



DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

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My dear people:

As we approach the start of the 2002-03 academic year, it is my sincere hope that the summer months have provided you an opportunity for fun, relaxation and time spent with family and loved ones. It is hard to believe that these sun-filled days are passing by so quickly.



Given the joyous and spirit-filled nature of the recent World Youth Day celebration in Toronto, attended by so many of our young people, it is only natural that my thoughts at this time center on the wonderful presence and gifts of our children. I also recognize the awesome responsibility of parents, guardians, catechetical leaders and teachers – and all adults who in some way influence young people – to help guide them along the correct moral, spiritual and academic path.

The bishops of the eight dioceses of New York State, in our document *Every Parent, Every Child: A Pastoral Statement of Parental Rights in Education*, rightly define children as “our most precious gift and our greatest hope”. The document also affirms the notion that parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.

While I strongly agree with the latter statement, I would also take this opportunity to remind parents and guardians of the Diocese of Rochester Catholic Schools’ desire to partner with them in this most important endeavor. An awareness campaign launched late last winter promoted the fact that at Catholic schools “*We teach it all*”. That phrase, which is embodied through the work of dedicated educators in each of our schools, serves as a reminder that the strong core academics, for which Catholic schools are noted, are intertwined with a focus on instilling moral and spiritual values. We renew our pledge to work in a collaborative manner with parents and teachers to ensure that our students achieve success in school and in life.

To all students, parents, guardians and educators, I extend my very best wishes for another successful school year. Please know that, as always, you remain in my prayers.

With every good wish, I remain

Your brother in Christ,

*Matthew H. Clark*

Matthew H. Clark  
Bishop of Rochester

*God's Love Endures Forever*

# FOCUS ON EDUCATION



## DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Friends,

Building academic performance while enhancing Catholic values has always been the foundation of a Catholic School education and is the primary reason that Catholic Schools excel. Despite spending less than half of what the public schools spend on educating children in both city and suburban schools, Catholic schools outperform public schools in both reading and mathematics at every grade level. Recent studies across the state indicate that Catholic schools educate students for 46.8 of the public school cost.



Although both Catholic and public schools achieve less as the percentage of their enrollment represented by children in poverty increases, Catholic schools substantially mitigate the effect of poverty, so the rising levels of poverty produce far smaller negative effects on learning in Catholic than public schools. So, how do we achieve these levels of success?

According to Paul E. Peterson and Herbert J. Walberg, distinguished visiting fellows at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and authors of a recent study comparing Catholic to public schools, effectiveness and efficiency of Catholic schools do not seem attributable to Catholicism, at least not by the authors' definition. They observed that Catholic schools must compete for their customers. Poor families in particular must struggle to pay tuition. Peterson and Walberg concluded that parents get much more for their dollar when they choose Catholic schools. Specifically they list the following attributes as important differentiators:

Courtesy, fairness and respect; a clear mission for learning; an appreciation of democratic principles and preparation to be good citizens; an academic curriculum taught well to whole classes; a notebook of assignments and notes for each subject; homework for completion and grading each day; a close connection between parents and teachers; leadership, with a principal accountable to parents who can choose to leave if dissatisfied.

“The keys to Catholic school success are competition and direct accountability to their customers – parents and students,” conclude Peterson and Walberg. They further suggest that parents should expect no less from any school they choose for their children. In the Catholic schools of the Rochester Diocese we not only believe in the attributes depicted in the study, we live them each day. We shall not rest in this effort but instead continue to build on the strong foundation of academic excellence and spirituality that has served us well. I look forward to the challenge and working with the dedicated teachers, students and parents of our schools.

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth Megan, OP*  
Sister Elizabeth Megan, OP  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

