SACRED HEARTS ACADEMY

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Catholic Schools Are Back In Style

As Americans continue to re-examine and assess the virtues of classroom discipline, values-based teaching and a core-curriculum, it appears vitally clear that Catholic schools are still very much in fashion and demand.

In his book "The Road Ahead," Bill Gates states that today's most successful corporations benefit from a "positive feedback cycle" where success builds upon success. Comparably, Catholic schools today are in a "positive feedback cycle" that positions them well for their work with students in the 21st century.

There are more than 12,000 students now attending 41 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Honolulu. Why are these schools, which require students to still raise hands respectfully and face detention for slight infractions, so successful in the overall picture of education for Hawaii's families? To be succinct, these schools practice and preach old-fashioned virtues: values, discipline, educational rigor and parental accountability.

Catholic schools, including Sacred Hearts Academy, develop these virtues in many ways:

- There are strict rules—no drugs, no gangs and a genuine atmosphere of mutual respect with very few expulsions. Real learning takes place best in an ordered environment, and discipline is a habit that allows the educational process to move forward so that every student can learn and grow.

- Catholic schools are as concerned about the student's personal growth as they are about the development of a student's mind. There is a drive for excellence in every activity from sports to drama to school publications. These activities teach poise, confidence and healthy competition and cooperation, all of which are attributes of a balanced citizen.

- Our Catholic schools are challenging students to consider their responsibilities to their communities. Serving at hospitals or in homeless shelters, or wherever help is needed, is common.

- Academic rigor is present! Catholic high schools routinely offer few electives and require a heavy load of basics. There is an unwavering commitment to a strong academic program with math, science and foreign language for all students, regardless of background or life experience.

Catholic education is based on a clear religious mission, and parents will sacrifice to send their children to schools with a purpose and a willingness to support the kinds of values they struggle and strive to teach at home. Parents of non-Catholic students appear less worried about the religious instruction their children may absorb than the alternative, which is an absence or disregard of values leading to a void in conscience and acceptable behavior.

Even though most Catholic schools are far more affordable than most private ones, with large numbers of both Catholic and non-Catholic students receiving financial assistance, one of the major tasks facing Catholic education in Hawaii is to enhance financial resources so that even more children from low-and low-middle income families can receive a quality education.

Sacred Hearts Academy joins other Catholic schools in Hawaii to play a critical role in educating Hawaii's young people and in setting a standard of quality in education. Recognizing that application and development of the above mentioned old-fashioned virtues to our overall educational system presents a host of challenges, Catholic schools, nevertheless, offer an inspiring and positive example for all who are concerned about the need for reinvigoration of America's educational institution.