

# Catholic Schools Rise Above

**By Archbishop William E. Lori**

Every year as the Super Bowl approaches, we begin to think about commercials. I think it's safe to say that this is the only time of the year many of us give thought to the ads that bombard us on television, radio, newspapers and the Internet. There has been a recent spate of television shows produced that have characters working in the advertising world which have brought renewed attention to the world of advertising and the creation of campaigns and "brand identities" for various companies and their products.

These shows highlight what many consider to be a lost art. Let's face it, we all watch commercials and see various ads in our day-to-day lives, but how often do we think about what it takes to make them? Though I'm sure these shows depict a glamorized version of the process, I suspect they reveal some accurate and basic, but important, steps to creating an ad campaign. For instance, it is critically important to know something about one's audience or customer and what they currently think about a product before developing a campaign that seeks to change or reaffirm his or her consumption habits.

I write about this topic because here in the Archdiocese of Baltimore we recently underwent a similar process on behalf of our Catholic schools.

While not new - Catholic schools have been around for more than 200 years - people's perceptions of our schools have changed through the years, as have the ways in which they make decisions about where to educate their children. And with so many educational options available to families, it is important today more than ever to remind parents of the excellent value of a Catholic school education.

We began the process by engaging our stakeholders to find out what they think of our schools, especially regarding the unique way in which they educate the whole child, about our schools' increasing investment and use of technology in the classroom, and about the role of our schools in forming the faith lives of our

students.

In focus groups and surveys, we engaged more than 1,400 current and former families, principals, admissions directors, pastors, school board and faculty members, as well as Catholic families that have not chosen to educate their children in a Catholic school.

What they told us was important and revealing. They affirmed the unquestionable academic legacy of Catholic schools – long the hallmark of a Catholic education – but also the intangibles that make our schools so unique and valuable in the formation of children: our rich history and heritage here in Maryland; the higher calling that motivates the educators in our schools; and the special care taken to ensure the education of the whole Catholic school student – mind, body and spirit.

What emerged was a logo (see the attached image) and tag line that connect each of these intangibles to produce a new brand identity for the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Catholic Schools. The tag line, "Rise Above," speaks to parents who wish their children to aim higher – academically, spiritually, athletically and morally. It speaks to pastors, principals, teachers and all who see the education of children as a higher calling, a mission, a vocation. And it speaks to students who wish to transform their lives, to demand more of themselves, and become closer to God through education.

You'll see the new brand in the coming weeks and months, including in television advertisements like some of those developed on the various ad agency shows on TV today. When you do, consider the product behind the commercial, all the thought and input that went into creating it, and what we feel the brand says about our schools and those who choose them. Catholic schools, rise above.

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