

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.

A Prayer for the New Year

God of all time, help us enter the new year quietly, thoughtful of who we are to ourselves and to others, mindful that our steps make an impact and our words carry power.

May we walk gently.

May we speak only after we have listened well.

Creator of all life,

help us enter the new year reverently,

aware that you have endowed

every creature and plant, every person and habitat with beauty and purpose.

May we regard the world with tenderness.

May we honor rather than destroy.

Lover of all souls,

help us enter the new year joyfully,

willing to laugh and dance and dream,

remembering our many gifts with thanks

and looking forward to blessings yet to come.

May we welcome your lavish love.

In this new year, may the grace and peace of Christ bless us now and in the days ahead. Amen.

American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the AERA will be held in Denver, CO, April 23, 2025 - April 27, 2025 at the Colorado Convention Center. Registration and hotel information can be found [here](#). The theme of this year's meeting is Research, Remedy, & Repair: Toward Just Education Renewal.

AERA is organized into various Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to allow members to focus on particular areas of interest. Among notable SIGs are: Catholic Education, Spirituality & Education, Religion & Education, School Choice, Private Education, and Moral Education.

Catholic Leadership Summit (CLS) 2025 Phoenix

The Catholic Leadership Summit sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) will be held in Phoenix, AZ, October 19-22, 2025 at the Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort.



Recent Changes Among Superintendents and Central Office Leaders for Catholic Education

We honor and celebrate the years of service, witness, and formation provided by the superintendents who have announced their upcoming retirement, including:

Donna Hargens

Archdiocese of Baltimore

David Faber

Diocese of Grand Rapids

We salute and thank the following superintendents who recently moved on to new adventures:

Jennifer Beltramo

Diocese of San Jose

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

Previous issues of The Superintendent's Chronicle dating back to Summer 2023 can be found [here](#).

2025 Jubilee Year of Grace – Pilgrims of Hope



His Holiness Pope Francis has inaugurated the Jubilee Year, having commenced on December 24, 2024 with the opening of the Holy Door and extending until January 6, 2026. The year will be filled with many religious tours in and around Rome and diocesan bishops are designating various churches as places of pilgrimage and prayer to create a local experience of the jubilee for those unable to travel to Rome. For Christians worldwide, the jubilee year is a time of renewal and hope. For a month by month calendar of jubilee events, click [here](#).



The annual NCEA Convention is to be held in Orlando, FL, April 22-24, 2025. Registration information is available [here](#).

U.S. Students Losing Ground in Math According to TIMSS

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) was administered in dozens of nations in 2024. Results reported in December 2024 found that since 2019, American fourth graders have declined 18 points in math, while eighth graders have declined 27 points. The top-performing education systems on TIMSS in math included Singapore; Taipei, Taiwan; South Korea; Hong Kong; and Japan. Several European countries also significantly outperformed the United States, including Britain, Poland and Ireland.

American fourth graders performed similarly to those in Hungary, Portugal and Quebec.

A full report on TIMSS 2023 can be found [here](#) and historical data on its administration every four years [here](#).

E-Rate Funding In Jeopardy?

The U.S. Supreme Court will decide the future of the E-rate program, as the justices have agreed to review two key cases that address the funding mechanism for the Federal Communications Commission's Universal Service Fund.

The Supreme Court will review the [5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' ruling](#) in July striking down the funding mechanism for the Universal Service Fund as unconstitutional. E-rate, which provides federal funds to help schools and libraries afford broadband services, currently operates under the Universal Service Fund.

While no disruption of service is anticipated in the immediate future and schools are being encouraged to apply for e-rate funding as usual for the 2025-26 school year, an adverse decision could force Congress to move quickly to make certain that school connectivity remains in place. Gina Spade, a telecommunications lawyer and founder of Broadband Legal Strategies, said it is premature to prepare for the end of the E-rate program and that "no one should panic" that the Supreme Court is hearing this case.

At the same time, school leaders "might want to start talking to their representatives in Congress to make sure they understand the value of the program, what it means to them, what the E-rate program allows them to provide for students," Spade said. "So that if the worst comes to pass, then they will have already done some of that education."

More details on the pending case can be found [here](#) and the granting of certiorari [here](#).

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](#).

Educator Diversity Matters

In a [December 2024 publication](#) of non-regulatory guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the importance of a diverse teacher workforce was highlighted. Reviewing the research on teacher diversity, [ED reported](#) that a diverse teacher workforce was beneficial to all students, but especially students of color. Research indicated that when students of color are taught by teachers with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds, students of color show improved outcomes on statewide assessment data, increased likelihood of graduating high school, and increased likelihood of enrolling in college (<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED616770> and <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2332858418817528>).

Prayer for the Jubilee by Pope Francis

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both
humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.
To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.
Amen.



Francis

Protecting Your Interests in Federal Funds, Allocations, & Consultations

The Office of Nonpublic Education (ONPE) at the U.D. Department of Education (ED) recognizes the authority of (arch)diocesan Catholic school superintendents as analogous to that of a public school superintendent when it involves federal programs. Specifically, Catholic school superintendents may write a formal letter to any and all Local Education Agency (LEA) within their respective dioceses, requesting allocation information for each school, ensuring that the superintendent is copied on all communications to schools, especially regarding consultation, and confirming whether or not any pooling of funds would occur in the upcoming year. ONPE encourages all decision-making regarding expenditures to be made in collaboration with principals. By writing and sending such a letter to involved LEAs, Catholic school superintendents can stay well informed of both the status of their schools as well as the information emanating from public school districts.

Funding Title II Initiatives for Diocesan-Wide Professional Development

Diocesan superintendents may also, following the plan above, determine that a certain percentage of every school's Title II funding be allocated to support diocesan-wide professional development efforts, including programs for teachers, administrators, and central office staff. This is especially important because many central office staffs are small and often have limited funding for such initiatives. Moreover, some schools fail to spend their Title II allocations annually. Such an approach has the added benefits of close collaboration between principals and the central office and increasing the accountability and transparency of the LEAs.

For more information on diocesan-level leadership possibilities, please be welcome to contact Henry Fortier at:

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Funding Extensions Granted for Pandemic Spending

The U.S. Department of Education has already approved about \$1.7 billion in K-12 spending extensions for pandemic emergency funding under the American Rescue Plan (ARP). The Education Department had not rejected any state's application in full to extend spending as of November 21, 2024.

Most of the ARP spending extensions — about \$1.3 billion — is for seven states and Puerto Rico to extend their spending deadline for the ARP-Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief allocations to school districts. Those states are Alabama, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts and Nebraska.

The remaining \$425 million is for eight states to extend spending from ARP-Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools, according to updated information from the Education Department as of Nov. 21. Those states are California, Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Texas and Utah. For a complete list of federal funding extensions, click [here](#).

Conclave: The Movie

Conclave is based on Robert Harris's 2016 international bestselling thriller of the same name. While it is clearly a fictional account of the election of a pope, it is presented within the parameters of the rules and processes governing papal elections. That it has garnered much attention from the press comes as no surprise.

Various Catholic commentators have criticized the movie, claiming it has an anti-Catholic bias and is simplistic and shallow in its presentation. Bishop Robert Barron said the movie portrays the Church hierarchy as "a hotbed of ambition, corruption and desperate egotism". Others have observed that the film's plot twist is completely gratuitous, even while remaining faithful to the original book.

A comprehensive and well annotated reference source on conclaves past and future can be found [here](#).

For helpful, accurate, and interesting information on the participants of the next conclave, the Vatican has provided an updated and searchable dashboard containing background information on every member of the College of Cardinals. [The Dashboard of the College of Cardinals](#) can be used to identify and sort members by country of origin, age, date of appointment, or even selection by various popes. It also shows the total number of eligible voting members and the required number of votes needed in the next papal election.

Study: Charters Hastened Catholic School Decline. Will ESAs Slow the Process?

New research suggests that the explosive spread of charters in the 2000s led families to abandon Catholic schools. In a [study](#) released in August 2024, researchers at Boston College found a clear relationship between the opening of charter schools and declining enrollments at Catholic schools in the surrounding neighborhoods. Between 1998 and 2020, an average of 3.5 percent of students left their Catholic school within two years of a charter opening nearby, according to the study. As the number of families transferring to charters grew, the Catholic schools became significantly more likely to close.

Additional intervening historical variables that no doubt shaped parental decision making in recent years include the sexual abuse crisis and the rapid post-pandemic growth of school choice legislation. For more details about the study, click [here](#).

New Non-Regulatory Guidance on Title IIa

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has published Using Title II, Part A Funds to Strategically Support Educator Recruitment, Retention, Professional Learning, and Improved Student Outcomes. While not specifically targeted to nonpublic schools, this non-regulatory resource provides guidance for state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) on how to leverage Title II, Part A funds to address educator shortages and improve student outcomes by implementing evidence-based strategies outlined in the U.S. Department of Education's Raise the Bar: Lead the World initiative.

Funds can support activities such as improving teacher compensation and working conditions, expanding entry pathways into teaching, providing professional development, offering leadership opportunities, and promoting diversity among educators. With the expiration of emergency pandemic-related funds in September 2024, SEAs and LEAs are encouraged to strategically utilize Title II, Part A resources to sustain and build upon past teacher recruitment, retention, and training investments. To read the guidance, click [here](#).