



**HE
CAN'T
WAIT
250
YEARS.**



ASCENSION
CATHOLIC ACADEMY



It was in

1966

that a study documented the disparities in academic achievement between children of color and white children. What was then a startling discovery has become an enduring problem:

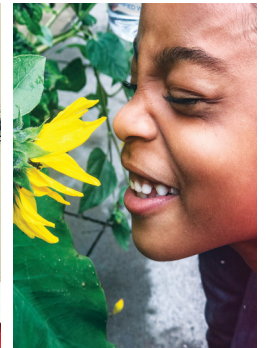
THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP.

The gap is closing so slowly nationwide that if it is allowed to continue at its current rate, researchers believe it will take until

the year **2269**

to equalize outcomes nationally between children of color and white children.

The achievement gap in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. It shows up in grades, standardized test scores, drop-out rates and college completion rates.



THE NEED IS URGENT: Children of color, children from low-income households and those learning English as a second language must receive rigorous and individualized education. This will help develop our future workforce, encourage civic leadership and foster self-sufficient families among a population that has historically been underserved.

Ascension Catholic Academy brings faith-based rigorous, intentional and individualized learning to children of color in urban areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. We use strategic planning and partnerships, on-going review of best practices and extensive data to move our scholars forward more than one grade level in a year's time. Graduating scholars are rooted in faith and prepared for high school academically, socially and emotionally.

Our three Catholic schools – Ascension, St. John Paul II and St. Peter Claver – combine decades of experience in Kindergarten through Grade 8 education with innovative yet proven best practices. We meet scholars at whatever level they are and individually tailor learning.

With partners including the **GHR Foundation**, **the University of Notre Dame**, **MN Comeback**, **Great MN Schools**, **Achievement Network**, **The University of St. Thomas**, **Groves Academy**, **Teach for Christ** and the **Northside Achievement Zone**, we study the factors that drive academic success and implement them. We transform lives.

- **3 OUT OF 4** kindergartners come to us unprepared for school. Many haven't attended preschool and don't know even the basics, such as how to sit quietly.

- Children who transfer to our schools in later grades are often **3 OR MORE YEARS** behind grade level.

WHO WE SERVE

Ascension Catholic Academy schools provide hope in challenged urban areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. We provide a learning environment where our scholars feel safe and know they belong.

522 **TOTAL ENROLLMENT**

74% **QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH**

Annual income for a family of four is less than \$33,475.

47% **ARE CATHOLIC**

30% **ARE LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

We meet all scholars where they are and expect them to grow. We measure and compare progress in fall, winter and spring to ensure scholars are growing academically. This extensive data populates individual learning plans and helps scholars feel ownership over their education and meet their goals.

OUR CHILDREN CAN'T WAIT THAT LONG.



Our focus on scholar growth has been strategic, done in partnership, founded on best-practice review and measured by data.

OUR INSTRUCTIONAL VISION

We believe that excellent instruction empowers the ACA community to deliver on our guiding principles and happens when ALL scholars have access to four key resources:

- 1 Consistent opportunities to work on grade-appropriate assignments
- 2 Strong instruction, where scholars do most of the thinking in a lesson
- 3 Deep engagement in what they're learning
- 4 Teachers who hold high expectations and believe scholars can meet grade-level standards

Greater access to these four resources improves academic achievement, especially for children who are below grade level.

- Research shows that scholars given each of these resources advance at a rate at least

2 TIMES FASTER
than children who aren't

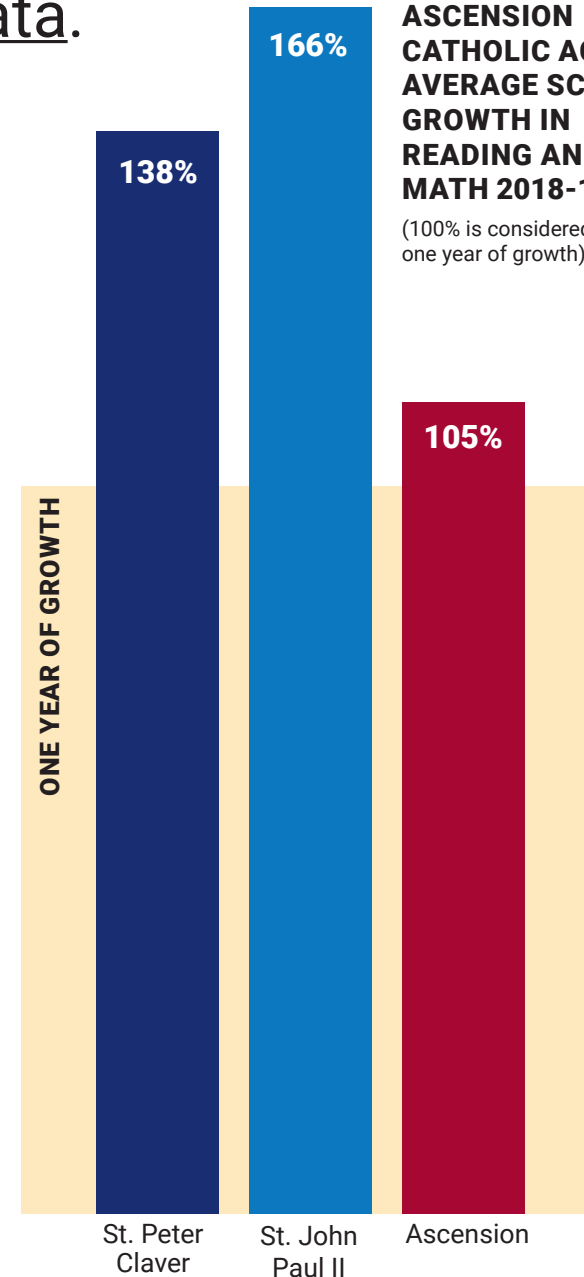
- We use strategic planning and partnerships, on-going review of best practices and extensive data to

MOVE OUR SCHOLARS FORWARD

more than one grade level in a year's time.

ASCENSION CATHOLIC ACADEMY AVERAGE SCHOLAR GROWTH IN READING AND MATH 2018-19

(100% is considered one year of growth)



Here is how we bring our Instructional Vision into all classrooms:

- **At Ascension and St. John Paul II, we are expanding the Higher Powered Learning Program from 4 pilot classrooms to school-wide.** We

introduced the Higher Powered Learning Program (HPLP), under the direction of the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education, at Ascension and St. John Paul II schools last year.

The program uses blended learning, which combines targeted, individualized online learning with traditional face-to-face classroom learning. Lessons taught by teachers are based on data gathered from the scholars' online and classroom work.

This way of learning fills in the gaps in each scholar's knowledge and challenges them with advanced skills.

- **At St. Peter Claver, we are continuing The Groves Literacy Framework to improve literacy.** This three-year program developed by Groves Academy's Institute for Professional Learning, provides weekly classroom literacy coaching for teachers. It is rooted in decades of literacy and brain research.

The goal is to reduce the number of "high risk" scholars, those in the 0-10th percentile in reading fluency. The results are encouraging, with **Groves reporting that their Catholic partner schools, including St. Peter Claver, reduced by 87% the number of high-risk 1st graders.**

- **With gratitude to GHR Foundation for a generous grant, we are using a new high-quality, grade-appropriate language arts curriculum.**

This will help ensure scholars are given rigorous, grade-level assignments.

The curriculum was reviewed and recommended by EdResource, a national education research nonprofit. St. John Paul II and St. Peter Claver are implementing it this year; Ascension is making a selection this year and will begin its use in 2020-21.

- **All schools are using PowerSchool,** a student information system that will quickly identify scholars in need of academic, behavioral and social-emotional learning support.

This will allow us to begin intervention strategies with scholars in an efficient and timely manner. The system also increases parent involvement, giving families the ability to track assignments and attendance, and helps teachers engage families earlier when problems arise.

- Scholars understand the purpose of the lesson and the content. Expectations, directions and procedures are clear.

Giving scholars ownership over their educational progress helps keep them engaged. They know their goals for each assessment and take pride in their growth.

- We have been using our Top 20 program of social-emotional learning for two years now, and our goal is to continue to integrate our faith instruction with the program's tenets. **We assist teachers with curriculum that aligns the liturgical calendar and scripture to the TOP 20 program.**



We have set high but attainable goals for the Academy:

- Scholars will recognize themselves as beloved children of God and understand the challenge and responsibility that carries.
- We will increase enrollment by 10% annually to be at full capacity of 700 scholars.
- Graduating scholars will be prepared for high school

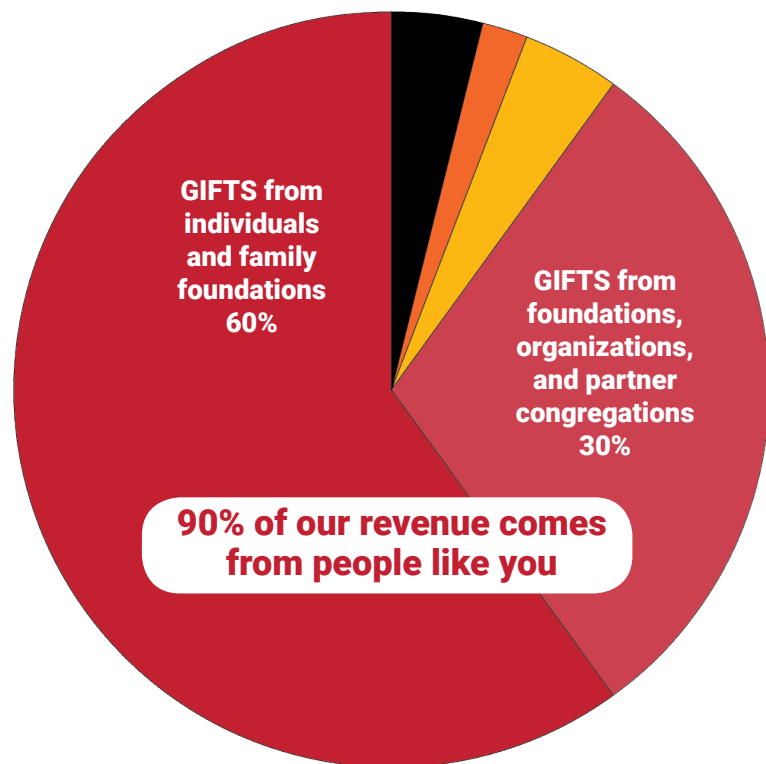
academically, socially, emotionally and rooted in faith.

- 100% of scholars will achieve at least one year's academic growth or grade-level proficiency each year.
- Top 20 framework will be embedded Academy wide so scholars are fully supported in social emotional learning.

2019-20 ASCENSION CATHOLIC ACADEMY BUDGET

Revenue: \$6,379,025 Expenses: \$6,377,723

ACA SOURCES OF REVENUE



Tuition, student fees and school fundraisers 4%

Cafeteria 5%

Other, including athletics 1%

- We have an audit every year to ensure that we are fully

GAP COMPLIANT.

Ascension Catholic Academy was formed to provide transformative, excellent education to an underserved population and to share resources to benefit all of the member schools. Our model is a fresh approach that shares central office staff in areas including finance, human resources, advancement, enrollment, volunteer management, building services and communications.



St. Peter Claver Principal Terese Shimshock

On our Academic Leadership Team, principals join with central office leaders to develop and implement a Framework for Success. They jointly set policies, provide accountability and offer professional development that supports and coaches teachers in carrying our instructional vision into their classrooms.

All teachers set annual goals for themselves based on our rigorous set of instructional competencies. When results are not meeting our expectations, we provide additional observation and coaching to improve learning outcomes.



Our scholars are our future

Our scholars can't wait 250 years, and we can't either.

Catholic Schools, especially those in urban areas, are an asset to their surrounding communities. Communities are strengthened and changed by education, and the cycle of poverty can be broken. More than just educational institutions, the schools are social hubs in their neighborhoods.

Families know that with an education, their children have more choices in life. Rigorous, faith-based education leads children to become confident, self-supporting adults who understand the need for social justice. They become leaders in the community.

Recent research shows that **Catholic School graduates are significantly more likely to participate in civic activities** than those who attend public schools, according to the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education. Catholic School graduates vote, volunteer and give to charity.

Your partnership with Ascension Catholic Academy schools is improving our community and our world.





How you can help

Our schools serve all children regardless of whether their families can pay tuition. We set tuition low and work with families to determine how much they can pay.

As much as 90% of our revenue comes from our community of supporters, many of whom are individuals and family foundations.

We need more strong, committed partners with a passion for our mission to bring rigorous, faith-based education to underserved urban children. We need your prayers, your financial gifts and your volunteer time.

YOU and Ascension Catholic Academy schools are changing lives.

Justice too long delayed is justice denied.
— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



ASCENSION
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT ACAMN.ORG