



# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS Herald

SUPPLEMENT TO ARKANSAS CATHOLIC — NEWS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

NOVEMBER 18, 2017

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## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### Social media can prevent our doing greater things

By Vernell Bowen  
Superintendent of Schools

In the past two years, school principals have begun to deal with issues with inappropriate uses of social media not only by students, but by the parents.



Vernell Bowen

There are many positive things about the ways social media keeps us informed and connected with family and friends. However, when social media is used to degrade persons and institutions and create negative and hateful statements toward each other then it becomes an instrument that can be powerfully evil. Social media can also keep us from using our valuable time to truly experience life in the moment.

Growing up, my mother always said if you can't say something nice about someone, then don't say anything at all. This statement also goes back to the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have done to you. Of course, this was before the time of social media and even cell phones.

What has happened in today's society is that people are not saying things face to face to each other. Social media has allowed people to dehumanize each other because they do not have to listen to immediate responses. It does not allow people to communicate and work out their issues. The misuse of Facebook and other social media has led schools to write policies that give the administration the right to tell parents that they must remove their children from school due to inappropriate messaging through social

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## Schools express their unique qualities

Catholic educators learn how to communicate schools' special gifts

By Aprille Hanson  
Associate Editor

Charlotte Hylden, 6, a first-grade student at Our Lady of the Holy Souls School in Little Rock, proudly wore her sticker with a red heart and blue cross that read "Wabbits Have H.E.A.R.T."

Hylden earned her sticker for being engaged in her math assignments, working quietly so as not to disturb others. That dedication to school work rings true to the characteristics of "H.E.A.R.T" — honorable, engaged, academic, respectful and a team member. But it's more than a sticker and an announcement in the morning of which students were recognized. It's recognition that a student is acting in a way that lives out the charism of the school.

The sticker program was started last year, as Our Lady of the Holy Souls School in Little Rock and others throughout the diocese have looked closer at what makes their Catholic schools unique. The Catholic Schools Office encouraged each school to identify their charism, what a school is called to be, and create a culture centered



Aprille Hanson

Charlotte Hylden (right) and Anna Kiehn, first-grade students at Our Lady of the Holy Souls School in Little Rock, pay attention to teacher Amy Bratcher during a math lesson. The students both earned H.E.A.R.T. stickers.

on that identity.

"It's so important to keep our Catholic identity alive and strong in our schools," said Marguerite Olberts, associate superintendent of Catholic Schools. "This is a wonderful way for our schools to take a step back and review how

they project that charism and culture to their school community, parish and outside community and to see if it truly coincides to what they should be projecting of a Catholic school."

Vernell Bowen, superintendent of Catholic Schools, heard

Dr. Timothy Cook speak about his book "Charism and Culture: Cultivating Catholic Identity in Catholic Schools" at a National Catholic Educational Association conference and asked principals to read

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## Parents' voices important in success of schools

Diocese encourages survey annually to stay connected to families

By Aprille Hanson  
Associate Editor

School administrators, teachers and students are on the front lines of whether a school is achieving the success it desires. But parents are also part of the equation, making their voices crucial in the overall development and promotion of the school.

The Catholic Schools Office has encouraged all 27 Catholic schools in the state to conduct a parent satisfaction survey this month to gauge how they feel about a school's strengths and weaknesses

and also their likelihood to recommend the school to other parents.

"It's important because through the parent satisfaction survey, the parents will often share what they may not share with you otherwise," said Marguerite Olberts, associate superintendent of Catholic Schools. "It gives you a window into their perspective."

The anonymous 11-question online survey, sent primarily through the Catholic Schools Office's Survey Monkey account, asks parents a variety of questions, including changes they'd like to see in their school to give it a higher overall rating, how likely they are to keep their child at the school and a space for parents to offer suggestions. A few questions also give parents a chance to rate areas of interest as not important or extremely important and how satis-

"Through the parent satisfaction survey, the parents will often share what they may not share with you otherwise."

Marguerite Olberts, associate superintendent of Catholic Schools

fied they are with technology at the school, the principal, the teachers, lunch program and other topics.

"We see the survey results come in there and we send that feedback out to the principals," for schools that use the Catholic Schools Office Survey Monkey account rather than their own, Olberts said.

Chuck Toomer, president of the Diocesan Board of Education, was "key in the creation of the survey," Olberts said. Toomer, who has served as president about four years, said the survey was born out

of a strategic plan for the Catholic schools.

"I think it's important for them to do the survey on a yearly basis in order to measure the satisfaction of their parents so they can in turn make improvements on the education their kids receive," he said.

Fifteen schools sent out the survey last year. Catholic High School in Little Rock had a response of more than 700, with enrollment at 750 students. Schools

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## Parents

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can also add additional questions unique to their school, something principal Steve Straessle did for Catholic High.

"It underscored our beliefs more than anything else. What our strengths are and what our challenges are," he said. "We knew that upgrading technology was important to the parents. That's one of the reasons we did the renovation of the school," with improvements made throughout the past three or four years, adding "We renovated the entire building now and have the capacity to upgrade the technology on a more fluid basis."

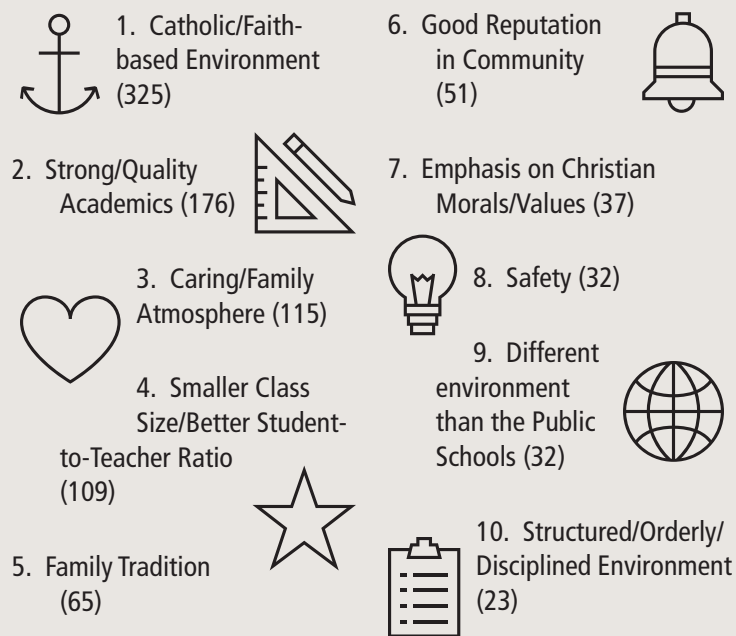
Parents' concerns about technology covered it all, from using technology in the classrooms to their IT infrastructure.

"We knew that they appreciate the discipline and tradition and the idea it's a level playing field at Catholic High," which was confirmed by the survey.

Straessle also said the survey revealed that parents were concerned about mental health issues. Training for staff to recognize warning signs has "been a little more focused," he said.

"There's a growing sense that depression and anxiety are more obvious features of growing up as a teenager nowadays. Schools have to be ready to address that," Straessle said. "As a school with teenage boys who commonly don't emote as much as others, it's incumbent of us to notice the triggers and warning signs and more

## Top 10 Reasons parents choose a Catholic school



Compiled by the Diocese of Little Rock Catholic Schools Office out of responses from 1,468 parents surveyed during the 2016-2017 school year. Parents could choose more than one reason.

subtle indicators."

St. Joseph School in Conway distributed the survey to parents from their elementary, middle and high schools. The highest turnout was from elementary school parents, said Matt Tucker, who was the elementary school building principal when the survey was conducted. This year, he is the middle school principal. Diane Wolfe is principal of the high school and Courtney Pope is principal of the elementary

school building.

"I can think we have the pulse of the heartbeat of the school, but the parents will let you know the true view of the school," Tucker said. "We may fail to see what that does in terms of student achievement or engagement."

High school parents were concerned about enforcements of the dress code, as the school has made changes including less color options and a specific plaid skirt pattern the female students voted on.

"The parents didn't feel there was a consistent enforcement and she's (Wolfe) addressing that and bringing more enforcement, making sure it's implemented," Tucker said.

While younger grades have Chromebooks in the classroom, middle school students must purchase their own devices. Making sure students are better prepared in third grade to understand the program at home so they do not have to rely on their parents has been a priority.

"We do work a lot out of our Google Classroom. That's not something parents are used to working out of. They were like me, paper and pencil," Tucker said.

Tucker said the feedback was "overly positive." One of the most common complaints was about Common Core being taught. However, Catholic schools do not follow Common Core like public schools.

"I think that one of the changes that has occurred is better communication has been put in place," said Diane Wolfe. "... We're in the digital age, so we have really upped our technology," in the form of emailed newsletters, a mobile app, texting and an online parent portal.

Though the survey is important to gauge how parents feel, a school cannot change their philosophy or identity to satisfy a few.

"We can't be all things to all people and chase every fad or shoot from the hip request," Straessle said. "But on the other hand, we have to maintain who we are and add the things we think that will make who we are better."

## WORD OF MOUTH

### Parents can be powerful promoters — or detractors

One of the most important questions on the parent satisfaction survey asks how likely a parent is to recommend their school to a friend or colleague on a scale of 1, not at all likely, to 10, extremely likely.

"It is a nationally known question and one that's talked about in school development," said Marguerite Olberts, associate superintendent of Catholic Schools. "...

Parents who give it a six or below rating are considered detractors. They're not happy for some reason and are not out there promoting your school."

Those who choose seven or eight are "happy, but not openly encouraging" other parents to send their children to the school. Scoring a school nine and 10 is the goal. A school's score is calculated by taking the total of each of the three ranges and dividing

it by the total number of surveys. Subtract the percentage of those who rate the school between one and six from the percentage who rated it nine or 10 to get the "net promoter" score.

- Above 64 percent: outstanding
- 50-64 percent: average
- 35-49: below average

Last year, 15 schools conducted the survey, with 11 through the Catholic Schools Office and one reporting their findings to the of-

fice. Of those 12, eight had a "net promoter score" of outstanding, three were average and one was below average. Olberts said that school has worked to make vital changes to improve its score.

"It's just a factor to look at in terms of retention of your students. Enrollment is always something our schools are looking at ... you want your parents to be happy, you want to be doing an excellent job," she said.

## Social

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media that is derogatory toward others that includes the actions of students as well as parents.

There are many ways social media, especially Facebook, can be used in positive ways. The Office of Catholic Schools has a Facebook page that allows us to provide information about all the great things that the schools are doing. Facebook allows families and friends to stay connected. There are many good things that would have never happened

without Facebook. However, there may be a longer list of things we don't do because we are too busy on Facebook. When Facebook becomes an appendage to our body and we let it take over our life, then we are missing out on greater things.

Recently, I was reading an article by Matthew Warner on "The Real Reasons to Quit Facebook" and will share some of his statements about what you miss when you are too busy on Facebook.

■ What if I have a 15-minute break during the day, instead of checking Facebook, I put time into planning a meaningful evening

with my spouse?

■ What if I have 30 minutes before I go to bed, instead of checking my Facebook, I read a spiritual masterpiece that could change my life and others around me?

■ What if the next time I have two minutes at a traffic light, instead of checking my Facebook I say a prayer of thanks to God?

■ What if when commercials come on instead of checking Facebook, I jump on the floor with my kids for an impromptu wrestling match?

■ What if the next time I get an hour on the weekend to relax, instead of checking Facebook, I put

on some amazing music and get lost in its beauty?

These are just a few of things that Mr. Warner offers as suggestions to make life better.

In this article, I have mainly commented on Facebook as a form of social media that may keep us from doing greater and more important things in life. Texting, messaging or Twitter also can ruin our ability to be in the present and live the moment. It is much more important to value our activities through living in the moment than valuing only those that can be captured and shared online.

## BY THE NUMBERS

The Office of Catholic Schools provided the following statistics for the 2017-18 school year for the Diocese of Little Rock.

### Enrollment

- Schools: 27
- Total enrollment: 6,706
- Elementary enrollment: 4,836
- Secondary enrollment: 1,870
- Percentage of Catholic students: 77
- Total enrollment in pre-schools: 734

### Race and Ethnicity

- Percent of white students: 89
- Percent of multi-racial students: 4.6
- Percent of Asian students: 4
- Percent of black students: 1.6 (The remaining students are Native American, Pacific islanders or unknown.)
- Percent of Hispanic students: 15.1

### Tuition

- Average annual cost of educating one child in elementary school: \$5,802
- Average annual cost of educating one child in secondary schools: Ranges from \$6,258 at Catholic High School and \$12,503 at Mount St. Mary Academy. Subiaco Academy, a boarding school, ranges from \$22,000 to \$35,300 for boarding students and \$8,000 for day students
- Average tuition for elementary for first Catholic child: \$3,711
- Average tuition for secondary: \$6,336 (Catholic student) or \$7,382 (non-Catholic student), not including Subiaco Academy

### Staff

- Total professional staff: 635
- Percentage of lay staff: 96.8
- Percentage of Catholic staff: 77.3

### Spring Testing

All students in first to eighth grade take the Terra Nova National Achievement Test annually. Any score above the 50th percentile is above average.

First grade	83
Second grade	81
Third grade	77
Fourth grade	83
Fifth grade	81
Sixth grade	83
Seventh grade	86
Eighth grade	88

### ACT Scores, 2017 graduates

Subject	State Average	Catholic Schools Average
English	18.9	25.5
Math	19.0	23.2
Reading	19.7	25.3
Science	19.5	23.7
Composite	19.4	24.5



**St. John pastor** Father Chinnaiyah Irudayaraj "YC" Yeddnapalli helped make funnel cakes at the St. John School Bazaar in Hot Springs Oct. 27.

### Bazaar

The St. John School Bazaar in Hot Springs raised more than \$80,000 to benefit the school Oct. 27. The annual event included a live and silent auction, bake sale, lunch and dinner, games and in-



**St. Boniface sixth-graders** Jack Thomas, Irma Damian, Amy Nguyen, Meliza Gopar, Isabel Quezada, Will Thomas, Vincenté Otero, Mora Boyd, Lauren Ramsey, Azucena Castillo, Gabe Didion along with teacher Shelly Faught present their wax museum to the school.

flatables for children. It has been held for more than 75 years.

### Wax museum

The sixth-grade social studies class transformed into civil

war leaders Oct. 31 at St. Boniface School in Fort Smith. Students created a "Civil War Wax Museum" under the direction of their teacher Shelly Faught. All classes were invited to learn about the leaders they presented.

### Robots

Our Lady of the Holy Souls School in Little Rock has a new Robotics Club. The club has three teams comprised of fifth-eighth graders. One team is all female students. These teams will be competing in their first tournament at UALR Dec. 2 using VEX IQ equipment. The teams will be building their own robots in order to compete. Along with the robotics teams, the robotics club meets once a month and is just for students to come and play, build with the kits and learn a bit about robotics.

### Children ministering

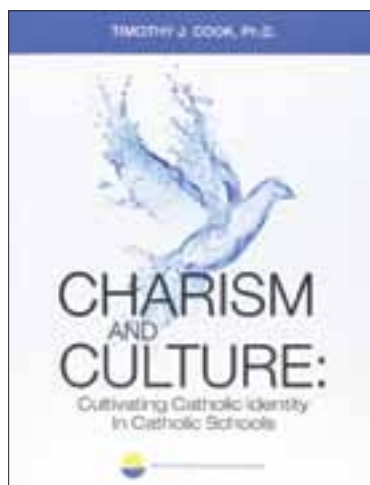
St. John School in Hot Springs will have its annual toy procession on St. Nicholas Day, Dec.

students are actively involved in giving, Dobbins said. Students have made prayer cards for Eucharistic ministers to the sick to pass along and welcome cards that Settled Souls ministry gives to homeless from Jericho Way day resource center who have just found a home.

"With the cards to Settled Souls, we do talk about homelessness and there are people helping those who were homeless start a better life," Dobbins said, adding that real-world application helps students learn about the world and their place in it.



**Dr. Timothy J. Cook** is a professor, chairman of the Education Department at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., and author of "Charism and Culture: Cultivating Catholic Identity in Catholic Schools."



## WELCOME VISITORS



**During Red Ribbon Week**, Congressman U.S. Rep. French Hill participated in a Google Hangout with students in the seventh and eighth grades at St. Theresa School in Little Rock. Eighth-grader Robert Gangluff was able to address a question to the congressman. Also during Red Ribbon Week, basketball players from UA Little Rock Trojans basketball team talked to students about making healthy choices.

6 at the 8 a.m. all-school Mass. Each student will bring an unwrapped gift to be presented at Mass. The gifts are taken to the Cooper Anthony Mercy Child Advocacy Center. They are distributed to the children who receive treatment at the center.

### Hurricane help

At St. Mary School in Paragould, students made and sent cards to St. Mary School at League City, Texas, following Hurricane Harvey. In reply the

Texas school sent back handmade cards thanking the Paragould students.

### Christmas shopping

The Old-Fashioned Christmas Church Bazaar will be presented Saturday, Dec. 2 from 1 to 6 p.m. at St. Boniface School in Fort Smith. Holiday shopping in the parish hall will feature handmade crafts, homemade baked goods and small business vendors. There will be a 50/50 and quilt raffle.

love, act — have taken hold at the school.

The words are displayed on student T-shirts, the top of their school website and parents are using the hashtag #learnloveact while sharing school information.

A key emphasis in "Charism and Culture" is to not only identify a school's charism but find ways to make sure policies, logos and a mission statement relate to it, Olberts said.

"Over the past year or so, we have really started to try and brand things with those three words," Pohlmeier said. "Every little thing we do I could fit into a category of how they're loving others, acting like Jesus or learning to be better. It's become a way of life."

The concept of charism is something the Catholic Schools Office hopes all schools in the diocese strive to understand better.

"We've certainly seen a number of schools take steps to do this and ... we think more will continue. It will only make schools stronger," Olberts said.

## CHARACTERS



**On Halloween**, students and teachers at St. Theresa School in Little Rock were invited to dress as a book character and receive 10 percent off at the Scholastic Book Fair. Jasmine Gonzalez (dressed as Pinkalicious) and her third-grade book characters pose with Clifford the Big Red Dog.

## Culture

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it beginning in 2016.

"When you read through the book it gives so many concrete ways you can assess this. It gives you a good firm idea of what it (charism) is," and how it can be translated into the culture of the school, Olberts said. "... Ok, what is our history, what is our identity? Are we connected to a saint?"

Each school has the commonality of Catholicism, but just as people in the pews are different, so are the schools and what they bring to the Universal Church and world.

Our Lady of the Holy Souls was started by the Olivetan Benedictine sisters in 1927. Though there are no sisters teaching at the school today "it's important for us to keep that spirit alive," said Ileana Dobbins, principal at Holy Souls.

Their Helping Others Program or "H.O.P.," which picks a different charity or organization to adopt each month, now makes sure the