

Executive Summary - Catholic Schools Planning Survey

Background information

Parishioners throughout the Diocese of Madison were invited to complete a Catholic Schools Planning Survey between January 25 and February 9, 2009. Surveys were made available electronically via the diocesan website and in paper copy through local schools and parishes. Spanish versions were also available in both forms. At the end of the survey period, a total of **1,963** surveys had been completed.

Who completed the survey?

The vast majority of survey respondents were parishioners residing in the Diocese of Madison. Only 2% of respondents were not parishioners. Among the parishioners, respondents varied by the length of time they had resided in the Diocese as follows.

54%	20+ years
18%	10-20 years
10%	6-10 years
8%	3-6 years
6%	1-3 years
2%	Less than one year

This may be significant due to the fact that over half of the respondents have lived in the Diocese for over 20 years. However, as we did not ask for the age range of respondents, we cannot distinguish those who have spent 20+ years of their adult life in the Diocese as compared with those who were born and raised in the Diocese. Thus the number of years one has been a parishioner in the Diocese does not necessarily tell us the age of the respondents. This is an area that might be explored in a future survey.

36% currently have one or more children in a Catholic school in the Diocese.
64% currently do not have any children in Catholic schools in the Diocese.

This means that for 2/3 of the respondents, their opinions regarding Catholic schools were shaped either by previous experience (at one time they had children in the schools or themselves had attended a Catholic school in the Diocese), by volunteer experience (volunteering in the schools) or by second hand sources. As this statistic generally mirrors the demographics of the larger population, it may provide an accurate portrait regarding the attitudes and opinions of the general Catholic population regarding Catholic schools in the Diocese.

32% of respondents graduated from a Catholic school in the Diocese of Madison.
68% of respondents did not graduate from a Catholic school in the Diocese of Madison.

Findings - What did we learn?

General Summary

Slightly less than half (49.7%) of respondents said that they were “extremely likely” to recommend a Catholic school to family, friends and colleagues.

Slightly more than one third (33.7%), were less likely to recommend Catholic schools, while 16.6% of respondents were either neutral or would not recommend Catholic schools in the Diocese.

Top Five Reasons to Recommend Catholic Schools in the Diocese

1. Catholic school environment is safe and secure
2. Catholic identity/values/teachings are very evident
3. School faculty delivers a high quality education
4. School community is welcoming
5. Class sizes are ideal

Top Five Reasons NOT to Recommend Catholic Schools in the Diocese

1. Other (Most people gave an individual comment rather than choose from those listed.)
2. Tuition is not affordable.
3. There are not enough programs for special learning needs.
4. Schools facilities are not in the best condition.
5. School faculty does not deliver a high enough quality of education

Conclusion

The survey provided a snapshot of current opinions regarding Catholic schools in the Diocese of Madison. It should be noted that the survey was not designed to provide specific information regarding any one school, but rather to paint a broad picture of how people typically view Catholic schools in the Diocese of Madison. Generally, this opinion is split as roughly 50% of people hold a very positive opinion of Catholic schools and 50% are less enthusiastic.

While the survey points to several areas that warrant attention, it is also important to note that many of the perceived strengths were also marked as perceived weaknesses. This may indicate the broad diversity among the 46 schools in the Diocese and may reflect that a strong aspect of one school is a weak aspect of another school. In order to properly focus on these however, further data gathering is necessary. More detailed and targeted surveys and/or focus groups should be conducted in order to pinpoint specific areas of strength and weakness.