



SCHOOL MATTERS

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT...



The schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia intentionally work to remain on the cutting edge of educational transformation so that our students are receiving a Catholic education that is both rigorous and relevant preparing them for future choices and endeavors.

The Catholic environment of reverence, respect, prayer and service are the hallmark of our schools. This Gospel-centered learning atmosphere is integrated into all aspects of our schools' daily schedules and learning routines.

The Office of Catholic Education works with the parish, regional, special education and secondary schools to create a vision that is forward-thinking and enables each school to provide the leadership and resources for an excellent Catholic Education. Schools are continually challenged to integrate technology, critical thinking, communication, creativity and innovation skills, as well as the opportunity for our students to collaborate with one another in the learning environment on a frequent basis.

Our teachers stand among the best in our region as they continually participate in professional development with a keen focus on establishing a learning environment that will engage and challenge our students to do their best at each grade level.

Our students are well prepared for success as they move from grade level to grade level, from elementary to secondary and from secondary to post-graduate education and into the workplace. It is our responsibility and our privilege to assume such a vital role in a child's life, educating for now and for their future.

As the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops so wisely stated in 2005, "Young people of the third millennium must be a source of energy and leadership in our Church and our nation. Therefore, we must provide young people with an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education and faith formation designed to strengthen their union with Christ and His Church."

We invite you to consider a Catholic Education for your child. [Click here](#) to find a school near you. If you already have, we are most grateful for your confidence and trust in our work to advance your child in wisdom, age and grace! ❖



"Like" Mary Rochford on Facebook to stay connected and informed about Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS— MISSION AND BELIEFS

Our commitment to the spiritual and educational vision of 21st century Catholic schools is affirmed more now than ever before as a result of the recent contract negotiations in the Secondary School System earlier this school year.

As we work to provide the best possible Christ-centered education for our students, the Association of Catholic Teachers and the Secondary School System accept and support the mission and belief statements below:

MISSION

Catholic Schools form Catholic students to be full and practicing members of the Church, are centers of evangelization that call all to live fully the message of Jesus Christ, and are centers of academic excellence that rigorously prepare students to be life-long learners and contributing members of the global community.

The Secondary School System of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is dedicated to the mission of Catholic education. To that end, the work of all should reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe the Catholic Schools in the Secondary School System are an integral part of the Church's mission to teach young people how to proclaim the Gospel, build faith communities, celebrate through worship, and service to others.

We believe the goal of our Secondary Catholic Schools is to assist parents/guardians in preparing the next generation of practicing Catholics who are well educated

in the Catholic faith and capable of leadership in creating a just and Gospel-centered society.

We believe our Secondary Catholic Schools are committed to academic excellence, fostering the intellectual development and growth of faculty and students as all embrace learning attitudes of the 21st century.

We believe student learning in our Secondary Catholic Schools begins with a rigorous curriculum presented in a learning environment that supports high levels of student engagement where ever-evolving technologies and 21st century skills are integrated with information relevant to the present as well as the future.

We believe all students in our Secondary Catholic Schools need to be given frequent opportunities to think critically, work collaboratively, and make appropriate choices in an academic climate that allows for growth in each student's ability to express learning in creative ways.

We believe a safe, orderly and respectful learning environment is necessary for a quality, Catholic Education.

We believe our Secondary Catholic Schools embrace cultural diversity reflective of the world in which our students will live and work.

We believe supportive relationships enhance the learning capabilities of all of our students.

To learn more about the Mission, Vision, and Beliefs of our Catholic Schools, please visit:

<http://www.catholicschools-phl.org/about-oce/mission> ❖

THE IMPORTANCE OF 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

The history of education in the United States tells us that one of the original models of 21st Century learning came from a progressive education pioneer, John Dewey, during the late 1800's. It is not easy to grasp the idea that John Dewey's model for experiential learning of the 1800's is closely aligned with today's model of rigorous and relevant, skill-based learning. However, it is true!

Dewey's lab school provided students with relevant, real-world experiences from which they could build knowledge and skills that would endure throughout a lifetime. However, during the past 100 years, most educators have focused on a model of strong content knowledge through single disciplinary studies as the method to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship with little attention paid to the skills that students should acquire.

Today, educators and business and community leaders face challenges such as how to prepare a workforce for a globally competitive market when students entering the workforce have the knowledge but not the skills needed to ensure success. Educators understand the need for skill-based outcomes for their students and have begun to embrace the 21st Century skills needed by students. It simply is not enough to have deep content knowledge in a given subject. Students need to possess the ability to take their content knowledge and apply it to problem-solving, communications, strategic planning, collaboration, and creativity.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (www.p21.org) suggests a framework for 21st Century learning that includes six key elements. The essential skills found through the six key elements of a 21st Century education will help prepare students for college, career, and citizenship.

The six elements include:

- 1 deep core subject knowledge such as found in language arts, math, science, and social studies;
- 2 21st Century content knowledge such as global awareness, civic literacy, financial literacy, and environmental literacy;
- 3 learning and thinking skills such as creativity and innovation, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking;
- 4 Information and Communications Technology skills;
- 5 life skills such as, leadership, ethics, accountability, self direction, and social responsibility; and
- 6 21st Century assessments that provide students, parents, and teachers with meaningful information about the acquisition of the student's knowledge and skills.

All students need to be ready for the world in which they will live, not for the world in which their parents and teachers live. In order to bridge the gap between what students learn in school and what skills they need to succeed in the real world outside of school, educators and policymakers together must purposefully decide to prepare all students with 21st Century skills and experiences. Dewey might be proud to find us at the tipping point of experiential, skill-based learning again. ❖

GETTING TO THE CORE OF LEARNING

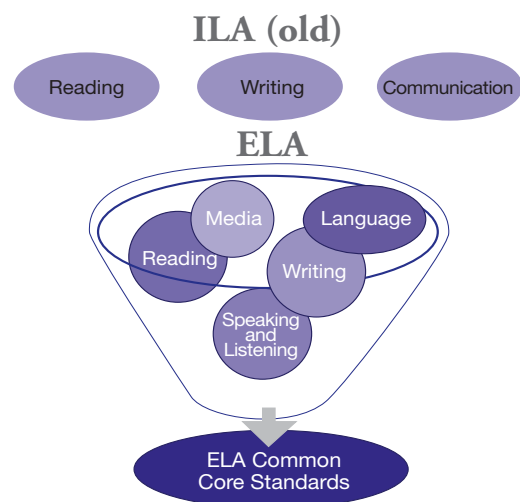
When Archdiocesan schools opened their doors in September, teachers and students began the implementation of a whole new approach to learning and thinking. After years of research and study of curriculum, our schools are among the first in the area to adopt the Common Core State Standards.

An initiative of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), this evidence-based and research-based curriculum in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics is intended to prepare our students for college, career and life.

In the early 90's, students in the United States ranked among the top in the world. In more recent studies, there has been a significant decline, prompting the action of the NGA and CCSSO. Curriculum topics at each level varied from state to state. Learning was passive and textbook-driven. Active, research-based learning will be evident with the Common Core State Standards. The focus of curriculum will shift from "what's taught" to "what students need to know."

In mathematics, the Standards are designed to provide a solid foundation for grades K–5 in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals, and a solid foundation for grades 6–8 in geometry, algebra, and probability and statistics. Conceptual categories such as higher level algebra, functions and modeling are presented in grades 9–12. Some standards go beyond the "career and college readiness level" (e.g., integration with Science, Technology, Engineering and higher-level Math concepts are a thread throughout, but go beyond what all students will need to know and at high school may lead to a 4th year of math).

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts incorporate Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. The following graphic describes the transition from the previous Language Arts Curriculum to the newer Curriculum. As seen here, there is much more of an integration among the various components of the curriculum.



Academic excellence remains a goal for all students in a Catholic school. As we move forward with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, we realize that change will bring about challenges, but as we have done in the past, we will face the challenges and continue to focus on the core of what is best for our students.

[Additional curriculum information can be found here.](#) ❖

In the next edition. . .Changes in Report Cards and Grading

THE VALUE OF A CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT

“There can be no separate Church for children with disabilities. We are one flock that follows a single shepherd.”

These powerful words from the U.S. Catholic Bishops in 1978 still hold true today.

The profound commitment of the Office of Catholic Education (under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia), together with major support from Catholic Charities, provides our students the opportunity to thrive in a Catholic faith community that nurtures their relationship with their loving God.

Presently, our four programs include two schools that address sensory issues: Archbishop Ryan Academy for the Deaf, Saint Lucy Day School for Children with Visual Impairments, and our two schools that support students with intellectual disabilities: Saint Katherine Day School and Our Lady of Confidence Day School. Saint Katherine Day School also has a program for students with severe intellectual and physical disabilities.

We desire our children to take their place in society as strong Catholics with a belief in God through a rich sacramental life, as well as being equipped with the means for independence and for equal opportunity.

Students begin and end their day with prayer and often song! They actively participate in school liturgies and show their love and concern to God’s people through service to the community.

The voice of one of our parents says it all! “There is no where else I wish to send my child than to this special school. I know she will learn about God’s love and care through you and it will stay with her forever.” ❖



[Discover our Special Education Schools.](#)

THE RELEVANCE OF HOMEWORK

Homework has been around for as long as anyone can remember. It sparks negative connotations in some minds and that is a shame. The “art” of homework has many advocates that are equally vocal about the positive or negative effects on a student’s learning, and his or her attitude toward school. Some say it makes students anxious about school, while others say it makes good use of what might otherwise be leisure time. But there is a need for homework and its many benefits.

Homework is the intersection of home and school. It can be used by the parents to

find out what their child has been doing the many hours they were away from home. It allows them the opportunity to be positive about a child’s school and the wonderful progress he or she is making.

Homework should allow practice in the academics that were presented or worked on during the school day. If done properly and with supervision by the family, it can improve a child’s achievement as he or she will increase general knowledge of the material.

Homework can also increase a child’s sense of responsibility. Children must know that they need to gather books, papers and pencil. Then, they check what needs to be done, complete the assignment and come to the parents with the work completed for review, and finally to hand the assignment to the teacher.

Time management is a skill with which even adults sometimes need help. Children need to be taught at a young age that their responsibility is to know what needs to be done. However, when parents help them remember to do the assignment and ask along the way how the assignment is coming along, children will have a better sense of how to manage time.

Adults have patterns that they have learned during their lifetime. Helping a child to do his or her homework provides additional practice in instruction, can improve academic achievement, and strengthen a sense of responsibility and time management. Believe it or not, a parent can set up homework to succeed, family ties will be enhanced. In the beginning it may seem difficult to achieve, but remember that skills are learned by repetition. Reminding children to do their homework and getting the necessary items ready is a task much like learning to tie ones shoes or ride a bike— it has to be done over and over to acquire the skill. ❖



SCHOOL CHOICE

This fall, our Legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will most likely address the issue of School Choice. School Choice would allow taxpayers to benefit directly from monies they pay to the state government. These monies traditionally flow to local public school systems. Under School Choice initiatives currently being considered, some parents would receive a credit towards the school of their choice be it—public, private, religious, or non-public.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) support legislation that increases the successful Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program and creates a voucher program. Vouchers may or may not help all families today, but they will help low-income families and will free up EITC funds that can assist both low- and middle-income families now.

School choice reinforces the idea that parents, not the government, are the primary educators of their children. The current treatment of children, especially those from low-income families, is unjust and inequitable.

Currently, the EITC system, benefits students choosing to attend non-public schools. This system, while very helpful, does not do enough to address the often overwhelming cost of Catholic Education that many undertake or wish to undertake.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is supporting an initiative which would raise the amount of money dedicated to EITC every year, as well as enact School Choice Legislation for parents and students who could not attend otherwise. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, along with the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC), has been and will be contacting our local senators and representatives asking for support of the School Choice Bill. Providing a quality education for our children is the most critical investment we can make for our future. Parents have the duty and responsibility to provide the best education possible for their children. They have a right to determine which school will best meet the needs of their children. The state should support parents in meeting this obligation.

We ask that our parents, and those concerned about the future of Catholic education to contact their local state legislators and reiterate to them that School Choice—the creation of a voucher program and an increase to EITC— would not only benefit them, but their community at large. [Please click on this link to easily send a message to your legislator today!](#)

For more information on school choice, please visit ACE + PA and REACH via the icons to the right. ❖

School choice is not a public vs. private school issue. Public schools have continued to receive funding while EITC has grown. They will continue to receive funding when vouchers are passed. School choice empowers families to find the best educational environment for their student.



THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE

The third Commandment calls us to keep holy the Sabbath day. For Christians, the observance of the Sabbath occurs on Sunday. For a Catholic, Sunday Mass is the most important event of each week. In it, we offer our lives in sacrifice with Jesus to the Father. We make Sunday holy by participating in the Eucharist and refraining from unnecessary work.

Keeping Sunday holy has its origin from the actual day of Christ's Resurrection, Easter Sunday. Each Sunday we celebrate the great event of our salvation. During Mass we offer praise and thanks to God as we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus. By his death and resurrection, Jesus frees us from sin, guides our journey on earth and opens the way to heaven for each of us. Through our participation at Mass we are instructed by God's word and nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. We are drawn into an even more perfect union with God and with each other.

While Sunday is the time for worship, it is also an occasion for rest and relaxation. Too many people's lives are marked by constant activity that for most they are just as busy and exhausted on Sundays as they are on weekdays.

For six days, we work and use our talents and abilities to supply for our needs and the needs of others, particularly our families. By resting on the Sabbath, we make a public statement that ultimately we depend on God for everything. We can be tempted to believe that our accomplishments are done independent of God. We are misled to think that through our own efforts, we achieve success. In reality, any measure of achievement or success is the fruit of God's grace. By keeping Sunday holy, we acknowledge our dependence on God for everything. Our participation at Mass is the supreme act of thanks and praise that we offer to God for his goodness to us.

On Sunday, make time to be with one another in meals, conversation and activities that deepen family life. Take care to set aside sufficient time for leisure. The Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door. Those who participate at Mass carry their joy, faith, and concern for others from the Mass into the rest of the day, and indeed into the week that follows. ❖

SAVE THE DATE

The Distinguished Catholic School Graduate Award was established in 1991 to recognize those graduates whose commitment to the values of a Catholic life have inspired an appreciation for a Catholic education.

The tradition will continue as we pay tribute to the next class of Distinguished Graduates.

More details to follow in the next issue, but please **save the date:**

Tuesday, April 24, 2012

Crystal Tea Room | Philadelphia, PA





DISTINGUISHED PRINCIPALS 2011

The role of Principal is not just that of an administrator within a school within a school, but also a vocation which requires a strong understanding and trust in God to perform daily duties with love and respect for those children in their care.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is blessed to have extraordinary principals in every one of our schools. Each year we honor those that have exceeded the everyday calling, and have striven to make a difference in the lives of those in their school communities.

This year's Distinguished Principals, who are listed below, were formally honored at the Administrator's Fall Conference on October 13, 2011. The honorees exhibited exceptional knowledge in Best Practices, 21st Century Skills Application, and fostered strong Catholic Identity as well as overall academic achievement in their school.

Sister Virginia Paschall, IHM

Blessed Virgin Mary School, Darby

Thanks to the keen administrative ability of Sister Virginia Paschall, Blessed Virgin Mary School can pride itself on a high level of group activity, brainstorming, collaboration, and integrated use of technology. The school provides a developmentally appropriate environment that fosters a sense of self, social, and spiritual awareness within the individual child. Within its classrooms, students feel comfortable taking educational risks, knowing that they will be supported by their teachers. Overall, Sister Virginia has ensured that symbols of the faith are evident throughout the entire school, which proudly wears the mantle of its Catholic Identity.

Ms. Patricia Cody

Epiphany of Our Lord School, South Philadelphia

Ms. Cody is to be commended for the enthusiasm and dedication she has demonstrated during her 30 years in Catholic education. Never one to shy away from a challenge, she has embraced technology, new initiatives, and programs whole-heartedly in her pursuit of excellence. Through her participation in the Distributed Leadership program, Ms. Cody has empowered her teacher-leaders to create a Professional Learning Community in which they share an unrelenting focus on evidence-based teaching and learning. Her students love her as do her students' parents because of her evident loving concern for them.

Ms. Bridget Tighe

Saint Francis of Assisi, Norristown

St. Francis of Assisi School's motto, "Small School—Big Difference" is evidence of the tireless work of Ms. Tighe. Through participation in the Powerful Learning Practices Program, and through collaboration with other principals within her district, she and her faculty created a learning community in which resources and ideas could be shared and collegial relationships were formed. Ms. Tighe believes that in order to make a difference for the children, it is necessary to cultivate the talents and skills of the teachers, and she has made professional development a top priority in her strategic plan. A member of the Mathematics Curriculum Committee and the Middle States Elementary Commission, as well as the Safe Environment Facilitator for the Office of Youth and Child Protection, it is Ms. Tighe's mission to make a big difference in the lives of her students.

Sister MaryAnne Bolger, IHM

Saint Veronica School, Philadelphia North

Sister MaryAnne is an administrator of a culturally diverse school. The school faces financial hardship as it strives to meet the many needs of its school families. Sister MaryAnne sees the humor in all situations. As she says, "You better be able to laugh." Sister administers to a parish school that has challenges and she understands the importance of reaching out to the needs of her community. The fluctuation of families moving in and out of the parish and neighborhood results in turnover of students. However, Sister MaryAnne does not let any of these factors deter her from being a strong and effective Catholic School leader. She creates a nurturing environment for her student body. Her students truly believe that their school is a "home away from home." She sets high standards for her teachers and her students and expects the best. There is not one defining initiative or program, but an unrelenting passion and persistence in developing a culture to support rigor and relevance for all students. Sister MaryAnne is always so open to everything and shares all initiatives with her faculty. She inspires her teachers to give of themselves for the students.

Ms. Peg Egan

Saints Peter and Paul, West Chester

Ms. Egan stepped into the role as principal with a positive attitude and a drive to grow her school. Successfully, she added a grade of students each year until the school had its first, of many, graduating class. A true educator, Ms. Egan researched programs, sought out services, and interviewed countless applicants in an effort to create a learning environment in which academic excellence would abound. Under Ms. Egan's leadership, children within the classrooms are engaged in rigorous learning and relevant projects. Lessons are multidisciplinary in nature and involve collaboration, critical thinking, and creative problem solving. This school is a learning laboratory where 21st Century skills are the order of the day, and academic achievement is evident in TerraNova results. Hers is a success story that makes her predecessor smile from Heaven everyday!

Our Nominee for Distinguished Principal for NCEA...

Ms. Nancy Matteo

Saint Andrew, Newtown

Ms. Matteo's mantra is "Set the Bar high! Students will give you exactly what you expect," so mediocre isn't an acceptable word around Saint Andrew School—and the spirit of the school is contagious. The faculty and students are happy, and the students have the opportunity to learn in an environment where best teaching practices are utilized all day. Ms. Matteo's dedication even extends beyond the school year, attending courses in the summer so that she can keep abreast of the latest and best practices in teaching, which she transfers to her teachers. Her door is always open for students, and she feels strongly that students should have a voice in school matters.

The parents of the school rave about their principal, and confirm that Ms. Matteo does indeed live the Mission Statement of the school:

"The faculty and staff work in partnership with families to develop and maintain the spiritual, social, and academic needs of the student to instill a lifetime appreciation for learning and to send forth Christian leaders to a diverse global society."

YOUR DIGITAL PERMANENT RECORD: THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING YOUR DIGITAL REPUTATION

You've gotten the best grades in school, the SATs, participated in a wide variety of clubs and sports in and out of school, you've worked hard to make yourself look like the "ideal" candidate for any college or job. Is all that enough? What about your "digital permanent record?"

Your "digital permanent record" isn't an actual record, but rather a trail or collection of all the things you have posted online. It used to be that the Internet gave people the ability to be anonymous, but that isn't the case anymore. Every single status update or comment on Facebook (or any website), each video uploaded or comment made on YouTube, each text message sent, and all photos uploaded to Twitter or Flickr are all recorded forever. Even once deleted from the site or phone, it may have been shared, downloaded, or archived somewhere else on the Internet or on a computer.

If you haven't googled yourself, this is a great practice to get into as up to 50% of colleges and businesses today regularly search current/potential employees and students before accepting them into their businesses or schools. For many adults today, their online reputation and



maintaining a positive, professional image has become an important part of their lives. It's not uncommon to hear of someone losing a job, not being hired, losing a scholarship or acceptance to a college due to what has shown up during a quick google search or from the results of their social networking activities. It is equally not uncommon for someone to be recruited for a job due their positive online presence. The key to all of this, whether positive or negative, is of course, your name.

It is unrealistic to expect a teenager living today in a "Reality TV" world to not be a part of social networking where one freely shares opinions, information, and details of daily lives. The Pew Internet Project found that two thirds of teens are content creators meaning that they are regularly uploading and sharing videos, photos, blogs, status updates and sharing personal information. What are some ways of enjoying being connected and yet maintaining a positive digital permanent record? Short of being very mindful of what is posted and never posting anything even remotely questionable, two suggestions are avoid the use of your full name, and secondly becoming the source of positive content in your digital record.

Future employers and admissions directors will search for you by your full name so avoid using your full name at all costs and use a nickname. While your nickname can follow you, it is easier to distinguish yourself from that than from your legal name. Your legal name and reputation are incredibly valuable; treat it that way and only use it when absolutely necessary.

As you grow into adulthood, be mindful of the content you create online and the reputation it will leave. Having a positive reputation online means protecting the information about you that you'd rather people not see and also not publishing information that you don't care for others to see. Having an appropriate presence online where you constructively comment on blogs, share appropriate photos and videos, and represent yourself with professionalism will help create a "digital permanent record" that you can be proud of.

Remember, once you put something online it is there forever, and someone who is your friend today may not be tomorrow, so please think before you click submit and always avoid using your full legal name. ❖

DID YOU KNOW...

that businesses in Pennsylvania can receive a 75-90% tax credit by donating to Business Leadership Organized for Catholic Schools (BLOCS) through the EITC program?

The Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program allows businesses to make contributions to BLOCS and provide life-changing scholarships to students in our area that enable them to attend Catholic Schools. Our scholarships are 100% need-based, and have allowed thousands of students to receive a quality, values-based education and escape the cycle of poverty they would otherwise face.

BLOCS depends on your EITC donations to literally change the lives of children who otherwise wouldn't have access to a quality education. Please help continue this work by applying for your tax credit this year, and by designating BLOCS as the recipient of your generosity. Applying is easy...

[Click here for an application for EITC credits, as well as step-by-step instructions on how your business can support good schools for great kids in the Philadelphia region through the EITC program.](#) ❖

MAKE A DONATION— CHANGE A LIFE

Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia have enjoyed a tradition of spiritual formation, social growth and academic excellence for more than 100 years. While many schools can offer solid academics, Catholic schools rigorously prepare students to be life-long learners and contributing members of the global community. Please support our young people. ❖

[Make a Donation to Catholic Schools Now*](#)

*Use the "Donation to and any restrictions" area to specify if you wish your gift to go to a specific school and/or program. ❖

