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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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L.A. ARCHDIOCESE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS DEMONSTRATE STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE GROWTH DURING CHALLENGING PANDEMIC SCHOOL YEAR

--Majority of the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese survive grave economic impact of first pandemic year with six schools being consolidated due to ongoing decline in enrollment and financial hardship--

After a year of distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles are <u>welcoming back students to in-person or hybrid instruction</u> as they continue to face the impact of the pandemic head on. While the tumultuous year challenged all school communities, annual student academic performance results show continued growth thanks to the commitment and hard work of teachers, staff, and families.

In a <u>video message</u> shared today to the community of faith of the Archdiocese, Senior Director and Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Paul Escala recognized the commitment and resiliency of Catholic school communities during the pandemic.

"Though there have been many challenges and some setbacks, our Catholic school communities have demonstrated resiliency throughout this crisis," said Superintendent Escala. "As our Catholic schools welcomed students back, our students were able to celebrate the sacrament of their First Holy Communion something they missed early on in the pandemic. Our Catholic schools continue to demonstrate academic performance growth in reading and math in both elementary and high schools. This among so many other accomplishments, is something we can all be proud of. Our schools are open, safe and excited to welcome our students back to campus to finish the school year strong!"

The schools of the Archdiocese administer the nationally normed, Common Core standards-aligned Renaissance STAR assessment for grades K-9th; early literacy for grades K-1st, and reading and math for grades 2nd through 9th. For the 2020-2021school year fall and winter testing windows, 92 percent of students participated in the assessment. The following is a breakdown of the scores based on grade level and subject.

- Grade K (early literacy): 74.9% of students met/exceeded benchmark (4.1% increase)
- Grade 1 (early literacy: 69.9% of students met/exceeded benchmark (7.7% increase)
- Grades 2nd-8th (math): 62.8% of students met/exceeded benchmark (4.4% increase)
 - o 62.5% of students grew at a typical or high rate from fall 2020 to winter 2021 when compared nationally to academic peers
- Grades 2nd-8th (reading): 55.8% of students met/exceeded benchmark (2.4% increase)
 - o 64.5% of students grew at a typical or high rate from fall 2020 to winter 2021 when compared nationally to academic peers

- Grade 9 (math): 34.3% of students met/exceed benchmark (4.4% increase)
- Grade 9 (reading): 35.1% of students met/exceed benchmark (5.1% increase)
 - o Over 60% of high school students assessed grew academically at a typical or high rate in Math and Reading from Fall 2020 to Winter 2021 when compared nationally with their peers across the same platform.

*Note: benchmark is 55 (K-8) to 65 percentile (9th grade), respectively, among national peers.

"This pandemic has not come without its consequences," added Superintendent Escala. "To be sure, many of our community members have suffered tremendous loss of loved ones. Many of the neighborhoods we serve have been ravaged by COVID-19 and continue to be faced with unimaginable impacts. We pray for all those who have been lost and the families who carry on with their legacies with honor and pride. These impacts are not just human ones. Many have lost their businesses, jobs, homes, and possessions."

"These losses effect our school communities as well. In fact, at the end of this school year, six of our parish schools will be consolidated with nearby Catholic schools due to low enrollment, shifting demographics and distressed finances. We will be welcoming these students, their families and staff to local Catholic schools in the fall with love and support."

The following elementary schools will be consolidated with area Catholic schools at the end of the 2020-21 school year:

- Assumption School (Los Angeles)
- Blessed Sacrament School (Hollywood)
- St. Catherine of Sienna School (Reseda)
- St. Ferdinand School (San Fernando)
- St. Francis of Assisi School (Los Angeles)
- St. Madeline School (Pomona)

The Department of Catholic Schools (DCS) is working closely with the schools that will be consolidated to ensure the placement of students and staff at nearby schools. Families currently receiving tuition assistance from the Catholic Education Foundation who are transitioning to new schools will continue to receive financial support. The DCS will work with families who are in need of aid to help mitigate tuition costs and ensure a smooth transition for students and their families.

"These six schools had been trying to overcome financial challenges long before the pandemic," explained Superintendent Escala. "After careful discernment with Archdiocesan and school leadership, the decision was reached to consolidate these schools with nearby schools to create a union that would strengthen the school communities in the area so that all students can continue to receive the quality Catholic education that our schools provide."

"Resourced schools are successful schools that empower our students to excel in academics and in society," added Superintendent Escala. "When you think about the ministry of Catholic education, it's about our kids. It's about serving the poor, and it's about emulating the image of Christ in our children. Moreover, we're a family of faith that rallies to support one another during difficult times, as we have during this pandemic. To do that really well, we need to cultivate more support for Catholic schools among our donors, parishioners and civic institutions, including public resources so that way we can continue to serve our communities and continue to make quality Catholic education accessible for all families."

For more information on Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, visit www.lacatholicschools.org.