

The Catholic School Advantage

Catholic school parents have many reasons for choosing Catholic schools. Many choose Catholic schools because they believe them to be places that provide excellent academics, faith-filled communities and service to others. Catholic school parents know this to be true from their own experiences, but do you also know that there is data to show these are more than just “beliefs” but actually “reality”?

Here are some specifics about the advantages of a Catholic school education. These facts can be talking points to share with your friends and neighbors or anyone else who might be considering a Catholic school education for their family.

Excellent Academics:

- On national and standardized tests, Catholic schools consistently outperform public and other private schools by as much as 20 percentage points.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for the Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL) assessments show Catholic school students were “at or above proficient” scoring 60 percent and public schools scoring 40 percent. In basic overall achievement, Catholic schools stand at 93 percent and public schools at 83 percent.
- NAEP results of twelfth-grade students performing at or above proficiency in reading and math are, respectively, Catholic school seniors perform at 63 percent compared to public school seniors at 37 percent; and Catholic school seniors at 48 percent compared to 25 percent for public school seniors.
- Catholic schools are 37 of the 50 private and religious schools recognized as National Blue Ribbon schools in 2017.
- Catholic schools graduate 99.3 percent of their high school seniors compared to 82 percent in public schools; 86 percent of those Catholic high school graduates go on to four-year colleges and universities.

Faith-Filled Communities:

- Catholic school students are more likely to pray daily.
- Catholic school students attend church more regularly and retain a Catholic identify as an adult.

- Thirty-four percent of Catholic elementary school graduates and 39 percent of Catholic secondary school graduates continue to practice Catholicism into adulthood. This is compared to five percent of Catholics who did not attend Catholic schools.
- Catholic high school graduates are more likely to consider faith as one of the most important parts of their lives.

Service to Others:

- People who attended some sort of Catholic school are more likely to feel a social responsibility to the needy.
- Catholic school graduates are more civically engaged.
- Catholic schools serve the disadvantaged and marginalized.
- Catholic school graduates are more likely to vote.
- Catholic schools are deeply rooted in the communities they serve.
- Catholic school graduates are more tolerant of diverse views.

These facts are part of what make Catholic schools unique. Pope Francis, through the work of the Pontifical Foundation *Gravissimum educationis*, neatly ties together the threads of home and school -- the Catholic tenet that emphasizes parents as the primary educators of their children and the Church’s desire of an education that ensures their integral formation. “The education of young people is such an important task in forming them as free and responsible human beings. It affirms their dignity as an inalienable gift that flows from our original creation as children made in the image and likeness of God. And because education truly forms human beings, it is especially the responsibility and duty of the Church, who is called to serve mankind from the heart of God and serve in such a way that no other institution can.”

References: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), *Why U.S. Catholics Should Be Proud*, Vol 21, No 3, Winter 2016; Sander, W. (1996), *Catholic Schools: Private and Social Effects*; Jeynes, W.H. (2007), *Religion, Intact Families, & the Achievement Gap*, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*; McDonald, Dale, PBVM. Ph.D. and Margaret Schultz, *Annual Statistical Report 2016-2017*, National Catholic Educational Association (NCA), 2017.