Preparing Scholars, Leaders, and Grace

Diocese of Knoxville
Catholic Schools
Annual Report 2022

Dr. Sedonna J. Prater,
Superintendent of Catholic Schools, SJNCS

Catholic Schools Soar

The ten Catholic schools experienced a successful year with student achievement celebrated within the classroom and throughout a number of co-curricular activities. As a system of schools, the ten schools met the rigorous standards for re-accreditation through Cognia. The schools were commended for initiatives in the key areas of leadership, academic excellence, and operational vitality.

Specifically, the schools were commended for:

- Support from pastors, administrators, and teachers for the goal of “intentional planning for leadership succession”
- An atmosphere of mutual support, respect, and collaboration between the Catholic Schools Office, School Pastors, and the schools
- Maximizing opportunities by utilizing national and local community partners to enhance leadership programs
- Compiling a collection of student assessment data to evaluate student performance growth and inform instructional decision-making
- Strong academic performance reflects the commitment to meet the needs of all learners
- Strong Catholic identity that is ingrained in the culture of day-to-day work throughout the diocese
- Prioritizing opportunities for students and faculty to continue their faith development
- Training sought through the Latino Enrollment Institute at the University of Notre Dame has brought great ideas and enthusiasm for increasing Latino enrollment in the schools
- Collection and sharing of data in regard to school budgets enables the schools to establish benchmarks and set sustainability goals
- Focus of the Catholic Schools Office on development and marketing will positively impact the viability of the schools

While the schools celebrate these successes, our Catholic schools are eager to embrace the new goals developed in the diocesan strategic improvement plans.

“Be who God intends you to be and you will set the world on fire” St. Catherine of Siena
Enrollment on the Rise

The Catholic Schools within the diocese are expecting another increase in enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year. Last year, the schools welcomed 3,388 students in preschool through Grade 12, an increase of 5% over the last five years. This reflected, for the first time in eleven years, an increase in enrollment in all 10 of the schools from the previous year. School administrators and teachers are preparing for another increase in enrollment with several schools having waiting lists for certain grade levels.

The student population also reflects changes in diversity within the demographic profile. Eighty-five percent of the students identify as white with an increase of Hispanic students to 16%, black students to 4%, and a decrease in Asian student population from 4 to 3 percent. Approximately 33% of the students have exceptional learning needs and another 14% have diverse linguistic backgrounds with a native language other than English.

The enrollment increase is attributed to a number of factors. New families report a desire for family-like environments found in our Catholic schools, as well as, the foundation of faith and focus on values. Parents have shared that the academic rigor and continued achievement as another important reason for enrolling their children. During the last few years, the schools have prioritized marketing and outreach to families within our communities. New families moving into the area have also contributed to this increase, as there has been considerable growth within the cities where our Catholic schools exist.

Students Excel on Achievement Exams

The Diocese of Knoxville Catholic Schools’ Office released the 2021-2022 student achievement results for the Iowa Assessments, which demonstrate the students have continued to excel academically in all content areas. While many schools across the nation are struggling to mitigate learning loss due to the pandemic, the students in the diocese have maintained learning with no significant loss. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Catholic schools remained committed to ensuring the continuation of learning and evaluating student progress through assessment data.

Results from this 2022 spring assessments reveal:

- 76% of students in Grades 3 through 8 met or exceeded grade level expectations in English Language Arts.
- 73% of students in Grades 3 through 8 met or exceeded grade level expectations in mathematics.
- 69% of students in Grades 3 through 8 met or exceeded grade level expectations in science.
- 69% of students in Grades 3 through 8 met or exceeded grade level expectations in social studies.

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2022 ACT COLLEGE EXAM SCORES (DIOCESAN)

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Assessment of Catholic Religious Knowledge (ARK)

In the Spring of 2022, the Catholic schools administered a nationally normed assessment of Catholic religious knowledge. The Assessment of Catholic Religious Knowledge (ARK) is used by over 100,000 students 42 dioceses to assess both student and teacher knowledge of Christian doctrine and the application of this faith through practice. Students in grades 2 through 12 were administered the assessment and demonstrated 68% mastery of Christian doctrine as compared to the score of 47% across the nation. In addition, a Catholic identity score was given to the schools based on the student and teacher responses on the beliefs and behaviors score. Compilation of the results indicated a 97% rating on Catholic identity.

The teacher and student scores will be used to further assess religious instruction and curriculum alignment with grade level standards. In addition, the teachers may use their own scores to identify catechetical formation goals.