

Catholic Schools Week

Parent's Choice for the New Evangelization

Bishop Joseph P. McFadden, Chairman of the Committee on Catholic Education for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
January 29, 2013

During Catholic Schools Week the Catholic community takes time to recognize and support parents in the fundamental and inalienable right to choose Catholic Schools to support the faith formation and excellent education for their children.

Catholic schools have a rich history in supporting the work of on-going evangelization of the Catholic community in the United States. For more than two centuries Catholic bishops, pastors and parents have educated children in parish and private schools with the intention of offering the life giving Word of the Gospel in an environment that shows respect for the human person, the virtues of good citizenship and academic excellence. This educational effort has been done without the aid or subsidies from state or federal monies but largely through the tenacious efforts of parents, pastors, principals and teachers. Based on public school per pupil cost, Catholic schools save the nation more than \$20 billion dollars a year. 99 % of Catholic High School students graduate each year. 84 % of those students go on to graduate from a four year college. The success of Catholic Schools is one of the Catholic Church's best stories in the United States.

Our Catholic schools reach 2 million students nation-wide every day. It is a challenging education in an atmosphere where Jesus Christ is the center. In this Year of Faith it is important to remember that our Catholic schools are centers for the New Evangelization for families of a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and diverse cultures. 85 % of our students are Catholic. 15% of students are from non-Catholic families. 20% of students in Catholic schools are from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This helps create a rich environment for catechesis and cultural diversity. The unique atmosphere of our Catholic schools is a space and place where the New Evangelization can reach out to parents and children in a way that is respectful of the human person, presents the teachings of the Church, and supports family life.

During Catholic Schools Week we thank the 151,395 teachers in over 6,841 K through 12 schools for the witness of love and commitment to parents and young people. We thank parents who partner with Catholic Schools in the education of their children. We thank all those in the Catholic community who support Catholic schools. This important week reminds all of us that Catholic education is needed now more than ever to be that place "which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1)

Taken from "The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing; United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2011-2012 published by National Catholic Educational Association.