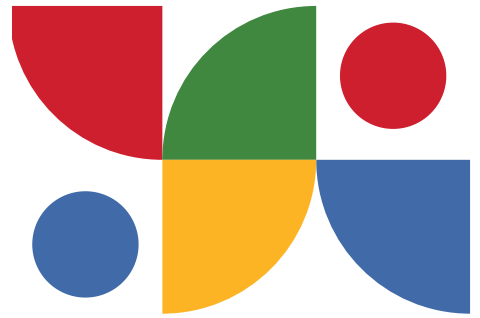




CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
DIOCESE of DES MOINES



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025



CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS IN CHRIST

“Let us thank all those who teach in Catholic schools.
Educating is an act of love; it is like giving life.”

Pope Francis

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



As superintendent, my heart is filled with gratitude and awe for the vibrant communities flourishing within our 16 schools. Our sacred mission is to educate the whole child—mind, body, and spirit. The future of Catholic education in our diocese is not just bright; it's radiating with the light of interconnected faith, and I am thrilled to share the highlights of our 2024-2025 journey in this annual report.

Our theme was Cultivating Connections in Christ, and a hallmark of this year has been the deliberate and joyful cultivation of connections within our school walls. Several schools lived out this mission through faith families, intentionally bringing together students across grade levels. Imagine kindergartners holding hands with eighth graders, learning, praying, and growing together as one spiritual unit. This beautiful initiative transcended age barriers and created a supportive network where older students embraced their roles as mentors and younger students felt cherished and secure.

One eighth-grade class embraced their roles as disciples and guides as they led thoughtful and engaging prayer retreats for their younger peers, creating spaces for quiet reflection and shared spiritual discovery. This was about nurturing genuine spiritual bonds, with older students sharing their faith journey and wisdom, and younger students finding relatable examples of devotion within their own school family.

A group of high schoolers took their first steps in becoming the next generation of teachers, as they gained real teaching experience alongside certified teachers at our PS-8 schools. This is just one example of intergeneration advocacy blossoming in our schools, as we also initiated programs to invite grandparents to visit classrooms in kindergarten through twelfth grade to offer their invaluable wisdom and experience.

Beyond daily school life, our students gained opportunities to connect with the enduring legacy of our Catholic faith, like the chance to venerate a relic of the very first millennial saint. This rare and grace-filled experience allowed them to tangibly connect with a holy life dedicated to Christ, transcending time and bridging generations of believers.

These incredible achievements are a testament to the dedication of every faculty member, staff member, parent, parish, volunteer, and generous supporter. Your unwavering commitment allows us to cultivate these essential connections in Christ, making our Catholic schools not just possible, but exceptionally successful. Thank you for being such a vital part of this sacred mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Bishop". The script is elegant and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Donna Bishop, ED.S
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

OUR MISSION

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines are collaborative communities of spiritual formation and academic excellence, where students grow in faith and wisdom and emerge as responsible citizens dedicated to the practice of life-long discipleship.

We believe Catholic education should be rooted in **FAITH**, focused on **EXCELLENCE** and supported by a caring **COMMUNITY** while also providing the best **VALUE** to our families.

FAITH

Daily exposure to our faith-based mission and a caring culture enables students (Catholic and non-Catholic) to learn about the divine teachings of Jesus Christ and freely discuss the compatibility of faith, science and reason without government restrictions or interference.

EXCELLENCE

From preschool through high school, your child will thrive with smaller class sizes that teach BIG subjects. We encourage our students to respect the diversity, dignity and beliefs of all in pursuit of knowledge and truth through critical thinking and constructive debate. This helps them form strong principles and a moral center that celebrates all achievements for the common good. From a more practical perspective, that means fewer disruptions in the classroom, higher attendance and graduation rates, better test scores, and strong civic engagement.

COMMUNITY

Walk the halls of our Catholic schools and you'll discover not just a great learning environment, but also an opportunity to form lifelong friendships with students and families who have the same values, aspirations and desires to advance the common good. We also help students discover their soul, build self-esteem, cultivate interests and develop the skills and empathy needed to create a better world. As a result, our students are fully engaged with the community. They study today's difficult social challenges by building mutually beneficial relationships and exploring innovative solutions.

VALUE

Rooted in faith – the cornerstone of all we do – it's about having the best educators with challenging lesson plans and new technologies at your disposal. It's about a creative, disciplined and welcoming environment, where a focus on social justice, service and leadership is central to each student's experience. It's about your child growing and flourishing in every part of their life – not just test scores. And it might be more affordable than you think.

OUR SCHOOLS



**CHRIST THE KING
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
2YO, PS3, PK4, TK, K-8
Des Moines



**DOWLING CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL**
9-12
West Des Moines



**HOLY FAMILY
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, K-8
Des Moines



**HOLY TRINITY
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, TK, K-8
Des Moines



**SACRED HEART
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, TK, K-8
West Des Moines



**SAINT ALBERT
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
6 weeks-2YO, PS3, PK4, K-12
Council Bluffs



**SHELBY COUNTY
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PK4, TK, K-5
Harlan



**ST. ANTHONY
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, K-8
Des Moines



**ST. AUGUSTIN
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PK4, TK, K-8
Des Moines



**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, K-8
Des Moines



**ST. JOSEPH
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, K-8
Des Moines



**ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
K-8
Ankeny



Our Lady's Little Learners
PS3, PK4, TK
Ankeny



**ST. MALACHY
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, K-8
Creston



**ST. PATRICK
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PK4, K-8
Perry



**ST. PIUS X
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
PS3, PK4, TK, K-8
Urbandale



**ST. THERESA
CATHOLIC SCHOOL**
2YO, PS3, PK4, K-8
Des Moines

OUR TEAM



MOST REV. WILLIAM M. JOENSEN, PhD
Bishop, Diocese of Des Moines



DONNA BISHOP, EdS
Superintendent of Schools



DENISE MULCAHY, MSE
Director of Teaching and Learning



ANNE FRANKLIN, PhD
Director of Professional Development



NICOLE CASTILLO WALLER, BA
Director of Multicultural Programming



JAKE SHAMA, BA
Director of Marketing and Enrollment

OUR SCHOOLS BY THE NUMBERS

6785

PS-12 Students

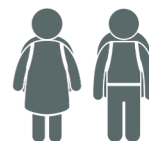
NCEA school reports Oct. 2024



2.1%

Enrollment Growth

Compared to -0.6% nationally.¹



31%

School Diversity



12:1

Classroom Ratio



\$2.5M

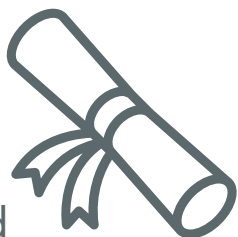
In Tuition Assistance
Provided by CTO and DTA

56%

Students Received
ESAs

1/3

of Faculty hold
Advanced Degrees



\$552K+

Awarded in Grant
Funding

1. National Catholic Education Association. *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2024-2025*.

SCHOOL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS



More than 50 students and four teachers joined the Catholic Church by receiving their first sacraments. Multiple students credited their teachers and classmates for deepening their faith, underscoring that our schools provide more than academics. They are spaces for spiritual discovery and belonging.

At Dowling Catholic High School, 86 students earned the 2025 Iowa Seal of Biliteracy—the highest number in school history. Languages included French, German, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Ukrainian. Also of note, Holy Family students represent seven languages and 15 home nationalities.



A high school service league at St. Albert became a charter Kiwanis International Key Club. Holy Trinity students participated in a clothing drive and made fleece blankets for hospital patients and refugees. St. Francis of Assisi middle schoolers gave Christmas gifts to 42 families, and St. Pius X hosted an on-campus Lenten food pantry. In all, our students completed more than 100,000 hours of service learning and volunteering in their communities.

St. Augustin completed a playground renovation, St. Theresa added security features to entryway and ground-level areas, and Shelby County Catholic raised nearly \$40,000 from their annual “go for the Green” raffle and “Tribute to Harvest” fundraisers. Meanwhile, St. Joseph hosted the diocesan community for the first time in 75 years inside their recently finished gymnasium.



St. Anthony fourth grader Diego Lopez wrote a novel in Spanish, *El poder que había estado mucho tiempo escondido*, and Dowling student Eric Reveles-Paz spent six months illustrating *Never Grow Up*. Both books are available on Amazon. Eric is working on a second book, and proceeds from *Never Grow Up* go to the Avenue Scholars program.



A FAITH-FILLED ENVIRONMENT



My kids actively talk, want, and work on their relationship with Jesus. I know this starts at home, but they are flourishing because they learn and practice at school too. This is incredible to help build a foundation and example of how to incorporate these things when they are on their own some day. There is no better example than the kids actively living these things. The school is foundational in this, and we could not be happier our kids get to talk about God/Jesus during our school.

— Joanna Lowe,
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School Parent

FAITH HIGHLIGHTS

Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools cultivate connections in Christ at every level of the student experience. This foundational commitment means that faith is not merely a subject but the living fabric woven into our daily curriculum and school life. Through dedicated faith formation initiatives, our students develop deep, personal relationships with Christ. By fostering this spiritual connection, we ensure that students emerge as well-rounded individuals who are prepared to live out the principles of love and selfless discipleship in the world.



Our student population is 84 percent Catholic compared to 71.8 percent nationally (1). We welcome students of all faith traditions. At St. Patrick, a non-Catholic eighth-grade student led a prayer retreat for her younger peers, providing a unique perspective through the lens of her own faith background. Our students celebrated more than 700 school Masses throughout the school year, joining their hearts and voices in prayer.



St. Malachy middle school students traveled to Missouri to visit the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and the Museum of 500 Relics, witnessing and praying before the incorruptible body of Sister Wilhelmina during the trip. A relic of St. Carlo Acutis – the first millennial saint – was brought to St. Pius X, providing students with a role model for living our Catholic faith in modern times.



Diocese of Des Moines students clinched the championship at the State Diocesan Middle School Religion Bee in Cedar Rapids on May 5. Five exceptional students—Brady Beck (St. Anthony), Macky Buyske (Saint Albert), Cooper Gifford (St. Pius X), Gianna Jones (St. Luke the Evangelist), and Charlie Pease (St. Augustin) secured the victory in a dramatic tie-breaker by correctly identifying Pope John Paul I as the "Smiling Pope," demonstrating an impressive depth of Catholic faith knowledge and excellent sportsmanship.

1. National Catholic Education Association. *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2024-2025*.





EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



"The education (my son) has received has shown him that anything is possible for him."

— Tisha Hall,
Dowling Catholic High School Parent

EXCELLENCE HIGHLIGHTS

From their earliest years in preschool through high school, our students flourish in caring, creative environments where they tackle a challenging curriculum in small class settings. Their teachers are dedicated mentors who inspire them to pursue growth in every dimension—academically, spiritually, and personally. Because their education is rooted in a faith-first foundation, students develop a powerful sense of self-discovery and purpose. They are empowered to embrace their full potential, ultimately emerging as confident, compassionate, and deeply well-rounded individuals prepared to make a positive impact.



Five students – Max Fazio, Carson Klein, Fernando Konrad Parras, Jacob Suresh, and Cora Volp – represented Dowling Catholic among approximately 700 scholars at the 2025 U.S. Academic Decathlon National Finals. Klein was named national champion in literature and earned bronze in art, fifth overall, and top-ten finishes in multiple subjects. Parras and Suresh also earned top-ten placements in various categories. Meanwhile, Andrew Honkamp achieved a perfect ACT score – the first Dowling student to do so since 2019.



Holy Family has continued its four-year trend raising math and reading proficiency. In that time, math scores have improved 19%, while reading proficiency improved 11%. The success comes as Holy Family maintains a 97% diverse population, 81% of whom are English Language Learners (ELL) or have graduated out of an ELL program.



It was a year of excellence for extracurricular activities, as the Saint Albert girls basketball and track teams won state championship titles. The Sacred Heart Middle School Crusader Band traveled to St. Louis to participate in a professional clinic in recognition of their efforts. And schools across the diocese performed impressive musicals, including Shelby County Catholic's rendition of *The Lion King*, directed by 2024-25 Teacher of the Year Cindy Schwery.



EXCELLENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools participate in the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). ISASP is a standards-based assessment designed to inform schools and families on how students perform on the Iowa Core Academic Standards. Students performing at the proficient level demonstrate adequate competency in the knowledge, skills, and abilities that meet the requirements for their grade level associated with academic readiness for college and a career in the subject area.

2024-2025 Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP)

Percent Proficient or Advanced

	State of Iowa	Diocese of Des Moines
3rd Grade English Language Arts	68%	75%
3rd Grade Math	76%	84%
5th Grade English Language Arts	69%	82%
5th Grade Math	71%	77%
5th Grade Science	64%	75%
8th Grade English Language Arts	80%	93%
8th Grade Math	74%	81%
8th Grade Science	70%	78%
10th Grade English Language Arts	74%	87%
10th Grade Math	67%	78%
10th Grade Science	66%	73%

**There is no test for 3rd Grade science.*

A CARING COMMUNITY



"I have always believed in the power of community and that together we are each other's harvest. That is the spirit (of our school) that loved us through a very difficult time and remains a sacred space for my son to grow and flourish in."

— Jennifer Witt,
Holy Trinity Catholic School Parent

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Our students immediately feel secure and accepted as they become part of a welcoming environment created through the powerful partnership of parishes and parents. Here, the educational experience transcends academics, becoming a community of faith where students discover bonds of friendship and trust that last a lifetime. In this nurturing setting, students are guided to discover their soul, build self-esteem, cultivate their unique interests, and develop the essential skills and empathy needed to actively create a better world.



Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools serve students and families from all faith backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and cultures. Students across the diocese speak 29 home languages, and our student body is 31 percent diverse, compared to 34.9 percent (1) among Catholic schools nationally.



Christ the King introduced Faith Families, which are multi-age student groups each led by a teacher. Students will remain in their Faith Families as they progress through the grades, fostering long-term relationships and spiritual growth. Shelby County Catholic hosts monthly Masses, followed by a social hour. More than 300 people attend each event.

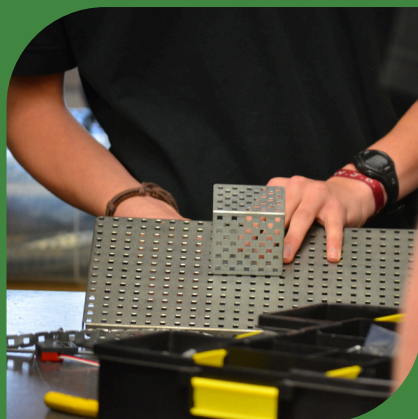


Sacred Heart Catholic School hosts unique club experiences for its students, including Cubing Club – for students who know or want to learn how to solve a Rubik's cube – and Adoration Club, which gives students in grades 4 to 8 a monthly opportunity to build community, pray together, listen to guest speakers, and spend time in quiet adoration.

1. National Catholic Education Association. *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2024-2025*.



THE BEST VALUE IN EDUCATION



"I just find such great value in Catholic education. Hearing them be excited about the different aspects of the faith is just super valuable."

*— Kendall Begnoche,
St. Anthony Catholic School Parent*

VALUE HIGHLIGHTS

Investing in your child's education is about their mind, body, and soul. With exceptional educators, challenging academics, and new technologies, students benefit from a creative, disciplined, and welcoming environment where social justice, service, and leadership are central to their experience. Iowa's Students First Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) have been a profound blessing, empowering more families than ever to choose this transformative, faith-centered foundation for their child.



One hundred percent of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic high school seniors graduated — 360 students in total. In addition, 97 percent of graduates planned to continue their education, with members of the 2025 graduating class awarded college scholarships totaling more than \$11.6 million.



Students in Dowling's Foundations of Education class were paired with a certified mentor teacher at one of our PS-8 schools. This close relationship between our schools allowed each student to complete 40 observation hours and provide assistance in a real classroom setting, providing valuable experience as they prepare to continue their education studies in college.



For the 2024-2025 school year, 1,945 students received more than \$2.29 million in tuition assistance from Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO). In addition, 3,780 students received an Education Savings Account (ESA) – 55.3% of our student population – providing \$7,826 per student in grades K-12.



DES MOINES REGION CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



At the end of the 2024-2025 school year, the Des Moines Region Business Office completed onboarding of the final five schools in the Des Moines metro, Holy Trinity, Sacred Heart, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Pius X, and St. Theresa. Now, all 12 schools receive consistent, high-quality human resources, information technology, and financial services support from a centralized business office – keeping curriculum and faith under the umbrella of the Catholic Schools Office. To support this move, the office grew its staff to 16 individuals, and in January 2025, they moved into the Pastoral Center, creating a unified base of operations for the first time.



The Des Moines Region Business Office began updating and coordinating network technology across schools, replacing a patchwork of often outdated equipment. The updates will provide a consistent, reliable, and high-performing network across all Catholic schools in the Des Moines metro. All K-8 schools have refreshed at least 25% of student devices, and plans are underway to install advanced cybersecurity tools and move school data to more efficient cloud environments.



Des Moines Region schools are progressing toward a common goal of increasing teacher compensation to 90-95% of public school teacher salaries. Between 2022-2023 and the end of 2024-2025, teacher compensation increased 42.3% on average, with one school raising compensation by 95.5%.



During the 2024-2025 school year, 6,836 students attended Catholic schools in the Des Moines metro, a one-year increase of 138 students (+2.08%). Of these, 3,087 qualified for and received an Education Savings Account (54.62%), including 1,149 new students, many of whom finally had the opportunity to attend the Diocese of Des Moines school of their choice for the first time.



FINANCIAL DATA

We greatly appreciate and understand the financial sacrifice families make to provide their children with an education at a Diocese of Des Moines Catholic School. However, tuition only covers a portion of the cost of educating a student at our schools. The remaining amount is supported by parish subsidies, private donations, and tuition assistance resources.

COST TO EDUCATE VS. COST OF TUITION

	AVERAGE COST TO EDUCATE A STUDENT	AVERAGE TUITION BEFORE TUITION ASSISTANCE <i>Including parishioner subsidy</i>
K-8	\$10,048/student	\$5,379/year <i>Compared to \$6,800 nationally. (1)</i>
9-12	\$14,260/student	\$9,394/year <i>Compared to \$14,000 nationally. (1)</i>

This tuition investment goes towards high-caliber educators, enhanced learning experiences (such as STEM and Spanish immersion), the latest technology, and moral and emotional education for each student.

TUITION ASSISTANCE: All our schools offer tuition solutions and assistance programs. We work with all families to reduce any barriers related to tuition. In 2024-2025, 2,176 students received both an ESA and tuition assistance from CTO, and 304 students received Diocesan Tuition Assistance (DTA) through the Ignite! Capital Campaign. If you need assistance, contact your school administrator, or contact the Catholic Schools Office at dmdiocese.org/tuition-assistance.

1. Education Data Initiative. *Average Cost of Private School*. Aug. 29, 2024.



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
DIOCESE *of* DES MOINES

601 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309
dmdiocese.org/schools