



Dear Parents,

In Bishop Checchio's pastoral letter, *Lighting a fire in the heart of our world*, he states that 'Our schools educate our students to be truly free, intellectually honest and dynamically prepared to engage the wider culture with confidence.' One of the hallmarks of a Catholic school education is academic excellence. In order to achieve that excellence, we have dynamic classrooms with outstanding teachers that are addressing the various needs of each student. Instruction is enhanced by current pedagogy and technology and infused with the teachings of the Church.

A guiding force in the education of our students is the continuous improvement of each learner in every school. A key component in the improvement process is assessing student learning in a variety of ways—classroom tests, projects or portfolios. Additionally, every year the students complete a series of standardized achievement tests that are designed to tell administrators and teachers how a student is progressing in key academic areas in order to foster continuous improvement. For many years, in the Diocese of Metuchen, the Terra Nova tests were used. As many of you will remember, we had great difficulty with the test last year and had a very difficult time trying to get any results for our families. We were not alone in this difficulty. The Archdiocese of Newark, the Diocese of Paterson and the Diocese of Trenton shared in our disappointment with a company we had used for many years. As a result, we began to research testing companies to determine the best selection for us at this time. This year all five dioceses in New Jersey will use the IOWA Assessments as our annual achievement test.

The tests will be administered in April and the results will be returned to the schools in May, enabling you to have a parent report before the end of the school year. There will be professional development provided for the teachers to guide them as they use the tests to create the most effective learning environment possible for your child. Each school will have a test coordinator who will be able to explain and share with you information regarding reports. As with any new test, it will not be unusual to see a difference in the scores the students achieve. That is to be expected as they familiarize themselves with a new test and we interpret the data in a different way.

Please be assured that our principals and teachers recognize that this is a new test for the students, but not a new experience. I am confident that it will be a worthwhile venture for everyone, and I pray that this will be another beautiful example of the home and school partnership that makes our schools unique.

I wish you all the blessings of Holy Week,

Ellen F. Ayoub, Superintendent of Schools