



# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

*The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida*

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## **Vision for Catholic Schools**

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Catholic schools have been rooted in the Catholic faith since their inception. The immigrant parents looked to the Church not only to reinforce the Catholic values taught at home, but also to provide a secular education that would help their children succeed in a country that they did not fully understand. Catholic schools have continued that tradition by raising standards and preparing our students for college and for their future professions while imparting our religious and moral values.

Catholic high schools across the country have exceptionally high college acceptance rates. In addition, now Catholic schools need to prepare our youth for an “unknown” job market beyond college in a complex, multi-cultural, pluralistic world society. With technology making significant strides and the global market expanding rapidly, we must raise the educational level of all students served by our schools. Our Catholic schools are addressing all of these challenges within the context of our foundational purpose to prepare our students to develop strong Catholic character. In pursuing this goal, teachers must utilize a variety of instructional tools as well as alternative teaching methods to ensure engagement of all students.

The joint collaboration and consultation between the Catholic Colleges and Universities and the (Arch)Diocesan superintendents resulted in the creation of the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools. These standards and benchmarks are now the framework for the Florida Catholic Conference accreditation process for Catholic elementary schools. The adoption of the National Benchmarks has provided the framework for the openness to academic excellence and strong Catholic identity at all levels.

In addition to rigorous curricular content, today’s students must master comprehensive interpersonal skills such as team work, solving complex problems, innovative thinking, etc. Additionally, students must become self-directed learners, and they must develop a positive work ethic as they simultaneously master oral and written communication skills.

We must ensure that students are provided with multiple opportunities to maximize their full potential physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Thus, programs for diverse learners (students who are cognitively challenged, gifted and accelerated students, students affected by attentional disorders, English Language Learners, etc.) are absolutely critical. This will increase the possibility that all students will reach their fullest potential.

Our Catholic faith reminds us that parents are the first, foremost and primary educators of their children. The leaders and teachers of Catholic schools, as partners with parents, continue to examine new ideas, explore new methods and models of instruction as well as continue to infuse our Catholic virtues and values into all aspects of the curriculum.

Catholic schools will continue to “raise the bar,” challenging the status quo, nurturing all learners, supporting parents and imparting to youngsters the mystery and doctrine of our faith and enabling them to share the faith with others. This commitment to growth and excellence is a hallmark of our Catholic educational heritage that cannot, must not, and will not be lost.