



National Catholic Educational Association
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Announcement

November 4, 2013

There was a numerical error in the previous email. Please see the corrected information highlighted below.
Dear Superintendents and Principals,

A somewhat negative research study on Catholic primary schools has generated some attention in the media. Sister Dale McDonald, NCEA's Director of Research and Public Policy, offers her analysis below. I am sure you will find it helpful.

Brother Robert

A recent article published in the Journal of Urban Economics, ***Are Catholic Primary Schools More Effective than Public Primary Schools?***, co-authored by Todd Elder from Michigan State University and Christopher Jepsen at the University College Dublin, is generating attention as it answers the question with a negative response.

Using statistical methods that control for selection bias, the authors use "selection on observed variables to quantify the importance of selection on unobserved variables" when analyzing data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K) and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88). Their primary contention is that achievement for students in Catholic schools is attributed to the home environment and skills acquired prior to attending kindergarten, and when those advantages are statistically eliminated, public school student achievement is higher than that of Catholic school students.

Statistics often demonstrate whatever effect a researcher is looking for, but with regard to Catholic school student achievement, no statistical manipulations are necessary to understand the clear and unambiguous results of Catholic school students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Nation's Report Card. The long-trends, as well as interim achievement scores, clearly refute this latest study that claims there are no positive discernible effects for Catholic school students.

Comparisons of NAEP and SAT achievement scores may be found on the [NCEA website](#). The data for NAEP Mathematics and Reading 2013 will be released by the National Center for Education Statistics on Thursday, November 7, 2013.

NAEP Long-Term Trends in Mathematics (2012)

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Math			
Public	243	284	295
Catholic	251	305	325

NAEP Long-Term Trends in Reading (2012)

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Reading			
Public	220	231	285
Catholic	231	277	309

For comparisons in years 1980-2008 [visit the NCEA website](#).