

A Look at Catholic School Numbers

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The *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2023-2024: Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing* presents a high-level overview of the current state of Catholic education in the United States, shedding light on school characteristics, enrollment trends and the strategic positioning of schools across various regions. Portions of the report from the current edition are reprinted here. The summary synthesizes key findings and offers insights into the evolving landscape of Catholic education and its implications for stakeholders. However, I encourage our readers to read and/or download the PDF, free for NCEA members, for more detailed information on topics than we can print here, www.NCEA.org/CatholicSchoolData.

Stability Amidst Chaos

Amidst societal upheaval and educational instability, Catholic schools have emerged as beacons of stability, reversing years of enrollment decline. Faced with challenges such as technological shifts, demographic changes, and the pandemic's impact, these institutions have adapted strategically. The following key findings directly reflect how Catholic schools have not only stabilized but also begun to flourish anew. This resilience underscores their enduring commitment to providing a grounded, faith-based education in a world that often seems in flux.

A. Enrollment Trends

The national enrollment for the PK-12 grade span stands at 1,693,327, with pre-school students making up 10.1 percent of the total enrollment. Although the national enrollment decline since 2013-2014 school year has been 281,251, a 14.2 percent loss of the student population, enrollment in more recent years has stabilized. This year enrollment remained steady with a 0.0 percent change from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024.

Key Data Points:

- National PK-12 enrollment: 1,693,327.
- Enrollment has remained stable since last year, rather than continuing the trend of decline.

After two years of growth, enrollment has stabilized.

B. Schools in Different Places

Regional Changes: The Great Lakes and West/Far West regions account for nearly half of the Catholic school population, indicating robust engagement in these areas. Notably, the Southeast region has seen the highest enrollment increase since the 2019-2020 school year, showcasing a regional dynamism that could model growth for other areas. The total number of Catholic schools stands at 5,905, with a regional distribution that reflects broader demographic shifts in the United States.

Key Data Points:

- Southeast region enrollment shift: 3.6 percent since the 2019-2020 school year.
- The total number of Catholic schools is 5,905.

Urban vs Suburban Schools: Despite a decline in the total number of schools over the past four decades, Catholic education maintains a strong presence in urban and inner-city areas, with 38.7 percent of schools located in these settings. Meanwhile, suburban schools have increased to 40.3 percent of the total, reflecting changing urban landscapes and demographic trends.

Key Data Points:

- Urban and inner-city schools: 38.7 percent.
- Increase in suburban schools to 40.3 percent.

C. School Openings, Consolidations, and Closures

The report documents 20 new school openings against 55 closures or consolidations in the past school year, the lowest number of closures in years. The relatively low number of closures and consolidations, however, may indicate effective adaptation strategies and community support mechanisms that have helped stabilize many schools. However, 38 percent of all schools have a waiting list, demonstrating that there is strong interest in many locations.

Key Data Points:

- New schools opened: 20.
- Schools closed or consolidated: 55.
- 38 percent of all schools have a waiting list.

Commitment to Inclusion

Catholic schools are increasingly reflecting a commitment to inclusivity, responding to the growing diversity within their communities. By accommodating the rising enrollment of Hispanic students, addressing the needs of students with disabilities, and embracing students from various faith backgrounds, these schools are actively working towards creating a more welcoming and supportive educational environment. This commitment to diversity not only enriches the learning experience for all students but also aligns with the Catholic educational mission of serving a broad and diverse community.

A. Support for Students with Disabilities

The inclusion and support of students with disabilities are indicative of the Catholic education system's commitment to serving all children. An increase in the percentage of students with diagnosed disabilities to 7.8 percent from the previous year's 6.9 percent reflects a growing recognition and accommodation within Catholic schools.



This trend underscores the importance of inclusivity and personalized support in Catholic education.

Key Data Points:

- 7.8 percent of students in Catholic schools have a diagnosed disability, highlighting the inclusive nature of Catholic education and its adaptability to diverse learning needs.

B. Hispanic Student Population

The demographic composition of the student body, particularly the Hispanic population, provides insight into the cultural diversity within Catholic schools. The increasing diversity, with a significant representation of Hispanic students, reflects broader demographic shifts in the United States and the Catholic education system's response to these changes. Catholic schools

are responding by building programming and increasing resources.

Key Data Points:

- The Hispanic/Latino student population in Catholic schools (19 percent) underscores the system's role in serving diverse communities and its adaptability to the changing demographics of the United States.
- 129 Catholic schools offer Dual Language Immersion Programs.

C. Non-Catholic Students

The increasing trend of non-Catholic student enrollment in Catholic schools, which currently stands at 21 percent, is a significant development with various implications for these institutions. This shift not only reflects the changing landscape of Catholic education but also presents opportunities

and challenges that schools must navigate thoughtfully. The trend of increasing non-Catholic enrollment in Catholic schools underscores the need for these institutions to adapt and innovate in ways that uphold their Catholic identity while embracing diversity.

Key Data Points:

- 21 percent of students are reported to be non-Catholic.
- 16 percent of faculty are reported to be non-Catholic, and 12 percent have not reported a religious affiliation.

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Dive further into the data at
NCEA.org/CatholicSchoolData.