



PASTOR NEWSLETTER



Dear Pastors,

As our 2017–18 school year shifts into high-gear, I am pleased to share with you updates on ambitious new initiatives taking place throughout our Catholic School system. These achievements

would certainly not be possible without the support and spiritual guidance of our pastors. As you know, we have much to celebrate this year as a school system, particularly the results of our students' 2017 New York State English Language Arts and math tests. Our Catholic schools outperformed New York City, New York State, and most charter schools. That said, we can all agree **“good” simply is not good enough.** That is why we are embarking on a follow-up to our 2010 Pathways to Excellence strategic plan, entitled

Pathways to Excellence II, which will assess the progress we've made in the last six years and determine what additional improvements we can make for our students and families over the next three years.

There is no doubt, by building on the successes we have made in recent years and working even harder to engage our school communities, we will see even greater growth in our students' academic and spiritual development. I look forward to our continued partnership and to having your assistance with the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. McNiff, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of New York

Pathways to Excellence II

As we embark on Pathways II, we are particularly focused on finding effective ways to strengthen the Catholic Identity in our schools. This would certainly include identifying more opportunities for our pastors to actively engage and participate in our school communities.



Test Scores

The 2017–18 school year began with terrific news about our students 2017 New York State ELA and math exams. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding 2017 proficiency standards in math and ELA was 42.5% and 49.3% respectively, outpacing both New York State and New York City public schools. This marks the third year of consistent improvement in our students' system-wide ELA and Math test scores.

This news should come as no surprise given the innovative teaching and learning strategies we continue to implement throughout our school system, most notably our investment in Eureka Math and Pearson English/Language curricula as well as our continued expansion of blended learning.

ARCHDIOCESE RESULTS

	2015	2016	2017
Percent of students meeting or exceeding the proficiency standard in Archdiocese of New York	37.4%	38.7%	42.5%
Percent of students meeting or exceeding the ELA proficiency standard in Archdiocese of New York	34.0%	44.1%	49.3%

NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

	2015	2016	2017
Percent of students meeting or exceeding the proficiency standard in NY public schools	38.1%	39.1%	40.2%
Percent of students meeting or exceeding the ELA proficiency standard in NY public schools	31.3%	37.9%	39.8%

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

	2015	2016	2017
Percent of students meeting or exceeding the proficiency standard in NY public schools	35.2%	36.4%	37.8%
Percent of students meeting or exceeding the ELA proficiency standard in NY public schools	30.4%	38.0%	40.6%



Strengthening and Enhancing Our Catholic Identity

The Office of the Superintendent is continuing to work with the Archdiocesan Catholic Identity Advisory Council in its mission to ensure that faith and Christ's teachings remain at the forefront of our school communities. Below are some of the recent initiatives we have pursued to promote Catholic identity in our schools:

- The Office of Catholic Identity proactively communicates with principals and teachers to encourage them to showcase and recognize Catholic traditions and religious observances through the experiences students have in their Catholic schools. For example, the office is working to ensure that traditions such as First Friday Mass, Holy Days of Obligation, the praying of the Rosary (especially in the month of October), and ceremonies dedicating the month of May to Our Blessed Mother are being celebrated in our schools. Without question, having the support and participation of our pastors in this effort will be critical.
- In order to ensure our students' full participation in the Mass, there will be increased instructional attention to Mass responses throughout our schools. Specific short responses will be taught in grades K–6 and reviewed in grades 7–8. As a complement to this instruction, the Office of the Superintendent has provided an electronic version of a Mass booklet for teachers to utilize in their classrooms. Additionally, students in grades K-8 will be engaged in the study of one saint each semester and the school's patron saint throughout the year.
- The Loukoumi Make A Difference Foundation has donated 3,000 "Loukoumi" children's books for our elementary schools to incorporate into their religion and morality curriculum. There are seven different books teaching values and service in this series written for grades K–2. Within these books are stories that depict moral lessons such as: love your neighbor as you love yourself; learn to be generous givers; and celebrate both our differences and our individuality. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of these stories on religious instruction in the early primary grades.

Pastors Join Principals in Roundtable Discussion at Semi-Annual Principals Meeting

On October 27th, the first semi-annual Principal's meeting was held at Marina del Rey in the Throggs Neck section of the Bronx. The day began with the celebration of Mass at St. Frances de Chantal Church followed by a pastor and principal panel discussion entitled **The Significance of the Pastor-Principal Relationship**. This panel reflects our strong commitment to maintaining the critical relationship our school communities share with their pastors.



Prayerful Reflection at Westchester County Center

On September 19th, approximately 3,000 faculty, staff, and principals gathered for their annual Spirituality Conference Day at the Westchester County Center. Fr. Joseph J. McShane, S.J., President of Fordham University, and Bishop John O'Hara celebrated mass and facilitated a day of prayerful reflection for the teachers present. In his homily, Fr. McShane used Christ's words to inspire our teachers and capture the larger meaning of their vocation, telling them:

"I submit that you are called to do exactly what Jesus did in His capacity as teacher: you are called to speak with authority about the Father's love; you are called to gather children around you and open for them the mysteries of the Kingdom; you are called to deliver the Sermon on the mount — in the schools of the Archdiocese of New York ..."

Our teachers, staff, and principals returned to their schools with a renewed sense of mission and energy which will help them strengthen their faith communities as we begin this school year.

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@DrTimothyMcNiff

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Hurricane Harvey Relief

The Office of the Superintendent of Schools has been in communication with the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, as well as the dioceses in south Florida and Puerto Rico, to ascertain where urgent help is needed. While we continue to coordinate these relief efforts, I am proud to report many schools have also independently organized clothing drives, fundraising initiatives, bake sales, pen-pal letter-writing campaigns to students in affected dioceses, and a whole host of other creative efforts.

Helping those recovering from these recent natural disasters is yet another example of how our students practice the Gospel every day. To date, our schools have collectively raised over \$150,000 in donations and aid for the victims of Hurricanes Irma, Harvey, and Jose. Families in the Catholic Schools Region of Staten Island, many of whom encountered similar devastation in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, raised \$61,000 for schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Students at Archbishop Stepinac High School in Westchester began their school year by collecting school supplies in conjunction with the "Adopt-a-Classroom" initiative.

We ask that you continue to pray for all those whose lives have been dramatically affected by these natural disasters, and to please contact your school principal if you are interested in participating in your region's relief efforts.

