

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Students with Disabilities

It has been stated Catholic and other school-choice providers refuse to enroll students with disabilities.

Catholic schools **do** enroll students with disabilities when they have the resources to meet students' needs. When they do not, it is in the best interest of the student not to enroll that particular school.

Statewide, Catholic schools enroll 3,715 students from the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program and the Autism Scholarship Program.

Special needs students who are enrolled in nonpublic schools are referred to as parentally placed students. Under the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), parentally placed students do not have specific entitlement to special education services.

Parentally placed students also do not have a right to FAPE – Free and appropriate public education. This means they may not have a right to an IEP – Individual Education Plan – to include services they need to address their disabilities. In addition, they may not be afforded procedural safeguards and due process.

Accountability

There have been suggestions that Catholic schools are not accountable. This could not be further from the truth. First and foremost, Catholic schools are accountable to parents and families. If parents were dissatisfied with their children's Catholic schools, they would not continue to pay tuition from their hard-earned dollars. Parents pay twice – tuition at Catholic schools and paying local, state and federal taxes to support the public educational system.

Catholic schools hold a valid charter issued by the State Board of Education and maintain compliance with the Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools (OAC 3301-35-09). The accreditation standards of chartered nonpublic schools are reviewed and approved by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. – a condition for our schools to maintain a charter from the State Board of Education.

Catholic schools administer to every student such norm-referenced alternative assessments as the Iowa Test of Basic Studies, Terra Nova, STAR and/or MAP. In addition, our students on state scholarship participate in the third-grade reading guarantee, take other state-mandated elementary assessments and the state-required assessments for high school graduation.

Finally, by the admission of everyone who has testified before this Committee, and by the admission of the Commission itself, the present report card is flawed. Catholic schools are willing -- in fact, we are COMMITTED -- to being accountable for the public dollars our students receive. We certainly would consider additional accountability measures. However, these have to be appropriate to the mission, staffing, students, organization, governance, funding, and other features of Ohio's various nonpublic schools. By their very nature nonpublic schools are not public. They do not operate in the same way as public schools. They have different inputs. Every item on a public school report card will not apply to a nonpublic school.

Licensed Teachers

Every teacher in a Catholic school in Ohio has an approved Ohio license or certificate. The vast majority have the very same license that would be required for them to teach in a public school. Years ago, the General Assembly, recognizing the wealth of talent available in Ohio and the shortage of available teachers in some subject areas, created the “alternative teaching license.” Alternative teaching licenses make it possible for Ohioans who have not gone down the traditional path of teacher preparation to teach in a public school while they work toward attaining a standard Ohio teaching license.

In a similar way, the state permits Ohio’s nonpublic schools to hire some teachers on a state-issued “nontax” certificate. A good number of these individuals are teaching religion: a required subject in all of our schools and one for which there is **no standard Ohio license**. Others, many with advanced degrees, and broad career backgrounds in areas such as engineering, foreign languages, and technology are teaching in difficult to staff subjects.