

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **Catholic students return to the classroom**

Archdiocesan students perform above the national average

September, 2009 (OMAHA, NE) – Over 21,000 Catholic students have returned to the classroom to continue a long, proud tradition in the Archdiocese of Omaha.

From Bishop James O'Connor, who from his first days pledged his total commitment to Catholic education, to immigrant parents who struggled and sacrificed to make sure their child was given the best possible start in their new country, the Catholic education community led by Archbishop George J. Lucas is united in the belief that every child is a gift, and every child deserves a Catholic education.

Most people living outside of Omaha are astonished at the number of Catholic schools in the archdiocese – 18 high schools and 58 elementary schools, with an enrollment of more than 21,000 students.

The archdiocese's record in standardize test scores, graduation rates, attendance rates, and college matriculation rates is admired by other school districts. High school graduation rates for students graduating from Catholic elementary schools are consistently above 95%. This includes graduates of the eight inner-city schools where over 53% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch and over 60% are from immigrant and/or minority populations. Catholic school students in the archdiocese consistently score above the state and national average on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development; and 96% of all Catholic high school graduates enroll in colleges, universities, or other post-secondary institutions.

But numbers do not tell the whole story. The Archdiocese of Omaha is blessed to have so many individuals who make a strong commitment to Catholic education and its mission of teaching the message of Jesus Christ. Thousands of parents in northeast Nebraska believe that Jesus "came that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10), and they search for the fullness of life for their children in archdiocesan schools.

"Next to the family, the Catholic school is one of the most effective places for children to probe the mysteries of revelation," said Msgr. James E. Gilg, superintendent of Catholic Schools. "In archdiocesan schools, young people learn Christ's commandment to love God and one another. They are taught that this is the greatest of the commandments."

(more)

Generous benefactors and mindful alumni have long supported the efforts of archdiocesan schools so that younger generations might take their places in society as responsible citizens and faith-filled disciples of the Lord.

“Parents, who make personal sacrifices, devote themselves to a family worthy of the title ‘domestic church,’” Gilg said. “With Jesus as the ultimate example of teacher, the administrators and teachers in the Archdiocese of Omaha along with priests are committed to ensuring academic excellence in a safe, secure Christ-centered environment with a genuine Catholic identity.”

The students in archdiocesan schools have the daily opportunity to study, share, learn about virtue, and bear witness to the Gospel. Regular participation in school Masses leads students toward a meaningful appreciation of the Sunday Liturgy. Students are encouraged to pray and learn to develop their own personal relationship with Christ, to respect the dignity of life in all of its stages, and to develop a healthy and well-formed conscience that enables them to live morally good lives.

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Founded as a diocese in 1885, the Archdiocese of Omaha serves spiritual and human needs in a 23-county area of Northeast Nebraska. Through its 148 parishes and missions, the archdiocese reaches out to more than 221,000 Nebraska Catholics. With two Catholic universities, 58 elementary schools, 18 high schools and a parish-based religious education program within its boundaries, Catholic education enriches the lives of some 44,000 young people. The Archdiocese of Omaha is one of the largest private social service providers in the region. Catholic Charities and the Office of Family Life lead a network that ministers to the broadest and most fundamental needs of our community. Generous support to the Annual Appeal is symbolic of the collective faith that allows the Archdiocese of Omaha to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. [www.archomaha.org](http://www.archomaha.org)