

# THE POWER OF LEARNING STARTS **HERE**



**CUES** SCHOOL SYSTEM | SACRED HEART  
ALL SAINTS  
HOLY NAME

WE EDUCATE, SUPPORT & EMPOWER EAST OMAHA CHILDREN

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

# MISSION



## **Our Vision**

CUES will be recognized as a world-class model for providing transformative education through a faith-based culture, documented academic success and community engagement and support.

**The CUES School System** is a bold educational initiative providing centralized leadership and governance to three urban elementary schools in Omaha, Nebraska, serving a majority of low-income students and families.

We combine innovative instructional methods with comprehensive student and family support in a Catholic, faith-based environment to create and sustain excellent and measurable outcomes that not only impact the students we serve but also the entire community.

**The CUES Fund** secures financial support through private donations to fully fund the CUES School System. The school system is comprised of three urban grade schools: Sacred Heart, All Saints and Holy Name. The CUES Fund is a non-religious, non-profit organization overseen by a Board of Directors.

Message from

## THE CUES SCHOOL SYSTEM & THE CUES FUND

To say this year was challenging is an understatement! We refer to it as the year of constant pivoting. Being flexible and resourceful meant making many sacrifices.

Our donors helped us provide safe environments for learning. Many gifts were given to provide computer devices and hot spots so students could connect to the internet from any location.

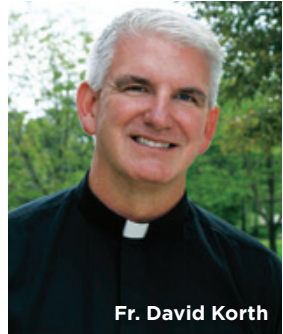
All three schools were turned upside down. Everything had to be reconfigured, from curriculum to safe classroom environments. Our teachers pivoted to develop curriculum that could be taught remotely and in-person. Continuous adjustments were made throughout the year to our curriculum and teaching practices. Both the development and implementation of new teaching methods began through the sacrifices of many.

We settled into the new hybrid school year, and quickly discovered that teachers needed to be trained to support the social and emotional behaviors they were seeing in the classrooms. We expanded our capacity to provide student and family support and realized we still need additional community and mental health resources!

In a year without face-to-face events we adopted and learned new ways to come together. All board, staff, and donor meetings as well as parent conferences were carried out with the use of technology. We did our best to keep everyone engaged!

We are proud of the accomplishments from this past year. We believe we are stronger because of the efforts of everyone on our boards, staff, volunteers, and supporters of CUES.

Thank you for your belief in our mission and our students. We are honored by your support.



Fr. David Korth



Bob Glow

Fr. David Korth  
President, CUES School System

Bob Glow  
CEO/Executive Director CUES Fund

### CULTURE STATEMENT

The CUES School System is rooted in Catholic faith and values.  
We share God's love, kindness, and excellence.

## FAST FACTS 2020 - 2021 Academic Year



**527**  
preschool-eighth  
grade students



**100%**  
received free/reduced  
cost lunch



**93%**  
persons of color



**14**  
average class size



**52%**  
are not Catholic



**100%**  
qualify for financial/  
educational assistance



**94%**

of CUES students graduate from high school compared to 78% in Omaha Public Schools or 68% nationally

## SCHOOL PROFILES AND ENROLLMENT

### Sacred Heart Elementary School

*Founded in 1904  
2205 Binney Street*

**Mike Jensen**  
Principal

Enrollment: **138**

Student demographics:  
**93% Black, 5%  
Multiracial,  
1% Latino, 1% White**

Average class size: **14**

**100%** of families qualify  
for financial education  
assistance

**100%** qualify for free or  
reduced cost lunch

**15%** of students are  
Catholic

### All Saints Elementary School

*Founded in 1955  
1335 S. 10th Street*

**Terri Bush**  
Principal

Enrollment: **154**

Student demographics:  
**46% Latino, 43% Black,  
8% White, 2% Multiracial,  
1% Asian**

Average class size: **16**

**100%** of families qualify  
for financial education  
assistance

**100%** qualify for free or  
reduced cost lunch

**90%** of students are  
Catholic

### Holy Name Elementary School

*Founded in 1917  
2901 Fontenelle Boulevard*

**Tanya Santos**  
Principal

Enrollment: **235**

Student demographics:  
**55% Black, 21% Latino,  
10% White, 8% Asian,  
6% Multiracial,**

Average class size: **13**

**100%** of families qualify  
for financial education  
assistance

**100%** qualify for free or  
reduced cost lunch

**39%** of students are  
Catholic

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 🔍 CUES helped hundreds of families find solutions to housing, food, technology, transportation, and health care
- 📱 Provided 527 devices and hotspots for online learning
- 🍏 Facilitated individualized instruction to all students to maximize learning
- 🔧 Volunteers built and installed 600 plastic dividers on desks

- 💧 Teachers and school staff went above and beyond recommended protocols to ensure the health and wellness of students and staff. The entire school system constantly pivoted to meet the ongoing challenges of the pandemic
- 💬 Held first virtual parent teacher conferences with 100% attendance rate
- 📊 51% of CUES students achieved a higher level of learning in math vs. their grade-level expectation and 46% above in reading
- 🚌 For the first-time ever, CUES provided summer enrichment in all three schools



"Because of CUES my children will have a chance to receive higher education."  
—Olivia Pliego, All Saints parent



"I never expected a school to offer support that will help me achieve my life goals. CUES is my second family."  
—Jasmine Burns, Holy Name parent



"We believe teaching our children about equality in a diverse setting and walking in faith will create a better future for all."  
—Bettenhausen family at Holy Name

# ADAPTING. NAVIGATING. SUPPORTING.

When teacher Abbey Bessmer conducted Zoom class sessions with her second-graders at Holy Name School last year, she at times had an extra student taking it all in.



*Abbey Bessmer, teacher*

One of her students frequently had her two-year-old brother at her hip, pandemic family disruptions forcing the eight-year-old into the role of caregiver. At times, the student would mute her tablet microphone to take care of her brother before getting back to learning.

As Sacred Heart teacher Joe Koziar taught his technology class remotely one day, a fourth-grade girl whose bedroom had become her classroom started jumping on her bed.

**"I'm going to do a flip," she announced.**

**"Don't do a flip," Koziar implored.**

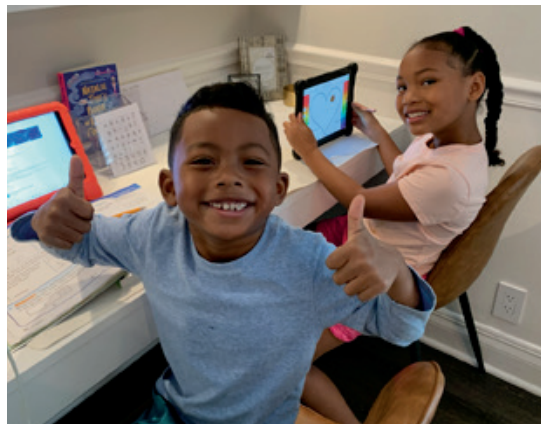
**She did a flip. And then another.**

Learning through a pandemic without a doubt posed challenges, surprises and topsy-turvy times for both staff and students in the three urban Catholic schools in Omaha.

But whether classes were taught remotely, in-person or through a hybrid of the two, school staff worked hard during the 2020-2021 academic year to adapt to the trying circumstances. They delivered the same kind of student-centered, faith-based, quality education the CUES School System is known for. And the CUES Fund was there to back up the schools and students all along the way.

**CUES helped support families as they navigated the difficult circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic,**

whether family job loss, disrupted schedules, social isolation or other personal challenges. The families and students served by CUES already face more barriers to success than most. The pandemic only served to exacerbate them.



*Sacred Heart students learning at home*

“It was a real eye-opener,” Bessmer said of her caregiving second-grader. “The kids have so much on their plates at home that I can’t even fathom.”

The story really begins in March of the previous school year, as Omaha saw its first cases of the deadly virus. Schools across the state suddenly shut down. Students would not return to class for the rest of the school year.

“We met with the kids and told them, ‘We don’t know if we will be able to come back together,’” said All Saints Principal Terri Bush. “It was a whirlwind.”

Staff provided daily lessons and assignments for kids to perform at home. It was difficult to engage students who had suddenly lost all the structure in their lives. Bessmer said the worst part of it all was never having the opportunity to say good-bye to her second-graders.

**“It was so abrupt,” she said. “Anyone that works with kids knows that they need that structure of school and the safety of school, and they completely lost that.”**



*Holy Name Zoom assembly with students and staff*

The end of in-person learning also posed an immediate nutritional challenge for students and their families.

All students in the CUES schools qualify for the free lunch program

and receive free/reduced breakfast and lunch each school day. With those meals suddenly cut off, staff immediately went to work to help the families achieve food security. At Sacred Heart, staff pitched in to form an assembly line that put together weekly breakfasts and lunches for students.

As the pandemic continued through the summer, it became apparent to educators everywhere that the 2020-2021 school year would not be a normal one. After weeks of planning and study, the CUES School System adopted a hybrid model of both in-person and remote learning.

To provide for more social distancing, half the students would attend school in person on Monday and Tuesday while the other half learned remotely. On Wednesday and Thursday, the two student cohorts would switch. Friday was a day of remote instruction for all students while staff took time to prepare for the upcoming week, including often recording lessons for their remote learners.



*Joe Koziar teaching technology class*



*Sacred Heart classroom with barriers on desk*

New procedures for promoting social distancing and keeping kids safe were implemented. CUES volunteers built and installed plastic dividers on desks. Water bottle stations were installed. Cafeteria hours were expanded to allow kids to spread out more during meals, or the meals were served in the classroom. Masks were required for both students and staff. Daily school building cleaning with a deep dive cleaning every Friday became the norm.

To meet the technology challenge of remote learning, CUES donors provided funding for new devices for every student — Chromebook tablets for older students and iPads for those in younger grades. For students who did not have internet at home, mobile hotspots were provided so students could access the internet.

Koziar said teachers originally faced a bigger technological challenge than students in adjusting to the new way of learning. Kids are “fearless,” he said, and have grown up with such devices. CUES teachers had to develop all-new skills.

Getting students to tune in to the video lessons, whether recorded or held live by Zoom, was difficult. And at times they would still run into technology issues. CUES staff ended up visiting homes to troubleshoot IT problems. “It was an all-in experience,” said Sacred Heart Principal Mike Jensen.

But the learning model provided benefits, too. While most students were in class only half the time, the smaller classes allowed for more one-on-one attention, which

proved powerful, Bush said. Teachers also found innovative ways to engage kids. Reading teachers often used guest readers to provide students a fresh face. “They did an exceptional job of being creative and changing things up so it was not the monotony of getting on Zoom every day,” Bush said.

Teachers utilized testing data to create learning plans that would address any setbacks. Working within the framework of the hybrid learning model, teachers identified students who needed extra attention and developed individualized plans according to the data. For example, Bessmer used her planning time on Fridays to bring students in for one-on-one tutoring. She once recorded a special video lesson for one student to help him catch up.



*All Saints teacher working one-on-one with student*



*CiCi Landrum, Holy Name student*

“The at home learning was difficult, I have four young children at home and I am thankful that CUES provided instruction with all the schoolwork. CiCi is my oldest and enjoys teaching, she helps her siblings with their lessons.”  
—Cierra Landrum, Holy Name parent



**"The secret sauce is to love them first, and then meet them where they are," Bessmer said.**

The challenges for students went beyond learning. Many students had parents working in service industries who lost jobs when the pandemic closed many restaurants and hotels. Other parents struggled to balance jobs and caring for children who were suddenly at home for all or part of the school week.

Holy Name Principal Tanya Santos said there were some student "frequent fliers" regularly coming into her office, not for discipline issues, but to talk about challenges at home. She was seeing twice the number she would normally see. The trauma and anxiety students were dealing with included family financial issues, hunger, domestic violence and isolation from their friends. To help families, CUES provided funding so that Jim Swanson, Student & Family Support director, could expand his team.



*Jim Swanson "Swanny", Student & Family Support director with Sacred Heart student*

**The hybrid experience taught an important lesson to everyone; for the social, emotional and academic well-being of kids, they really need to be in school.**



**"We are grateful for the resource support and the fact that our children attend school in a welcoming and inviting environment."  
-Alex Paul, All Saints parent**

By the second half of the school year, with vaccinations now readily available for staff and parents — all of the CUES schools found a way to transition back toward full-time, in-person learning.

**When the regular school year ended, for the first time summer school was offered in all three schools to address lingering learning gaps.**

In the end, the year proved an exhausting one for teachers and staff. But their commitment to their students also shone through.



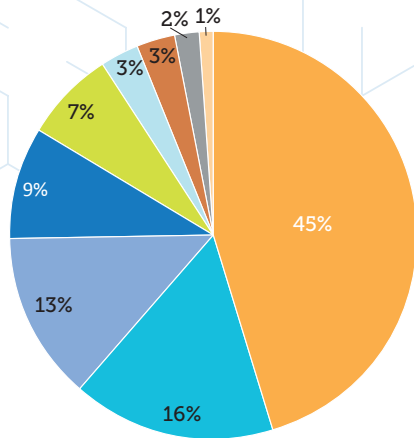
*Summer field trip 2020-2021*

## THE GAP

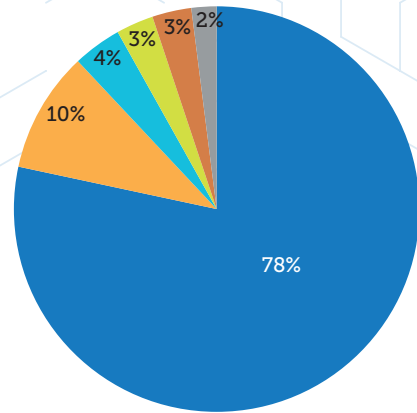
Underwriting the cost of education is our greatest need. The total cost to educate a child is \$11,990 per year. Tuition is \$2,800 annually, however, all of the CUES families qualify for financial educational assistance. **CUES never turns away a child due to inability to pay!**

### July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021 OPERATING REVENUES AND EXPENSES

#### Revenues



#### Expenses



Appeals, Gifts & Events	45%	\$ 3,262,416
Investment Gains	13%	\$ 982,487
Scholarships**	9%	\$ 644,803
Grants	7%	\$ 530,656
Government/Nutrition	3%	\$ 203,713
Archdiocese of Omaha	3%	\$ 240,000
Tuition and Fees	2%	\$ 167,440
Parish	1%	\$ 77,836
One-time Revenue*	16%	\$ 1,205,997
<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ 7,315,348</b>

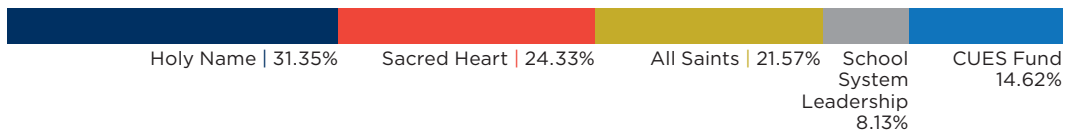
Payroll & Benefits	78%	\$ 4,980,674
Administrative Services & Supplies	10%	\$ 613,543
School Expenses	4%	\$ 246,389
CUES Fund Development Expenses	3%	\$ 228,225
Activities	3%	\$ 198,706
Capital Outlay	2%	\$ 127,217
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ 6,394,754</b>

**NET GAIN/(LOSS) \$ 920,594**

\* One-Time Federal PPP Fund (COVID relief) received and utilized to fund payroll during the pandemic. Without the PPP funding, CUES would have a net loss.

\*\* Children's Scholarship Fund, Holy Name Family Scholarships, and others.

### Program Expenses



## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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Archbishop of Omaha

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**Bob Glow**  
Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director, CUES Fund

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**Terri Laughlin**  
Advisor

**Mary Morinelli**  
Treasurer

**Liz Crosson**  
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**Kathy Mrla**  
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2207 Wirt Street | Omaha, NE 68110  
CUESschools.org

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2020-2021  
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INSIDE**

## JOIN US

Your financial support allows CUES to strengthen and grow our mission! We are here for families who seek quality, faith-based education for their children.

We are grateful to you for joining us in providing a promising future for our children and their families. To see a complete list of donors from July 2020–June 2021, please visit our website at [CUESschools.org](http://CUESschools.org).

### CONTACT US

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