

# Catholic Schools Week kicks off Jan. 25

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Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore and throughout the nation will celebrate Catholic Schools Week Jan. 25-31 with Masses, open houses, special productions and other activities.

This year's theme is "Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service."

In the Baltimore archdiocese, the enrollment for the current school year is 25,633 in 49 elementary/middle schools and 20 high schools. The archdiocese is also home to one special-education school, with an enrollment of 125.

According to the most recent data from the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), nearly 2 million students are enrolled in Catholic schools in the United States, including nearly 1.4 million in elementary/middle schools and more than 580,000 in secondary schools.

The NCEA reports that U.S. Catholic school enrollment reached its peak in the early 1960s when there were more than 5.2 million students in nearly 13,000 schools. By 1990, there were approximately 2.5 million in 8,719 schools. From the mid-1990s through 2000, there was a 1.3 percent enrollment increase.

With the downturn in the economy of several years ago, many dioceses, including Baltimore, closed schools that were struggling with finances and enrollment. Between 2004 and 2014, 1,856 schools were closed or consolidated across the country.

Catholic schools continue to enjoy a strong reputation for excellence, consistently performing high on standardized testing.

In the Baltimore archdiocese, 99 percent of students graduate from high school and 98 percent attend college. In 2014, Catholic high school students in the Baltimore archdiocese were awarded more than \$205 million in college scholarships.

Since 2009, 11 Catholic schools in the archdiocese have been recognized by the federal government as among the best in the nation when they were named National Blue Ribbon schools.

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