Fact Sheet: Catholic Secondary Education in New York

The Archdiocese of New York says the mission and aim of Catholic education in New York is “to ensure its schools are Christ-centered, academically excellent, and welcoming communities that teach students to be life-long learners and leaders energized by fidelity to Christ, the Church, and one another.”

The Evolution of Catholic Schools in NYC

- On the first day of school in 1957, The New York Times reported that 351,500 pupils were expected to attend New York City Catholic schools, or about one child for every three in a public school.
- In the 2014-15 school year, just 90,000 Catholic school students were enrolled in the five boroughs of New York City, according to the archdiocese of Brooklyn (which oversees Brooklyn and Queens) and Archdiocese of New York (overseeing Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx,) compared with 1.1 million students in public schools.
- Nationally, the number of Catholic high school students dropped to 590,883 this year from 653,226 in 2005, according to Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate in Washington, D.C.
- Brenna Moore, an Associate Professor of Theology at Fordham University, says the reason for the decline in the number of students in Catholic secondary schools can be traced to rises in the tuition. “The Catholic secondary education school system was built overwhelmingly with the labor of nuns, who worked hard for very low wages (one colleague of mine in her 70s, said that her Catholic elementary school in Philadelphia in the 1950s had 110 students in each class, with one nun as a teacher. 110 students, that is not a typo),” explains Moore. “Today, the ranks of nuns are down by massive numbers, it is just not possible to run the schools as cheaply
as they once did. Catholic school tuitions have gone up, and many families can no longer afford it – a shame because Catholics schools still are sometimes the only viable, robust institutions in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the U.S. today.”

Bucking the Trend: Long Island Schools

- Although Catholic school enrollments in New York City have fallen over time, parochial schools remain popular in the city suburbs. In 2013, Newsday reported that enrollment at most of Long Island's Catholic high schools is relatively steady today, even as a decreasing numbers of students in the diocese's elementary schools forced closures and the region's economy struggles to regain its pre-recession footing.

- Newsday also reported that seven of the 10 Catholic high schools on Long Island have increased enrollment over the decade from the 2003-04 school year through 12-13 while three saw declines.

Some of the larger and best know Catholic Schools in New York City are:

- In Manhattan: Regis High School, Cathedral High School, Xavier High School, Marymount School of New York, Loyola High School
- In Brooklyn: Xaverian High School, Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School, Bishop Kearney High School, St. Joseph High School
- In Queens: St. Francis Preparatory High School, St. John's Preparatory High School, Archbishop Malloy High School, The Mary Louis Academy, Holy Cross High School
- In the Bronx: Cardinal Hayes High School, Cardinal Spellman, Fordham Preparatory School, St. Aquinas High School
- In Staten Island: St. Joseph by the Sea High School, Monsignor Farrell High School

Author: Laura Sanicola