

# THE SUPERINTENDENT'S CHRONICLE

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A quarterly newsletter provided by Catapult Learning, *The Superintendent's Chronicle* offers Catholic school leaders at the chancery-level current insights, ideas, and information about the landscape of Catholic schools and helpful tools for addressing emerging challenges.

## ***May I Share This Newsletter with Catholic School Principals?***

Yes. Please be most welcome to forward or print copies for principals, pastors, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders, such as school councils, boards, PTOs, and the like. All back issues are also posted and available to all [here](#).

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## ***A Critique of Catholic Schools Statistics***

In a March 10, 2024 article entitled, "[Can We Be Frank about the Catholic School Crisis?](#)" by Patrick J. Reilly in the *National Catholic Register*, concerns were expressed regarding the National Catholic Educational Association's (NCEA) statistics on the state of U.S. Catholic schools for 2022-2023.

### **Four issues discussed were:**

1. The NCEA report makes no attempt to count Catholic homeschoolers even as recent research found that ten percent of recent ordinands to the priesthood and fourteen percent of new entrants to religious institutes have been homeschooled for at least some of their education;
2. Recently announced enrollment increases are primarily in pre-K enrollment, which now accounts for fifteen percent of all Catholic school children;
3. We are still very much in the post-pandemic period and recovering from a variety of pandemic-related challenges beyond enrollment, such as mental health and safety;
4. There is a declining number of Catholics in Catholic schools. The proportion of Catholic students in Catholic schools has dropped from 97% in 1970 to 87% in 2000 to the present 78%.

## **Recently Appointed Superintendents & Central Office Leaders**

Congratulations and best wishes to the following new diocesan leaders from:

|                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Diocese of Albany</b>     | Chris Bott                |
| <b>Diocese of Belleville</b> | Fr. Mike Caruso, SJ       |
| <b>Diocese of Fargo</b>      | Mike Hagstrom             |
| <b>Diocese of Kalamazoo</b>  | Jillian Kellough          |
| <b>Diocese of Knoxville</b>  | George Valadie            |
| <b>Diocese of Pittsburgh</b> | Lauren Martin             |
| <b>Diocese of Portland</b>   | Shelly Wheeler            |
| <b>Diocese of Reno</b>       | Br. Christopher Hall, CFC |
| <b>Diocese of Richmond</b>   | Michael Riley             |

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We honor and celebrate the years of service, witness, and formation provided by superintendents who recently left their positions, including:

|                               |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Archdiocese of Atlanta</b> | Diane Starkovich   |
| <b>Diocese of Albany</b>      | Giovanni Virgiglio |
| <b>Diocese of Bridgeport</b>  | Steve Cheeseman    |
| <b>Diocese of Kalamazoo</b>   | Margaret Erich     |
| <b>Diocese of Richmond</b>    | Kelly Lazzara      |

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Readers are welcome to send any updates to Fr. Ron Nuzzi [ron.nuzzi@catapultlearning.com](mailto:ron.nuzzi@catapultlearning.com) or at 330.652.7944).

### ***Catholic Leadership Summit (CLS) 2024 Seattle***

Monday night of CLS 2024 in Seattle found many leaders at Chihuly Garden & Glass for a wonderful evening of celebration, fellowship, and song. Students from Kennedy Catholic High School in Burien, WA enlivened our festivities with music and song. Their String Quartet graced our social hour and the Excalibur Choir followed with an after dinner performance. Thanks to all who attended and enjoyed the evening, with special thanks to Nicholas Ford, superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Seattle and Lindsay Brown, choir director at Kennedy Catholic.



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### ***2025 NCEA CONVENTION***

The annual NCEA convention will be held April 22-25, 2025 in Orlando, Florida at the Orange County Convention Center. Click [here](#) for more information and convention details .



### ***Fall Retreat for Superintendents***

Immediately prior to the Catholic Leadership Summit (CLS) in Seattle, many superintendents gathered for a weekend retreat at the Seabeck Conference Center. With time for prayer, relaxation, community, and networking, all in a sylvan setting, the retreat was a splendid opportunity for both personal and professional growth. Because the timing maximizes travel dollars and minimizes time out of the office, this retreat has become an annual event, always prior to CLS and near to its location.



The next superintendents' retreat will be held March 4-6, 2025 at Bethany Center in Tampa, FL.

For more information or to register to attend, contact Fr. Ron Nuzzi at 330.652.7944 or [ron.nuzzi@catapultlearning.com](mailto:ron.nuzzi@catapultlearning.com).

## ***Nearly 60% of Grades Don't Match Student Test Scores***

A recent [study](#) recommends steps to improve grading practices to reduce both grade inflation and grade depression. Grading practices in U.S. schools are antiquated and “out of step” with other contemporary K-12 efforts, according to a study published last month by the Equitable Grading Project, a nonprofit research organization that promotes equitable grading practices. The study of about 33,000 middle school and high school grades found that almost 60% of the students’ grades did not match the course knowledge they showed according to standardized test scores. The mismatches were highest among Black and Hispanic students and those from families who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch. Grade inflation — or when grades exceed a student’s actual academic understanding — can lead to students struggling to keep up in certain high school or college-level courses. At the other end of the spectrum, grade depression can cause students to miss out on higher-level courses or college admission and scholarship opportunities.

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## ***National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) Appoints New President/CEO***

Most Reverend Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv., Archbishop of Atlanta and Chair of the Board of the National Catholic Educational Association recently announced that the Board of Directors has appointed Steven Cheeseman, Ed.D. as the next President/CEO of NCEA, effective August 1, 2024. Cheeseman replaces Mr. Lincoln Snyder who resigned from his position to pursue other educational opportunities. Cheeseman comes to the NCEA from having served as the Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport, CT since 2016. Prior to his tenure in Connecticut, Cheeseman was Associate Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, NY and a teacher/administrator at both the elementary and secondary levels.



## ***September 30, 2024 Was a Very Important Day***

A few years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic upended K-12 school operations, causing learning to shift from in-person to online. Many teachers, parents, and political leaders correctly predicted that the hardships spurred by the public health emergency would set students back academically and socially. As it turned out, students from marginalized subgroups have fallen even further behind. Even though Congress allocated an unprecedented \$189.5 billion in one-time funding for school districts to spend on recovery from pandemic setbacks and expenses, that funding is ending even as some say more money is needed to continue catching students up to pre-pandemic learning growth.

September 30 was the last day school districts were able to obligate, or promise to spend, American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds, which is the last and largest allocation available through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) aid package.

The next date to watch for is Jan. 28, 2025. That is the spending deadline for ARP, when all funds must be liquidated. Nationally, the pace of spending for the three ESSER allocations has run as expected, according to education finance experts. ESSER allocations under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) had earlier obligation and spending deadlines. However, some districts that received spending extensions have longer spending time frames.

Updated information from the U.S. Department of Education shows that local school systems in four states — Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska — as well as Puerto Rico received approvals to extend about \$1 billion collectively in ESSER-ARP spending for an extra 14 months through March 30, 2026. Federal COVID emergency money left unspent by districts and states will eventually be returned to the Education Department.

For a complete list of states that have been approved for various extensions to spend their pandemic relief dollars, click [here](#).

## ***Democrats and Republicans on K-12 education: A Comparison***

In anticipation of the upcoming presidential election, the Washington, DC-based Brookings Institution has circulated a summary of the education policies of both major political parties. The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. Their mission is to conduct in-depth, nonpartisan research to improve policy and governance at local, national, and global levels. Read about the education plans and proposals of both Democrats and Republicans in summary form [here](#).

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## ***New research highlights the emotional and cognitive benefits of classical music ensembles for youth***

Playing classical music as a part of an ensemble has shown itself to be of benefit to the emotional and cognitive health of youth. Similar to join a sports team, but with the added experience of producing music, the dynamics of the learning, practicing, and performing have tended to produce highly prosocial results in a recent [study](#).

The study reported that playing in an ensemble helped students develop not only their musical abilities but also crucial life skills. These skills were categorized into three main areas: cognitive, emotional, and social-relational. In structured interviews, the adolescent participants themselves noted that their critical thinking and self-awareness improved through ensemble participation. They learned to evaluate their performance critically and manage their time and self-discipline effectively.

The researchers concluded that insights such as these have serious implications for music education programming.

## ***Disagreeing with Your LEA Regarding Equitable Services***

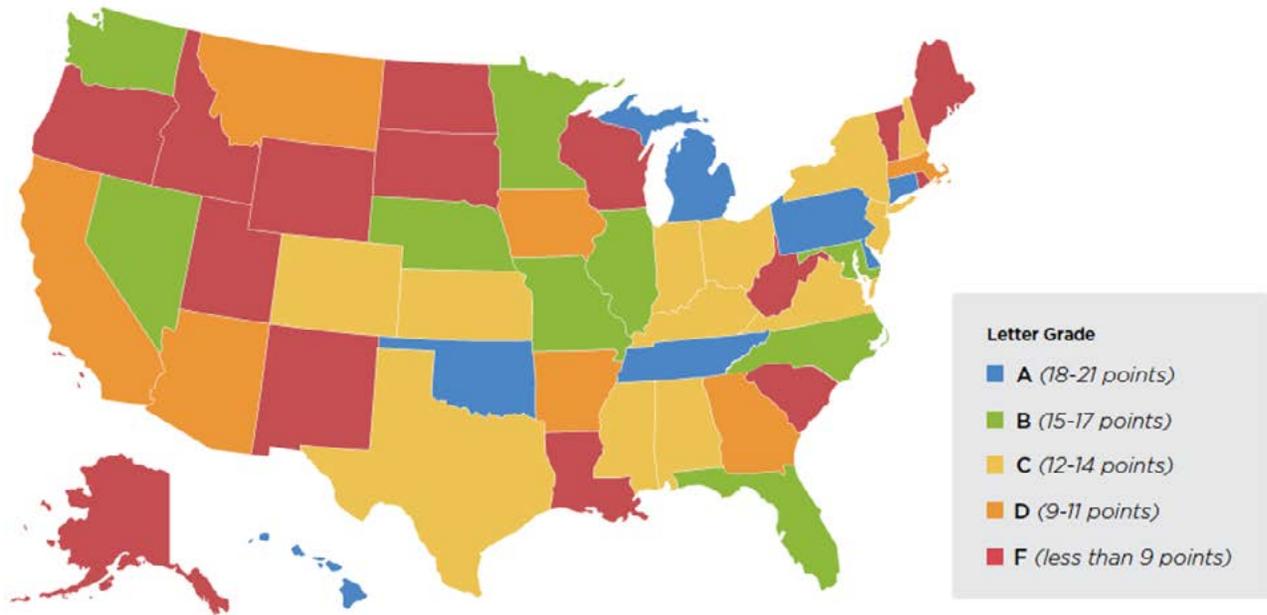
To help ensure equitable services and other benefits for eligible private school children, teachers and other educational personnel, and families, a State educational association (SEA) must designate an ombudsman to monitor and enforce equitable services requirements under both Title I and Title VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA sections 1117(a)(3)(B) and 8501(a)(3)(B)). To identify your state ombudsman and their contact information, click [here](#).



## State Secrets: How Transparent Are State School Report Cards About the Effects of COVID?

How easy would it be for a parent or advocate to compare student performance pre- and post-COVID? The short answer: in most states, it is not easy at all.

In a new report from the Center for Research on Public Education (CRPE), a research team graded school report card websites from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., based on how easy it would be for a parent or advocate to find and compare pre- and post-COVID performance across key measures. The findings reveal that the majority of states are failing to provide accessible, transparent longitudinal performance data—at a time when parents, advocates, and the general public need it most to close pandemic learning gaps.



### Key Highlights

- **Top performers:** Only seven states earned an A: Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Michigan, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee.
- **Most states fall short:** 34 states plus D.C. received a grade of C or worse for their efforts to provide accessible, transparent school performance data going back to pre-COVID times.
- **Common data gaps:** Graduation rates and ELA/mathematics performance levels are widely available, but social studies, achievement growth, and chronic absenteeism data are often missing or hard to find.
- **Navigation challenges:** Reviewers rated 27 state report card sites as 'fair' or 'poor' in terms of usability.

## Catapult Learning

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