

ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON  
66 BROOKS DRIVE  
BRAintree, MASSACHUSETTS 02184-3839

June, 1, 2010

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Academic excellence and faith formation are at the core of our Catholic schools. We know that you have chosen Catholic education to advance your children's intellectual, spiritual, physical and social development. All of us in the Archdiocese of Boston are deeply committed to providing schools that meet your high standards academically and spiritually.

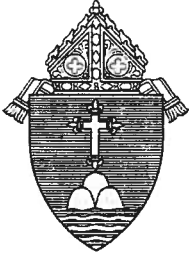
As the school year comes to a successful close, I want to provide you an update on a major step we took this year to enhance the academic excellence of our schools and advance the learning of all our students. Based on the advice of a committee of our best principals and assessment experts, the Catholic Schools Office adopted a new standardized assessment, the Stanford Achievement Tests 10 (Stanford 10). During the week of March 22, 2010, over 18,000 students (grades one to eight) in the Archdiocese of Boston took part in the first annual Stanford 10 assessment.

Our new assessment has been considered the standard of excellence in achievement testing for more than 80 years. The Stanford 10 measures students' knowledge in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. We believe that the most important purpose of assessment is to inform instruction. When teachers and administrators have easy and immediate access to student test results, they have a window into the best strategies for improving learning for each and every student. Thus, we are pleased that the Stanford 10 is supported by a powerful online data reporting and analysis tool that will allow educators to make timely, targeted instructional decisions.

A key to a successful assessment program is quality professional development for principals and teachers. The Catholic Schools Office has been working closely with school leaders this spring to help them dig deep into the assessment data and apply it to the learning needs of all of their students. Over the coming years, we will continue to work regularly with our principals and teachers to help them develop strategies for using the assessment data to support classroom instruction and school-wide decisions about curriculum and academic programs.

Based on the results of this spring's Stanford 10 testing, you will be pleased to know that students in the Archdiocese of Boston continue to perform well above the national average across the curriculum. Pushing student achievement to ever higher levels is essential.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that when schools adopt new standardized assessments it is typical that scores may drop for one or two years. The shift from the Terra Nova to the SAT10 has resulted in a drop in scores. You may see a decrease in the standardized



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testing results of your child, which is normal with a new assessment. The primary reason, which our principals and teachers can explain, is that results on the Stanford 10 are based on different norm (comparison) groups than the Terra Nova. In addition, the Stanford 10 in many ways is a more rigorous test than the Terra Nova.

Educators and parents should be most concerned with the progress—the growth—that students exhibit academically, as well as in all aspects of their development. We want all our students to perform at high levels, and we want to see that they are gaining knowledge and improving every year. As a result, we are developing what experts call “a growth model” for all of our students, so that we can begin to understand and talk about how much more (or less) students are learning as they move through their schooling.

We are blessed to have you share with us each day the gifts of your children. Please know that we are deeply committed to seeing that every student is challenged, stimulated and grows—intellectually, spiritually, physically and socially. Best wishes for a happy close to the school year and to a refreshing summer break.

Sincerely,

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Mary Grassa O'Neill  
Secretary of Education/Superintendent of Schools