

# Catholic Schools:

## Looking to the future with confidence



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

SEPTEMBER 2009

### Consultation Timeline

Oct 2007: Convocation on Catholic Education - over 500 participants

Jan 2008: Four task forces formed to research key areas

Feb-Oct 2008: Research into best practices

Sept 2008: Archbishop Wuerl issues pastoral letter on education (available online)

Nov-Dec 2008: Surveys on school policy options sent to over 12,000 people; 1,500 respond

Feb 2009: Focus groups with pastors, educators, parents and parishioners

Feb-Mar 2009: Consultation with six consultative groups

Apr 2009: 1,000 people invited to eight regional consultations on policy options

May 2009: Additional consultation with three advisory groups and discussion at a Priest Convocation

Aug 2009: Policies finalized, approved and published

Oct 2009; Jan and July 2010: Policies go into effect in three phases

## New year kicks off with new school policies; First comprehensive revision in 30 years

**W**hy do we have Catholic schools? What does it mean for a school to be called Catholic? How can parents be sure their child's school is academically excellent? How is tuition assistance determined? And, how do Catholic schools plan for the future?

Questions like these - along with many more - were explored during the recent planning process for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington.

Eighteen months of study, which included surveys, meetings and focus groups with thousands of parents, parishioners, clergy and educators, and extensive research on best practices, have resulted in new policies for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington.

These policies, recently approved by Washington Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl, mark the first comprehensive revision of school policies since 1976.

"This is a significant moment for our schools," said Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, Ph.D., superintendent of Catholic schools.

"The new policies, developed with the

expertise and input of thousands of people from throughout the archdiocese, will be instrumental in moving forward to ensure our schools continue to be truly Catholic, academically excellent, well governed and, to the best of our ability, affordable and accessible," she said.

The Archdiocese of Washington includes 96 Catholic schools, educating 29,000 stu-

dents in the District of Columbia and five Maryland counties. Sixty five are parish-based elementary schools or early childhood programs.

The policies address four major areas:

**Catholic identity:** what makes a school Catholic

**Governance:** types of Catholic schools and their relationship with the archdiocese

**Academic excellence:** standards, including curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional

**Affordability and accessibility:** the responsibility of all parishes to support Catholic schools, tuition assistance, tuition rates, budgeting and communication with parents and parishioners.

The policies will go into effect in three phases: October 2009, and January and July 2010. Learn more on the next page.



Learn more:

[www.CatholicSchoolsWork.org](http://www.CatholicSchoolsWork.org)

# POLICIES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS 2009

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ● ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

### CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Catholic identity is best expressed by a school's visible communion and cooperation with the Archbishop, the appropriate celebration of sacramental life, the teaching of the faith and an environment permeated with the spirit of the Gospel. Policies in these four areas of Catholic identity apply to all Catholic schools and seek to ensure that the Good News that Jesus proclaimed is truly passed on from one generation to the next through the great blessing of Catholic schools.

### GOVERNANCE

The governance structures for Catholic schools vary depending on the sponsoring organization that has overall responsibility for the school. The Archdiocese of Washington, through parishes, has direct responsibility for all aspects of parish and Archdiocesan-owned schools and for recognizing the affiliation of independent schools as Catholic schools. For independent Catholic schools, the responsibility for the day-to-day operations, instruction, financing and overall direction of the school rests with the sponsoring community or organization.

### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Academic excellence is central to the mission of all Catholic schools. It requires uniform policies to ensure that the declaration of the quality of Catholic education is verifiable. These policies address essential Archdiocesan school-wide requirements in four sections: academic/curriculum standards, instructional standards, assessment standards and professional standards. All four sections are designed to support and maintain a culture of excellence. Individual school

leadership and the Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Office support these efforts to sustain the highest standards.

Policies focused on curriculum standards define student expectations by content areas and grade level for Archdiocesan K–12 schools. Instructional standards are reinforced by policies that define the expectations which support effective educational environments. Assessment policies are designed to ensure quality evaluation practices utilizing multiple methods of assessment, the continuous monitoring of student performance, the analysis of data to adapt instructional practices and the evaluation of school level progress across the Archdiocese. The last set of policies addresses the professional expectations and requirements essential for a Catholic school community. These policies provide the foundation for the contents of all school handbooks and address the principles of behavior for school personnel, student, families and the wider school community.

### AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

As early as October 2007, during the Convocation for Catholic Education, the consultative process identified the need for a new model for funding Catholic schools that would maximize the use of limited resources to strengthen our

schools and more equitably distribute the cost of Catholic education across the entire Archdiocese.

These affordability policies follow on the understanding that the effort to support Catholic schools across the Archdiocese must be shared at both the parish and Archdiocesan levels, that there be a mechanism to more equitably distribute assistance to the schools and that we identify the sources of needed additional funding.

For these reasons, these policies shift support to tuition assistance scholarships in an effort to provide assistance for as many families in need as possible, call for increased financial commitment at the Archdiocesan level and an increase of the educational assessment at the parish level.

While we look to the future with confidence, these policies do not seek a goal that is beyond our collective means as a Church, nor do they guarantee that each school building will continue in service. Rather, these policies represent the best efforts of an extensive collaborative process to do the best we can to ensure the continued success of Catholic schools in this Archdiocese for future generations.

*“Catholic education is the responsibility of the whole Church...We look to the future of Catholic education throughout our archdiocese with the hope to renew in the hearts of all the members of this Church a sense of ownership of all of the expressions of education, particularly our schools.”*

*-Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl, Catholic Education: Looking to the Future with Confidence (2008)*

