



Dear School Parents and Guardians:

As many of you know, our diocesan schools have made several decisive steps forward as we implement the strategic plan for schools, “Lighting the Path to Our Future.” Approved in 2010, our strategic plan has directed our schools to pursue continuous improvement and to implement the best management practices in our Catholic schools. Examples include the creation of local strategic plans for each school, establishment of marketing and enrollment management across the diocese, recruitment of new students, especially from underserved Latino families, and the cultivation new leadership for our schools, to name just a few important changes. With this letter, I want to inform you of another important direction our schools will take as we continue to implement our plan With the support of Bishop Conlon and after consultation with the Joliet Diocese Board of Education and our principals, we will seek accreditation of our Diocesan schools by AdvancED, the largest school accrediting agency in the world. Currently our schools have non-public recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education. This, however, would be a more complete accreditation process.

Accreditation will provide another assurance that the Catholic education we provide in our diocesan schools meets and exceeds the highest standards. It is important to note, that the standards against which we will measure the mission effectiveness of our schools are explicitly Catholic standards. AdvancED has aligned its standards to the recently published National Catholic Standards and Benchmarks. As parents evaluating private school options, you will see that our accredited schools are not defined by our own standards of quality, but are measured against explicitly Catholic standards whose validity are substantiated by experts. As our strategic plan states, “Families served by Catholic schools recognize these schools as equal to, or better than, other educational options.” Accreditation is one important indicator that our diocesan schools are serious about achieving and maintaining the highest levels of quality in academics, faith formation and other programs.

Our principals and the Catholic Schools Office staff have been preparing for the accreditation process throughout the first semester. As part of the process, AdvancED requires that surveys be taken by various stakeholders, including school parents. The surveys will provide another avenue for feedback and offer some data about how you, as stakeholders, view our schools. The surveys will be ready for distribution during Catholic Schools Week. In addition to surveys, all of our schools, as well as the Catholic Schools Office, will submit self-assessment reports to AdvancED. The accreditation process will conclude in November 2015 when a national team of

educators will come to the diocese, visit selected schools, and issue a report.

The investment in Catholic education for the diocese is significant. Parents sacrifice to send their children to Catholic schools; parishioners invest generously in their parish schools; pastors, principals and teachers dedicate their lives because our high standards create more than successful students. Our collective investment meets with more than academic results. Our Catholic schools produce faithful leaders educated for excellence and sent to serve. Our commitment to accreditation is another example of the investment all of us make in providing the best Catholic education possible.

Thank you for your support for this important initiative and for everything you do for Catholic education in the Diocese of Joliet.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Rev. John Belmonte, S.J., Ph.D.
Superintendent of Catholic Schools