



Dear Catholic School Families,

Welcome to the 2026-2027 school year! As we prepare to open our doors to your children once again, our hearts are filled with profound gratitude and joyful anticipation. Partnering with you in the sacred mission of educating the mind, body, and spirit of your children is one of the greatest privileges in the Diocese of Des Moines.

Our spiritual theme for this school year comes directly from Christ's Great Commission: "Go and Make Disciples of All Nations" (*Matthew 28:19*). In a world searching for purpose, our Catholic schools serve as beacons of faith, sending forth young men and women centered in Christ and equipped to transform the world through love, service, and excellence.

We stand united as one diocese across 16 schools and growing. We're proud to celebrate six consecutive years of enrollment growth, a trend that began long before the introduction of Iowa's Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). When enrollment numbers are certified later this fall, we expect to have more than 7,000 students in our schools for the first time, and 2026-2027 is expected to be the single largest year-over-year increase on record! As we look to launch early-childhood education programs in new communities, we are excited about the potential to educate even more young learners in the near future.

To truly make disciples, we must meet every student where they are and provide them with the tools to flourish. We continue to intentionally strengthen our infrastructure of academic supports through 504 accommodations, increasing English Learner (EL) services, adding numerous AEA coaches, interventionists, and behavior coaches, as well as raising funds for diverse learners through the annual Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools.

In the past five years, major upgrades have been made to facilities at St. Joseph and St. Pius X. We are anxiously awaiting St. Francis of Assisi early childhood expansion project to get underway. In 2026, we broke ground on a \$7.5 million project at St. Luke the Evangelist – adding eight classrooms, cafeteria, second kitchen, offices, and parking/sidewalk accommodations – and a \$76 million campaign at Dowling – including a student union, main entrance updates, expanded parking, renovated kitchen and dining area, athletics facilities, large-group seating, and a storm shelter.

We have also made it a priority to offer competitive support for the educators who dedicate their lives to your children. After Iowa increased starting salaries for public school teachers by 40%, we immediately moved to do the same. We are proud to share that our teachers' average salary is now closely aligned with the public schools. We continue to look for ways to provide an even more robust compensation package.

To support these efforts, our average cost to educate a K-8 student in our Diocese is projected to be \$11,200 for the 26-27 school year. We continue to progress toward a cost-to-educate financial model. Our tuition will begin to be based on the actual cost of educating our students. Parishes will continue to provide financial assistance for parish families, and thanks to new and expanding forms of assistance – primarily the Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO), Diocesan Tuition Assistance through the Ignite! Capital Campaign, ESAs, school foundations and the newly formed Iowa Catholic SGO (scholarship granting organization) – out-of-pocket costs remain lower than ever for our families. No student is turned away due to an inability to pay.

As we embark on this 2026-2027 journey with the call to “Go and Make Disciples of All Nations,” we thank you for your trust, your prayers, and your commitment to Catholic education. Together as administrators, teachers, parents, and supporters of Catholic education, we are cultivating a generation of faith-filled leaders ready to share the light of Christ with the world.

May God bless you and your family as we begin another grace-filled school year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Bishop". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donna Bishop, Ed.S.
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Des Moines