LOS ANGELES CATHOLIC SCHOOLS:
Academic Excellence and Character Formation for Students Living in Poverty

The findings of Phase 3 amplify and expand on what previous studies have shown: that Catholic education is a proven model with a strong track record of success, particularly for students living in poverty.

Executive Summary

This is the third phase of a longitudinal study examining the impact of Catholic school education on students living in poverty who receive tuition assistance from the Catholic Education Foundation (CEF). As part of the study's continuing effort to assess how Catholic schools prepare CEF-supported students for college, Phase 3 both replicates and builds upon previous phases—introducing charter school comparison data; indicators of high school preparation; and college acceptance and attendance rates.

The study follows nearly 600 students who enrolled in Archdiocese of Los Angeles Catholic high schools in 2008 with tuition assistance from the CEF. These students come from families living at or below the poverty line, most of which have no history of college attendance. The students in the study are primarily Latino and in some cases students whose first language is not English. Without CEF tuition assistance, their families would not be able to afford to send them to a Catholic school.

The findings of this study indicate that these CEF-supported students not only graduate high school at higher rates than their counterparts attending public schools, but are also substantially better prepared for and more likely to enroll in college.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE
All (100%) of the CEF-supported Catholic school students in the study graduated from high school. By comparison, the high school graduation rate in the same year was 79% for California public school students and 67% for public school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE
A total of 68% of students in the study successfully completed the courses required to apply for admission at universities in California's public four-year higher education systems, versus 62% of students at comparable charter schools and 37% of students at comparable public schools. The CEF-supported Catholic school students also had substantially higher rates of taking the SAT and ACT tests required for four-year college admissions than their public school counterparts.

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE AND ATTENDANCE RATES
Among the students in the study, 96% were admitted into a two- or four-year college and 92% were attending college in the fall of 2012. The majority of students were enrolled in a four-year college.

The results of this study come at a time when the United States continues to engage in efforts to reform its educational system through expanded choice and competition, particularly in low-income communities of color. By far the greatest beneficiaries of Catholic education are the students from such communities, including those depicted in this report. For most of these families, Catholic schools represent the only viable option for a quality education. In addition, Catholic schools produce the positive outcomes highlighted in this study at a substantially lower per-pupil cost than what is spent by public schools. Although Catholic schools often charge families much less than what it costs to provide this high-quality education, such efforts are not economically sustainable and many families living in poverty cannot afford to attend.

The findings of this study make a compelling case for including Catholic schools—a proven model with a long track record of success, particularly for our society’s most marginalized and vulnerable members—in the national conversation on education reform. Ensuring that Catholic school education is affordable and accessible will provide benefits to all of society by opening the doors of opportunity while providing young people from challenging circumstances with a path to success.

For the full report, please visit http://soe.lmu.edu/cce