

Why Choose Catholic Schools

Among some of the reasons why parents choose a Catholic school for their children is “strong moral values.” This statement is backed by a report by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. Another study by the University of Pennsylvania reveals “success is not the number-one priority for most parents. We’re much more concerned about our children becoming kind, compassionate and helpful.” These are just a couple of reasons to choose Catholic schools, but there is more to Catholic education than remarkable character-building. Catholic schools prepare students to be true disciples of Christ.

Catholic education addresses the development of the whole person – spirit, mind and body – through spiritual and academic formation based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unique to Catholic schools are these principles:

- Catholic schools operate as communities rather than bureaucracies
- Catholic schools are committed to academic excellence
- Catholic schools incorporate spirituality into every aspect of the curriculum
- Catholic schools teach that service to others is a basic tenet of the Catholic faith
- Catholic schools are diverse and inclusive
- Catholic school teachers and leaders say they believe they are called to the ministry of Catholic education

You know you made the right decision to choose a Catholic school for your child when 16 years later you hear the following words: “My Catholic education allowed me, from an early age, to have educators who became my role models on how to live out my faith on a daily basis. Their example, as well as the emphasis on academic excellence, has shaped my values and diligence.” This is what Claire Kiesel said about attending Catholic school from kindergarten through college.

Just as Claire’s testimonial states, Catholic schools are academic successes as well as faith successes. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Catholic school students consistently score higher on advanced assessment tests than public and other private and religious schools. For the past two decades, Catholic school eighth graders have outscored their public school

counterparts in mathematics by 13 points and in reading by a full 20 points. Notably, on a national level, high school graduation rates are 99 percent for Catholic school students compared to 82 percent for public school seniors. Catholic schools work!

In addition to the measured academic successes of Catholic schools, we know they also help build a better society and communities:

- Catholic school students are more likely to pray daily, attend church more often, retain a Catholic identity as an adult and donate more to the Church.
- Students who attend Catholic high schools are approximately twice as likely as students who attend public high schools to graduate from college.
- Nearly 62 percent of Catholic high school students earn a bachelor’s degree or higher by the time they are eight years out of high school. By contrast, only 31 percent of public school students go on to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher in the same time frame.
- The achievement gap between students of different racial and/or socioeconomic backgrounds is significantly smaller in Catholic schools than public schools.
- A child who is African American or Latino is 42 percent more likely to graduate from high school and 2.5 times more likely to graduate from college, if he or she attends Catholic school.
- The more “at risk” a child is, the greater the relative achievement gains he or she experiences in a Catholic school.
- Catholic school graduates enjoy higher earning potential than public school graduates.
- Catholic school graduates are more civically engaged, more likely to vote, more tolerant of diverse views and more committed to service as adults, and less likely to be incarcerated than their public school peers.

Tuition assistance, philanthropic partnerships, private scholarships and the advancement of school choice give more parents the option to choose Catholic schools today.

These are some of the answers to the question “Why Choose Catholic Schools?” The real question might be “What do I want for my child?” The likely answer is “a Catholic school education.” ✦