

Growing DISCIPLES

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DIOCESE OF DES MOINES CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BUCK NATIONAL TREND

It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted learning across the globe. However, recent news about how much learning U.S. students missed during the last two years has reignited a national conversation about the devastating effects of the pandemic on student outcomes. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests showed a dramatic shift in student performance following the onset of COVID-19 and school closures – essentially undoing two decades of progress in math and reading (Mervosh, 2022). Math scores dropped in nearly every state, with only 26% of eighth graders demonstrating grade-level proficiency. Fourth graders performed only slightly better, with 36% demonstrating proficiency. Furthermore, in reading, only one in three students demonstrated proficiency, "continuing a downward trend that had begun even before the pandemic," (NYT, 2022).

The Diocese of Des Moines' efforts to reduce learning loss have paid tremendous dividends based on recent data. Although not an apples-to-apples comparison to the NAEP, the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools and Iowa public schools participate in the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP).



ISASP is a standards-based assessment designed to inform schools and families on how students perform on the Iowa Core Academic Standards. Students performing at the proficient level demonstrate adequate competency in the knowledge, skills and abilities that meet the requirements for their grade level associated with academic readiness for college and a career in the subject area.

Click [here](#) to learn more and to see how our students stack up to their peers state-wide.



Holy Trinity Catholic School, Des Moines

HOLY TRINITY RECEIVES MODEL PLC RECOGNITION

Holy Trinity Catholic School was recently recognized as a Model Professional Learning Community (PLC) at Work® by Solution Tree for its sustained success in raising student achievement. PLCs are schools where educators acknowledge that the key to improved student learning is ongoing, job-embedded education for the adults serving those students. Schools that employ use of PLCs "empower educators to work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve." (Solution Tree, 2022).

Holy Trinity is the first and only school in Des Moines to receive this honor. In addition, only one in approximately 200 schools and districts throughout the US and Canada receives this recognition.

Schools are selected based on strict criteria, including demonstrating a commitment to PLC concepts, implementing these concepts for at least three years, and providing clear evidence of improved student learning. Once measurable results can be seen, the school must explain its practices, structures, and culture and submit its application for consideration by the PLC Review Committee. According to the Champions of PLC at Work®, "Educators in the schools selected for this recognition have shown a sustained commitment to helping all of their students achieve at high levels. They have been willing to alter the structure and culture of the organization to reflect their commitment."

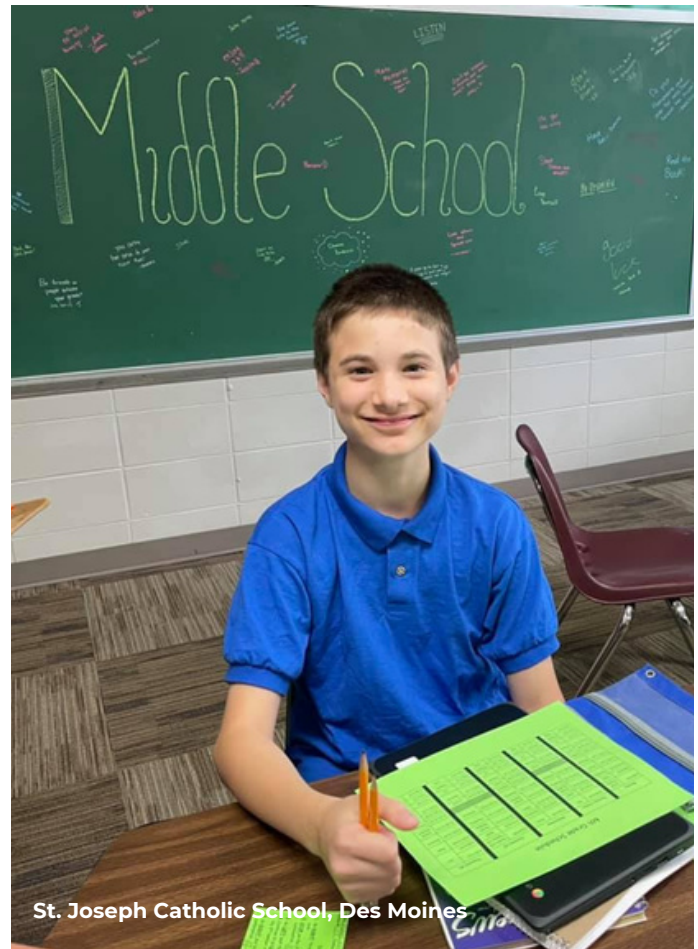
"This prestigious designation is a testament to the tireless efforts of the Holy Trinity leadership and faculty to ensure student growth, said Donna Bishop, Superintendent of Schools. "We are blessed to have Holy Trinity Catholic School in our diocese. It is truly an exemplar of academic excellence and commitment to student success."

DIOCESE ANNOUNCES NEWLY EXPANDED TUITION ASSISTANCE

From preschool through high school, Diocese of Des Moines students thrive in caring and creative environments with smaller class sizes that teach BIG subjects. Our teachers challenge students to aim higher in every aspect – academically, spiritually and personally – so they can achieve their full potential. Ensuring our schools are accessible to all families who desire a Catholic education is central to our mission. Every year, nearly 40 percent of our students receive some form of tuition assistance to help make Catholic education affordable.

No family is turned away for the inability to pay full tuition. During the 2021-2022 school year, more than \$3 million in tuition assistance was provided. There are many forms of tuition assistance available including newly expanded tuition assistance now available through the Tuition Assistance Endowment established with the Ignite Campaign. With these added tuition assistance resources, an additional 15% of currently enrolled families may qualify for tuition assistance.

The application window for tuition assistance is open February 1 - April 18, 2023. Click [here](#) to learn more about available tuition assistance.



YOUR INPUT MATTERS!

We invite you to help us assess parent engagement at our school using the short survey at the link below. Your input will help us make improvements to ensure all Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools are centers of strong faith formation, academic excellence, and community. The survey takes only a few minutes to complete and responses are confidential. The deadline to submit responses is May 25 and we are striving toward 100% participation. Click [here](#) to complete the survey.

Thank you for your help with this important initiative!

GRANT FUNDING SUPPORTS NEW COMPUTER SCIENCE CURRICULUM

Five Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools were recently awarded grants from the state of Iowa totaling over \$280,000. Schools awarded grants include Christ the King, Holy Trinity, St. Anthony, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Joseph. The schools were notified of their awards in December, and plans are underway to begin implementation of the new Computer Science curriculum and professional development for faculty.

This funding was made possible through Iowa's Computer Science Fund (CSF). The goal of the CSF program is to provide startup funds for K-12 schools in Iowa to support the purchase of an approved computer science curriculum, aligned professional development for teachers, equipment, and teacher stipends and substitute pay. Ultimately, this grant program will build the capacity of Iowa schools to provide high-quality computer science instruction.



St. Anthony Catholic, Des Moines



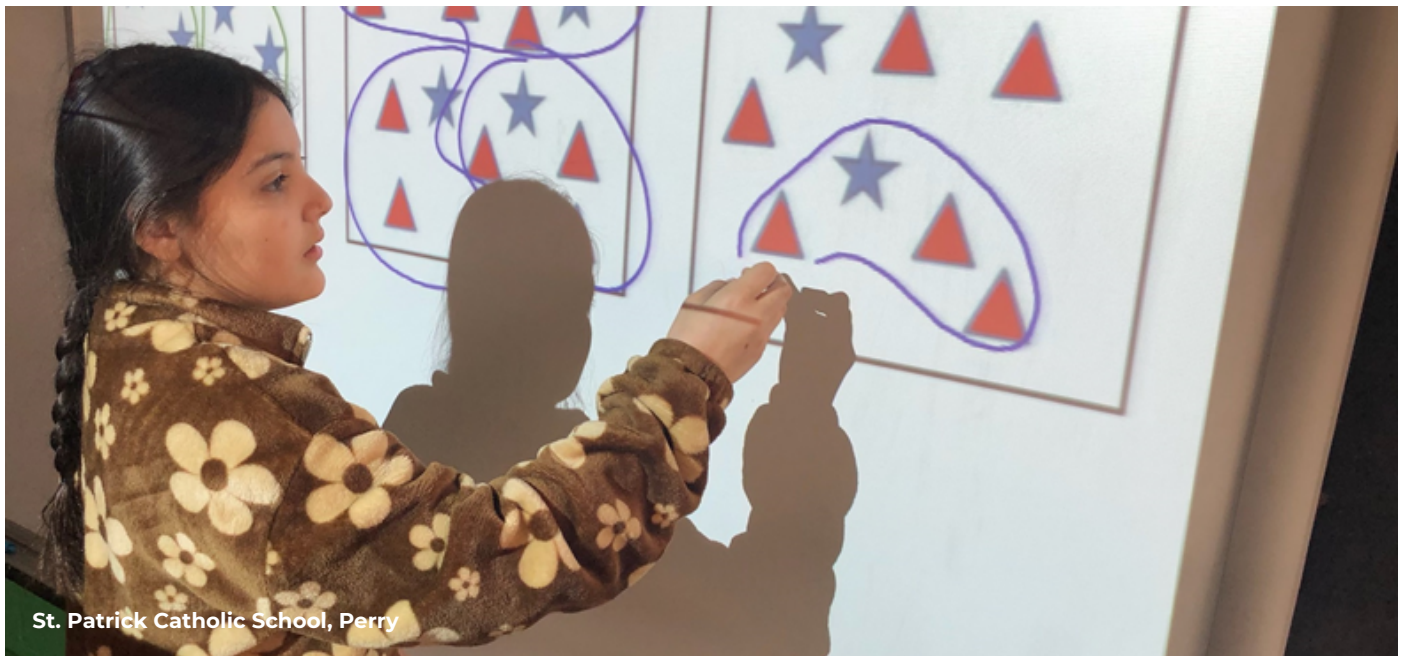
Lena Rosloniec

SAINT ALBERT SENIOR LENA ROSLONIEC IS ALWAYS UP FOR A CHALLENGE!

Senior Lena Rosloniec decided to try her hand at football for the first time this fall. She is believed to be the first female high school football player in Saint Albert Catholic history.

“She’s been a welcome addition,” said head coach Jake Driver. “She’s taught us to be inclusive. Once you’re a part of our team, you’re always a part of our team. She’s been at every practice. She’s done all things required to be a Falcon football player. Her contributions probably don’t show up on a stat sheet.”

Click [here](#) to learn about her journey.



St. Patrick Catholic School, Perry

UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

On January 24, 2023 Governor Reynolds signed the Student First Act into law. The Student First Act makes state education funding through Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) available for eligible Iowa K-12 students who choose to attend accredited private schools. It also provides public schools additional funding for students who live in their district but attend private schools.

An Education Savings Account (ESA) is a deposit of public funds into government-authorized savings accounts which eligible families may use to cover tuition, fees, and other qualified education expenses at accredited private schools in Iowa. Parents who enroll their eligible children in an accredited private school will receive an estimated \$7,598 per pupil for the 2023-2024 school year.

Now that ESAs are a reality for Iowa families, it's understandable that parents have questions about how will this new legislation impact the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools.

First and foremost, the Diocese of Des Moines takes pride in the tradition of our smaller class sizes, family-centered culture, and unique climate provided by each of our schools. We will continue to maintain these qualities as we open our arms to welcome more children to experience the Catholic school difference.

Next, while most of our schools have room to accommodate additional students, this new legislation will not increase class size guidelines. We will welcome new students in grades with open seats according to our current enrollment process. Enrollment growth will be gradual over the next few years.

There are so many more questions, and we have answers! Click [here](#) for more information about ESAs.

DIOCESE OF DES MOINES CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools includes 16 schools serving 23 counties in central and southwest Iowa. Catholic schools in the Des Moines Diocese build Christ-centered, collaborative, inclusive partnerships with parents, students, and parishes to provide innovative academic excellence and inspirational faith formation. To learn more about the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools, visit dmdiocese.org/catholic-schools or email grow@dmdiocese.org.

Growing Disciples is a quarterly publication of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools Office. Content may not be reproduced without the expressed written consent from the Diocese of Des Moines. To submit a story idea, email grow@dmdiocese.org.



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