

A young girl with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark blue school uniform with a yellow collar, is looking down with her hands clasped in prayer. A priest in white vestments is blessing her with a golden chalice. Other students are visible in the background, also in uniform.

# School Viability Study

## of Parish and Regional Elementary Schools

*in the Archdiocese of New York*

*June 2025*



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS *in the*  
ARCHDIOCESE of NEW YORK

Faith-Based.Future-Focused.



## SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS OFFICE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

June 2025  
Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus  
Jubilee Year

### **Dear Friends of Catholic Education:**

As we walk together through this Jubilee Year, we are reminded of Christ's promise in Revelation 21:5: "Behold, I make all things new." These words offer us great hope, reassuring us that God is always at work in our lives, renewing and transforming us—even in times of challenge.

I am writing to share the key takeaways of our recent School Viability Study (SVS), an important step in ensuring the continued strength of Catholic education in our Archdiocese. The study, grounded in the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools* (NESBECS), highlighted both opportunities for growth and areas in need of improvement. While many of our schools continue to thrive as beacons of faith and education, all will work to address challenges and strengthen their academic and spiritual missions.

The renewal process is not always easy, but it brings with it the promise of transformation and growth. All schools, whether strong or in need of additional support, will work together with the Archdiocese to implement these renewal efforts. School principals will be communicating the specific details of these plans with their communities.

Additionally, after careful discernment, on February 13, 2025, we announced the closure of Our Lady of Refuge (Bronx), St. Lucy School (Bronx), and St. Mark the Evangelist (Manhattan) at the end of the 2024–25 academic year due to sustainability concerns. Subsequently, on May 6, 2025, we also announced the closure of Mt. Carmel-Holy Rosary School (Manhattan), effective at the end of the same academic year. We understand the emotional impact these closures have on the students, families, and communities, and we trust in God's providence to guide us toward new opportunities.

Let us hold onto the promise of Revelation 21:5, trusting that God's continual work of renewal and transformation is at the heart of everything we do. Together, we will continue to nurture faith, knowledge, and community in our students, confident that God is with us as we move forward in this time of renewal.

Thank you for your prayers, support, and unwavering dedication to Catholic education.

**Sincerely in Christ,**

**Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, Ph.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools







# School Viability Study of Parish and Regional Elementary Schools in the Archdiocese of New York

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The School Viability Study (SVS) was a comprehensive assessment that evaluated all Regional and Parish Elementary Schools in the Archdiocese of New York to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of Catholic education within the community. This process examined vital factors such as enrollment trends, financial health, academic performance, governance and leadership, and alignment with the mission and values of Catholic education.

In the Archdiocese of New York, the SVS used the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS) as a framework to ensure that every school met high standards of academic excellence, operational vitality, and Catholic identity. The study provided recommendations to strengthen Catholic education, allowing schools to continue nurturing students' educational growth and spiritual formation for future generations.

## Our Key Focus Areas of Study

Mission and Catholic Identity

Governance and Leadership

Academic Excellence

Operational Vitality

**Mission and Catholic Identity:** Catholic schools are rooted in the mission of the Church, forming students as disciples of Jesus Christ. This foundation is reflected through vibrant faith communities, meaningful liturgical experiences, and a curriculum infused with Gospel values. By fostering a culture of faith, service, and academic inquiry, Catholic schools prepare students to live out their call to holiness and transform the world.

**Governance and Leadership:** Effective Catholic schools thrive under visionary leadership and sound governance structures. Leaders inspire the community with a shared commitment to Catholic education's mission while governing bodies ensure accountability and sustainability. Collaboration among clergy, administrators, and stakeholders strengthens the school's ability to fulfill its mission and adapt to emerging challenges.

**Academic Excellence:** Catholic schools pursue excellence in teaching and learning, integrating faith with rigorous academics. Educators employ innovative methods and data-driven practices to support each student's unique needs. Catholic schools empower students to reach their full potential and contribute to society by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and a love for learning.

**Operational Vitality:** Sustainability is key to Catholic schools' success, achieved through planning, resource management, and community engagement. Operational vitality ensures that schools are well-resourced and accessible, fostering long-term growth. From effective enrollment strategies to financial stewardship, Catholic schools create a strong foundation for their mission to thrive.

# The School Viability Study Process

## October - January 2025

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### Evaluation of Parish and Regional Elementary Schools

From October 2024 to November 2024 a comprehensive evaluation process was conducted across 77 parish and regional elementary schools along with two Archdiocese of New York (ADNY) Initiative campuses to assess their alignment with the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS). This initiative involved extensive preparation, collaboration, and a structured review process to ensure meaningful outcomes.

### Planning and Organization

The initiative began with five planning meetings for all staff participants of the Superintendent of Schools Office in the Archdiocese of New York to establish clear objectives, assign roles, and standardize evaluation procedures. Oversight was provided by a steering committee led by the Superintendent of Schools, which reviewed all findings and made final recommendations.

### Formation of Sub-Committees

Four sub-committees were formed to evaluate schools across specific domains. Each sub-committee operated within a defined scope, led by the following chairs:

- **Mission and Catholic Identity**  
Co-Chairs: Linda Dougherty and Cathy Cassel
- **Governance and Leadership**  
Co-Chairs: Sr. Anne Massell and Dr. Noelle Beale
- **Academic Excellence**  
Co-Chairs: Marie O'Shea and Anthony Biscione
- **Operational Vitality**  
Co-Chairs: Patricia Zaccone and Joanne Walsh

### Execution: School Visits and Reports

Eighteen staff members from the Superintendent of Schools Office in the Archdiocese of New York visited 77 parish and regional elementary schools along with two Archdiocese of New York (ADNY) Initiative campuses, engaging in in-depth conversations with each principal. These discussions were guided by comprehensive self-studies submitted by each school.

These visits involved gathering data and observations to produce detailed evaluation reports. The findings highlighted strengths and areas for improvement for each individual school.

### Scoring and Evaluation

The evaluation process included analyzing school materials and visit reports using scoring rubrics tied to the NSBECS standards. Each domain was prioritized using the following adjusted emphasis:

- Mission and Catholic Identity
- Governance and Leadership
- Academic Excellence
- Operational Vitality

This revised approach placed greater importance on long-term mission alignment while still providing a comprehensive assessment.

### Final Review and Recommendations

The steering committee reviewed all scoring and evaluation reports, synthesizing the findings to provide actionable recommendations for each school. These recommendations were designed to support future improvements and strengthen each school's alignment with the NSBECS standards.

### What is School Viability?

School viability refers to a school's capacity to sustain and thrive over time by effectively fulfilling its mission, maintaining strong governance and leadership, achieving academic excellence, and ensuring operational vitality. It encompasses the ability to adapt to challenges, optimize resources, and create opportunities for growth while meeting the needs of students, families, and the wider community.

A viable school demonstrates stability, resilience, and a commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring its long-term success and relevance in the Catholic educational landscape.







# Bronx Catholic Schools

The Bronx Catholic School Region presents a diverse educational landscape, with schools experiencing varying levels of sustainability. While several schools are thriving, supported by strong finances, academic excellence, and active parish partnerships, all schools that will be committed to participating in structured renewal plans. These efforts aim to ensure long-term vitality, strengthen Catholic identity, and position schools for future growth.

After careful and comprehensive assessment, certain schools were determined to be unsustainable and recommended for closure at the conclusion of the 2024-25 academic year. This decision, though deeply difficult, was made with great care for the well-being of students, families, faculty, and the broader faith community.

## Regional Strengths and Challenges:

The Bronx region has made significant strides in building stronger connections among school communities and promoting a unified Catholic identity. Throughout the region, a sustained focus on data-driven instruction has been successfully implemented, leading to continued excellence and measurable improvement across all schools. Targeted leadership development and resource-building initiatives have begun to create a stronger foundation for future success. Still, major challenges remain.

Charter school competition continues to affect enrollment across the region, and the underutilization of school buildings drives operational inefficiencies and rising costs. Addressing these realities through focused renewal plans will be critical to sustaining a vibrant Catholic educational presence in the Bronx for years to come.



St. Theresa School, Bronx



St. Benedict School, Bronx



St. Philip Neri School, Bronx





*Corpus Christi  
Holy Rosary*



# Central Westchester Catholic Schools

The Central Westchester School Region presents a mix of sustainable schools and those in need of targeted renewal efforts. While several schools are thriving, every school in the region will actively participate in renewal planning to strengthen sustainability and future growth.

As part of a comprehensive regional effort, every school—regardless of current performance—will engage in a renewal planning process to address challenges, build on strengths, and ensure their mission and vitality for the future.

## Regional Strengths and Challenges:

Many parish schools benefit from strong financial health, academic success, and close partnerships with their host parishes, providing stability and support. Several regional elementary schools also maintain solid financial foundations, positioning them well for long-term success.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel School and Pastoral Center offers a unique opportunity to serve as a model of innovation and best practices in Catholic education. Schools in Yonkers, much like those in New York City, benefit from shared resources and pooled government funding, creating a centralized financial structure that provides a reliable foundation for their operations.

Nevertheless, the region faces challenges. Several schools experience declining enrollment, financial pressures, and operational inefficiencies. Factors such as increased competition, and funding limitations contribute to these difficulties.



St. Anthony School, Yonkers



Corpus Christi - Holy Rosary School, Port Chester







# Manhattan Catholic Schools

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**The Manhattan School Region** presents a diverse mix of schools—some with strong academic and operational performance, and others facing financial and enrollment difficulties. As part of a renewal plan that includes all schools, the region will move forward with efforts to strengthen long-term viability and ensure every school is better supported.

## **Regional Strengths and Challenges:**

Parish-based schools are a particular strength in Manhattan. These schools benefit from solid financial support, academic success, and strong partnerships with their host parishes. These relationships play a key role in their stability and can offer helpful models for other schools across the region. Additionally, several of the Archdiocese's highest-performing elementary schools are located in Manhattan. The culture of data-based instruction has spread to all schools in the region and is contributing to continued excellence and improvement across the region.

Despite these strengths, challenges remain. Some schools face ongoing enrollment and financial pressures that make it difficult to sustain operations. In Upper Manhattan, a high concentration of schools leads to increased competition for a limited number of students, which restricts growth and puts added strain on resources.







Father Vincent Capodanno Catholic Academy, Staten Island



# Staten Island Catholic Schools

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The **Staten Island School Region** maintains a stable educational landscape, with schools demonstrating a mix of strengths and opportunities for growth. As part of a region-wide effort, all schools will engage in renewal planning to strengthen their foundations and ensure long-term sustainability.

## **Regional Strengths and Challenges:**

Many parish and regional elementary schools on Staten Island benefit from strong financial footing, solid academic performance, and active parish or community partnerships. These elements contribute to school vitality and sustained engagement. At the same time, renewal planning will provide every school—regardless of current status—with a structured process to assess progress, reinforce stability, and address any emerging challenges.

The region as a whole benefits from a collaborative financial framework that allows for resource sharing and collective problem-solving. While no widespread change is anticipated, the renewal planning process will help ensure that all schools are positioned for continued success and viability as part of a broader, forward-looking strategy.



Sacred Heart School, Staten Island



St. Rita-St. Theresa STREAM Academy, Staten Island





St. Margaret of Antioch School



# Upper Counties Catholic Schools

**Catholic Schools in the Upper Counties** stand at a transformative moment, with both significant opportunities and challenges on the horizon. This diverse area has a strong foundation for growth. While some schools are already thriving, all schools will participate in renewal plans aimed at strengthening long-term sustainability. Encouragingly, every school in the region holds the potential for revitalization and future success.

## **Regional Strengths and Challenges:**

The Upper Counties Region has a number of strengths and opportunities that can be leveraged for future growth. Community engagement and stability stand out as key assets, with strong partnerships in certain areas fostering ongoing collaboration and operational resilience. These partnerships provide a solid foundation upon which further development can be built.

However, challenges such as declining enrollment and financial instability exist in some institutions, underscoring the importance of addressing these issues proactively. By finding sustainable solutions, these institutions can be supported in navigating financial uncertainties and ensuring their long-term viability.

The distribution of institutions and their relationship with surrounding communities also presents an opportunity for careful evaluation. Understanding how the current PK-5 model functions in different geographic areas will be essential for making informed decisions and crafting effective strategies for the future.



Kingston Catholic School, Kingston



St. Margaret of Antioch School, Pearl River



St. Anthony - St. Paul School, Nanuet and Valley Cottage





# The Catholic Elementary School Association (CESA): Former Partnership Schools

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**The Catholic Elementary School Association (CESA)**, formerly *Partnership Schools* is at a critical juncture, facing profound deficiencies across all key areas: Catholic identity, governance and leadership, academics, and operational vitality, with all requiring renewal plans and two deemed unsustainable and recommended for closure at the conclusion of the 2024-25 academic year. These challenges are compounded by significant financial deficits, systemic weaknesses, and operational inefficiencies that necessitate immediate action.

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## **Current State of the CESA Schools:**

Based on evaluations that included self-assessments, on-site visits, and committee reviews, these schools face a projected deficit driven by a combination of low tuition rates and high operational expenses. The financial model currently in place fails to adequately offset costs, and the tuition structure demands thorough analysis as these schools transition back into the traditional Archdiocesan education model.

On January 15, 2025, the Superintendent of Schools Office of the Archdiocese of New York announced that two CESA institutions in the Bronx, will cease operations as Catholic schools at the end of the 2024-25 academic year. Brilla Public Charter Schools, a network of free, high-performing public charter schools in the Bronx, plans to relocate Brilla Pax and Brilla Veritas Middle schools into the buildings. Brilla, in collaboration with Seton Education Partners, will also offer an optional Catholic extended-day program for students.

Two other CESA schools were deemed non-viable and recommended for closure at the end of the 2024–25 academic year due to low enrollment. Both schools have struggled with declining student numbers, with one having the lowest enrollment and requiring the most extensive remediation. Their closure is considered a necessary step to reallocate resources more effectively. Following the closures, alternative solutions will be needed to address the needs of their respective communities.

By addressing these challenges with care and urgency, the Superintendent of Schools Office can guide the remaining CESA schools toward a future of sustainability and growth. This path will be one of hope and renewal for the schools, the students, and the communities they serve.





# The Path Forward: A Unified Vision for Catholic School Renewal

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Across the Archdiocese of New York, Catholic schools will embrace a shared path forward rooted in faith, excellence, and sustainability. While each region faces unique challenges, all are committed to a common strategy focused on growth, stability, and a vibrant Catholic identity. The path forward focus areas outlined below reflect this unified vision and provide a shared roadmap for the future.

## **Key Areas of Focus Across All Regions:**

### **1. Targeted School Renewal Plans:**

Each Catholic School in the Archdiocese of New York will develop customized renewal plans to strengthen their mission, Catholic identity, academic performance, and improve operational efficiency.

### **2. Enrollment Growth and Retention:**

Renewal efforts will be made to enhance enrollment through improved academic offerings, targeted marketing, and increased family engagement.

### **3. Financial Sustainability:**

Renewal plans will include the evaluation of tuition models, reallocation of resources where needed, and efforts to optimize financial health across schools.

### **4. Facility and Space Optimization:**

Schools will assess current building usage to align facilities with enrollment trends and reduce operational costs through consolidation or building reconfiguration where appropriate.

### **5. Stronger Parish-School Partnerships:**

Collaboration with parishes will be deepened to strengthen Catholic identity, foster spiritual growth, and ensure community support for each school's mission.

### **6. Leadership Development and Innovation:**

Investing in strong, mission-driven school leadership and leveraging innovation through initiatives such as Our Lady of Mount Carmel School and Pastoral Center in Elmsford will be critical to long-term renewal.

As part of this path forward, all schools—not only those facing immediate challenges—will participate in a renewal plan process. Each school will develop and implement a tailored plan to enhance its long-term viability, rooted in the principles of Catholic mission, academic excellence, governance and leadership, and operational vitality.







# Next Steps: School Renewal Plans

The School Renewal Plan is a tactical tool designed to strengthen and sustain the mission, excellence, and long-term vitality of Catholic schools. This next phase is a direct response to the School Viability Study (SVS), which calls for a renewed commitment across the Archdiocese of New York’s educational system.

All renewal plans will serve as a guide to strengthen and sustain the mission and effectiveness of Catholic schools. This comprehensive process is centered on the four key areas:

- **Mission and Catholic Identity:** Ensuring that the school’s Catholic identity is authentically lived out, visibly present, and deeply integrated into all aspects of school life, culture, and decision-making.
- **Governance and Leadership:** Promoting strong, mission-driven leadership structures and collaborative governance that support the long-term success of the school.
- **Academic Excellence:** Advancing a rigorous, values-based curriculum that meets the diverse needs of students while fostering intellectual growth and spiritual development.
- **Operational Vitality:** Establishing a solid foundation for financial health, enrollment stability, facilities management, and community partnerships to ensure sustainability and growth.

Together, these focus areas provide a framework to guide schools in their continued development, faith formation, and educational impact.

## Implementation Timeline and Support:

- All Regional and Parish elementary schools will engage in the development of a School Renewal Plan addressing each of the four key areas.
- Selected schools will receive direct support from external consultants to help guide and enhance their planning process.
- The renewal process will launch in Spring 2025, with schools actively engaging in planning and reflection throughout the fall.
- Completed plans will be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools by December 2025 for review, feedback, and approval.

The overarching goal of the School Renewal Plan is to strengthen and enrich Catholic education—deepening faith, fostering academic excellence, and ensuring the vitality of each school for years to come. ***This renewal process is not simply a one-time initiative*** but a foundational step toward building thriving, mission-centered school communities grounded in our Gospel values and academic distinction.







# School Viability Study (SVS)

## of Parish and Regional Elementary Schools

*in the Archdiocese of New York*

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### **SVS Steering Committee**

Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools  
BriAna Pechin, Deputy Superintendent of Schools  
Patricia Zaccone, Associate Superintendent for Operations and Planning  
Steven Pallonetti, Associate Superintendent for Government Programs and Student Services

### **Standards and Benchmarks Committees**

#### **Mission and Catholic Identity:**

Linda Dougherty (Co-Chair), Associate Superintendent for Catholic Identity and Secondary Schools  
Cathleen Cassel (Co-Chair), Regional Superintendent for the Upper Counties  
Veronica Jarek-Prinz, Former Director of Enrollment Management  
Gerald Wutkowski, Jr., Director of Communications and Digital Media  
Patricia Ryan, Grants Manager

#### **Governance and Leadership:**

Sr. Anne Massell, PBVM (Co-Chair), Associate Superintendent for Leadership  
Dr. Noelle Beale, Ph.D. (Co-Chair), Regional Superintendent for Central Westchester  
Sr. Patricia Anastasio, PBVM, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent for Teacher Personnel  
Matthew DiBenedetto, Student Services & Public Policy Associate  
Oneeka Jordan, Director of Data Information Systems and Data Management

#### **Academic Excellence:**

Marie O'Shea (Co-Chair), Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning  
Anthony Biscione (Co-Chair), Regional Superintendent for Manhattan  
Jann Amato, Regional Superintendent for Staten Island  
Ray Vitiello, Regional Superintendent for the Bronx  
Connie McCrory, Director of Early Childhood Education  
Margaret McEvoy, Director of Teacher Personnel

#### **Operational Vitality:**

Patricia Zaccone (Co-Chair), Associate Superintendent for Operations and Planning  
Joanne Walsh (Co-Chair), Associate Superintendent for Early Childhood Education  
Steven Pallonetti, Associate Superintendent of Government Programs and Student Services  
Lillian Valentin, Director of Data Collection  
Patrick Davis, Director of School Technology



# THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RENEWAL



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