

## Catholic Schools as Communities of Social Involvement and Civic Engagement

The 2017 National Catholic Schools Week theme *Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service* points to the three reasons why our schools are seen as communities of social involvement and civic engagement. Catholic education forms students in faith, helps them to grow intellectually and demonstrates how to love and serve God through service to others.

The Catholic school is a community rooted in the values of the Gospel where students are encouraged to live their faith in the community. A school-sponsored activity to promote social and civic engagement helps students to be contributing members of their Church and society as they use those opportunities to promote the common good of all.

In addition to the research on Catholic schools that demonstrates students' outstanding academic achievement there are studies that point to the benefits of a Catholic education to society at-large:

- Catholic schools' Christian service programs expose students to different communities of need and service to others outside of their comfort zones, raises their social awareness and helps to build a better society.
- More students in Catholic schools participate in voluntary service activities than do public school students and they are more committed to service as adults.
- In Catholic schools, children learn to practice self-discipline, generosity, inclusion and cooperation with one another. This prepares them for democracy and teaches them to respect the opinions of others and promotes social and political tolerance.
- Catholic school students consistently outscore their public school peers on national assessments of U.S. history, geography and civics. This academic knowledge translates into better civic participation and good stewardship of resources.



- Catholic high school graduates are more civically engaged and likely to vote.
- Catholic schools and classrooms are more racially integrated than public schools and they tend to produce graduates who are more tolerant of diverse views.
- A major contribution of Catholic schools to the common good is the financial savings they provide to state and local communities. Based on the average public school per pupil cost, Catholic schools save the American taxpayers more than 20 billion dollars a year that they would have to spend to educate students if they were in public schools.

In almost every Catholic school, students are required to engage in service projects as a means of living out their faith and witnessing their commitment to creating a more just and peaceful society as a sign of the Reign of God to come. This adoption of service-hours requirements for students in Catholic schools has helped to create generous, socially-minded adults ready, willing and able to support their community and their world.

Share this good news about Catholic education with your friends and neighbors! ✨