



**A NEWSLETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**



**Spring 2016**

*We are soon coming to the close of an exciting academic year and I am pleased to share with you the progress our students are making.*

*Highlighted in this newsletter are the impressive scores our Universal Pre-K programs received in the recent Early Childhood Environment Ranking Scale (ECERS) evaluations. These positive evaluations, as well as our 2015 elementary test scores that also ranked higher than the City averages in many cases, are good news for parents and educators alike. Our efforts to promote technology in the classroom took another positive step forward with the inclusion of several blended learning projects in our schools. The transformation occurring in those classrooms is amazing.*

*As always, our focus is to provide a quality, faith-filled education for each child. We are making advances every year, as evidenced in our elevated test scores and the interest among new families to enroll their children in our Catholic schools. Throughout all of our efforts, we maintain our cherished Catholic identity, personified by pastors like Father Matthew Furey of St. Francis Xavier Parish, who is also profiled in this newsletter.*

*I join His Eminence in thanking you for entrusting your child’s education to us. We are honored to partner with you on this journey.*

Timothy J. McNiff, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

**ENGAGED LOCAL PASTOR IS KEY TO CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

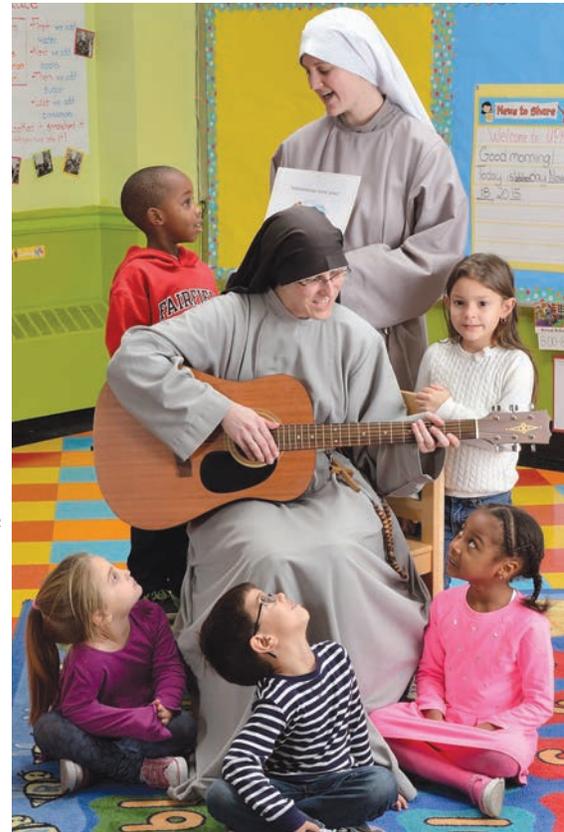
Cardinal Timothy Dolan said the leadership and presence of priests is essential to the success of Catholic schools. When he encouraged local pastors be actively involved in the regional schools, he may have been thinking of Father Matthew Furey, pastor of St. Francis Xavier in the Bronx.

Mrs. Angela Deegan, principal of St. Francis Xavier Regional School, said, “Father Furey is very visible in our school. He makes a point of greeting the children in the morning. Once a week, he teaches the 8th grade religion class and he celebrates First Friday Mass for the children.”

“The kids really like him because he’s friendly, accessible, and they’re excited that he comes to sporting events, plays and shows,” she said. “He’s always in the front row, cheering for the children. I can honestly say he loves the

school and he loves the children.”

Father Furey said St. Francis Xavier, the regional school he hosts, is an extension of parish life, even if it is not formally connected to the parish. He and his parochial vicar hear confessions and lead devotions. They also participate with the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal and religious instruction teachers in an innovative “Wednesdays with Jesus” program that introduces the faith to Universal Pre-Kindergarten children in an after-school setting filled with music, Bible stories and prayer.





“These are our kids and our families,” Father Furey said. “Everything flows from faith and the Eucharist. A disconnect between the church and the school would diminish the vibrancy of our Catholic life.”

“The *Wednesdays with Jesus* program Father Furey implemented makes the parents feel that their young children are part of the elementary school and are beginning to be introduced to religion formally,” Mrs. Deegan said.

## APPLICATIONS, SCHOLARSHIP AND TUITION ASSISTANCE INFORMATION ARE NOW ONLINE!

This year, there is an easier, faster, more streamlined process to apply to Catholic elementary schools and request a scholarship or financial assistance at the same time.

Find the simple, free online application at [www.CatholicSchoolsNY.org](http://www.CatholicSchoolsNY.org) or call 646-794-2885 for assistance. Once parents apply online, they can make an appointment to meet with the principal at their school of choice for an in-person interview. After the student interview has taken place and all supplementary documents have been submitted, families will learn of their child’s acceptance and any scholarship or tuition assistance they will be receiving.

Scholarships and financial assistance for the 2016-2017 school year will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Last year, more than 8,100 scholarship/tuition assistance awards averaging \$2,100 were distributed across the archdiocese. This year, the archdiocese expects to make up to 10,000 awards, based on demand and applications that meet the established criteria.

Choosing the right school is one of the most important decisions a parent can make for their children’s future. This new streamlined application and the additional tuition assistance and scholarships will offer more children a high-quality, life-changing Catholic education.

## BLENDED LEARNING PILOT PROGRAM IN THREE SCHOOLS

A pilot program for blended learning was sponsored in three of our schools this year in grades K-8: St. Ann’s School in Manhattan, St. Thomas Aquinas in the Bronx, and Immaculate Conception in Central Westchester. Teachers and principals have worked tirelessly to introduce students to this new tool. Blended learning has transformed teaching and learning, creating a culture of personalized instruction for students and an environment in which all students are deeply engaged in and excited about learning.

Blended learning combines online lessons with digital and person-to-person learning experiences coordinated by the teacher in a traditional classroom setting. The teacher plays a key role, and the students have some control over time, place, path and pace of their individual learning.

The power of blended learning is its ability to provide targeted, small group, personalized instruction. It allows teachers to differentiate instruction to give each student what he or she needs to have an optimal learning experience. Research by the U.S. Department of Education shows that students exposed to both face-to-face and online education were more successful than students who learned in only one environment.

In the archdiocese, we are using a blended learning model that has three instructional centers. Students work in small groups and rotate through the sequence together. The first is a teacher-directed center where the teacher instructs a small group of students in a targeted area; the second is a technology center where students work with software programs that can be adapted to the instructional level that is appropriate for them; and the third is an independent center that supports additional guided practice for the students. Teachers use data from all centers to tailor instruction to particular student needs and help each student successfully meet grade level standards.

### 2016-17 CATHOLIC REGIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL APPLICATIONS AS OF MARCH 29, 2016

#### 2,696 APPLICATIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN TO DATE

1,908 are from current UPK/Pre-K4 students currently enrolled in a Catholic regional school  
 69% are Catholic  
 5% have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)  
 52% are girls  
 82% indicated they would apply for financial assistance;  
 52% have submitted a financial aid application

#### 1,304 APPLICATIONS FOR GRADES 1 to 8 TO DATE

1,094 are from students not currently enrolled in a regional school  
 68% Catholic  
 9% have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)  
 53% are girls  
 87% indicated they would apply for financial assistance;  
 49% have submitted a financial aid application



In the 2016-2017 academic year, blended learning will be extended to more schools in grades K through 8. Until funding is in place to roll it out system-wide, we are encouraging principals to introduce blended learning into their schools in the grade or grades where it is most appropriate to the local situation. In the spring, we will have a blended learning summit to explore instructional, technical and budgetary aspects of the program and offer guidance on how best to proceed.

## NEW REPORT CARDS

Grades communicate what a student knows and is able to do. This year, the archdiocese piloted a new report card in nine schools to help provide a more complete portrait of student achievement for students, parents and staff.

Throughout the year, teachers maintained records and data to support grades. Parents were informed of their children's progress in an accurate, clear and objective manner. They were asked to respond to the various reports they received from the school, and to arrange a conference with the teacher if they had questions regarding grades. Report cards were distributed four times a year for grades K to 8 and twice a year for grades Pre-Kindergarten 3 and 4.

In the new report cards, student progress is measured with a variety of assessments. Under the new policy, report card grades will be determined based on these percentages:

- Summative assessments (i.e. tests/projects) (45%)
- Quizzes (25%)
- Class work (20%)
- Homework (10%)

Numerical grades are given in grades 1 through 8, and progress of Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students is assessed on a scale of proficient, developing, emerging and time needed. Effort, conduct and special subjects, including art, music, foreign language and physical education are reported with letter grades.

Based on information from the nine pilot schools, we have made adjustments and all schools will use the new report cards in 2016-2017.



## RESEARCH-INFORMED PRACTICE WILL GUIDE INSTRUCTION

As a school system, we recognize the importance of using data and research to guide our instruction. For us, this includes both assessment data from state test scores and research that we conduct in our own schools. We are particularly interested in how UPKs and Kindergartens build a strong foundation for literacy that establishes children's identity as readers and helps them in the higher grades.

We are fortunate to have a partnership with two prominent educational scholars. Dr. Ernest Morrell is the Macy Professor of Education and the Director of the Institute for Urban and Minority Education at Teachers College at Columbia University. Dr. Jodene Morrell is senior lecturer at Teachers College. They are also proud Catholic school parents.

In the fall of 2016, the Morrells, in collaboration with Dr. Betsy Okello, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Staff Development, will spearhead a research project at one school in each of our regions.

The purpose of the the research is to show the power of contemporary urban Catholic education and inform future academic initiatives throughout the archdiocese.

## ARCHDIOCESAN UPK PROGRAMS RANK ABOVE NEW YORK CITY AVERAGES

The Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs operated in New York City by the Archdiocese of New York score higher than the City average, according to two new widely acknowledged rankings.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) evaluates programming, planning, teaching and support. Our UPK programs surpassed both City and national averages. In the area of instructional support, for example, the national average score was 2.9, the City was 3.6 and our UPK programs came in at 4.03, which put us in the 71st percentile.

### UPK SITE METRICS FOR ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

CLASS	Avg Score	Rank
CLASS Emotional Support	6.21	62%
CLASS Classroom Organization	6.05	59%
2.9 National Average; 3.9 NYC DOE Average		
ECERS	Avg Score	Rank
Observation Average	4.13	58%
Space and Furnishings	3.99	62%
Personal Care Routines	2.42	42%
Language Reasoning	4.97	55%
Activities	4.59	63%
Interaction	4.98	48%
Program Structure (Schedule & Timing)	3.76	66%

**Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)** is designed to assess group programs for preschool-kindergarten children from 2 through 5 years of age. The total scale consists of 43 items that cover the various classroom interactions between staff and children, parents, and other adults, as well as children and the materials and activities in the classroom.



In the Early Childhood Environment Ranking Scale (ECERS), our UPK programs achieved scores well above the City average. We have enjoyed consistently good ratings from CLASS and ECERS, and to make our programs and scores even better, we brought in early childhood instructional specialists to work with our teachers. We also have archdiocesan specialists who help principals, parents and teachers in each region develop bonds and strategies to deal with any issues that may arise.

Seventy-one of the 89 UPK programs in the archdiocese are in New York City. Independent evaluations of programs outside the city will be available at the end of the school year.

## MARKETING AND COMMUNITY EVENTS ATTRACT NEW STUDENTS

We are engaging Catholic school students, families and teachers in our community outreach program to invite friends and neighbors to visit and apply to one of our excellent schools. After all no one knows us better!

Spring is a great time for block walks, such as the one led by members of the St. Teresa's School community in Staten Island. More than 60 students, parents and faculty donned school hats, sweatshirts and "I Love Catholic Schools" pins for a school spirit walk through their Castleton Corners neighborhood. Led by principal Anna Simione and pastor Msgr. William Belford, the enthusiastic group walked behind a banner carried by members of the Class of 2016. They distributed fliers to local businesses advertising the school's upcoming Touring Tuesday open house events and called attention to St. Teresa's 60th anniversary as a quality, faith-filled school for Staten Island students.



Other schools in Manhattan and the Bronx held awareness events in the community at stores and local shopping malls to meet prospective Catholic school families. During these "mall intercepts," students and families passed out brochures describing their schools and answered questions. The community outreach initiative aims to boost enrollment by spreading the good word about Catholic schools.

More than 600 families have attended Touring Tuesdays events across the archdiocese so far this year. Digital and radio ads and ongoing social media campaigns have helped raise awareness about the benefits of a Catholic education and supported recruitment efforts for all schools.



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