community stimulates parental engagement:**

- Inner-city Catholic school parents report taking an active role in their children's education, and they believe that participating in the Catholic school community represents an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty. ([Stewart, Wolf, et. al, 2009](#))
- Latino Catholic school parents believe their children are more motivated, more focused, and working harder since enrolling them in a Catholic school. ([Stewart, Wolf, et. al, 2009, p. 32](#))

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<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Grogger and Derek A. Neal; "Further Evidence of the Effects of Catholic Secondary Schooling," Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs, 2000, pp. 151-93.

<sup>10</sup> Derek A. Neal; "Measuring Catholic School Performance." Public Interest, 1997, (127), pp. 81; Derek A. Neal; "The Effects of Catholic Secondary Schooling on Educational Achievement." Journal of Labor Economics, 1997, 15(1, Part 1), pp. 98-123; Evans, W.N. & Schwab, R.M. (Nov. 1995). "Finishing High School and Starting College: Do Catholic Schools Make a Difference?" Quarterly Journal of Economic, vol. 110, no. 4, 941-974.

<sup>11</sup> York, D. (1996). The academic achievement of African Americans in Catholic Schools: A Review of the Literature. In J.J. Irvine & M. Foster (Eds.), Growing Up African American in Catholic Schools (pp.11-46). New York: Teachers College Press.

## **Catholic schools generate social cohesion and preserve civic order in the local community**

- Neighborhood social cohesion decreases and disorder increases following the closure of a Catholic elementary school. ([Brinig & Garnett, 2010, p. 890](#))
- Police beats in Chicago that experienced at least one Catholic school closure had a higher crime rate than those in which there were no closures. ([Brinig & Garnett, 2011, p. 906](#))

## **Catholic schools are sacred places helping to build a better society**

- Graduates of Catholic high schools are more likely to vote. (Cohen & Chafee, 2012)
- Catholic schools save taxpayers more than \$24 billion annually. (McDonald & Schultz, 2013)
- Catholic school graduates enjoy higher earning potential than public school graduates. ([Neal, 1997, p. 108](#); [Owyang, and Vermann, 2012, p. 4](#))
- Catholic school graduates are more civically engaged, more tolerant of diverse views, and more committed to service as adults, and less likely to be incarcerated than their public school peers. (Campbell, 2001)

## ***Part IV. Parental Choice Benefits***

### **Parental Choice Improves Student Achievement and Attainment:**

- Students participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program demonstrated higher academic growth in reading than similar students in Milwaukee Public Schools. ([Wolf, 2012, p.8](#))
- Students participating in the Washington, DC Opportunity Scholarship Program demonstrated more than 3 months of additional gains in reading over their public school peers in a single school year. ([Wolf, Guttman, et al., 2009](#))
- Students participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program posted a graduation rate more than 7.2% higher than students in Milwaukee Public Schools. ([Cohen, Fleming, et al., 2011, p.7](#))
- African American students participating in a privately funded parental choice program were 24% more likely to enroll in college as a result of receiving a voucher. ([Chingos & Peterson, 2012, p. 12](#))

### **Parental Choice Empowers Families:**

- More than 90% of parents participating in the Washington DC Opportunity Scholarship Program report being happy with their current scholarship school. ([Glenn & Swindler, 2013, p. 18](#))
- More than 97% of the parents participating in the Florida Scholarship Tax Credit report being happy with their current scholarship school. ([Glenn & Swindler, 2013, p. 18](#))

### **Parental Choice Provides Fiscal Savings:**

- The Indiana Choice Scholarship Program saved the state more than \$4 million in its first year of operation. ([Indiana Department of Education, 2012](#))
- The Florida Scholarship Tax Credit will save the state more than an estimated \$100 million over the course of the next two years. ([Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2012, p. 546](#))