



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

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MR. MICHAEL J. DEEGAN, SUPERINTENDENT

June 13, 2023

Dear Students, Teachers, Parents, Staff, and Friends,

As I join my colleagues in preparing for this academic year to come to a close, I do so with pride in what our great Catholic schools accomplished this year, along with optimism for the future of this iconic system of Catholic schools – the standard bearer for education in America today.

The daunting challenges we faced over the past several years have only highlighted the resilience and adaptability of our schools and the power of faith and community to heal and transform. We have come together to provide continuity of learning and support to our students and families.

Standardized academic testing for the past two years has demonstrated that our Catholic values-infused curriculum, enhanced by major investments in technology and professional development for our teachers, *exceeded* state and national averages despite COVID. In fact, thanks to the tireless work of pastors, principals and all the professional educators they lead, our schools and our students had significant *score increases* in the crucial area of English Language Arts (ELA).

Indeed, the future for our schools is revealing itself in real time. This spring, thanks to the leadership of our shepherd, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, we launched the creation of a new program to create a Catholic Education and Family Center at St. Philip Neri School, a PreK-8 elementary school that has been serving students in the Bedford Park neighborhood of the Bronx for over 100 years.

This new school model: a larger school that combines multiple existing school communities and parishes, identifies the elements that will make the school both academically excellent and distinctive and is an impactful addition to the community for the families in the neighborhoods it seeks to serve. The Office of the Superintendent will partner with other Archdiocesan ministries such as Catholic Charities, ArchCare, and Youth Ministries to provide services, including health and wellness education, vocational training, and parent and family support. This multi-year project will be the blueprint for transforming other schools in the Archdiocese of New York.

While these developments make me eager to see our future successions come to fruition (and they will), I find myself quite nostalgic for the past and, frankly, a bit melancholy as my truly blessed career comes to an end. What an immense privilege it has been to serve as the Superintendent of Catholic Schools. Throughout five decades as a Catholic educator – teacher, principal, dean and deputy superintendent – I have been honored to witness and be a small part of the transformation of countless lives, including my own.

I have been blessed to work alongside a team of dedicated educators and staff who are committed to ensuring that Catholic education remains relevant in our ever-changing world.

As I step away, I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you who have supported and uplifted me throughout my tenure. I am grateful to Cardinal Dolan for entrusting me with the leadership of the venerable institution, which he considers a treasured gift to the Church. I am in the debt of his brother bishops, priests and deacons, and the countless pastors with whom I have worked for fifty years.

Goodness knows, I am also grateful to the principals, teachers, and staff who are the heart and soul of our schools for their unwavering commitment to the growth and well-being of our students. I am also truly humbled by the love of our benefactors – the dear friends of Catholic education – whose generous gifts bestowed upon our schools have allowed us to meet and overcome the most daunting obstacles placed in our path.

Perhaps most profoundly, I am grateful to the parents who have entrusted us with the privilege of educating and nurturing their children – their most precious possession. If you had not been touched by the Holy Spirit with the determination to provide your child with a Catholic education and the willingness to make the sacrifices that accompany that, there would be nothing to write about today. I would simply be writing a memoir of sorts about something that used to be, not celebrating things to come.

Together, we have built a strong Catholic educational community that is rooted in the Gospel values of faith, service, and love. Let me shout it from the rooftop – our best days in Catholic education are ahead of us! I am confident that this commitment to Catholic education will only grow stronger under your new superintendent, Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, Ph.D., who is one of us. We are all blessed to have her as our new leader.

Life as a Catholic educator is dynamic. Every day is the same, yet no two are alike. Sacred teachings, couched in archetypal tradition, are delivered with state-of-the-art technology to a student body now more diverse than ever before. In a recent conversation, a friend asked me what I would miss most about being a Catholic educator. My answer was simple: All of it.

I pray that God will continue to bless you and your families.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Deegan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Mr. Michael J. Deegan
Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of New York