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Successful Sustainability in a Catholic Secondary School

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Successful Sustainability in a Catholic Secondary School

by

Diane Tucker

MA, Rowan University, 1999

BA, Glassboro State College, 1975

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2016

Abstract

The decreasing number of sustaining Catholic schools has limited diversity in educational options for families, affecting local district finances, reducing potential for academic competition among schools, and increasing crime and violence in in the areas where these schools have closed. In 2013-2014, 9 out of 22 Catholic secondary schools closed or merged in the Northeast region of the United States. However, some schools in the Northeast region have been thriving and sustaining their students and programs. Utilizing Fullan's systems thinking on sustainability as conceptual framework, a descriptive case study of a successful Catholic secondary school in the Northeast region was completed to find best practices and strategies to duplicate in other Catholic schools. Nine semistructured personal interviews were conducted, and relevant school documents were reviewed. Data analyses included open and axial coding, resulting in themes that revealed elements assisting school sustainability, including effective financial planning for affordability, educational programs, collaboration, communication, diversity, administrative support, trust in leadership, Catholic identity, and safe environment. Successful leadership strategies were developed from these elements and incorporated into A Guide for Catholic School Leaders on Successful Sustainability. This guide will be presented as a professional development preparation program for secondary Catholic school leaders. This project study has the potential to produce positive social change by improving school leader preparation, increasing educational diversity, providing services to the local community, and directing outreach to the increasing immigrant population.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to the survival of Catholic education in this country.

For all the schools that have met this challenge successfully and for all the schools who

continue to struggle, but may see some light and direction with this research.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Many changes in enrollment have been evident in public, parochial, private, and schools of choice over the last decade. Catholic schools are struggling to remain open while many others are thriving (De Fiore, 2011). In this study, I investigated why these enrollment trends might have existed and, more specifically, why some Catholic schools successfully remained open in a geographical region (Northeast) where a downward trend had become apparent. This study provides the definition of the problem for Catholic school closings and evidence demonstrating how these closings affect the local and global educational communities socially, financially, and academically. The rationale provides understanding of the problem of Catholic school closings, seeking successful sustainability strategies and creating social change. Within this section, I define the key terms and provide the research questions that guided the study, which includes a review of the literature regarding organizational sustainability and factors influencing sustainability in parochial, private, and public schools.

Due to decreasing enrollment and increasing tuition costs, Catholic secondary schools in the Northeast have been struggling to remain open. At the local study site in the Northeast region, nine out of a total of 22 Catholic secondary schools in 2013-2014 had closed or merged (McDonald & Schultz, 2014). Additionally, in the Northeast region, 4 out of a total of 5 Catholic secondary schools in 2015-2016 had closed or merged (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). On the other hand, public schools in the area, including charter schools, had experienced an enrollment increase in most states of the

Northeast during 2013-2014 and were projected to increase through 2024 (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2014). Public school enrollment has been increasing mainly due to demographic shifts in population and expansion of prekindergarten programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Since 1990 there has been an increase in US public elementary and secondary schools from 42-50 million students in 2010, to a projected 51 million in 2020 and 53 million students in 2024 (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2014). However, there has been an increase of publicly funded charter and choice schools during this time that may have influenced public school enrollment (New Jersey Department of Education, 2013).

During the past decade, while there have been Catholic school closings, there have also been Catholic schools opening in all regions of the country. In the Northeast, three Catholic elementary schools opened during the 2015-2016 school year. Also, some schools have waiting lists in the Northeast (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). This research sought to find out why and how a Catholic secondary school in the Northeast region of the country was able to sustain and thrive, while the trends and statistics over the past decade had indicated the Northeast was the region with the overall most school closings and decreasing enrollment.

Many factors have contributed to the declining enrollments: change in demographics, parish and school mergers, alternative school options as choice or charter schools (publicly funded), and highly publicized scandals in the church (De Fiore, Convey, & Schuttloffel, 2009). Catholic school enrollment has consistently dropped from 1965 with a few exceptional years, demonstrating a continuous downward trend still seen

today (De Fiore, 2011). McDonald and Schultz (2014) described Catholic school history trends in the United States, stating that after the peak years in the 1960s, there were two decades of decreasing numbers.

In the 1990s, the rate of school closures declined while enrollment increased. However, between 1995 and 2015, there was a major decline again in the number of schools and overall enrollment due to reasons such as as demographic shifts and a challenging economy. Elementary schools saw the sharper decline with secondary schools displaying a lesser decline (McDonald and Schultz, 2016).

However, when enrollment decreases, the school/parish needs to compensate for this decrease by increasing tuition or finding supplemental or alternative funding. For example, in the Northeast region, Catholic secondary schools in some of the urban and suburban areas have increased tuition to meet operating expenses, but due to the increase of tuition, enrollment has dropped because it is no longer affordable for some of the families (De Fiore, 2011). Therefore, keeping a Catholic school in the parish or community becomes very challenging because of less revenue due to a decrease in enrollment, which results in seeking financial resources elsewhere (Secondary Schools Department for the National Catholic Educational Association, 2011). The purpose of this study was to seek best strategies and practices for achieving sustainability through leadership from a thriving Catholic secondary school in the Northeast. These findings may be able to assist struggling Catholic secondary schools in the local region to remain open, increase educational diversity for families, and encourage competition among

educational institutions including public schools, charter schools, and other private schools.

Definition of the Problem

Secondary education in many Catholic schools from the Northeast section of the United States has consisted of school closings, mergers, and reconfigurations (Mc Donald & Schultz, 2014). Also, there have been many Catholic elementary schools that have merged or closed. Many of the elementary schools are subsidized by the local parishes, which no longer have the financial revenue coming in from the parishioners (DeFiore, 2011). Catholic elementary schools are feeders to the secondary schools; therefore, when these schools close or merge it has a direct effect on the Catholic secondary school enrollment. When there is fewer enrollments and less parish or diocesan revenue, schools need to compensate and increase tuition.

As a result of tuition increases, the parishioners in the local area have chosen to send their children to more affordable educational institutions that will provide an education to meet their financial and academic needs. These financial issues have left an unfulfilled mission of the Catholic Church to provide a means for an affordable education to their parishioners. The consequences of unaffordable Catholic education created a domino effect. For example, decreasing enrollment in local secondary schools caused an unstable future for existence, reconfigurations of grade levels (combining a middle school and elementary with high school grades into one school system), and an actual closing of a school.

Over the past 5 years, the local area (Northeast region) has experienced changes in demographics, a challenging economy, diminishing financial resources for the schools, increasing tuition rates, changes in governance, negative public perceptions, and additional alternative school choices. De Fiore (2011) discussed that many of these factors individually or collectively have caused low enrollment in Catholic schools and eventually caused them to either merge or close.

The closing of Catholic schools will affect education locally, nationally, and globally. Losing Catholic schools would decrease another educational option for families and eliminate another source of competition between schools. According to the Organization of Economic-Cooperation and Development (OCED, 2012), diversity and competition among all schools in the United States and other countries are important for improving the educational system and workforce. Japan has been a major advocate of promoting competition among schools (OCED, 2012). Japan is academically ranked as one of the top three countries in reading and math, in contrast to the United States, which ranks in the second and fourth quartile respectively (OCED, 2012). More educational options, such as Catholic schools or charters, will increase diversity and motivate schools to improve academically (Holley, Egalite, & Leuken, 2013). Crime and violence has increased in areas where schools have closed (Brinig & Garnett, 2012). Between the years of 1995 and 2005 in Chicago, serious crime increased 25% citywide, but only 17% in areas where Catholic schools were opened (Lopez, 2015). Catholic schools in city environments have provided a safe and positive environment in these urban communities. Where a Catholic school is viable in the community, neighborhood cohesiveness

develops that fosters a safe and welcoming environment for those who live in the area (Brinig & Garnett, 2012).

The local Catholic schools also provide community services to local organizations. As a past principal of a city Catholic school, I observed students and faculty involved with community organizations such as those supporting senior citizens, socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals, and local soup kitchens. The students and faculty financially supported food banks using fundraising events, routinely made and distributed food to the homeless, and visited senior citizen homes for events and holidays. When the local school closed, these supplemental social services were no longer available from the school to the community, therefore affecting social outreach in the community. When Catholic schools close, many students redirect their education to a public system (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The increase of students in the public school system places additional financial burden on the local and state taxpayers and increases enrollment in some of the public schools, which will affect programs and offerings. Finally, with the growing Hispanic population in the United States, potential for more open immigration laws is a strong possibility (Huston, 2015). Therefore, there will be a need for more Catholic schools to accommodate Latinos and other immigrants who value a Catholic education (Suhy, 2012). The southwestern and western parts of the United States have increased the number of Catholic schools to accommodate the influx of immigrants from neighboring Latino countries. At the same time, the northeastern region of the country continues to close more schools, therefore decreasing the

opportunities for immigrants or the growing Hispanic population to attend a Catholic

school (Suhy, 2012).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The annual statistics report on Catholic schools' enrollment and staffing for the

United States Catholic elementary and secondary schools is published by the National

Catholic Education Association (NCEA). Their findings for the Northeast region of the

United States indicated that during 2015-2016 Catholic schools had the highest number

of secondary school closings (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). In addition, the Northeast

region—which includes New England states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New

Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and Mideast states of Delaware, District of

Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania has had the highest

enrollment decrease in secondary schools (31%) over the past decade (McDonald &

Schultz, 2016).

McDonald and Schultz (2016) explained there were a total of 86 Catholic

elementary, middle, and secondary schools closed or merged in the United States during

the 2015-2016 school year. During the 2015-2016 school year there were a total of 5

secondary Catholic schools closed or merged in the United States. Four of these schools

were located in the local Northeast region alone. Although the Northeast currently has a

decreasing trend, there are some Catholic schools that are viable and thriving. It was the

intent of this study to find out why some schools are able to thrive along with the

declining trend in the area.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

    Socially. Closing Catholic schools can negatively affect communities socially, financially, and academically. Socially, when Catholic schools close in an urban community, the community loses neighborhood cohesiveness that provides the feeling of a safe environment (Suhy, 2013). There is evidence in Chicago and Philadelphia that crime increased in the urban area where a Catholic school had closed due to the loss of neighborhood social capital (Brinig & Garnett, 2012). For example, in Chicago, during the years 1995-2005, there was a decrease in serious crimes where Catholic schools remained open. Some examples of serious crimes included prostitution and drug trafficking (Lopez, 2014).

    Financially. The local public school district was affected by the influx of students due to a Catholic school closing. It cost approximately $19,000 to educate a student in New Jersey. If a Catholic school closes, the local public school needs to absorbed more students at that price per student (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). The cost to accommodate an increase of students in the public system will eventually trickle down to the taxpayer in the district or state.

    Academic improvement in public schools is already evident in some states and districts that have voucher systems in place (Egalite, 2013). In the United States, 23 states out of 50 have voucher systems including Washington, DC. Vouchers and tax credits are public money allotted to families to make their school choice for their children. Although some public schools may tend to view vouchers as a threat to their enrollment, other public schools have used the voucher or tax credit system as motivation to improve their

district (Holley et al. 2013). Studies of competition effects on public school academics and voucher system district have taken place in several locations in the United States (Egalite, 2013). Results of these studies displayed mostly positive or improved scores in testing and academics in some states, while other results displayed neutral, which indicated no major changes in test scores or academics (Egalite, 2013). Therefore, to implement a voucher or tax credit system may positively improve the entire educational system by providing diversity and improve academics in both private and public schools. There are different names for the voucher system, but most use public funds for obtaining a private, charter, or parochial education. For example, there is an Opportunity Scholarship Act, Parental Choice Program, or Tax Credit Scholarship Program where families receive tax credit from the state. Continued evidence of vouchers contributing to the academic improvement and motivational drive in public schools will encourage more states to incorporate the use of a voucher system, instead of vouchers contributing a negative impact on the public school system.

Academically. Closing Catholic schools will decrease diversity for families to have another educational option and provide less competition among schools to motivate and improve academically. According to OCED (2012), competition academically improves schools, based on top-ranked countries that advocate competition among schools for attracting the top students. In some states where vouchers are used to attend private schools, there is academic evidence that public schools have been motivated to improve academically to compete with the other schools for the same students (Egalite, 2013). Therefore, keeping Catholic schools opened will provide more

competition among schools and has been documented to motivate the public system to improve academically.

Higher education in the Northeast has been affected by closing Catholic schools. Universities and colleges have permeated the south and west over the last 10 years to recruit students to their schools. For example, a university from the Northeast region recruited from Florida, California, Texas, and Europe to reverse their declining enrollment (Supiano, 2009).

School leadership at all levels has influence on the sustainability of an organization (Fullan, 2005). Leaders as superintendents, pastors, and principals have the most influence on the sustainability of a Catholic school (De Fiore, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to investigate a successful sustaining Catholic secondary school in the Northeast and seek strategies and practices from a variety of the school leaders to determine best practices used to successfully sustain a Catholic secondary school. I have developed a model using best practices of school leaders to assist other struggling schools and prevent more closings or mergers.

Definition of Terms

The following information contains terminology that is related to this particular study and is utilized throughout this research. These terms used in the study are defined and explained in reference to the local area problem.

Charter schools: These schools are publicly funded school options that operate as its own local education agency under a charter granted by the commissioner (New Jersey Department of Education, 2013).

Consolidation: This is a process of merging present schools together. However, different dioceses use various definitions for consolidations and mergers. Sometimes a new name for the school is created (Mc Donald & Schultz, 2016).

Financial plans: Methods to obtain extra funding resources other that diocesan or parish subsidies (De Fiore, 2011).

Recruitment plans: Marketing methods to attract more students to the schools (Dorner, Spillane, & Pustejovsky, J. 2011).

School choice: School choice is an alternative educational option that offers parents the power to choose an educational system so they are not bound to the local public school district. School choice is publicly funded in some states and provides parents an opportunity to send their children to another school district free of charge or in some states to a private school in with tuition support (Forster, 2016).

School or parish mergers: School or parish mergers are created when two or more schools or parishes merge together and create a new single entity. Mergers are usually created due to low enrollment in schools or poor finances in parishes (Butcher, Johnston, & Leathley, 2011).

Tax credit programs: A form of school choice that allows individuals or corporations to receive a tax credit from state taxes against donations made to nonprofit organizations that grant private school scholarships (Cunningham, 2014).

Vouchers: A government-funded voucher redeemable for free tuition at school other than a public school where a student could attend free. Vouchers are available in some states with a variety of programs (De Fiore, 2011).

Significance

The objective of the local Catholic educational community is to keep a Catholic school system in the local diocese that will keep their mission without financially burdening the parish, diocese, or families. This particular local area consists of many more working class urban areas where there may be more families of low socioeconomic status and the mission has been more difficult to accomplish. Many low socioeconomic status families do desire a Catholic education, and research has shown that children with low socioeconomic backgrounds do benefit from a Catholic education (Russo & Cattaro, 2010). For example, in Los Angeles, California, by providing financial assistance to low socioeconomic families, special educational funding has given opportunities to children who may not otherwise be able to rise above their current social and financial status (Higareda, Litton, Martin & Mendoza, 2010). These students can have hope, attend college, and eventually earn good jobs. Some of these students return to their homes in efforts to make a positive impact on their communities and be productive in society (Higareda et al., 2010). However, the desire to obtain a Catholic education for the urban area families has become more difficult due to lack of available tuition assistance for the economically disadvantaged families (Higareda et al., 2010).

The downward trend of enrollment and financial sustainability in the local area and diocese needs to be stabilized to keep Catholic education system thriving in the local region (McDonald & Schultz, 2012). Keeping Catholic schools as another viable educational option is important to the entire educational community by providing educational diversity and instilling competition among schools (OCED, 2012). The

presence of Catholic schools in an urban neighborhood provides social cohesiveness and decreases serious crime and violence in the local area (Brenig & Garnett, 2014). Also, Catholic schools address the needs for the growing Hispanic and immigrant population in the United States who value and desire a Catholic education (Suhy, 2013). In addition, a Catholic school in the local district provides another school option, as well as financially assists local municipalities by educating students who do not attend the public school, therefore potentially lowering the school annual budget. Investigating a secondary school that remained open in the Northeast revealed factors and strategies used by school leaders at different levels that successfully sustain a Catholic secondary school. Also, these successful strategies may also be helpful to public, charter, or other private schools which have to compete for enrollment.

Guiding/Research Question

Through this study, I sought to find successful strategies a variety of school leaders had used to sustain Catholic secondary schools in the Northeast region of the United States. According to the Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing (McDonald and Schultz, 2014), the Northeast has the largest decrease of Catholic school closings over the past 2 years and highest enrollment decrease over the past decade. I collected information from various levels of school leaders to create a best practice plan that can be shared with struggling Catholic schools to prevent closings and keep them sustained in a current declining geographical area. Therefore, a deeper understanding of school leader dynamics using successful strategies for sustainability may assist other struggling schools to thrive or confirm sustaining schools are moving in

the right direction. Fullan's (2005) eight elements for sustainability indicate leaders at different levels need to collaborate, communicate, and respect each other to achieve sustainability in an organization. Therefore, utilizing answers from school leaders will provide appropriate information to develop best practice plans for sustainability. Consequently, the research question was this: What are some best practices in leadership strategies for sustainability to be learned from a thriving Catholic secondary school model and why have these practices been successful?

Review of the Literature

The review of literature includes the conceptual framework, which gave backbone and structure to this research study. Also reviewed in this section are influencing factors affecting sustainability, successful strategies, and information about successful sustainability in Catholic secondary schools.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilized Fullan's (2005) systems thinking for achieving sustainability as the conceptual framework. Fullan's systems-thinking includes eight essential elements needed to achieve sustainability goals. The eight elements revolve around collaborative efforts of school leaders and all levels of leaders in a school district and community reaching for the same goals.

Connections with framework. I collected information to make connections from a variety of school leaders in a successful sustaining school to determine leadership elements that are prevalent, strategies, practices, and factors that may be significant for a school to thrive in a region where schools are closing or merging. In addition, I tried to

find strategies and practices most leaders of the school used that encouraged successful sustainability in their school system. Fullan's (2005) eight elements were used as a guide to determine successful leadership to achieve sustainability.

Eight elements for sustainability. The following elements describe the relationship of Fullan's (2005) system thinking with Catholic secondary school leadership structure to achieve sustainability.

Element 1: Public service with a moral purpose. The superintendent or school leader fosters a commitment publicly to improve the quality of education, treats all employees and school community with respect, and makes all schools aware in the district and school of the plans to improve (Fullan, 2005).

Element 2: Commitment to change context at all levels. The superintendent or school leader is aware of what must happen at all levels and communicate this throughout the school community. For example, he or she shares visons that would need to be accomplished at all capacities in the district. Therefore, the diocesan governance would need to commit to the schools sustainability as well as the superintendent, pastor, and principal (Fullan, 2005).

Element 3: Lateral capacity building through networks. Quality knowledge needs to be shared throughout the district and at all levels. The superintendent or school leader must develop learning communities accessible to all and observe the effectiveness and accountability throughout the district. In this case, the diocesan educational objectives must be clearly shared with the superintendent, principals, and other school leaders in the district on the intent for the school's viability (Fullan, 2005).

Element 4: Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships. Sustainability provides intelligent accountability and vertical relationships to develop a mutual respect for each other. In other words, there needs to be a collaborative effort of cooperation and sensitivity to educate all stakeholders as administration, teachers, faculty, staff, parents, and community of the district(s) with objectives and goals for sustainability to include academics, financial, marketing, and recruiting plans (Fullan, 2005).

Element 5: Deep learning. Deep learning requires continuous improvement using student data, action plans, and monitoring implementation of plans for improvement by leadership. Strategic plans for viability that have been developed need to be implemented, consistently monitored, communicated, and reviewed for clear levels of improvement (Fullan, 2005).

Element 6: Dual commitment in short term and long term results. This element emphasizes commitment to short- and long-term results. Short-term results should be accomplished unilaterally before the long-term results are achieved. For example, a short-term influx of money to "band-aid" a situation will not be sufficient for a school to remain open. There needs to be a long-range financial and enrollment plan with a "buy in" for the concept of keeping Catholic education viable in the district (Fullan, 2005).

Element 7: Cyclical energizing. Fullan (2005) discussed cyclical energizing as measure of work ethic, rest, renewal, and time to regenerate thinking. Sometimes it takes time for all to be on board with a new idea or method or system. Time is sometimes needed for information to process and prove reliable and valid. Time is needed to develop trust and confidence in the leadership.

Element 8: Long lever of leadership. A long lever of leadership means giving the superintendent time. In time, an effective superintendent will develop more good leaders in the district who will further continue quality education and achieve sustainability. Knowledge and information should be shared with others leaders to network throughout the system. All eight elements working together will build a system think capacity throughout an entire district, which contributes to success and sustainability of a school district and superintendent (see Table 1 Fullan, 2005).

Table 1

Fullan's Eight Essential Elements for Sustainability

#	Essential Elements	Clarification
1	Public Service with a Moral Purpose	A collective effort to improve student learning, institutional organization and social justice.
2	Commitment to change context at all levels	Leaders at all levels must have a shared moral purpose for the desired goal or change.
3	Lateral Capacity Building through networks	Create collaboration with and among stakeholders groups as administration, teachers, parents and students.
4	Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships	Identifying and sharing goals as a group. Respecting strengths and weakness within the group. Transparency is needed at all levels to achieve goals that will endure time.
5	Deep Learning	Collective problem solving adaption and continuous improvement foster deep learning in systems that sustain. Sometimes there needs to be failure early in the initiative to achieve the goal, but a collaborative support system will embrace and forgive, then move forward.
6	Dual Commitment in short term and long term results.	Short-term results are needed before attaining long-term achievements.
7	Cyclical Energizing	Activity and rest is needed for adaptation and reflection. Working for a period of time and then resting will give those who resist, time to acclimate to the change, therefore more likely to work together in a changed environment. Time is essential to pacing successful change or sustainability. People need time to trust leadership and change.
8	The Long Lever of Leadership	Leaders at all levels are essential for sustainability. One group or individual will have difficulty keeping sustainability. Leaders must recruit and include more leaders to sustain and organization for the future.

Note. Adapted from "Resiliency and Sustainability," by M. Fullan, 2005, *The School Administrator*, *62*(2), pp. 16-18.

An effective organization have leaders who embrace teamwork and are emotionally "in sync" with those in the organization, which encourages leaders to remain focused through uncertainty and challenging times (Fullan, 2002). Fullan's eight elements emphasize that collaboration and transparency of school leaders at all levels reaches out to more venues in and out of the school community that can assist in attaining sustainability.

Influencing Factors

This literature review includes factors that may positively or negatively affect Catholic school enrollment such as demographics, personnel, governance, socioeconomic issues, public perceptions, financial and marketing plans, alternative school options as school choice, charter schools, and public schools. Also, the literature review includes effective financial, marketing, and governance strategies, general current working strategies in schools, strategies for future sustainability, and display evidence of increasing Catholic schools in another region of the United States. The following factors have displayed significant effects on the Catholic school enrollment and sustainability, especially in the areas of finances and social implications.

Decreasing trends. De Fiore (2011) explained there has been a 67% decrease in enrollment in all Catholic schools in the country since the mid-1960s for reasons as financial, alternative school options as choice and charter, scandals, decrease in religious school personnel, and leadership and demographic shifts. This decreasing trend has carried over to Catholic secondary schools in the Northeast for the past 10 years (McDonald & Schultz, 2012). The dioceses and donors have attempted to keep the

schools thriving using subsidies with the lower enrollment, but not all were successful.

However, some schools with aggressive developmental personnel were able to find

generous donors or philanthropists who understand the benefits of sustaining Catholic

school and financially assisted these schools (McCloskey, 2010).

Demographic shifts. In the 2013-2014 school year, 133 schools closed and 33

new schools opened in the United States (McDonald & Schultz, 2014). The downward

trend continued in the school year 2015-2016, with 96 schools closing and 14 new

schools opening (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). Most of the closings were elementary

schools, that sometimes feed into the local secondary schools. If elementary Catholic

schools are closing due to low enrollment and finances, it may affect the enrollment of

the Catholic secondary school in the system. A total 81 elementary schools closed in the

United States during the school year of 2015-2016, and 31 of these were from the

Northeast region (McDonald & Schultz, 2016).

The largest decline in enrollment over the last decade has been in the Northeast,

especially in the central cities due to poor economic times and demographic changes

(McDonald & Schultz 2014). According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher

Education (as cited in Supiano, 2009), the Northeast will experience a 10.2% drop in the

number of high school graduates in public schools and a 20.5% drop in private schools

between the years 2007 and 2015. These numbers display a major challenge for higher

education, compounded by a drop in the Catholic population. For example, in 1990 half

of the adults in New England identified themselves as Catholic. According to the

American Religious Identification Survey released by Trinity College in Hartford (as

cited in Supiano, 2009), by 2008 only 36% identified themselves as Catholic. In the

Middle Atlantic states, the Catholic population dipped from 41% to 36% in the same time

frame. New England has lost 1 million Catholics, while in the Middle Atlantic, New

York alone has lost 800,000 (Supiano, 2009). However, in other parts of the country such

as California, Texas, and Florida, the Catholic population has grown significantly, mainly

due to immigration from Latin America. There is evidence of an increase in schools due

to the importance placed on the increase in the Latino population (Suhy, 2012).

   School personnel demographics. The dramatic decline of religious personnel

between 1965 and 1975 led to a major transition of staffing schools with lay personnel

(De Fiore et al., 2009). Lay personnel are employees who are not part of the religion as

clergy or nuns. This personnel transition added another financial burden on the parish,

diocese, and families due to the budgeting of lay personnel salaries and benefits. These

extra financial issues contributed to merging or closing schools or parishes to

accommodate a Catholic school system in the diocese.

   Findings over the past decade showed that lay faculty percentages increased from

93% to 97.2% (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). Presently, 2.8% of professional staff is

clergy and religious (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). There may be a variety of reasons for

the decrease in religious personnel such as retirement, decrease in recruitment of new

religious staff, or the negative publicity, such as pedophilia cases or financial

misappropriations, causing religious personnel to be placed out of circulation in

education (Berry, 2011). These educational personnel statistics will eventually affect the

operating costs of a Catholic school that may now need to compensate lay personnel with

salaries and benefits, which are much higher than salaries for religious personnel. Money collected in the parish has also shifted to pay more professional lay personnel. There has been a low enrollment of people entering the religious vocations, which has created the lack of available priests and religious personnel to teach classes and the need for more lay personnel to teach and administrate the schools. This decrease of religious educators has caused a major financial effect on parishes and schools, which is why many need to merge with other schools, reconfigure, or close (Brennan, 2011). Also, money priorities may shift from education due to legal fees and disbursement payouts to pedophile victims. For example, in the early 2000's an archdiocese in the Northeast agreed to pay $85 million settlement for 542 victims, and a diocese in the Great Lakes region agreed to pay $14.4 million settlement for 285 victims (Berry, 2011). Therefore, if operating costs increase, the school usually will need to increase tuition, unless a financial plan is developed to assist families and make Catholic education more affordable.

Socioeconomic and community issues. Closings and mergers have been caused by shifts in demographics, value changes, poor economy, highly publicized church scandals, parish closings and mergers, or alternative educational choices as school choice (public voucher system) or charter schools (publicly funded; De Fiore, 2011). McDonald and Schultz (2016) indicated the Northeast region over the last decade had the largest percentage decrease in enrollment in secondary schools out of the entire country, which was 18%. This decline in students then resulted in the largest amount of secondary closings in the United States, which were four school closures out of a total of five in the 2015-2016 school year.

Also, 111 elementary schools closed nationally in 2013-2014, and 66 were from the Northeast region of the United States (McDonald & Schultz, 2014). Additionally, 81 more elementary schools closed nationally in 2015-2016 and 31 were from the Northeast region (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). Because elementary schools sometimes feed into the secondary schools, any enrollment issues in the elementary schools may affect the secondary schools. In a local area of the Northeast, there were four feeder elementary schools over the past 5 years that have closed or merged. These mergers and closings had a direct effect on the local enrollment problem due to younger students selecting a public school option or another more affordable educational opportunity over the local Catholic school system.

It also was apparent in the local region, that weak recruitment numbers threatened school enrollment and generated poor school climate. In addition, school closings or mergers created grief and stress within the school community. Also in the local community, the displaced students and teachers from a school closing and created dissension with new and old governance accentuated a negative environment which displayed adverse perceptions in the community.

When there is a change in governance, there usually is a change in philosophy to operate a school. It is at this point of transition, a trickle-down effect occurs affecting administrative structure in the school, budgeting, fundraising, and allocations of money. Transitional changes in personnel usually creates uneasiness in the school climate due to the unknown, creating high emotional distress due to hardcore business decisions that are quietly implemented in an attempt to keep a school sustained. Leadership needs to

communicate a clear vision of goals to the school community for successful financial sustainability. Without clarity of goals and empowerment of the school community by leaderhship the school will run ineffectively (Miller, 2012).

Some of the Catholic secondary schools located near or in a city have been struggling due to the increase of tuition, forcing the poor and middle-class families to leave the school, which is a community issue (O'Reilly, 2012). Forcing the poor and middle class into the local public school causes a community issue because it increases the enrollment, which adds to the school budget and may cost taxpayers. Butcher et al. (2011) discussed the obligation of the local community to find a preferred educational option for the poor in urban areas. One of the missions of the Catholic Church was to afford all families a Catholic education for their children, but the Church is finding it very financially challenging to accomplish this goal. Some of the reasons urban schools closed are rooted in finances, governances, leadership, the community, and larger societal influences, but these reasons seldom act alone (De Fiore, 2011). With this research, I sought significant strategies in the areas above to assist struggling Catholic secondary schools to sustain and remain open. Catholic schools remaining open will give families another educational choice in the community and increase diversity in educational choices.

Also, providing a Catholic education for families in the district could assist the municipality by having fewer students in the public system to educate, reducing costs and potentially reducing taxes to the residents. For example, if a public school district costs $19,000 to educate a child and diocesan school costs $9,000, the taxpayer will save

money due to a smaller public school budget due to lower enrollment. If a Catholic secondary school closes in the area, the children need to relocate to another school. Some students go to another Catholic school, some choose to stay in the district, and others choose to leave the district. Either way, it may become an increased financial burden on the local taxpayers every time a Catholic school closes.

The mission of the Church. A mission of the Catholic Church is to provide a Catholic school education for all who desire it (De Fiore, 2011). However, the conflict of the mission and financially assisting families who are not able to afford tuition to attend Catholic schools has created another contributing factor to the decreasing enrollment and financial sustainability. For example, many families believe the church should be allocating more funds towards education to fulfill their mission, and this is not happening in many parishes. Due to this belief, families lose faith and do not regularly attend Mass, which decreases the funds collected on Sundays. Recent documentation has displayed a major decrease in Sunday collections over the last 10 years for various reasons, which has affected the parish income (Secondary Schools Department of the National Catholic Educational Association, 2012).

Sunday collection. Shrinkage of weekly collection revenue has parishes reallocating educational funds for other necessities as living and facility expenses. Due to this decrease of parish educational allocations, the schools had to seek other financial resources to fund operating expenses or tuition assistance. It then became the school's responsibility to find financial resources to supplement or balance tuition costs for the families. Usually, any surge of enrollment would have added the supplemental money

needed to assist families. However, since an increase in enrollment did not occur, the added fundraising or private donations became essential to maintain operating costs and needed tuition assistance for students. Private donations and supplemental fundraising assisted temporarily, but without the component of increased enrollment and strong collaborative planning by leadership, the mission to provide a Catholic education in the local area became more difficult to fulfill and some of the local area schools eventually closed.

Collaboration and achieving the mission. However, Frabutt, Holtzer, Nuzzi, Rocha, and Cassel (2010) explain the mission to provide a Catholic education for all who desire it can be accomplished with a continual collaboration of the pastor, principal, parents, teachers and diocese. A challenge to a successful partnership is to have all of the stakeholders be consistent with the development and implementation of the goals, keep continual communication, and be transparent and cooperative with decisions affecting all who are involved in the educational community. The purpose of this study was to discuss factors attributing to the declining trend, discuss some successful sustaining independent or private school situations and determine factors and strategies contributing to a successful Catholic secondary school in a declining region as the Northeast. This research conducted an in-depth study of a Catholic secondary school that was able to successfully sustain itself during a 10-year declining trend, especially in the Northeast region.

Public perception. An additional factor that may have affected enrollment is negative publicity of the Catholic Church. The negative publicity developed mainly due to scandalous behavior of the religious such as misappropriations of money and

numerous publicized pedophile cases. Berry (2011) and Russo (2010) found that highly publicized scandals, as the pedophile cases of priests and misappropriation of church money, has negatively affected finances of the parishes that subsidized the schools. Berry (2011) explained that the average Sunday collection losses in the United States Catholic Church were due to embezzlement, from 2005-2010 was $86,516,000. Due to the scandals, embezzlement and pedophilia, people in the parish have lost faith and trust in the church; therefore they choose not to support the parish spiritually or financially. The dioceses have also decreased subsidies for education because money allocations in many cases have shifted to pay attorneys and settlements for scandalous behaviors. For example, according to the Center for Applied Research in Apostolate Survey diocesan abuse costs between 2004-2009 totaled over $2 billion (De Fiore, 2011)

School choice, charter and public schools as alternative school options. Other possible contributing factors for the decreasing enrollment has been the state governments offering more school options instead of the local public school. Two of these options are charter and choice schools that are supported by public funding, providing students other free educational alternatives. Currently, there are 27 states and the District of Columbia that offer public financial assistance for students to attend private or faith based schools (McDonald & Schultz, 2016).

School choice and charter schools allow families to select another educational alternative for their children that are tuition-free or allow tuition credit (De Fiore, 2011). For example, the city of Milwaukee instituted a school voucher program allowing parents to use a state allocated voucher to attend a Catholic or private school. The schools were

highly attended and successful. In some states school choice allows a family to choose

another public school options with a specialty program of interest to the child (New

Jersey Department of Education, 2013). Many families have taken advantage of this

option because it alleviates the burden of tuition payments. Schools that have elected and

applied to become school choice through the New Jersey Department of Education allow

families to select another public school that may have a special program such as ROTC,

Performing Arts, or a specialty program that interests their child. Students may apply for

this program and attend that school using a voucher or at no cost to the family. Advocates

for school choice hope to encourage healthy competition and public school system

improvement (Forster, 2013).

In cities with no voucher program, there were a high percentage of school

failures, closings, and poor enrollment. Ford (2011) explains schools with limited

voucher growth had limited enrollment growth. Many charter schools are also emerging

on the educational scene as alternatives throughout the United States. Charter schools

usually open beginning with preschool through third or fourth grade, then by adding more

grades the school begins to grow and develop. The schools becomes a local educational

agency approved by the state commissioner of education (New Jersey Department of

Education, 2013). Charter schools are privately run educational systems but use public

funds to operate the school. Some families are opting for this educational opportunity for

their children. The schools are smaller, more program-oriented for the student's

individual needs and free of cost. Charter schools, which are public schools of choice, are

typically operated as not-for-profit organizations, essentially functioning as independent

districts consisting of single schools, by private groups including parents either independently or occasionally in conjunction with public institutions such as universities. In return for being exempted from many state regulations, charter schools are accountable for the academic achievement of their students. While charters vary in existence, they typically range from 3 to 5 years in contract length with the state. When the contracts expire, depending on state law, charters can be renewed or terminated depending on state regulations. Charter schools, although free from many state rules in regards to staff and curricular issues, remain subject to federal and state anti-discrimination laws such as those dealing with students with disabilities and employment (Russo & Cattaro, 2010).

Since the inception of charter and school choice, some public schools have used this as motivation to improve and compete for the same students. In some instances, the public schools have been successful as in Denver and Harlem. Both of these districts used competition with charter schools to motivate them to improve their schools academically and eventually increase enrollment (Holley et al., 2013). Sustaining another school option as a Catholic school will be another opportunity to increase competition and motivate school improvement.

Successful Strategies

Although this research has revealed and discussed factors that may have influenced the downward trend of Catholic schools, there have been some Catholic, private and public schools that continue to thrive successfully and sustain.

Successful schools. Although, there have been factors which attributed to the low enrollment, there have also been statistics that indicate new schools are opening and some

schools can remain open. Over the school year 2015-2016 there have been new schools

opening and waiting lists for schools in the Northeast region. In the Northeast, an average

of 27.5% Catholic schools have waiting lists for the 2015-2016 school year mainly in the

suburban areas, despite school closings and consolidations (McDonald & Schultz, 2016).

In some situations, leadership has been a key role. For example, in Memphis, Tennessee

the Jubilee school leaders provided philanthropist and donors with an articulated financial

and academic plans assuring financial and academic accountability and transparency.

These business groups grasped the importance of investing in the educational workforce

enhance positive civic and economic outcomes. The Jubilee schools increased from 26

students to currently over 1000 enrolled students (McCloskey, 2010). Also, there has

been an independent charter school movement in the Northeast called Uncommon

Schools. These schools have been developing since 1998 in Boston, New York City, and

Newark. There are 38 independent schools that have been thriving and successful in the

Northeast. These schools are predominantly low-income, minority and are performing

above the national average in the SAT. There are plans in the future to add at least five

more schools in the Northeast. According to a chief executive, for the Uncommon

Schools, the reason for the success and sustainability is the hiring and developing of great

teachers and leaders (Meyer, 2013). Content and core curriculum is important, but there

must be creative instructional strategies for students to comprehend the individually

learning material. Some of the research indicates that demographics and socioeconomic

issue may influence the decline of private secondary schools, but the Uncommon Schools

have negated this concept having mostly minority and poor students in urban areas.

Therefore, there are some private educational institutions in a poor socioeconomic area that can successfully sustain in the Northeast region.

The Uncommon Schools in the Northeast have emphasized the importance of obtaining strong leaders and teachers to sustain their public charter schools in the Northeast. These schools have increased from 6 to 38 in the Northeast (Meyer, 2013).

Vouchers and finance. Also, with the use of a vouchers system in some states the Catholic schools have been able to sustain and academically improve the local public school district (Cunningham, 2013). Additionally, in a small secondary school in the Northeast on the verge of closing several years ago pursued a strong leader of prominence in the school community as president of the school. This leader aggressively pursued high finance donors and business people who agreed with the strategic plan presented to them by the new president of the school and chose to assist the school financially now and in the future. The school is currently opened (Hurley, 2013).

Minority population and Catholic school. A small Catholic school district in Texas, predominantly of Latino descent with low socioeconomic background, increased enrollment by providing creative and aggressive marketing, increasing parent to parent communication to educate advantages of a Catholic education and finding more financial support to assist families in attending the school. The Latino population in the United States is the fastest growing race in the United States. According to Suhy (2012), Latino's highly value the importance of a Catholic education, both academically and spiritually. Providing education to this population could be an obvious asset to sustaining Catholic education in the United States due to the necessity of adding more schools for the

increase in population. During Pope Benedict's last trip (2008) to the United States, he stated the importance of sustaining Catholic education in the United States and the importance to keep this a viable option for all those who desire this education (Suhy, 2012).

Sustainability

For Catholic schools to exist, there will need to be added components for sustainability other than increasing enrollment, such as creative financial planning that should encompass more financial resources other than tuition.

Essential components of sustainability. A collaborative balance of essential components are needed to create an successful school system. For example**,** viability, vitality and effectiveness consist of a combination of essential components working together with increased enrollment and financial stability such as effective leadership, academic quality, Catholic identity and strategic planning (De Fiore, 2011). In some dioceses, as in Philadelphia, there have been financial plans developed by local business people that believe in providing a Catholic school education (O'Reilly, 2012). Some of these plans included providing financial assistance to families, school operating expenses, money for facility improvements or increased marketing to attract families. The new plans have been presented to local diocesan officials for approval for schools to remain opened. Consequently, some financial plans were approved, and the schools remained opened, however, other plans were insufficient and ineffective lacking in enrollment or appropriate trusted leadership to implement the plan, and the schools eventually closed (O'Reilly, 2012).

Financial plans for sustainability. Some schools have made efforts to sustain enrollment by offering more financial assistance to keep students in the school, improve facilities and academic programs to attract more students to the schools. As indicated by a local sustainability task force report (Diocese of Trenton, 2012), a sustainable school must include solid academic programs within a strong faith community, sustaining enrollment, and long-term financial resources. Some other Catholic school systems have been able to reconfigure successfully or consolidate into a system, or develop new financial and recruiting plans to sustain enrollment in Catholic secondary education over the last 5 years (D'Amico, 2012). Although according to Britt (2013) some of the consolidations may only last temporarily due to initial lack of support from the pastor, parish and administrative central office. Failed temporary "fix" as consolidation, emphasizes the importance of Fullan's elements three and four for sustainability that is to embrace collaboration of all stakeholders and to have long term results, short term results need to be successful.

Los Angeles district schools. Higareda et al. (2010) discussed that by providing financial assistance to those who could not afford to attend Catholic school in Los Angeles has increased the number of ethnic and minority students to stay in school, graduate and continue to college. The Catholic Educational Foundation in Los Angeles provided a tuition grant for students who wanted to attend Catholic school. Without the assistance, many families would not be able to afford the tuition. A survey of principals and parents in this urban school system revealed the student dropout rate in Los Angeles decreased, that allowed many more minority students to attend the college that provided a

brighter future for them in society. Also, by affording a Catholic education to those who desire one, demonstrates that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is living up to the mission of the Catholic Church by providing a Catholic education for families who desire that particular type of education for their children. However, to fulfill the mission, the pastor, principal, teachers, students, and parents must work collaboratively to achieve the spiritual and educational goal for their children (Frabutt et al., 2010). If all stakeholders' work together, the churches could be filled with parishioners that will help support the schools and keep a Catholic educational system in existence. This effort to attain a thriving system, accents the importance of Fullan's (2005) third and eighth essential element of sustainability, which include collaboration with all level of leaders in the district or, in this case, the diocese.

Marketing and recruiting for sustainability. For Catholic secondary schools to be enticing, they need to market and provide programs that separate them from other educational systems. In the past, the major difference in marketing Catholic schools was the ability to offer a religion curriculum. However, to attract more students they needed to broaden the spectrum of all programs, allocate more revenue for promotional venues and improve existing educational programs (Kennedy, Mullholand & Dorman, 2011). In many instances, the revenue came from tuition increases that could only be afforded by the wealthy, and then the poor would usually leave unless financial assistance was available. Currently, attending a Catholic school for the religious purposes is not necessarily a priority of families selecting this particular school system (Kennedy et al., 2011) Families are looking for an affordable school that academically challenges and

prepares their children for college, provides athletic and extra-curricular opportunities for their children to broaden their skills with potential to earn college financial assistance and provides a safe and secure learning environment for their children. According to Kennedy et al. (2011) all Catholic families regardless of income or faith are using academics, athletics and finances as their priority when choosing a school for their children. Therefore, to attract more students, Catholic secondary schools must include highly competitive programs such as college prep dual credit courses so a student may earn college credit in high school, advanced placement classes, incorporate advanced technology, maintain highly competitive athletic programs that consistently contend for state titles and distribute equitable financial assistance.

De Fiore (2011) discusses the importance of Catholic schools to market their education more aggressively using collaboration with centralized diocesan leadership and local leadership to increase enrollment. For example, in a local diocese in the Northeast, there was a 15% enrollment increase using improved marketing/recruiting programs in conjunction with new tuition scales, training and careful monitoring. The lack of successful marketing has been evident since many of the Catholics who have baptized their children have chosen to attend other schools feeling that the Catholic school did not address their financial needs. At one time, incorporating religious values within the core academic curriculum was the main reason, but this thinking has changed for many families with older children. Daly (2010) discussed that successful sustainability for Catholic school education is attained through providing the spiritual difference to parents that a Catholic education provides an integration of secular and nonsecular information in

the curriculum. In many instances, this may be true for families with children in elementary schools, but academic and athletic programs have taken priority over religion in school decisions made by parents and children in Catholic secondary schools. Some prestigious coaches of successful high school athletic teams in the local region assisted in student recruitment and fundraising by promoting extraordinary athletic programs to attract students and sustain Catholic secondary education (Sharmon, 2011). For example, a small Catholic secondary school in the Northeast region with an nationally ranked athletic program over the last 10 years was in a poor financial situation. There were many prospective student-athletes that wanted to attend the school for academic, social and athletic reasons but did not have the funds. However, the prominent coach successfully reached out to the community for benefactors that would contribute to the school due to the notoriety of the elite athletic program. The school has continued to remain open, but with new financial plans and resources (Hurley and Paisoner, 2013). As with many other educational systems, adding programs and giving financial assistance means adding revenue to accommodate these programs. It is the added revenue that has created the challenging financial situation that many of the Catholic schools are experiencing; therefore it became necessary to increase tuition to provide quality education to the students.

Governance for sustainability. Fullan (2009), suggests a whole system thinking to leadership development will create a successful culture and sustainability to a school system. Leaders at all levels of a school organization as superintendents, principals need to collaborate consistently and communicate to develop a successful school in areas of

academics and school organization. According to Negis-isk and Gorel (2013) a positive

organization culture for a successful school is attributed to teachers developing positive

relationships with each other and parents, sharing problem-solving methods with teachers

and administrators and stability in leadership that possesses fairness qualities. Frabutt et

al. (2010) stipulate a positive pastor and principal relationship create a successful school

system when it is collaborative with teachers, parents, and the community. This positive

relationship keeps all involved on the same page and less resistant to changes.

Parishioners and parents are more willing to support the mission of the church and

governance when the goals are clearly communicated with consistency and transparency

to the entire school community.

In some Catholic schools governance has undergone major restructuring over the

last decade. Since finance and fundraising have become a major factor for sustainability

in Catholic schools, some schools have changed the structure of governance to address

more financial issues like financial assistance, fundraising, and enrollment. Hobbie,

Convey et al. (2010) explained that funding and governance are major factors to sustain

Catholic education in the future. An example of successful governance has been one that

has reached out to the business community, instilled the importance of Catholic education

in the community and work as partnership to sustain Catholic education in the

community. Maney, Scanlon, and Goldschmitt (2013) implied that effective governance

in today's Catholic school would need to collaborate with diverse voices as parents,

pastors, principals and school community to address a variety of educational challenges

as curriculum, instruction and school environment. Fullan's (2005) first three elements

indicates collaboration and sharing the same goals within leaders and community will lead to sustainability. Also, although there are many new creative governances emerging that are necessary for school organization, they are insufficient for financial stability (Maney et al., 2013).

When one speaks in regards to governance, what has been found is that where parish schools have achieved a successful collaboration with the pastor and principal, the church will be able to accomplish the goals and mission. More specifically, the pastor will spiritually direct the school and community as an extended directive from the bishop, and the principal will educationally administrate the school.This collaboration among community, parish and school is a component of organizational framework that assists leaders to develop skills for successful governance (Weiss, 2009). An excellent Catholic school has a governing body that collaborates with appropriate and legitimate authorities to exercise decision-making and oversees the school's mission, academics and operational vitality (Ozar, 2012). Leadership which encompasses system thinking to include the entire district or organization when invoking change, policy, decisions or professional development will create an improved culture and working environment for all members (Fullan, 2009). Effective leadership begins at the top with diocesan leadership. There needs to be a clear commitment from the bishop, superintendent and financial officer that will provide support to pastors and principals. Without this commitment, schools are on their own; they may struggle and possibly close (De Fiore, 2011). Fullan (2005) emphasizes the importance vertical relationship and transparency in element five of his framework to achieve sustainability. Haney (2010) believed a change

in governance structure is needed to develop creative strategies that will meet the many

challenges, such as financing, in the present Catholic education. Leadership needs to have

transparency in the mission, to provide an affordable Catholic education for families in

the community. Educational goals sometimes become distorted due to financial

challenges and priorities, which are not always clearly revealed to the parishioners

through leadership. However, the Catholic school educational mission has changed to

more of a marketing objective instead of a valued objective as originally intended by the

Catholic Church (Boyle, 2010). This change of objectives has created confusion of the

mission causing public support of Catholic school to decrease, which may have indicated

ineffective leadership or the inability for leadership to clearly communicate the mission.

If there is this lack of confidence in leadership, families will not enroll their children into

a system when they do not trust the people in charge. Strong financial plans without clear

vision or adherence to the mission could result in school failure (Boyle, 2010). There

must be trust in leadership for people to follow (Berry, 2011). Although a school may be

financially secure, lack of trust in leadership and transparency of the mission will create a

feeling of instability within the school community (Miller, 2012). There must be

transparency, shared goals and clear communication among leaders of all levels in the

school district to achieve sustainability in an organization (Fullan, 2009).

Governance in Catholic education has changed over the past decade in an attempt

to incorporate the use of expertise in financial backgrounds, lay or religious personnel,

and assist in financial planning. Over the last 8 years, there has been an 8% increase to

use a President/Principal model in the schools (Secondary Schools Department of the

National Catholic Education Association, 2011). This governance model incorporates the use of a president basically as a CEO to manage funds and revenue for the school. The principal maintains a traditional educational leadership role in overseeing the daily running of the school, develop curriculum, provide professional development and supervise faculty and staff. Changing the type of governance role was an attempt to accommodate the change in demographics and needs of the school. However, if the relationship of the president, principal and pastor is not collaborative, the model will usually be ineffective (Weiss, 2009). The governance mentioned above has been both successful and unsuccessful in the Northeast region, which is discussed later in this study.

School governance consisting of educational and financial expertise will be advantageous to the sustainability of Catholic education in the future. Byrk (2008) states that future governance will assist in developing creative financial plans, securing public financial assistance and seeking private financial resources. For example, there needs to be a method to capture public funding, instead of relying on the traditional financial assistance of the local diocese and parish subsidies. Many of the local parishes or dioceses are not able to allocate money to education due to low parishioner attendance causing nominal Sunday collections. Some states in the United States such as Wisconsin, Michigan, and California have established a voucher system that distributes government money or tax credit to parents who decide on the school for their child to attend. What is observed in the Northeast, where the local problem exists, is that the concept of vouchers is being piloted in some urban areas, but this type of funding for all who attend Catholic schools in the Northeast continues to be debated by different state governments. As of

2014, 50 school choice programs exist in 23 states and Washington, DC; of the 50, there were 23 voucher programs, 17 tax credit scholarship programs, eight individual tax deduction programs, and one School Choice 187 education savings account program. In the Northeast: Maine, Vermont, and Washington DC have a school voucher program (Cunningham, 2015).

Higher education influence on future and sustainability. Higher education institutions may be able to assist the future of elementary and Catholic secondary education sustainability by developing partnerships with programs of financial assistance and professional development. Since there has been a drop in enrollment in Catholic higher educational institutions in the Northeast had had to recruit in other regions. Some schools in the northeast region have had to recruit from the southern states to improve their enrollment (Supiano, 2009). When there are fewer students to recruit from Catholic secondary schools, it could eventually have a domino effect on higher education.

Therefore, higher educational institutions are becoming more involved with the Catholic secondary schools. The universities and colleges are becoming more aware of governance and administration lacking support and knowledge to sustain Catholic schools. Some of the universities are collaborating in an attempt to provide professional development and mentoring to present and future administration so Catholic schools may continue to exist (Ozar, 2010). This supplemental support by the universities will assist administration to include all stakeholders appropriately in decision-making to promote and sustain Catholic education. Support may include financial, spiritual, academic, organizational or promotional that can alleviate resistance to change, add ownership with

the final decisions for the school's well being and increase confidence towards administration from the school community.

For example, schools embracing the partnership will offer scholarships or grants for higher education to students who attended or are teaching in Catholic secondary schools or offer affordable professional development workshops and courses to teachers, so they may continue to provide quality education to their students. Johnstone and Dallavis (2009) suggests higher institutions that cooperate with Catholic schools provide more than just professional development, but also networking and financial resources, which will keep Catholic schools sustained and thriving into the future. An example of higher education assistance was the University of Notre Dame, which developed a Task Force to find strategies to create a school partnership. The new strategies as the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) programs have assisted secondary and elementary Catholic schools academically, financially and improved their leadership quality by providing affordable professional development and graduate course work in areas of education and educational leadership (University of Notre Dame, 2008). This opportunity has been offered to the local region for professional development in the areas of Science, Religion and Educational Leadership. However, the promotion of these opportunities to educators has been inconsistently offered or promoted in the districts. Therefore, in some instances, many of the local educators were not aware of these educational opportunities, therefore, did not participate.

Another example of higher education assisting with sustaining Catholic education is the development of a university consortium that collaborates with other universities to

provide affordable teacher professional development and educational opportunities for potential Catholic school educators and college students. Davies and Kennedy (2009), describe a university consortium as the collaboration among universities to support Catholic education through professional development, financing, and graduate-level teaching service programs. The consortium is the University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE). Host UCCE universities such as Notre Dame, Seton Hall University, Loyola University and others offer graduate-level teaching service programs to support K-12 Catholic education in the United States. Also, the UCCE reaches out to alumni, private donors and organizations that will join in the overall mission to keep Catholic education as a viable option for students and teachers (Davies & Kennedy, 2009). Many of the Catholic school salaries in the United States are compensate much less than their public school counterparts. Therefore, teachers who are genuinely committed to Catholic school education, find it necessary to leave for higher paying positions to support themselves or their families (Davies & Kennedy, 2009). This conflict is the same with many students and families that desire a Catholic education for the values and can no longer afford the tuition. Individuals, schools, parishes and dioceses may all benefit from UCCE financial assistance, when funds are allocated to Catholic education, professional development and service programs to keep dedicated teachers in the Catholic school system.

Higher education has experienced drops in enrollment, especially for the Catholic students of the Northeast (Supiano, 2009). This decrease of enrollment has pushed them to recruit further south and west for students in the anticipation of the future decline in

the elementary and Catholic secondary schools. So far they have been able to sustain.

According to officials at a Catholic university in New York, they expanded recruitment

over the last 10 years to California,Texas, Florida, and internationally in Europe due to

the shrinking pool of students in the Northeast. In addition, another Catholic university in

Connecticut has connected with Jesuit high schools in Texas and California. This

particular university has also found recruits from Puerto Rico. A Catholic college of

Rhode Island had targeted North Carolina and Southern Florida due to the decline of

Catholic population (Supiano, 2009). Due to the present and potential future decline,

some of these higher educational institutions have become involved with secondary

schools through a collaboration of educational program partnerships and professional

development for teacher training (Davis & Kennedy, 2009). Higher education is hoping

to strengthen and ensure the path to Catholic higher education by providing professional

development and educational programs for students and faculty.

Standards and benchmarks for operational vitality have been developed by a task

force from Loyola University stressing strong financial and enrollment plan as part of a

guide for Catholic leaders to follow for sustaining Catholic education (Ozar, 2012). These

benchmarks include clear and concise information for leadership to apply in a strategic

plan for their future. For example distributing educational materials in the community

explaining costs and the need to supplement the present tuition prices would provide

transparency to the community of the costs. Transparency is stressed in element four of

Fullan's theory for leadership to possess to achieve sustainability. Also, guidelines of the

Loyola taskforce stresses the importance of governance to collaborate with leadership

and stakeholders to provide a quality education for all who desire one (Ozark, 2012). Promoting collaboration among leadership and stakeholders incorporates Fullan's (2005) sustainability element three which creates networks through collaboration.

Implications

The implications of this project study revealed successful leadership strategies utilized by school leadership to sustain a Catholic secondary school in the Northeastern region of the United States. This region has been found by the Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing (as cited by Mc Donald & Schultz, 2016), to have the highest number of Catholic secondary school closings in the country. Findings in this research have assisted me in developing a successful strategic plan guideline that may be applied in financially struggling or low enrollment school districts in the Northeast region and other regions to avoid more school closings, mergers or reconfigurations. The best practice template includes positive leadership characteristics, strategies and qualities needed for achieving sustainability, which coincide with Fullan's 8 elements for successful sustainability of an organization. Also, the model includes financial plans that display creative financial resources for the school, enhanced recruiting plans to increase enrollment and a variety of numerous marketing strategies that promote the school to attract more students. In addition, these findings could also be applied to publicly funded school choice, charter, and public schools that presently need to compete for enrollment of students, as do the Catholic secondary schools. These publicly funded schools may also apply best practice strategies to enhance their educational system by improving programs, academics, leadership and enrollment.

Also keeping Catholic schools open will provide potential enrollment for Catholic higher education institutions in the Northeast, instead of migrating to the South and West. The survival of higher education will provide more diversity for the students and economically assist the local communities who may rely on the local university population for financial stability.

Finally, maintaining a Catholic school venue in urban areas may provide educational and career opportunities, plus a wholesome learning and community environment to socioeconomically deprived families or minority populations that may not have these opportunities available in a local public school district. Keeping Catholic education as a viable educational option in the country will provide more diverse educational opportunities for families, increase academic competition among schools for students and provide valued educational opportunities for a growing minority population in the country, therefore potentially improve the overall educational system and workforce in the country.

Summary

In conclusion, the data collected and analyzed was used to find strategies and significance factors for sustaining Catholic secondary schools in the local region. The findings were described and used to develop best practices from school leaders for successful sustainability. These findings may avoid closings and keep Catholic education as a viable school option for families. In Section 2, there is a discussion of the selected case study school for this research, method of collecting data for analysis and interpretation of information. The data was collected through personal interviews at

various levels of leadership and using collected relevant written documents sought rich, thick details, of information with applicability for developing a successful template to sustain Catholic secondary schools.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

In Section 1, I examined the issue of Catholic secondary schools' sustainability in the Northeast region of the United States and factors that may affect schools' ability to remain open. The need for this study has evolved from the large enrollment decline in Catholic secondary schools in the United States, with the highest percentage of the school closings in the Northeast region over the past decade. These circumstances triggered possible factors such as tuition increases, financial and recruiting plans, leadership structure; demographic shifts, and alternative local school options, which may have some significance towards enrollment sustainability.

Section 2 includes discussion of the methodology I used to collect data from a successful Catholic secondary school and possibly discover their successful formula for obtaining and sustaining their Catholic School setting. I employed qualitative methodology by using a descriptive case study research design. A review of literature provided justification for the design choice as well as selection and access to the participants. This section also includes a description of the protection of human subjects and an explanation of data collection and analysis techniques relevant for this study. An explanation of my role as the researcher generates an understanding for potential bias and my preparedness for conducting this research. This explanation includes any personal biases or professional experiences that may have affected or influenced data collection and analysis, and I clarify and confirm credibility in the research. Lastly, this section includes limitations, scope, and a brief summary of Section 2.

Research Design and Approach

This case study involved a qualitative methodology to investigate effective strategies from a successful and sustaining Catholic secondary school in the Northeast area. The Northeast area was chosen due to this geographical region having the largest number of secondary Catholic school closings and mergers in the United States over the past decade, and especially in the past 2 years (McDonald & Schultz, 2014). In spite of the failed school settings, there are currently a few Catholic secondary schools successfully sustaining enrollment and financially thriving in the Northeast region. This research used a descriptive case study with a selected successful Catholic secondary school to seek strategies and significant factors contributing to sustaining enrollment in the school. In the descriptive case study, I interacted with participants through interviews and collect relevant written documents for data. Research identified and defined experiences of the school leaders at various levels and school community members from a successful school setting in efforts to attain strategies for a thriving school. Sustainability is the key characteristic researched in that particular setting; therefore, it was a bounded system within the walls of the school (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative research allowed me to understand the particular situation of a thriving school. My goal was to interpret these experiences and communicate the findings to others who may be interested in that same setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This case study focused on a Catholic secondary school that remained opened over the last 5 years during economically challenging times for Catholic education (De Fiore, 2011). The key instruments for data collection included personal interviews and written documents.

Qualitative methodology approach to this research allowed me to report how and why specific strategies, methods, or experiences kept a Catholic secondary school open. Through a qualitative methodology case study design, I explored a deep understanding of the issue, collecting rich and thick data for analysis procedures (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A quantitative study to survey school leaders for quantities of specific types of strategies was considered, although it would merely collect more superficial information without understanding how specific strategies developed. Also, using quantitative research would take more time to survey enough schools to determine their sustainability numbers. Finally, collected quantitative data would be without rationale and the human dynamics and only reveal statistics for analysis. Quantitative data might not provide insights into individual personalities, characteristics, and various methods of implementing leadership.

Mixed methods would require the collections of both qualitative and quantitative data, which would mandate more participants to conduct this research effectively using correlations with significance and supportive qualitative data (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, using a quantitative or mixed method design would require using more participants, creating continual intrusions on school time and personnel. Also, while using a phenomenological case study would stress more of the human emotion on a particular experience, this study is about the dynamics of participants in a particular setting, not an experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A theory would not be developed in this study. This research involved investigating a setting and current successful

strategies that were being implemented in the setting. Data analysis included some systemic coding as in grounded theory, but I would not develop a theory in this study. There are too many interpersonal dynamics that would make it difficult for the theory to be grounded in data. Therefore, grounded theory would not be an option for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Consequently, I chose to conduct a qualitative study using a descriptive case study design as the most effective method to complete this particular research successfully. This strategy provided descriptive explanations and an accurate account of how and why a school district has been able to be successful in the same geographic area where so many schools are floundering, merged, or completely closed (Creswell, 2012).

Participants

Criteria for Selection of the Participants

Purposeful sampling of participants was used to draw from a Catholic secondary school in the Northeast region of the United States that had been successfully sustained over the last 5 years, within a 2-hour driving distance for me as the researcher, and the school agreed to permit the study. This case study included descriptive data that provided information on the successes of this secondary Catholic school's sustainability. The completed interviews were with school leaders, such as vice principals, academic deans, athletic directors, guidance dean, admission directors, alumni, teachers, and parents. There were only one to two participants of each requested school leader level due to the large number of teachers, parents, and others from the district. Selection of these participants was based on their willingness to meet with me during an interview time that

was agreeable to all parties involved. Data between different leadership levels coupled with pertinent written documents such as marketing material and financial information relevant to sustainability were the main components used to create the project study. A complete list of written documents is identified later in this section.

Gaining Access to Participants

I sent a letter of cooperation to the principal/president of the school to seek consent for interviews with school leaders: President, principal, one to two board or trustee members, development director, two teachers (preferably department heads), two parents (preferably committee chairpersons), and two alumni. The letter of cooperation located in Appendix B was obtained before sending my proposal to the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB).

After IRB approval was granted (Approval Number 04-22-16-0224161), I contacted the principal/president for potential participants' contact information. I sent informed consent forms located in Appendix C to 17 potential participants by e-mail. I received nine positive responses, three negative responses, and five no responses. The forms included reassurances that their information would be held in strict confidentiality, and no names were used in the study or documents provided. I followed up with the consent forms in about 1 week by e-mail/phone call to the principal to acknowledge reception, timely permission, and potential interviewing dates. After the informed consent forms were returned by e-mail, time and location were confirmed and scheduled with participants for clarification of information being sought and reassurance of confidentiality. While coordinating time and

location, I requested from the principal the best time to meet with participants and

a room with privacy for confidentiality. I sent an e-mail to these participants

confirming the time and location to meet with them. They responded by e-mail to

confirm. A reminder was sent to principal about interviews the week before I was

to visit. The findings will be shared through hard copy with participants, principal,

and president (see Table 2).

Table 2

Procedures to gain access to participants

Procedural steps	Participant(s) Involved	Reason
Letter of Cooperation sent.	principal/president	Permission for access to participants.
Data Agreement sent.	principal/president	Permission for requested written documents.
After IRB **Approval**	principal	Request for participant contact information and written documents (listed on Data Agreement).
Send consent forms.	Participants: School leaders as school administration and school community members as faculty, parents, alumni and trustees.	Permission to collect data.
Follow-up e-mails	Participants	Acknowledgment of receipt for consent form.
E-mail/phone calls to coordinate and schedule interviews	principal/ participants	Best time and location to interview and collect data from participants.
Complete interviews/collect written documents, distribute Executive Summary	participants and principal	Data Collection
Develop common themes with collected data.	Myself	Data analysis to develop into best practice using open and axial coding.
Follow up e-mails and thank you.	Participants	Triangulation/Member Checking, Interpretation of notes, Crosschecking notes with written documents
Send 1-2 page summary	Participants and stakeholders involved in study.	Findings of study to share with participants/school.

Protection of Participant Rights

The Belmont Report determined three essential principles for ethically conducting research with human participants to protect participants from harm, which included ensuring the respect of persons, beneficence, and justice (United States, 1978). All individuals were provided informed consent before participating in the study and received a written explanation, which included a participant consent form to sign prior to the commencement of any data collection. Through informed consent, potential participants were made aware that participation was voluntary, of any aspects of the research that might affect their well-being, and that they may freely choose to stop participating at any point in the study (Glense, 2011). All participants were identified as school leader or school community member by a code, and written documents were sanitized from using school name and only identified by region, size, or type of school as a secondary school (see Appendix H). Participants who were interviewed included members of an administrative team: two deans for academics and dean for religion, vice principal of student activities/athletic director, dean for guidance director, director of admissions, director of technology, alumni, parent, and faculty members. Also, interviews were conducted in an area to provide a quiet and private environment. The school participant and school name were sanitized from all relevant written documents, which provided confidentiality of information in data analysis and results. The data collected were protected by storing interview transcripts and notes electronically in a password-protected file and collected written documents in a locked filing cabinet in a home office. Data will be destroyed on completion of the study.

Establishing a Researcher–Participant Working Relationship

It was important that participants were aware I would assure confidentiality of all people involved by using the consent forms and all written information collected would be sanitized (blocked names) to avoid any discomfort of answering truthfully or request of documents for the study.

After participants granted permission, participants and I completed confirmation of time and locations using e-mail/phone calls. Also, I prepared participants by composing and distributing an executive summary before the interview, which is located in Appendix E. This preparation process helped develop a comfortable working relationship with this part of research. It was important that the participants knew this was a joint effort to seek answers and to help each other through dialogue. Increasing familiarity of the interview process and goals of the research helped develop trust and a comfort zone between the participants and me. Developing a confident working relationship will support a team effort to seek truths together for a common goal to improve and sustain Catholic education (Glense, 2011).

Requesting District Documents

I requested access for the following written documents that would shed light upon the districts success rate. Examples of written documents I requested were pertinent financial assistance information, copies of the district's recruitment plans, marketing or promotional material, job descriptions, promotional events, activity handbook and trustee by-laws. Table 3 has a listing of requested documents. Written documents received were: marketing promotional material, school profile, financial material from web site and

handbook, alumni yearbook, school calendar of events and student and parent handbook.

A Data Use Agreement located in Appendix D was sent for permission to use the

requested written school documents for research and analysis after IRB approval for data

collection. Requested written documents were collected the day of scheduled interviews

with school leaders. All documents will be devoid of identifying names and other Family

Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) potential identification.

Table 3

List of Requested Written Documents

Document	Reason
Financial Assistance	Effects on enrollment
Professional Development	Evidence of collaboration and leadership.
Job Descriptions	Evidence of collaboration, leadership and enrollment
Trustee or Board By-Laws	Evidence of collaboration, leadership and enrollment.
Subsidies	Effects on enrollment.
Student Handbook	Accessibility of school financial and calendar events for the school community.
Scheduled Promotional Events	Effects on enrollment, evidence of collaboration and access to school community.
Marketing Material and Recruitment Plans	Effects on enrollment, evidence of collaboration and effects on school community.
Enrollment Numbers	Sustainability

Data Collection

Interview Questions

Interview questions were one of the two instruments used to collect data. The questions were created by me using Fullan's (2005) conceptual framework, my past administrative experience and input from local school administrators or school leaders as a guide to collect pertinent information on leadership, sustainability, and factors that may influence both of these areas.

After I collected all the consent forms, the personal interviews were scheduled with six school leaders and three school community members. Each personal interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes. The 10 interview questions located in Appendix E included four questions covering Fullan's elements on leadership and sustainability as collaboration, transparency, networking, cyclical energizing and long lever of leadership. The other six questions covered factors as demographics, alternative school options, marketing and financial and recruiting plans that may influence sustainability and indirectly influence Fullan's (2005) eight elements for sustainability. All participants were asked all 10 questions, unless time was short, then the interview was abbreviated to pertinent questions of sustainability and leadership. There were only two abbreviated interviews due to time restraints, which were noted in analyses. I took detailed field notes and asked additional probing questions from the participants. Probing questions were used to gain a better understanding of the initial answer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The relevant notes were written on a prepared chart (Table 4) for organizational purposes.

Table 4

Data Collection Organizational Chart (Interviews).

Participant: Title				Date:
Q 1(notes)	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10

If the face-to-face interviews were not convenient for the participant alternative
options were offered as a phone call or Skyped interview. These could be scheduled with
follow-up e-mails for confirmation of discussion. None of the requested participants
chose this option.

The semi-structured interview process consisted of nine school participants at an
on-site location during the scheduled school day. The school site administration
determined the scheduling due to the interruptions of school personnel schedules and
coverage of their classes. The interviews were 30-minute segments accommodating
school personnel availability.

Since the interview time was decrease, I needed to be extremely prepared and
organized. Each participant had individually coded data collection papers as displayed in
Table 4. When the participant entered the room there was a short introduction,
explanation of the interview, distribution of an executive summary (see Appendix E) and
assured them of confidentiality from the informed consent (see Appendix C). I asked 10
prepared interview questions for data (see Appendix E), took extremely detailed notes
and coded them immediately. When the interview was completed, I thanked the
participants personally and by e-mail, explained they will receive a member check in

about 1 week to verify their information and a summary of the findings will be e-mailed
to them in a few months. The next day, I sent an e-mail of thanks to the principal and
participants and reminded them about the member check and summary. In about 4 to 5
days I sent member check e-mails to participants to verify their transcripts with my
interpretations. There was only one transcript that requested clarification. I then began a
cross reference of transcripts with relevance to written documents and my written notes
for validity and credibility.

Written Documents

Written documents were the second instrument used to collect data. At the time of
the on-site interview, I requested to collect the written documents such as tuitions rates
from the past 5 years to determine an effect on enrollment, types of available financial
assistance and recruiting methods or open house events to determine an effect on
enrollment and use of collaboration. Other documents requested were student handbooks
to determine accessibility of financial and marketing information to parents and job
descriptions for administrators, faculty and staff to determine involvement with school
marketing, recruiting and finances. Also requested were by-laws for board or trustee
members to determine involvement with school marketing, finance, and recruitment.
Plus, I requested committee and faculty meeting agendas to determine involvement with
recruiting, marketing or finances and any marketing material pertinent to enrollment. I
received most of the needed documents for data analysis, but not all were collected.
Specific documents collected are shared later in this section. The written documents were
used to cross check interview information credibility and for any developing common

themes and categories that may become part of the best practices (see Table 5). If the

interviews were not completed on-site, written documents could be e-mailed, sent by

regular mail or arrangements made to have the documents personally collected. .

Table 5

Data Collection Organizational Chart (Written Documents)

Document Title	Themes:			
	Enrollment	Marketing	Collaboration	Finances
Financial Assistance				
Recruiting Material				

    After reviewing the interview transcripts using open and axial coding to develop

themes, I cross-referenced transcripts and data with written documentation using the

Table 5. The collected documents were: School profile and promotional material, school

student and parent handbook and alumni magazine. These items were extremely useful

along with the official school web site that included some of the same documents. The

collected written documents were agreed upon using the Data Agreement found in

Appendix D.

    After the interviews and collection of documents, triangulation was conducted to

assure reliability and validity of the data. Triangulation is a method used to check for

internal validity of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation was completed in

forms of reviewing and interpreting data notes from interviews, crosschecking

interpretations of data notes with collected written documents and member checking the

interpretations between participants. For example, when the participant included financial information with their transcript; I reviewed my data notes, cross check data notes with collected financial written documents for credibility and member check collected financial data interpretations for accuracy. I used member comment check chart (see Table 7) to assist in completing this task (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This chart was e-mailed to relevant participants for review and verification of data (see Appendix G).

Member checking was completed about 4 to 5 days after the interview. Table 7 chart with individual information was sent with a code for identification to each member with their transcript and my interpretations of their transcript. There were seven out of nine member checks returned with only one needing clarification. The information was then cross referenced with my interview notes, coded and collected written documents were used to confirmed validity and credibility.

The data collected from school leaders, and written documents was part of the process for seeking strategies used to sustain a successful Catholic secondary school. For example, I sought strategies used by school leadership and school community to determine if collaboration was used to attain sustainability as mention in Fullan's system thinking theory (2005). Also, I reviewed written documents as student handbooks to determine if transparency was evident for presenting financial and recruiting information to the school community (see Appendix H). This collected data inductively developed into themes and categories for successful strategies attaining sustainability (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The study provided data about the how's and why's this setting obtained and maintained their school's sustainability. Data collected answered the following

questions: Did the school utilize any of Fullan's system thinking elements for sustainability? What is it about this particular setting and their collective experiences that have brought them to this successful status.

Role of the Researcher

Interview questions and relevant written documents were the instruments used to collect the qualitative data for the study to be completed. I developed relevant interview questions using Fullan's systems thinking framework as my guide. In addition, my past professional role as a principal of a Catholic secondary school and additional collaboration with school administrators provided more substantiated questions that created an effective questionnaire and determined relevant written documents collected for the study.

<p align="center">**Data Analysis**</p>

Coding Process

When all interviews were completed and written documents collected, the data was coded into categories, subcategories and themes. Themes were generated through interview questions, probing questions and written relevant documents to gather detailed information from each information source. These potential themes follow Fullan's (2005) elements of sustainability as discussed in the conceptual framework. Some of the themes that were included are leadership structure for sustainability in relationship to collaboration with stakeholders, transparency of goals, building other leaders for the future, sharing goals throughout the district and building trust. Also, potential themes were developed from the factors that affect sustainability as demographics McDonald and

Schultz (2014), types of financial plans Diocese of Trenton (2012), marketing and recruitment plans (Kennedy, Mullohand et al., 2011). Additional themes included more educational options De Fiore (2011) public perception Berry (2011), socioeconomic issues Butcher et al. (2011) and governance (Hobbie et al., 2010). All of these themes developed into categories and subcategories evolved into best strategies for sustainability of a Catholic secondary school. Two forms of coding were used to review the data, which were open and axial coding.

Open coding procedure. Open coding identified the overall common themes in every form of the data collected. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain this procedure as a category construction. Open coding is open to a variety of themes and categories in the beginning of the coding process. Open coding begins with jotting notes down next to a column in the transcripts and written data. The notes are relevant to the study or points of interest. As the coding progresses, some themes or categories emerge and become more relevant than others. The relevant categories and themes were named, and organized into specific folders. Any irrelevant categories or themes were set aside or dismissed.

Axial coding procedure. The refining of categories is called axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During this process I sought commonalities and relevance among the categories or themes and place them into manageable data categories and themes. Data analysis of document was implemented similarly to interviews seeking common categories themes from collected information after being reviewed by the researcher. Then the categories were crosschecked with interview data and confirmed

with participants for relevancy on sustainability significance. A table was created for

organizing data sources using axial coding (See Table 6).

Table 6

Organizational Data Analysis Chart

Data Source	Information open coding	Category open/axial coding	Specific Themes axial coding
Interview or Written Document	Direct Data from Interview Transcript or Document Review	Emerging from Data	Emerging from Data

Note: Adapted from Qualitative Research A Guide to Design and Implementation by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint: San Francisco, CA

Evidence of Quality and Procedures

Member checking was completed by e-mail/phone interviews after data was

collected and analyzed. After the interviews were completed, I used member checking

and reviewed answers with participants to assure the accuracy of collected data. Member

checking is a strategy that ensures the credibility of the data, so there is no

misinterpretation of given information. I created a chart of comments with actions taken

to assure accountability of following-up with the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This

chart was available for participants to review for accuracy (see Table 7 and Appendix G).

Table 7

Member Check Comments

Title	Data Interpretation from Researcher	Comments	Action
Principal			No Action is needed
Superintendent			Write back and clarify the development of the category.

Note: Adapted from Qualitative Research A Guide to Design and Implementation by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint: San Francisco, CA

Reviewing and interpreting data notes, member checking with other participants and cross checking with written documents follows the process of triangulation. Triangulation assured the internal validity of the study by comparing answers of different people for credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Procedures for Dealing With Discrepant Cases

When interviewing different leaders in the school system, there may be a discovery of discrepant cases. If discrepant cases are found, data sources must be re-examined to see if the differences can resolve and if not, then this perspective will also be presented in the study (Lodico, 2010). After rechecking data information that was placed into themes and categories using coding and deduction, all participants had similar responses throughout the interview and data analysis process. In addition, collected relevant written documents verified the participant responses. Therefore, there were no discrepant cases found.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study may also be a strong point. As a previous principal and administrator of a Catholic secondary school that struggled and eventually closed I may be biased towards particular leadership characteristics at different levels of the system such as decision-making skills, communication, and collaboration. At the same time an experienced leader from a past struggling school was able to assist in developing probing and fact-finding questions for interviewing other leaders, as well as possess the passion for driving the research and finding answers to sustain Catholic education. Also, the school selected was not part of the same diocese where I was employed due to potential biases and emotional attachments, but the school was in the same geographical area of discussion: Northeast region. It is important to make these biases clear in the research to allow readers to understand the reason a particular interpretation of data may have been derived by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Scope

The scope of this study was focus on best practice strategies for a successful sustaining Catholic secondary school in the Northeast region of the country, which has the most secondary school closings and decreased enrollment over the past decade. These same answers to sustain Catholic education may also be used to assist the school choice option and public schools in the future. School choice option is available in some states, which allow families to select an out of district public school for the needs of their children. The school choice option has created competition among public schools that has

stimulated improvement for educational programs and encouraged promoting and marketing their school to attract students. Competition among schools will assist to improve the educational system in the country and create more diverse educational opportunities for families seeking an appropriate education for their children.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of the project study was to find out reasons why a Catholic secondary school sustains and thrives in the Northeast region of the United States. This geographical region had more school closings than any other location in the United States over the past 5 years. This research used a descriptive case study with a selected successful Catholic secondary school to seek successful leadership strategies and significant factors contributing to sustaining enrollment in the school. Nine school members agreed to participate in a personal semi-structured 10-question interview. Interview questions were developed by experienced secondary Catholic school administration to guide the goals of the research using Fullan's Theory (2005) on successful leadership and sustainability. All interviews were scheduled and completed during the school day in a quiet and private conference room. The participants included six school leaders (A codes) and three school community members (ALF, P and F codes) consisting of faculty, alumni/faculty and a parent/faculty. The data was collected using written notes, participant transcripts and open coding by the researcher. Axial coding was used to deduct common themes and categories from data analysis. Following data analysis, the findings were explained, supported and provided responses for answering the research question. An analysis of participants' interview responses developed into

patterns and themes, that gave insight and answers to why this particular school is able to successfully sustain in the Northeast. In addition, the data collected through interviews and written documents substantiated influencing factors and supported strategies on sustainability. Findings from the analysis were discussed in order of themes, that had larger number of responses to themes, that had less, but all themes were clearly evident in the findings. The themes were verified using narrative which includes participant comments and written documentations from the school, then data analysis findings from interviews and written documents were summarized in Table 8.

Financial Plan and Procedures on Sustainability

The majority of the participants indicated that a strong financial plan and knowledgeable leadership positively affected the school's present and future sustainability. Participants A4, A9, F1, P1 and ALF emphasized the President of the school "vision" and "financial knowledge and creativeness" have assisted the financial stability of the school and kept it "affordable for a diverse population of students". In addition, participants A8 and A5 indicated the financial plan including the "rental of the school facility" and implementation of "international programs" have positively affected the financial well-being of the school. Written documentation including school promotional literature and student/parent handbook supported the responses and the financial plan indicating that "Over the last 15 years tuition has only increased an average of $230. per year". Participants A4, A5, A7, A8, A9 concluded that a "strong financial plan" and "affordability" will support future sustainability.

School Academic and Co-curricular Programs for Sustainability

It was apparent from the repetitive participant responses that a variety of strong educational and co-curricular elite academic programs, athletics, community service opportunities and music programs were a strong influence for present and future sustainability. Participant F1 and A8 indicated that the "International programs" attracted more students, increased diversity and assisted school finances. "Strong academic standards and school expectations" have been strongly encouraged by leadership and teachers as indicated by participants A7 and A4. Ivy League acceptance, an overall high percentage of college/university acceptances and monetary awards at graduation are evident in written documentation as the school profile and alumni promotional literature, which supports the strong academic claims from the participants. In addition, participant A7 mentioned, "There is a middle school elite academic program connected with the high school, which awards academic scholarships to attend the high school based on academic performance in the middle school program". Also, a variety of programs as athletics, music and technology have attracted different populations due to public notoriety, success and uniqueness. Participant A4 mentioned there is a popular trading card club that students attend demonstrating uniqueness to student interest. Academics and co-curricular programs can also be found in school promotional material and the student/parent handbook. Participant A6 and F1 added that Campus Ministry "Instills the Catholic identity and provides community service opportunities such as creating a "a retreat for the homeless". Campus Ministry programs, events and information are also well documented in the school's student/parent handbook and promotional literature.

Collaboration for Sustainability

The student/parent handbook clearly defined the administration as a team that works together and manages the school operations and decision-making. This team approach structure indicated a collaborative effort is in place to be used in the best interest of the school and students. Fullan's (2005) theory demonstrates the use of collaboration in six out of the eight elements for achieving sustainability in an organization. Participant responses also indicated collaborative measures used among school leaders as well as school community including: faculty, alumni, parents and students. Participant A5 and F1 indicates there are " regular meetings between all levels of administration to help each other out". A7 mentions that the "President of the school invites all to get involve with school events". Participant A4 stated, " There is a team effort among administrative team members to support each other at school events such as all attending a football game". Participant ALF explains that "New teacher orientation gives very clear goals and expectations from administration". Participants A9, A8, A7, A6 and P1 indicated strong collaboration and communication from administration with faculty, alumni, parents and community. For example, there is on line support and training for parents from school instructors using new grading programs, collaborating with alumni to create social events such as the past school gala, community service events through Campus Ministry, development and community efforts with the construction of the new music hall and cooperative efforts from parents, administration, faculty and students with school open houses and recruiting.

Communication for Sustainability

Communication was mentioned as a strong administrative leadership quality from all of the participants. More specifically, A5 indicated that there are "regularly scheduled meetings" to share information with each other. P1 explains the use of "Facebook and newspaper" assists with communicating to parents and the community. A6 mentioned "weekly memos to parents and community" enhanced participation in community service events. A8 indicated " school leaders communicate with teachers to promote strong academic and co-curricular programs". In addition, "positive word of mouth" is encouraged by all school personnel from school administration to promote a strong team front and positive school image. A strong variety of marketing and recruiting tools reach out to large geographical and diverse population. The school web site and written documentation in the student/parent handbook, school calendar, school profile and alumni magazine confirmed and indicated strong marketing and recruiting events as: open houses, shadow days, seventh grade leadership days, community service opportunities, athletic events, school trips, programs, school events and application deadlines for various scholarships and financial aid. In addition, participants A8, F1 and A9 indicate there are billboards, TV commercials, Internet, Instagram, Twitter, e-mails, parish bulletins, and newspaper ads that communicate many school events and information to the school and outside communities.

Administrative Support and Trust for Sustainability

The majority of participant responses indicated that administrative support enhanced affected present and future sustainability. Participants mentioned a variety of

ways that leadership supported each other, faculty, students, parents and community. Participants A4, A7, ALF, F1, A9 indicate "trust and respect in teaching ability and knowledge" allow teachers to comfortably do their job and know administrators are "approachable, accessible and have their back" if school issues arise. There are monthly meetings and weekly memos that allow for discussion and sharing of ideas between leaders and school community members as mentioned by A5, ALF and A6. In addition, participants A8 and A5 explained that, "Administration uses appropriate placement of quality school personnel into specific job tasks. Administration knows the strengths and weaknesses of school personnel, therefore are able to build a quality staff in the best interest of the school". A6 mentioned that it is important to have " The Bishop's support in education" for future sustainability. A9 indicated, " Instructors are available to support students and parents using on line training for the grading system. In addition, phone calls are always welcomed for assistance in technology use".

Diversity for Sustainability

The majority of the participants agreed that accepting and targeting diverse populations assists with sustainability by attracting more students. "Leadership and students are accepting to a variety of cultures and backgrounds" as mentioned by participant A6. Participant P1 indicates, "Keeping the school affordable allows for a more diverse population in the school and students experience the real world". "Diversity is a promotional venue to attract more students to the school" as indicated by participants A8, A4 and F1. "Reaching out further geographically lends opportunities for more students to attend the school" as mentioned by participant A5. Written documentation confirms the

diverse outreach with the school profile indicating the school's distinctive qualities and geographical areas of provided transportation.

Values and Catholic Identityfor Sustainability

Encouraging and instilling values is promoted by the Campus Ministry that encourages sustainability. Community service opportunities create a community outreach for those in need as indicated by Participant A6. Creating accommodations for the homeless and participation in "Relay for Life" engage students and school community in service outreach for the outside community as explained by participants A6 and ALF. Promoting Catholic and spiritual identity makes the school different from other public choices. The spiritual awareness is important for some families when making a school choice decision as indicated by F1 participant. Written documentation was included in school promotional material, school calendar and student/parent handbook that supports the spiritual component of the school and community service events for student and school community participation.

Safe Environment for Sustainability

Leadership provided and implemented policies and procedures to keep a safe learning environment for the school community. Participant A4 and F1 indicated that a "Safe learning environment assists in the sustainability of the school." "General public perception of the school is that it is a good learning environment for students and school community within an affluent geographical area." as mentioned by Participant A5. Written documentation in the student/parent handbook explained and confirmed policies and procedures for a safe learning environment before, during and after school.

Summary of Findings

The following information is a summary of data analysis themes in relationship to Fullan's (2005) theory supporting sustainability. A narrative explanation will describe the dynamics and relationships of the findings. Table 8 will simplify the data analysis summary of findings.

Financial plan and educational programs. These two themes received a strong number of responses and claims from the participants for present and future sustainability. It was also indicated by two participants that it important to have a balance of both to retain sustainability. Repetitive accolades were given to the president of the school for creating and implementing the financial plan in a consistent and collaborative manner from year to year. The current president has been in place for 15 years and the financial plan continually enhances affordability for more families. In addition, academic and co-curricular programs were extremely effective based on student retention numbers and academic outcomes as college acceptances. As mentioned by participants, students are happy and want to stay, which assists retention. Enrollment has been consistent over the past 4 years with 1,600 applications on average per year and 1,560 enrolled in 2014 as mentioned in the school profile. Programs are diverse in an effort to meet the needs of a diverse population through academic needs, cultural acceptance, socioeconomic background and geographical location. Development of strong educational programs by hiring a quality staff for appropriate positions enhances retention and assists in attaining sustainability.

Fullans conceptual framework. Elements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 were extremely evident from the above evidence. The leadership has developed a strong moral purpose both financially and educationally by creating a strong financial plan and educational programs for the school to sustain. These plans are shared with leadership, faculty, staff, students and school community using a variety of opportunities and venues as meetings, promotional literature, school events, programs social media and word of mouth. Using a variety of vehicles enables leadership to reach out to a diverse population of families, therefore increasing opportunities for more students to attend the school. The collaboration demonstrates Fullan's (2005) second and third element: to share the moral purpose with others by networking and communicating will attain sustainability. In addition leadership trusts staff as staff trusts leadership as indicated by the many of the participants. Elements 4 and 7 are evidence in hiring practices, orientations and appropriate placement of faculty and staff in positions. Leadership trusts they will do their job as faculty and staff and staff trusts and has confidence in leadership that they will be supported when school issues arise.

Collaboration with School Leaders and School Community

This theme was a highly noted by participants in this study. There are numerous venues of collaborative opportunities which leadership implements throughout the year to enhance sustainability of the school. All participants noted in their responses they encountered or observed some type of timely communication or collaboration used by leadership during the school year. There is written evidence in the student/parent handbook that the operations of the school is managed by a team of school leaders and

displays the protocol for communication procedures. Participants indicated numerous leadership attributes as "approachable, visible and assessable" demonstrating strong collaborative and communicative qualities. Evidence displays opportunities as scheduled meetings, memos, e-mails and social media as methods to collaborate and communicate with school staff as well as school community. In addition, there are a variety of school events as open houses, visitation days, facility rentals, programs and community service opportunities including administration, faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni and community to reach out to diverse populations and enhance sustainability.

Fullan's conceptual framework. Elements 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 were evident in collaboration responses. Leadership displays a shared a collaborative effort in communicating the moral purpose and goals to all levels of the school and community demonstrating implementation of Elements 1, 2, 3, and 4 for sustainability. Leadership uses a variety of venues to collaborate and communicate to all levels of school personnel, school community members and outside community members. Element 4 emphasizes networking, communicating and transparency at all level an important aspect for an organization sustain. Element 5 is displayed by continuous school events and timely meetings during the year which encourages more collaboration and discussion to solve problems and create more opportunities. Element 8 is demonstrated by the structured team management system in place at the school. Working as an administrative team will encourage sharing skills and thoughts for future leadership. In addition, an administration team sharing goals with faculty and school community will enhance clarity of objectives influencing others to "buy in" for the future of the school, thus assisting sustainability.

Communication Within School, School Community and Outside Community

Communication theme was mentioned by most participants as a means for

sustainability at the school. It was evident through participant responses and written

documentation that communication is done in a variety of ways so the entire school

community and outside community receives pertinent school information. Participants

mention e-mails, memos, social media, television commercial and billboards as a few of

the vehicles used to communicate. Communication is done consistently throughout the

school year using weekly memos, meetings and scheduled school events. Written

documentation as the school calendar and student/ parent handbook provide a a schedule

for teachers, students and parents to follow for attending events and meeting deadlines. In

addition the web site and e-mail system provide a steady stream of communication for the

entire school community and outside community.

Fullan's conceptual framework. Elements 2, 3, 4, and 8 were evident from the

participant responses. These elements explain the importance of sharing information at all

levels of leadership, keeping transparency, and seeking more leaders with collaboration

and communication. This secondary school uses many venues to communicate to a wide

variety of people that attempts to reach the entire school community and also gives the

school community a venue to reciprocate and discuss school matters.

Administrative Support and Trust

The majority of participant responses indicated that the administrative team is

supportive with each other, faculty, staff and school community. The administration

possesses strong qualities as "approachable, visible and assessable" which encourages

clear communication and collaboration for decision making and problem solving within and outside the school community. Also, administration places personnel in appropriate positions, that creates a good learning environment and provides a quality education for the students. Administration respects the staff and trusts they will give the students a quality education.

      Fullan's conceptual framework. Elements 3, 4, 5, and 7 were evident from the participant responses. Creating collaboration throughout the building and networking in community is found in Element 3 for sustainability. In addition, strong leadership qualities of respecting each other's abilities and weakness is evident in Element 4 to keep sustainability. Element 5 allows for collaborative learning to assist in problem solving and adaption for improvement with failure being accepted, but learning and moving forward from that point, can be accomplished when administration is supportive. Element 7 allows time for trusting leadership. Trust is earned with time and sustainability will be the result. People need time to trust leadership and change.

Diversity in Areas of Culture, Socioeconomically and Geographically is Evident in Responses

      This theme was repetitively mentioned from the majority of participant responses. Reaching out to a diverse population through expanded geographical areas, providing transportation, affordability and including an international program will attract more students and increase enrollment to assist sustainability. Recruiting efforts expanding geographically using a variety of vehicles as four open houses, visitation days, community service opportunities and a variety of educational and co-curricular programs

will assist in keeping a diverse population. The school community accepting diversity has created a very comfortable school environment.

Fullan's conceptual framework. Elements 1, 2, 3, and 6 were evident in the participant responses on diversity to keep sustainability. A collaborative effort within the school community with recruiting and marketing demonstrate the outreach to diverse population. A variety of venues are used in an attempt to reach as many families as possible. Leaders at all levels and stakeholders that share a common goals encourages sustainability

Values and Catholic Identity Promoted Throughout the School was Evident in Responses

Values that instill the Catholic identity were repeated themes in participant responses and displayed in written documentation. Community service opportunities as well as a spiritual component are instilled daily in school through prayer and education. Also the religious component separates Catholic education from public choice. It was noted that the spiritual component could be a decision maker for families and attract students. Community service activities provides a positive public perception to the community and promotes the school which will attract students.

Fullan's conceptual framework. Elements 1, 3, and 6 were evident in the responses of the participants. Element 1 displays a moral purpose by outreach to the community needs and teaching the importance of improving society by helping others. Element 3 creates a collaborative effort by leaders, teachers, students and community to work together and assist those in need. Element 6 is evident when community activities

as accomodating the homeless and "Relay for Life" are implemented and there is a daily reminder of strong morals and values through education, community service and spiritual well-being which builds a strong community for society.

Safe environment for sustainability. Participant responses indicated that keeping a safe environment encourages sustainability. Evidence from responses is that public perception of the school is a safe and comfortable learning environment for students. The affluent geographical location of the school promotes this perception according to participant response. In addition, written documentation found in student/parent handbook of polices/procedures explain safety procedures and policies that are in place for the school day and school activities.

Fullan's conceptual framework. Elements 1, 2, 3, and 4 are evident in participant responses and written documentation. Providing and implementing a safe environment for all to learn is a collaborative responsibility of all leadership and school personnel. This collaborative effort is reached through a common goal to keep the school safe. Written documentation including safety policies and procedures developed and implemented by leadership, school personnel and community provides the school community with clear information on safety protocol for the school day, activities and events.

Table 8

Data Analysis Summary

Themes developed from responses and written documentation	Supported Participant Response	Supported Written Documentation	Fullan's Conceptual Framework
Financial Plan and Procedures	A4, A5, A7, A8, A9, F1, ALF, P1	School Profile (SP), School Promotional Material (SPM), Student/Parent Handbook (HB) Web Site (WS)	Elements 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7.
Programs Educational and Co-curricular	A 4, A6, A7, A8, F1, ALF, P1	SP, SPM, HB, WS, Alumni Magazine (AM)	Elements 1,2,3,4, and7.
Collaboration	A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, F1, A9, ALF	SP, SPM, WS, HB, AM,	Elements 2,3,4,5, 6 and 8.
Communication	A4, A5, A6, A7. A8, A9, ALF, F1, P1	SP, SPM, WS, HB, AM, School Calendar (SC)	Elements 2, 3, 4 and 8.
Administrative Support and Trust	A4, A7, A9, F1, ALF	HB, SP, WS, SC	Elements 3, 4, 5 and 7.
Diversity	A4, A5, A6, A8, P1, F1	SP, WS, HB and AM	Elements 1,3, 4 and 6.
Values and Catholic Identity	A6, ALF, F1	SP, HB and WS	Elements 1, 3 and 6.
Safe Environment	F1, P1 and A5	HB, SPM and WS	Elements1,2,4,and 4

Member checking was completed about 4 to 5 days after the interview. Using the

Table 7 chart, individual information was sent with a code for identification to each

member with their transcript and my interpretations of their transcript (see Appendix G).

There were seven out of nine member checks returned with only one needing

clarification. Subsequently, triangulation was utilized with the participant responses and

member checks, cross referenced with my interview notes, and collected written

documents confirming validity and credibility (see Appendix H).

Summary

The purpose of the project study was to find out reasons why a Catholic secondary school sustains and thrives in the Northeast region of the United States. This geographical region had more school closings than any other location in the United States over the past 5 years. Section 2 outlined a description of the design choice with justification for using a qualitative method case study of Catholic secondary school. This section explained the sampling selection of a Catholic secondary school as the site, which included school leaders, alumni, teachers and parents as participants to be interviewed. Also in the section, the criteria for selection of participants, protection and confidentiality measures, access to participants, researcher-working relationship with participants, and the role of the researcher is discussed and explained. Also, included in Section 2 is the evidence of measures for protection using triangulation including member checking, cross reference with written documents and transcript review to ensure accuracy and credibility for the data collected as well as procedures for discrepant cases. Finally, limitations and scope were discussed which includes biases and potential implications for future assistance with struggling Catholic schools or public schools which need to sustain enrollment and remain a viable educational institution.

Additionally, collection of data including interviews and written document collection were discussed. Data analysis was explained using open and axial coding which placed all data including written documents into themes and categories. Themes were discussed in reference to Fullan's (2005) sustainability elements and successful

leadership strategies, which evolved from the supported evidence from the participant responses and written documents in the project study.

Leadership strategies were developed into a template to assist secondary Catholic school leaders who rely mainly on tuition and enrollment to thrive. Leadership strategies guided the development of the project study: A Guide for Secondary Catholic School Leaders on Successful Sustainability.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In Section 3, I present the project, A Guide for Secondary Catholic School

Leaders on Successful Sustainability (Appendix A). The project includes a blend of

research, conclusions, and successful leadership strategies, based on findings, that have

successfully sustained a secondary school in the Northeast. The guide will be presented

as professional development to school leaders of struggling schools or for new school

leaders who need preparation and training or refreshment to veteran school leaders in

effective leadership strategies to enhance, improve, or sustain their present school system.

Professional development is implemented using venues such as conferences, workshops,

or seminars to assist school leaders to comprehend and apply the successful leadership

strategies in their schools. Some districts hire a consultant to work with their specific

situation and move the community forward.

Section 3 includes the description and goals of the project, rationale, a literature

review that provides the foundation for the development of the project, implementation

plans, project evaluation, and implications for social change.

Description and Goals

Based on the results from the data gathered in semi-structured one-on-one

interviews from six school leaders and three school community members, the project

focused on the need for the project to meet the needs of school leaders whose schools

may be struggling to sustain enrollment and who may be seeking a long-term financial

plan or developing innovative programs to attract more students. The objective of this

project was to develop, provide, and present a template of successful leadership strategies for school leaders to use or reference for developing and assisting school sustainability. The project describes effective leadership strategies and why and how these strategies are used to keep a secondary Catholic school thriving.

Numerous individual components make up an effective school system, such as strong leadership, excellent educational programs, and extraordinary faculty and staff. However, school systems with only individual quality components will find it challenging to achieve sustainability. Viability, vitality, and effectiveness consists of a combination of components working together with increased enrollment and financial stability such as effective leadership, academic quality, Catholic identity, and strategic planning (De Fiore, 2011). Fullan (2009) suggested a whole system thinking to leadership development will create a successful culture and sustainability to a school system. Effective leadership includes engaging, embracing, and collaborating with stakeholders to improve and create a quality school system (Kouzes & Poser, 2007).

Rationale

According to the results of the study, school leaders and school community members strongly supported financial planning by leadership, providing quality academic programs, widespread collaboration at all levels, consistent and clear communication throughout the school community, administrative support for school personnel and community, accepting diverse populations into the school system, and providing a safe learning environment. All mentioned components were considered a means for the school's present successful sustainability as indicated by responses. Additionally,

participants' responses shared the importance of instilling faith values daily and providing a safe environment as reasons for the school's continuous ability to thrive successfully.

Participants also included that in order to have future sustainability, leaders will need to continue a strong financial plan for affordability and provide academic and cocurricular programs that reach the diverse needs and interests of students. In addition, leadership must continue to use suitable hiring and placement practices that fit personnel in the best positions, therefore providing a quality education to the students.

The purpose of this project was to communicate the study's findings with professional development for school leaders. I summarized and included the findings in a guide for school leaders to reference for application in their own schools. Using the semi-structured interviews, the participants described the successful leadership strategies and influential criteria over the past 5 years, which indicated leadership strategies that will keep the school sustained in the future. Successful leadership strategies are experiences that must be shared with school leaders who may need assistance, motivation, or encouragement to build an effective school system. When essential information are shared such as successful leadership strategies, then the common moral purpose of sustaining more secondary Catholic schools, increasing educational diversity and academic competition among all schools can improve the overall educational system.

Review of the Literature

Catholic schools have been on a downward trend over the past decade. The Northeast has experience the largest decline in enrollment over the past decade of 27% of

the total student enrollment for all Catholic schools in all geographical regions of United

States. In addition, the Northeast had the most secondary school closures or

reconfigurations consisting of 4 out of a total of 5 secondary Catholic schools nationally

during the 2015-2016 (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). However, there are secondary

Catholic schools in the Northeast that have thrived and remained open. It was the purpose

of this project to determine from findings how and why these schools thrive, then convey

this message to other Catholic schools that may be struggling or want to enhance their

present status.

I will first discuss effective leadership strategies in school systems and leadership

strategies pursued for a Catholic school system. Secondly, a conceptual framework

consisting of transformational leadership will be explained and connected to findings.

Finally, leadership strategies developed and implemented from the findings will be

displayed and explained in terms of why they were successful.

Effective leadership practices influence sustainability (Fullan, 2005). The Wallace

Foundation Report, a study based on the effectiveness of public school principals,

reported Cummins's (2015) five effective leadership strategies for a quality sustained

school:

- Shaping a vision for academic success for all students. Creating a vision and

  appropriately marketing the vision to the school community allowed a school

  that was to close in Colorado, to remain open and needed to add more grades

  and classrooms. The principal marketed the school as a strong neighborhood

  school with a rigorous curriculum and nurturing environment. The vision was

shared with teachers who were provided with clear objectives, which

encouraged promotion of the school throughout the community.

- Creating a climate hospitable to education. A principal in Georgia, built in a

  daily 45-minute department collaboration for teachers to exchange ideas and

  assist each other and time for instructional training. This strategy kept teachers

  happy and improved teacher retention.

- Cultivating leadership in others. A principal in Florida, sent teachers to a

  county-wide meeting to share academic school data giving teachers a

  leadership role and seeing the bigger picture of leadership strategies. This

  small presentation by teachers helped the district to develop more future

  leaders who will assist their school's sustainability.

- Improving instruction. A principal in Maryland, had teachers plan lessons

  around four themes in an effort to blend learning in subjects across the

  curriculum and grade levels. This activity demonstrated a systemic

  professional learning community, by building relationships at all levels and

  sharing ideas among professionals. Collaborating and communicating at all

  levels will encourage all to be on the same page (Fullan, 2005).

- Managing people, data, and processes. A principal in North Carolina

  encourages teachers to attends workshops but requests them to share their

  experiences with rest of the staff in a professional development training.

  Collaborating, communicating, and building new leadership will assist to

  achieve future sustainability (Fullan, 2005).

Presently, much of Catholic school administration preparation is based on the secular aspect as mentioned above for leading schools. This has taken the focus off the faith formation and development of the Catholic identity (Boyle, Haller, & Hunt, 2016). Implementation of quality leadership strategies were evident in the above leadership strategies in public schools; however, there are very similar effective leadership characteristics Catholic schools looked for when hiring school leaders as mentioned in the National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Schools (Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014).

The National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Schools were created by a task force of Catholic school educators and religious leaders in collaboration with the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)(Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012). The standards include faith formation and Catholic identity, governance and leadership, academic excellence, and operational vitality.

It is important that Catholic school leaders be strong instructional and operational leaders, but they must also be strong in faith development. There have been many different standards developed for Catholic school leaders; however, there has been no one set of standards used for replicating effective leadership. More recently, in addition to faith formation Catholic school leaders have developed more responsibilities as in enrollment management, finding more financial resources to supplement tuition costs and providing more instructional support (Boyle et al., 2016). The current National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Schools include expectations of Catholic school leaders

needing a solid commitment to mission and faith identity, governance and leadership, academic excellence, and operational vitality.

I will mention examples of National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Schools that strongly support and define some of the research findings. An example of a faith formation and academic excellence standard is as follows: "An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, seen within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture and life" (Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014, p. 30). One of the benchmarks within this standard is this: "The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects, including religious education" (Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014, p. 31). Another standard found in operational vitality is this: "An excellent Catholic school provides a feasible 3-to 5-year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets and is the result of a collaborative process emphasizing faithful stewardship" (Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014, p. 36). One of the benchmarks within this standard is this: "The governing body and leader/leadership team engage in financial planning in collaboration with experts in nonprofit management and funding" (Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014, p. 37). Also, a governance and leadership standard follows:

An excellent Catholic school has a governing body (person or persons) which recognizes and respects the role(s) of the appropriate and legitimate authorities, and exercises responsible decision making (authoritative, consultative, advisory) in collaboration with the leadership team for development and oversight of the

school's fidelity to mission, academic excellence, and operational vitality.

(Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014, p. 34)

One of the benchmarks within this standard is this: "The leader/leadership team establishes and supports networks of collaboration at all levels within the school community to advance excellence" (Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014, p. 35). The remainder of standards are supportive with many of the findings, but would overwhelm the project at this time. The complete set of National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Elementary and Secondary Schools is located in Appendix I (Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012).

Both types of leadership descriptions mentioned shared similar leaderships characteristics needed for a successful and sustainable school system. The major difference is the religious identity that is emphasized in the National Catholic School Standards (Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014). Both effective leadership strategies demonstrate demands for school leaders to have a vision and moral purpose that is necessary to share with other school personnel for quality education, instructional direction, and strong academic programs and to use collaboration communication when planning and developing leaders from within the school community.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework will guide the effective leadership practices from both public and Catholic schools to achieve success and sustainability. Transformational leadership model developed by Kouzes and Posner (2007) guides successful leadership effectiveness found in the findings and applied in the project. There are five practices that

are part of this transformational model that are considered exemplary leadership qualities, that allow schools to accomplishment extraordinary things (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The extraordinary accomplishment in this particular project is the ability to keep a secondary Catholic school sustained and thriving in a geographical area that continues to see decline in the numbers of schools and enrollment over the past decade. These exemplary practices emphasize the importance of collaboration and communication to achieve a quality educational system. The five practices are as follows:

- Model the way.

- Inspire a shared vision,

- Challenge the process.

- Enable others to act.

- Encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

The following information will explain each exemplary practice, then indicate evidence and application from the findings for the project:

Model the way. Effective leaders have direct involvement and are continually visible in the organization. They are dedicated and committed to the operational strategic plans. In addition, they become very active in the plan for other to observe, trust and then follow. The findings indicated that school leadership displayed a strong vision, especially financially and academically which is shared with the stakeholders. Leadership was extremely visible in the school community and encouraged others to do the same. Also, results indicated strong dedication was observed through stability of staff and commitment to the goals.

Inspired and shared vision. Effective leadership will enlist others to engage. Goals and objectives are shared with a unity of purpose for all to clearly understand. Leaders learn to know the school community's interests and needs when developing plans to move forward. Collaboration and communication is thorough and consistent with stakeholders as faculty, staff, alumni, parents and school community. Results displayed widespread clear and concise collaboration and communication with goals and objectives for the school. More specifically, leadership encouraged and allowed others to be involved developing and implementing quality academic and non-academic programs.

Challenge the process. Effective leaders are not afraid to take risks and search for opportunities to innovate, grow and improve. Findings indicated that school leaders continually find opportunities to improve and grow, especially in the areas of finding creative financial resources and innovative educational programs as the international program and continually updating technology.

Enable others to act. Effective leaders foster collaboration and build trust with stakeholders and school community. Transformational leaders listen to others and allow them to fail without reprimand, but only to learn and grow. In addition, they engage others to participate in developing and planning stages with an understanding of living with the results. Results showed strong leadership qualities of trust, accessibility, approachability and communication possessed by school leaders that fostered collaboration and involvement with school objectives and goals.

Encourage the heart. Effective leaders recognize contributors and celebrate values and victories. Recognitions are completed with authenticity building collective

identity and community spirit. Accomplishments are aligned with values and promoted for outside community to observe. Findings indicated consistent recognition of school community strong points as quality administration, faculty, staff and educational programs displayed to the outside community a collective identity and community spirit. Recognitions were done through personal communication and support, as well as promotional material, school events and social media.

The above effective practices are evident in data findings that create successful leadership strategies of the secondary Catholic school in this case study. Table 9, summarizes the findings using transformational practices as structural framework and implementation of the successful leadership strategies. These successful leadership strategies will create the project study as a model for school leaders to reference or apply for improving and sustaining their own school.

Table 9

Summary of Transformational Leadership practices with Results and Implementation of Successful Leadership Strategies

Transformational Leadership Practice	Responses/Results/ Documentation	Implemented Successful Leadership Strategies
Model the Way	All 9 participants: School leaders and school community members. Responses: President has clear vision, dedicated , communicates to school leadership, visibility, appropriate placement of school personnel "fits" job tasks. Written documentation: School Profile(SP), School Promotional Material (SPM)	1.Sharing the financial plans and procedure using a variety of venues as meetings, school promotional and procedural materials to reach the school community and outside community. 2 Leadership shares communication with school community ensuring all members are informed on school matters, program development and pertinent school information resulting in satisfied staff, parents and students, therefore more likely to stay at the school. 3.Appropriate hiring and placement of faculty by administration provides a quality education for the students. 4.Leadership uses a variety of venues as meetings, web site, memos, school promotional and policy material to collaborate and network in order to reach all levels of leadership.
Inspired and Shared Vision	The majority of participants indicated leadership inspired and clearly shared vision. Responses: Team effort, administrative team in place, networked throughout community, technology used and updated, scheduled meetings, weekly memos, social media, visibility at scheduled school events. Written Documentation: SP, SPM, School Handbook(SH) Alumni Magazine (AM)	5. Leadership reaches out to diverse populations by disbursing clear promotional information and providing opportunities for visitations to the school. 6. Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel and community during the school year to provide a comfortable but yet professional rapport that builds trust and respect within the school community. 7. Leadership uses a variety of methods and events to consistently communicate to the school community and outside the community. 8. Leadership keeps communication available. Their accessibility encourages reciprocation from within and outside the school community.
Challenge the Process	Most participants indicated school leaders continue to find creative ways find financial resources and increase enrollment. Responses: Facility rentals, International programs, affordability, new geographical areas for enrollment, providing transportation, diverse educational programs and populations, community service projects	9. Sharing the financial plans and procedure using a variety of venues to reach the school community and outside community. 10. Leadership reaches out diverse populations providing transportation for potential students from distant geographical area. 11. Leadership makes efforts to keep education affordable and accessible to more families. 12. Leadership gives effort to promote diversity as an attribute and safe learning.

(table continues)

Transformational Leadership Practice	Responses/Results/ Documentation	Implemented Successful Leadership Strategies
Enable others to act.	Most participants indicated administration is supportive and collaborative with decision making and challenging school issues. Responses: Administration is supportive when school issues arise, trust teacher abilities and skills,	13. Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel to assist with educational program development and implementation and input for school policies and procedures during the school year. 14. Leadership keeps an open door to be approachable, accessible and supportive of school personnel and school community on school matters. 15. Leadership keeps communication transparent and their accessibility encourages reciprocation from within and outside the school community.
Encourage the Heart	Most of the participants, school events and written documentation indicate evidence of this practice. Responses: School leaders are approachable, flexible and assessable, will work with school personnel, Appropriate placement of personnel, visible and communicative. Written documentation: School Calendar SH, SPM, SP and AM.	16. Leadership promotes school community members as administration, faculty, alumni and students in promotional material, school marketing events and community service involvement. 17. Leadership develops and aligns curriculum using religious education, prayer, community service and school role models to instill values and Catholic identity for all on a daily basis.

Why These Leadership Strategies Were Successful

Table 9 indicates successful leadership strategies that were implemented based on findings in a sustaining secondary Catholic school. These leadership strategies include contributing elements such as: Collaboration, communication, educational programs, socioeconomic and educational diversity, financial plans and affordability, trust in leadership, administrative support, Catholic identity and a safe environment.

Collaboration. Evidence of collaboration in planning and developing academics, community service, school procedures and policies and financial programs were prevalent in this successful school. Leadership strategies 1, 4, 6, 9 and 13 demonstrate this element. Collaboration is important for a positive school culture. A positive school

includes positive attitudes and behaviors that create a more effective and functional

school (Young, Hill, Morris, & Woods, 2015). Collaboration with leadership and faculty

keeps decision-making close to the best interest of the students. It is important that

decision making include all those nearest to the activity as faculty instructing students or

school personnel involved with operations as school polices and facility management.

Those who are closest to the activity have first-hand knowledge of the actions, therefore

their knowledge should be shared with others and included in decision made by school

leaders (Hoerr, 2016).

  Communication. Communication was evident in leadership strategies 2, 5, 6, 7,

8, 10, 14, 15 and 16. Communication is an essential skill for school leaders in the daily

routines of school life. Intelligent communication consists of four abilities and five

capabilities when used skillfully by school leaders will promote a positive school culture

and an effective school that keeps people contented (Zoller, Lahera, & Normere, 2015).

  Abilities such as: dynamic presence-visibility and vision, adaptability-

communication to all levels and population, receptivity-sharing message with all levels

and community, and empathy reaching out to all populations for needs and interests. In

addition, the leadership strategies demonstrated capabilities such as: craftsmanship-clear

and concise communication in verbal and written communication, Efficacy-financial

concerns for affordability, Flexibility-adapt to diverse situations and people,

interdependence-possess leadership qualities of listening, accessibility, and

approachability to school community and outside community, consciousness-links all

abilities and capabilities together (Zoller et al., 2015). All leadership strategies included

at least three or more of the defined abilities or capabilities demonstrating

successful intelligent communication skills, therefore creating a positive school culture

and effective school system.

   Educational programs. Leadership strategies 2, 3, 6 and 13 include the

importance of developing educational programs in collaboration with faculty, students

and school community. Academic and non-academic programs are essential when

providing overall education to students. A wide variety of academics address diverse

students' needs and interests. Including a strong academic program that can create an

effective educational system attracting students and families. Providing strong academic

programs will keep schools competitive with surrounding schools for enrollment (OCED,

2012). In addition, research has shown that extra-curricular or nonacademic programs

offer a wide list of opportunities that are not accessible in an academic classroom but

which greatly enrich a student's school experiences (Vinoksi, Grayhill, & Roach, 2016).

   Diversity in education. Leadership strategies including 10, 11, 12 and 13

demonstrate how school leaders reach out to diverse populations academically and

socially. Plus provide an embracing and safe learning environment for all students.

Addressing diversity in education needs attention in today's society. Providing a learning

environment that attends to more students interests and needs and creating attainable

educational opportunities for more families encourages diversity. Intrepid leaders provide

equity-driven procedures and policies that support all students and the entire school

community (Nava, Hendricks, Nava & Castillo, 2016). Equity and diversity need to be

instilled into the many facets of education: staff, pedagogical practices, communication, leadership, assessment, curriculum, and community engagement (Anderson, 2014). Socioeconomic integration is an effective way to tap into the academic benefits of having high-achieving peers, engaged community of parents, and high-quality teachers. This multi-socioeconomic environment allows opportunities for the school community to learn from each other and prepare students for the future years of a more diverse and integrated society (Potter, 2013).

Financial plans and affordability. Leadership strategies 1, 9 and 11 includes finding financial resources to make a tuition based school affordable for a diverse population. Some schools with aggressive development personnel were able to find generous donors or philanthropists who understand the benefits of sustaining Catholic school and financially assisted these schools (Mc Closkey, 2010). In the northeast, a new school leader aggressively pursued high finance donors and business people who agreed with the strategic plan presented to them by the new president of the school and chose to assist the school financially now and in the future. The school is currently opened and thriving (Hurley & Paisner, 2013). School leaders finding creating financial resources will help fill the gaps when tuition does not cover the costs.

Trust in leadership. Leadership strategies 3 and 13, 14 and 15 include trust and respect aspects between faculty, school community and leadership. School leaders trust teachers to instruct students using shared knowledge through collaborative meetings and networking. School leaders build teacher leaders to make decisions for instruction based on the needs of the students and faculty. School leaders trust decisions made about

instruction content and strategies with teachers who are giving the instruction (Nicholson, Capitelli, Richert, Bauer & Bonetti, 2016). However, collaborative decision-making does not build trust alone. Transparent and consistent communication is important to build trust and respect, too. The head of an organization needs time to develop respect and trust to learn the demands of the jobs required for an effective school system. Once trust and respect are earned, then confidence builds for collaborative decision-making by stakeholders including school personnel and school community members as students, parents, board members and alumni (Hodgetts, 2016).

Administrative support. Leadership strategies 3, 8, 13, 14, 15 include evidence of administration supporting faculty and school community members. Administrative support is essential for an effective school system. There are four parts of administrative support for teachers: Emotional support from administrators shows teachers they are respected and trusted, communication is open and appreciation is given consistently for the daily grind of the job, instrumental support assists teachers with parental difficulties and work related tasks as providing material and resources for the classroom, informational administrative support provides professional development opportunities and suggestions for classroom management skills and appraisal support which includes constructive feedback on instruction, improvements and responsibilities (Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013). When schools and families develop partnerships to solve problems the positive outcomes benefit the students achievement, parental involvement and teacher morale. Additionally, when the school encourages parental involvement, parents become more supportive of the school and more supportive of the funding. The

parents and community develop a more positive attitude towards the school (Scullin, Palan, & Christenson, 2014).

Catholic identity. Leadership strategies 3, 16, 17 include evidence that demonstrates the importance of keeping the Catholic identity for an effective Catholic school system. Instilling the Catholic identity sets Catholic schools apart from other schools. The role of a Catholic school is not only to teach the academics, but to teach students to receive Jesus and live out his call to create the Kingdom of God on earth. Catholic leaders and other members of the Catholic school community must be determined to ensure that the Catholic school identity of their schools is present, maintained, and enhanced for the very vitality of the school (Hobbie et al., 2010).

Safe environment. Leadership strategy 7, 12, and 14 includes evidence for the importance of providing a safe environment for learning. Based on the newly proposed legislature of Every Student Succeeds Act, an essential practice for all students to learn is to provide a safe learning environment. Feeling safe and supported are necessary conditions for students to learn and achieve (Vaillancourt-Strobach, & Cowan, 2016).

Successful leadership strategies indicated from the findings need to be promoted and communicated for other school leaders to apply to their own school systems. Preparing new school leaders and sharing information with present school leaders is necessary professional development for administrative preparation in a Catholic school. Presently, there is no data bank that includes standards and criteria for preparing Catholic school leaders (Boyle, et al., 2016). Developing a guide with successful leadership strategies for school leaders will give reference for applicability and orientate new school

leaders for future needs. Leadership strategies for an effective and sustained school can be fostered using professional development venues as conferences, workshops or in-services.

Professional Development

Professional development for school leaders is essential to create a thriving school. Informed leaders are able to provide appropriate instructional feedback to teachers, communicate and collaborate visions and school goals to school community and keep updated on recent legal issues, policies and procedures. A full spectrum of professional development for school leaders circulates around the following domains: Professional growth and learning, student growth and learning, school planning and progress, school culture, instructional leadership and professional qualities and stakeholder support and engagement (Hansen, 2015). Professional development and preparation for school leaders in Catholic education is a needed venue. (Boyle et al., 2014). An added domain for Catholic school professional development will be inspiring the formation of faith and Catholic identity. Professional development will be implemented in a variety of ways to assure comprehension and distribution of material for differentiated learning styles and school situations.

<div align="center">

Implementation

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The project, A Guide for Secondary Catholic School Leaders on Successful Sustainability, will be created then presented in a PowerPoint. The PowerPoint presentation will be implemented as part of a professional development preparation program for Catholic school leaders. The PowerPoint may also be adjusted to

accommodate a different audience, number of participants, site location, and time allowances. The PowerPoint slides are included in Appendix A.

A 3-day school leader professional development program will be created to include detailed information from the project, which could be used to assist new school leaders, veteran school leaders of schools that are struggling, or for school leaders who may want gain or confirm their present leadership strategies. The 3-day professional development program will include why and how these strategies were successfully implemented. In addition, an abbreviated 1-day program will be developed for school leaders who have time and money restraints.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Potential resources for the development and implementation of the project will depend on the acceptance of the professional development program from the local diocese and school district. District leaders such as superintendents, bishops, or pastors will need to understand the importance to provide professional development preparation for new and current school leaders to establish an effective school and allocate funds for professional development. Money allocations will be needed for presenters, site location fees, maintenance fees, materials, food, hotel accommodations, and personnel coverage if needed for participants who attend the program.

Potential Barriers

Potential barriers for the implementation of this project may be time, money, attitudes, and site location. School leaders seem to always have restraints on their time. Most of the time their job is 12 months, and during that time, there is little or no time for

professional development. Therefore, the timing of professional development needs to be flexible or even implemented different times of the year for availability to school leaders. One method I will use to address the time issue is to create a 1-day seminar that would deliver an abbreviated seminar to include the strongest successful strategies according to participant responses.

Money is another barrier that may affect participation in professional development. In many instances, the districts that need the professional development the most, are the ones that are financially struggling. Creating a 1-day seminar will help to address this issue, too. However, school leaders in top administration need to realize the importance of professional development and preparation for school leaders who are directly in charge of schools and seek funds to accommodate training for them. There needs to be a clear commitment from the bishop, superintendent and financial officer that will provide support to pastors and principals. If bishops and pastors collaborate with principals and faculty, there is more of a chance that a school will sustain. De Fiore (2011) explains effective leadership begins at the top with diocesan leadership.

Finally, a location for implementing a 3-day professional development can always be a challenge, especially during the school year. Therefore, time and thought must be given to seek a school or diocesan facility that has availability, accessibility and time duration to use a conference area, three or four classroom areas or an auditorium that will accommodate a large number of participants for a 3-day conference. The number of classrooms will depend on the number of registered participants, but the school site facility should have the flexibility to accommodate more or less rooms on demand.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Using the project as direction, I have developed a 3-day conference during the year or early summer for new or veteran school leaders and a 1-day seminar for veteran or current school leaders or school leaders who may have time and money restraints. Registration will begin from January of the same year the professional development will be held for preparation and planning. Schedule itineraries for the 3-day conference and 1-day seminar are located in Appendix A.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

To ensure the project meets the needs of the school leaders preparation it will require the support of the school district, school community or diocesan administration as the Bishop, superintendent or pastor. When school leaders are properly prepared and know their responsibilities, they will be able to handle the challenges and tasks encountered during their tenure as school leaders. Professional development that covers these responsibilities, will give school leaders enhance opportunities to develop or sustain a thriving school. The value of receiving and sustaining a secondary Catholic education must be realize by the school community stakeholders such as: Bishop, superintendent, pastors, faculty, parents, students and alumni. Leaders at different levels in the school community need to communicate and respect each other in order to achieve sustainability (Fullan, 2005).

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Project Evaluation

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I will use an outcome evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the 3-day conference or 1-day seminar professional development. The evaluation will follow the

teacher professional development logic model (Haslam, 2010). This model suggests the evaluator begin at the end of the model, which consists of the outcomes for the participants. The importance of this concept is to assure the professional development is accomplishing the objectives. The outcomes will consist of knowledge and skills, change in organization culture and change in practice (Haslam, 2010).

Goals or outcomes for my project study:

- School leaders will increase knowledge in leadership strategies that have sustained a successful school.

- Why these specific strategies are effective in a school system?

- How the strategies were applied in the successful school?

If a school leader's district is struggling, they can use these successful skills as a guide for their own district in hopes to assist the school in thriving. If school leaders are new, they can use the skills as a guide to develop framework for sustainability or remain sustained. Finally, if the school leaders are veterans of a sustaining school, they can use the knowledge and skills to confirm their strategies are working or make improvements.

Teacher professional development logic model includes 4 progressive sections:

- Input needs for the professional development.

- Learning activities to implement the professional development.

- Benchmarks that include outcomes/indicators from the Learning Activities.

- Final overall outcomes from the professional development.

The numbers of learning activities and benchmark sections used may vary depending on the type and duration of professional development implemented (Haslam, 2010). In this case a 3-day and 1-day seminar professional development is short term and will use only 2 sections of learning activities and and 2 sections of benchmarks. The following information will be the logic model content for my project study professional development evaluation:

- Inputs: Audience: School leaders for struggling schools; materials: site and classrooms, strategy handouts, power point presentation, projectors, evaluations; staff: participants, maintenance; funds: grants, self-pay, budgets; Time: Early or late summer.

- Learning Activities-2 sections: Presentations, collaboration groups.

- Benchmarks-2 sections: Teacher perceptions-evaluations, gained knowledge and skills on sustainability strategies, application of strategies in school.

- Overall Outcomes: School leaders will increase knowledge in leadership strategies that have sustained a successful school, change in practice, change in culture and change in school leader learning.

In order for me to use more benchmarks, I will need to continue with the evaluation long term and since this particular professional development may consist of many different districts it will be a challenge to complete this task due to time and money restraints. However, to pursue long-term evaluation, I have included a questionnaire in Appendix A to check for long term evaluation effectiveness. A short-term evaluation

completed after each session by the participant is used to determine the effectiveness of the content and presentation of the daily professional development (see Appendix A).

Stakeholders involved with the professional development are school leaders as presidents, principals and department leaders, who will be directly applying strategies in the system in order to change or sustain the organizational culture. Other stakeholders are top district administration, as bishops, superintendents and pastors who need to support education, comprehend the importance of professional development for sustaining schools and allocate funds towards these goals. In addition, students, parents, and community are stakeholders who will be affected if the school does not sustain and remain open. For example, families will lose another educational option for their children and the community will lose outreach services if local Catholic schools close.

<div align="center">**Implications Including Social Change**</div>

Local Community

School leaders guide for sustainability and professional development will prepare school leaders to improve school culture and assist to sustain more Catholic schools in the region. Improving school culture using enhanced professional preparation for school leaders is essential for effective and successful schools (Hanson, 2015). The importance of this training will support the efforts for keeping Catholic school as an educational option for families and students. Keeping Catholic schools open in the community provides the community with a comforting neighborhood and in actuality reduces crime (Brinig & Garnett, 2014). In addition, more Catholic schools that remain open in the district will reduce per pupil expenditure in public school districts for the taxpayer (New

Jersey Department of Education, 2014). Also, many of the Catholic schools provide

outreach services in the community. In the local region, students and faculty attend to the

homeless by feeding them weekly, making routine visits to senior citizen homes and

generously give money, gifts and necessities to poor families during the year.

Far-Reaching

The distance implications for this project could provide an improvement to the

overall educational system. If more school leaders are able to successfully implement

new leadership strategies, they will be able to assist their school to remain open. Catholic

schools that remain open increase diversity and competition among all academic schools.

School choice and charter schools that are publicly funded along with public schools also

need to compete for enrollment. Therefore this project study could also assist publicly

funded schools that need to compete for enrollment.

Academic competition has already improved public school system academic

outcomes in some of the states in our country. Several states with documented academic

improvement have some type of voucher system in place, which allows families to

receive state public money to attend private or Catholic school (Egalite, 2013). If state

politicians understand the academic and financial values of the voucher system, maybe

more states will pass this legislature, therefore assisting to improve the overall

educational system.

Future research may extend to studying sustained schools from other regions of

the country for more successful strategies. Then compare these strategies for results and

develop another best practice plan to present at a regional or national conference. Also

future research may extend to immigration populations, laws and demographics for potential educational needs and interests that may influence Catholic education availability (Suhy, 2012).

Conclusion

School leaders are met with many leadership challenges that educational preparation did not cover due to the countless unforeseeable situations they encounter during a school year or daily. Without adequate support by top administration, budget restraints and time restrictions it becomes difficult to find methods such as professional development to assist in achieving an effective and sustainable school.

Professional development for school leaders has been noted by scholars that it does assist school leaders in providing an effective school system that includes components professional growth and learning, student growth and learning, positive school culture, school planning and progress, instructional leadership, professional qualities and stakeholder support. Data collected from school leaders and community members from a successful sustaining secondary Catholic school will provide essential information to develop a template that will become the driving force for professional development of school leaders in a secondary Catholic school.

In Section 4, I will present the strengths and the weaknesses of my project and recommendations for an alternative project. I will reflect on my individual doctoral passage and my experiences as a leader, scholar, practitioner, project developer, and social change agent. I will close by sharing final thoughts on implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to seek successful leadership strategies and present the implementation of these strategies for achieving sustainability from a thriving secondary Catholic school in the Northeast. A descriptive qualitative case study design allowed me to explain the responses of six school leaders and three school community members who are part of a thriving secondary Catholic school in the Northeast. Individual semi-structured interviews with selected participants, reviewing selected written documents, followed by data analysis revealed essential elements included in a thriving secondary Catholic school. Therefore, the project study is a template of successfully implemented leadership strategies that resulted from data analysis findings. A PowerPoint presentation was created to include current successful leadership strategies for school leaders. The PowerPoint presentation and outline produces a framework to provide a 3-day professional development program for school leaders, which is presented in Appendix A. Additionally, an abbreviated 1-day seminar for school leaders is developed, which is also in Appendix A. Both programs were created to present the model of successful leadership strategies to school leaders.

In this section, the strengths and limitations of the project study and alternative recommendations to address the problem of sustainability in secondary Catholic schools in the Northeast are discussed. Next, there is a review of what I learned from conducting this study with respect to scholarship; project development, leadership and change, and myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. Incorporated in this section are

summative reflections on the importance of this experience and implications for social change. Furthermore, there is a dialogue of implications, applications, and directions for future research. In conclusion, a summary includes the key points of the study with final thoughts.

<div style="text-align:center">Project Strengths and Limitations</div>

Project Strengths

Based on the findings of school leaders and school community members, a guide was developed for secondary Catholic school leaders on successful leadership strategies that will assist school leaders of secondary Catholic schools struggling to remain open. In addition, the guide leads into a professional development program for school leaders of secondary Catholic schools that may be struggling or for school leader who may want to confirm present working strategies.

The professional development includes a 3-day program or a 1-day seminar. Professional development and preparation for school leaders in Catholic education is a needed venue. Presently, there are no set standards for school leader preparation for Catholic schools (Boyle et al., 2014). Effective school leaders will be able to change school culture or sustain a positive school culture to help attain a thriving school (Zoller et. al., 2015). A positive school culture is essential for a school to be effective and functional (Young et al., 2015).

Participant responses indicated important elements that encouraged successful sustainability in the school and the development of the project. The elements included the following: financial planning and affordability, collaboration, communication, Catholic

identity, educational programs, diversity, administrative support and trust, and safe environment. Findings demonstrated application of these elements in the leadership strategies and became the components of the project guide and implementation of professional development program. The importance of these elements for effective leadership strategies were guided by the transformation conceptual framework of Kouzes and Posner (2007). This professional development model emphasizes effective leadership strategies that will allow school leaders to implement and create an effective and sustainable school system.

Another strength demonstrated is the need for stakeholder involvement in providing professional development for Catholic school leaders. Top stakeholders in the diocese such as the bishop, superintendent, or pastor need to support professional development and education by providing time and money for participation of school leaders. If bishops and pastors collaborate with principals and faculty, there is more of a chance that a school will sustain (De Fiore, 2011). Also, stakeholders such as faculty, students, parents, and community members will benefit from effective school leaders. Effective school leaders will be able to keep a school sustained using collaboration with faculty, students, parents, and community. Collaboration is important for a positive school culture. A positive school includes positive attitudes and behaviors that create a more effective and functional school (Young et al., 2015).

An additional strength is Catholic identity and faith formation being stressed as part of the professional development for Catholic school leaders. The Catholic identity is the major difference from the public school leaders' audience, but an essential part of the

project. Presently, much of the professional development for Catholic school leaders is mostly secular due to the many similar school responsibilities that must be covered for school leaders in charge of a school system. Therefore, the Catholic identity portion is sometimes lost (Boyle et al., 2016). The findings in this study included Catholic identity and spiritual education as an important component for sustainability, therefore becoming one of strengths in the project.

Project Limitations

One limitation for this project study is that the school leaders interviewed were from a school with large enrollment in an affluent geographical area of the Northeast. The selected secondary Catholic school was agreeable to collect data within the needed timeframe. However, demographics and enrollment size may have an effect on outcomes (De Fiore, 2011).

Secondly, this project study was designed to interview 10 to 12 school leaders or community members for 1-hour interviews. However, due to scheduling conflicts, site location, and availability, permission was granted by administration to informally interview, for 30 to 45 minutes nine participants on site during the scheduled school day. Because interview questions were well prepared and organized, abundant data were collected under minimal time restraints; however, a board member or finance personnel were not available for an interview. Written documentation and financial information were available for reference, which assisted in collected needed data in finance. In addition, interviewing during the school day was intrusive for the school, but

administration and participants were cooperative with coordinating their schedule to meet the needs of the study.

A final limitation is that the development and implementation of the project will take time, money, and an agreeable on-site location for implementation for a 3-day professional development for school leaders.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

A recommendation to address the school size and demographics will be to complete case studies in a variety of enrollment sizes and urban schools for a potentially more diversified spectrum of findings. De Fiore (2011) discussed demographics as one of the factors that may have collectively or individually caused low enrollment in Catholic schools and eventually caused them to either merge or close. The largest decline in enrollment over the last decade has been in the Northeast, especially in the central cities due to poor economic times and demographic changes (McDonald & Schultz, 2014).

An approach to address limited access to participants is to give them an option for interviewing when requesting participation using e-mail and the informed consent attachment. For example, if the participants would prefer a phone interview, I would schedule a more convenient time for the interview. I would present this option as a check off box on the participation e-mail for a definitive confirmation of time for participation.

An approach to address money and time restraints is to implement a 1-day seminar for school leaders (Appendix A). This seminar will address strong response points from the project in a 1-day professional development program for school leaders. However, implementing any effective professional development needs stakeholders such

as top administrative support to appropriate funds and time. A full spectrum of professional development for school leaders circulates around the following domains: professional growth and learning, student growth and learning, school planning and progress, school culture, instructional leadership and professional qualities, and stakeholder support and engagement (Hanson, 2015).

Scholarship

Education has been a major part of my life personally and professionally. I had a goal in life, to reach the highest educational level possible: to attain a doctoral degree. Although I began this journey later in life, I received rewards of knowledge and communicative abilities that I can share with others who desire or need leadership preparation. It is this passion for learning, helping others, and my own personal character qualities that guided me towards pursuing education as a career and vocation.

I realize this passion drove me to develop the project. I was a Catholic school educator for 35 years and in the same school for 32 years. During this time, I was employed as a teacher, coach, administrator, and obtained a master's degree in curriculum and supervision. I then realized I wanted to do more for the school with these leadership skills, so when the opportunity arose to become an administrator, I accepted the challenge. The first administrative experience was as a vice principal for 11 years and the second time as a principal for 4 years. As an administrator, I was able to make the most contributions for the school community.

While I was in administration, the school went through a rollercoaster of school transitions: leadership changes, high and low enrollment and changeable financial status.

As a vice principal in charge of students, curriculum, and supervision, I observed the need for increased collaboration and transparency to become a more effective school system. Using collective collaboration and clear communication with faculty, school community members, and outside community, we were able to improve the quality of instruction, develop more quality educational programs and improve marketing. Consequently, our enrollment increased, our financial issues were mostly resolved, and we were thriving.

Next, I became principal during economically challenging times. During this time, our school began to struggle financially and enrollment began to drastically decrease due to poor economic times, demographic shifts, ineffective financial planning, unreliable financial resources, and alternative school options in the area such as publicly funded school choice and charter schools. There were efforts to work collaboratively as an organization with school administration, faculty, staff, school community, and alumni to resolve our financial issues, but there was too much deficit to overcome and inconsistent communication and collaboration with all involved stakeholders. The diocesan administration closed the school, reopened it with new school administration, and then permanently closed it one year later due to finances and enrollment. It was during this difficult time a realization became evident to me again: All stakeholders must work together for sustainability. When stakeholders work together, sustainability of an organization can be achieved (Fullan, 2005). This adverse situation steered me to research and find out how closing schools could be avoided. I decided to research why schools successfully sustain and how they accomplish sustainability. As a school leader

who experienced severe budgetary restraints, layoffs, terminations, and school closings, I felt compelled to share knowledge and methods from my research findings in hopes to avoid similar challenging situations and keep more Catholic schools open.

Project Development and Evaluation

This project began with a local problem of secondary Catholic school sustainability. Implementing qualitative research, developing a literature review, collecting data, and completing data analysis to determine findings resulted in the project study: A Guide for Secondary Catholic School Leaders on Successful Sustainability. The guide will be implemented during a 3-day professional development preparation program for secondary Catholic school leaders.

My doctoral journey took many twists and turns as educational processes normally do, but also included real life happenings that interrupted the process numerous times. However, my passion, determination, and patience kept my "eye on the prize" to continue and complete this doctoral journey.

First of all, finding a school site who would agree to data collection was extremely difficult and challenging. Finally, an educational organization reached out to me, who assisted in finding a Catholic school that would agree to have data collected for my qualitative research.

After all the research was completed for the proposal and approved by the committee, URR and IRB reviews, the location site and procedures for data collection were still not secured until about 2 weeks before data collection. However, although documents are signed and confirmed for the doctoral process, it does not make it a done

deal due to teacher schedule changes, school events, and last-minute school issues.

Patience and flexibility were needed to collect data and avoid intrusiveness on the school

system's schedule and personnel. Although the original request included a more

structured lengthy interview with audio recording, it had to change to a more brief and

semistructured interview in order to accommodate the school's schedule. Therefore, data

collection was revamped and prepared for more detailed note-taking. Some of the

original schedule times and participants were changed or could not participate, but the

necessary data were received or collected in written documents that were agreed on in the

Data Use Agreement (Appendix D).

During the interview process, the participants were extremely cooperative and

completed member checking requests about 1 week after the interviews were completed.

While completing the data analysis, the detailed note taking was essential in order to have

accurate findings and create the successful leadership strategies for the project study.

These notes were continually reference during data collection and analysis for accuracy

and details for the development of the leadership strategies. For example, one response

indicated how administration would "fit in" personnel with appropriate positions in the

school and trusted personnel to do their job. Using this response, a leadership strategy

was developed that included administrative support demonstrating trust, respect, and

appropriate job placement practices. In addition, when writing for others to read and

comprehend, details must be clear and concise. Although the researcher may understand

information, the reader needs information explained clearly to receive the same

understanding as the researcher. Therefore, peers read the research to confirm that a correct message was being delivered from the writing.

Finally, evaluation of professional development is essential in order to justify effectiveness. Pending approval for the professional development to occur, a program evaluation will be distributed to the participants at the end of each day seeking the appropriateness and usefulness of the presented information for the school leader (Appendix A). In addition, a long-term questionnaire will be e-mailed 6 months later seeking effectiveness and application of any leadership strategies presented in the program (Appendix A). Professional evaluation will determine if the objectives of the program were accomplished, in this case preparing and assisting school leaders to successfully sustain their school.

Leadership and Change

Leadership requires clear communication and collaboration consisting of trust and respect. These components were quite vivid in my data collection from a successful sustaining school. As a past administrator who experienced and observed both ends of the spectrum with leadership and change, it is quite clear that good communication and widespread collaboration, trust and respect are essential for an effective school. All of these components were evolved from the findings of my research and were included in the successful leadership strategies for my project study.

An effective school includes a positive school culture created by effective school leadership. A positive school culture consists of positive behaviors including trust and respect among stakeholders. Stakeholders include top administration as the bishop,

superintendents, pastors, school administration as principals, vice principals and

supervisors, faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni and community. When transparent

communication and embracing collaboration involves all stakeholders, trust and respect

are earned among each other. However, keep in mind, sometimes positive change in

school culture needs time to develop. New leadership is usually met with some resistance

and will need time for stakeholders to "buy in" and build trust to the new system

thinking. Leadership will need to be patient and give stakeholders time to absorb and

accept new ideas. Leadership needs to allow all involved to communicate their thinking

and collaborate to develop an effective school system that works for the entire school

community.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Education became more of a vocation for me than an occupation. I receive great

joy and rewards in learning and teaching what I learn to others. I have been fortunate to

be in education in many different capacities such as: teacher, head coach for athletic

teams, vice principal of students, vice principal of academics, director of guidance,

department head and a principal.

During my time as an educator, I continued to take classes and receive degrees in

computers in education, supervision, curriculum and finally committing myself to the

doctoral process. Dedicating myself to this doctoral process was a major time and

financial commitment for my family and me. However, it was a life-long dream, which

my family supported me to pursue. The process has been a challenge at times, but it is

through adversities and accomplishments that there are achievements of continual growth and learning about oneself as a person, educator and a researcher.

The doctoral journey encouraged me to think deeper and communicate these thoughts concisely for others to comprehend. Achieving these objectives enabled me to share the gained knowledge and information to benefit others, which it the one of the major reasons I remain in education. So, thank you Walden University.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner, there is always something more to learn for enhancing yourself as educator or researcher. As an experienced educator for 39 years, this doctoral journey kept me updated on current research and pertinent information for the project study such as: Professional development needs, leadership strategies and educational trends. As a professional, I use my researched information by promoting collaboration using professional learning communities in my school, utilizing clear communication through scheduled meetings, newsletters and e-mails, providing and developing quality educational programs such as development of higher level academic courses and hiring staff to implement these programs. In addition, I provided administrative and instructional support for faculty, staff and school community such as keeping visible, being accessible for the school community and providing continual instructional feedback to faculty using formal and informal observations.

Additionally, through the doctoral process and research I learned to recognize strengths and weaknesses of leadership. Therefore, I was able to initiate change to create a more positive school culture and assist in attaining sustainability. For example, during a

series of transitional leadership changes I recognized instances of limited collaboration and inconsistent communication. According to findings of my research, consistent collaboration and communication were main ingredients for attaining sustainability. Therefore, creating collaboration and communication were successful leadership strategies included in the development of the project study to inform and prepare secondary Catholic school leaders for sustaining more Catholic schools.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As a project developer, finding ways to improve a situation motivates me to create a program or system that will be helpful and successful. In this case seeking effective strategies that will prevent more secondary Catholic schools from closing was the project goal. Therefore, I chose to collect data from a successful sustaining school and share these findings to help other school leaders keep their own school thriving.

This project study was developed, with passion and inspiration from my own experiences with a financially struggling school. Challenging experiences as this, urged me to seek practices to prevent other schools from struggling or closing. Therefore, I was determined to find out why and how successful schools remained open.

The majority of the participants in this study were school leaders who were sincere and generous with responses. Also, participants were very proud of their school, the leadership, students and colleagues. The reasons for their pride in leadership and school community are found from results in the main content of my project study. It is imperative the findings from this project study are shared with others, therefore I

developed professional development for school leaders on successful leadership strategies for sustainability.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

My intent for developing the project study was to educate school leaders on best practices that will sustain secondary Catholic schools. During the pursuit of this goal, I realized my work will impact more than school leaders. All stakeholders of the organization will be affected and the project guide could be implemented as professional development for all school leaders. Once stakeholders comprehend the importance of the professional development, the goal for sustainability will be more attainable. It is with stakeholder involvement, support and collaboration that sustainability will be achieved. Professional development as my project study for Catholic school leaders is essential, for the many school leaders who have not been prepared in areas as finance, business or facility management. The project includes elements and strategies of a successful Catholic school system that some school leaders may not have encountered or realized could be of importance. It is my hope that the project will be able to guide school leaders using strategies that have successfully work in another Catholic school and assist in sustaining more Catholic schools.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

This project has the potential to affect social change through improving school leader preparation for sustaining Catholic education, provide more diversification in educational opportunities, keeping schools opened provide the community with services,

outreach to the increasing immigrant population in this country, and improve the overall educational system by increasing academic competition among all schools.

If the decreasing trend of Catholic school continues, it is essential that Catholic school leaders have access to professional development for sustaining schools in an attempt to reverse this trend especially in the northeast region of the country. Sustaining Catholic school education provides more educational options for families and enhances competition between all schools that can improve the overall educational system.

In addition, many Catholic schools, especially in the urban areas, provide social outreach services to the community as assisting the homeless, visiting local senior homes and helping poor local families during the year, especially at the holiday seasons. Without the existence of Catholic schools in these areas, these services diminish for the community.

Also, the increasing Hispanic population in this country values a Catholic education. In geographical areas as the southwest, an increase of Catholic schools is distinct, mainly due to the increase of the Hispanic immigrant population in this area. If this trend continues, there will be a need for more Catholic schools, therefore a need for more prepared school leaders.

Finally, more schools in our educational system enhance competition for enrollment, improves academic programs to attract more students, which has shown to improved academic performance. Therefore, preparing school leaders to sustain more Catholic schools will improve the overall educational system by adding competition and diversity.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The importance of this project study implies a need for more standardized

Catholic school leader preparation. Current school leaders have many responsibilities

other than spiritual, instructional or academic. Professional development needs to include

a business and operational preparation, too. More standardized preparation for Catholic

school leaders will ensure more prepared school leaders in areas as finances, marketing

and facility management.

Another implication is the importance to provide professional development or

education to top administrators, too. For example, the bishop, superintendent and pastor

need to be educated on the importance of providing professional development to school

leaders for sustaining Catholic schools. Sometimes these administrators are too removed

or preoccupied with other responsibilities and lose the dynamics for running a school

system. Therefore, providing a separate professional development for top administrators

may encourage their attitudes to collaborate with the local school leaders and assist in

sustaining Catholic schools. An additional implication is the potential to use school

vouchers in more states. Research has shown there are at least 23 states that have some

type of voucher system in place which has displayed academic improvement in the public

school system.

Also, the public school system may benefit from the project study, minus the

Catholic identity content, since many of the public schools also compete for enrollment.

Public schools will benefit especially if they are in an area of choice or charter schools,

where competition is geographically close. Therefore, seeking successful leadership

strategies to improve areas of communication, collaboration, marketing and improving educational programs may assist the public system to improve, too.

Future research may include studying secondary Catholic schools in different socioeconomic levels from different regions of the country and compare these results with findings from the northeast, This comparison could assist either region by sharing best practices. Another direction for future research will be to review higher education Catholic school leader preparation for curriculum, application and certification. Higher education reaching out to the schools and develop a school leader preparation based on researched findings could assist school leaders to be more prepared and effective in school district. Standardizing Catholic school leader preparation in higher education institutions may improve the overall effectiveness of the school leaders and assist in sustainability of the schools.

Conclusion

School leaders of secondary Catholic schools are educationally prepared from a variety of programs, schools and curriculums. Presently, a standardized preparation program has not been created for secondary Catholic school leaders. Catholic school leaders can be hired without complete administrative preparation that currently needs to include business, law, hiring practices and facility management. Today's Catholic school leaders have a plethora of responsibilities to handle throughout the year. Therefore it is vital they receive consistent professional development opportunities or preparation training to successfully meet these responsibilities and create effective educational systems.

The data analysis from this research revealed the essential elements and strategies needed to sustain a successful secondary Catholic school. The project study includes a model of successful leadership strategies presented as professional development for school leaders to gain knowledge and skills to keep their schools thriving.

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Appendix A: The Project Study

A Guide for Secondary Catholic School Leaders on Successful Sustainability

The findings from nine semi-structured interviews of six school leaders and three school community member/faculty from a successful sustaining secondary Catholic school in the Northeast region of the country provided the framework for this project. All participants defined and described reasons for their school thriving over the past 5 years. Most of the responses circulated around common elements as: strong vision and financial planning from school leaders, widespread collaboration, clear and concise communication, instilling the Catholic identity, positive leadership qualities, accepting diversity, providing a variety of educational programs that meet students interest and maintaining a safe learning environment.

I created a guide that will include mentioned elements and implementation strategies for school leaders to reference for application in their school district. The guide will be presented in a PowerPoint presentation that will be delivered in a 3-day professional development workshop for school leaders who are looking to improve a struggling school situation or improve a sustained or thriving situation. I am also providing a visual handout at the end of the seminar that will include the information from the presentation. In addition, I have created a 1-day seminar consisting of the most positive responses from the results for school leaders who may have time and money restraints. At the end of each day, I will request an evaluation from participants to be completed to determine usefulness of daily content and effectiveness of format presentation. If time and money allows, I will also follow up in about 6 months using a

brief questionnaire to check for effectiveness application of any of strategies included in

the professional development workshop/seminar.

Below are the power point slides for a Guide for Secondary Catholic School

Leaders on Successful Sustainability from the Power Point Presentation. An outline of

slides will be distributed at the completion of the professional development workshop.

- schools in different socio-economic levels from different regions of the country and compare these results with findings from the northeast.

- Another direction for future research will be to review higher education Catholic school leader preparation for curriculum, application and certification.

Guide for Catholic School Leaders

On

Successful Sustainability

A Guide for Secondary Catholic School Leaders for Successful Sustainability

Successful Leadership Strategies

From

a

Sustainable Secondary Catholic School

Elements for a successful and sustainable school

- ★ **Collaboration**
- ★ **Communication**
- ★ **Educational Programs**
- ★ **Financial Planning (Affordability)**
- ★ **Diversity**
- ★ **Trust in Leadership**
- ★ **Administrative Support**
- ★ **Catholic Identity**
- ★ **Safe Environment**

Collaboration Strategies

★ Leadership shares the financial plans and procedures using a variety of venues as meetings, school promotional and procedural materials to reach the school community and outside community.

★ Leadership shares communication with school community ensuring all members are informed on school matters, program development and pertinent school information resulting in satisfied staff, parents and students.

★ Administration provides a quality education for the students.

Why are Collaboration Strategies successful?

★ Collaboration is important for a positive school culture. A positive school includes positive attitudes and behaviors that create a more effective and functional school (Young, Hill, Morris & Woods, 2015).

★ Collaboration with leadership and faculty keeps decision making close to the best interest of the students.

★ Those who are closest to the activity have first hand knowledge of the actions, therefore their knowledge should be shared with others and included in decision made by school leaders (Hoerr, 2016).

How are Collaboration Strategies implemented?

★ Leadership visions and visibility clearly communicated with stakeholders.

★ Development of financial plans, academic programs, policies and procedures.

★ Using venues as meetings, emails, memos and school events.

★ In written documentation as: School profile, policies and procedures, curriculum, school handbook and calendar.

★ Appropriate hiring and personnel placement practices.

Communication Strategies

★ Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel and community during the school year to provide a comfortable but yet professional rapport that builds trust and respect within the school community.

★ Leadership uses a variety of methods and events to consistently communicate to the school community and outside the community.

★ Leadership keeps communication open. Their accessibility encourages reciprocation from within and outside the school community.

Why are Communication Strategies successful?

★ Communication is an essential skill for school leaders in the daily routines of school life. Intelligent communication consists of four abilities and five capabilities and when used skillfully by school leaders will promote a positive school culture and an effective school that keeps people contented (Zoller, Lahera & Normere, 2015).

★ Abilities: Dynamic presence, adaptability, receptivity and empathy.

★ Capabilities: Craftstmanship, flexibility, efficacy and interdependence.

How are Communication Strategies implemented?

★ Weekly memos, social media, school web site, meetings, school events.

★ Written material: School calendar, promotional school profile, school handbook, alumni information and events, technology

★ Marketing: Promotional material, videos, commercials, billboards, community service projects, school events, web site.

★ Recruiting: Visitations days, openhouses, school events.

★ Leadership visibility at school events.

Educational Program Strategies

★ Leadership shares communication with school community ensuring all members are informed on school matters, program development and pertinent school information resulting in satisfied staff, parents and students, therefore more likely to stay at the school.

★ Appropriate hiring and placement of faculty by administration provides a quality education for the students.

★ Leadership develops and aligns curriculum using religious education, prayer, community service and school role models to instill values and Catholic identity for all on a daily basis.

★ Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel to assist with educational program development and implementation and input for school policies and procedures during the school year.

Why are Educational Program Strategies successful?

★ A wide variety of academics addresses diverse students needs and interests. Including a strong academic program creates an effective educational system attracting students and families. Providing strong academics keep schools competitive with surrounding schools academically and for enrollment (OCED, 2012).

★ Research has shown that extra-curricular or non-academic programs offer a wide list of opportunities that are not accessible in an academic classroom (Vinoksi, Grayhill & Roach, 2016).

How are Educational program Strategies implemented?

★ Scheduled collaboration and team efforts in program development.

★ Visibility and dedication as school leaders.

★ Hiring and Placement Practices of school personnel.

★ Providing a variety of programs to meet diverse interests and abilities of students.

★ Providing educational programs abroad and reciprocated in school.

Financial Planning Strategies

★ Leadership makes efforts to keep education affordable and accessible to more families.

★ Sharing the financial plans and procedures using a variety of venues as meetings, school promotional and procedural materials to reach the school community and outside community.

Why are Financial Planning Strategies successful?

★ Some schools with aggressive development personnel were able to find generous donors or philanthropists who understand the benefits of sustaining Catholic school and financially assisted these schools (McDonald, 2010).

★ School leaders finding creating financial resources will help fill the gaps where tuition does not cover.

How are Financial Strategies implemented?

★ Clear vision from leadership.

★ Transparency

★ Facility rentals

★ Donors

★ International programs and partnerships.

★ Collaborative planning with school community and outside community.

★ Promotional material and marketing.

Diversity Strategies

★ **Leadership reaches out to diverse populations by communicating clear promotional information and providing opportunities for visitations.**

★ **Leadership provides transportation for potential students from distant geographical locations.**

★ **Leadership gives effort to promote diversity as an attribute and safe learning environment for all students.**

★ **Leadership makes efforts to keep education affordable and accessible to more families.**

Why are Diversity Strategies successful?

★ **Addressing diversity in education schools has become professional practice that must be implemented. Intrepid leaders provide equity-driven procedures and policies that support students and the entire school community (Nava, Hendricks, Nava & Castillo, 2016).**

★ **Equity and diversity need to be instilled into the many facets of education: Staff, pedagogical practices, communication, leadership, assessment, curriculum, and community engagement (Anderson, 2014).**

How are Diversity Strategies implemented?

★ **Providing opportunities for visitations and openhouses.**

★ **Clear and concise communication using a variety of venues as ad, commercials, community service projects and social media.**

★ **Providing transportation to distant geographical areas.**

★ **Providing educational programs to meets students interests and needs.**

★ **Keeping education affordable for families.**

Trust in Leadership Strategies

★ **Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel and community during the school year to provide a comfortable but yet professional rapport that builds trust and respect within the school community.**

★ **Leadership uses a variety of methods and events to consistently communicate to the school community and outside the community.**

★ **Appropriate hiring and placement of faculty by administration provides a quality education for the students.**

★ **Leadership keeps an open door to be approachable, accessible and supportive of school personnel and school community on school matters.**

Why are Trust in Leadership strategies successful?

★ School leaders trust decisions made about instruction content and strategies with teachers who are giving the instruction (Nicholson, Capitelli, Richert, Bauer & Bonetti, 2016).

★ Transparent and consistent communication is important to build trust and respect. The head of an organization needs time to develop respect and trust to learn the demands of the jobs required for an effective school system (Hodgetts, 2016).

How are Trust in Leadership strategies implemented?

★ Appropriate hiring and placement to trust personnel in their jobs tasks.

★ Keeping accessible and approachable for school personnel and school community members.

★ Visibility at school daily and school events.

Administrative Support Strategies

★ Leadership shares communication with school community ensuring all members are informed on school matters, program development and pertinent school information resulting in satisfied staff, parents and students, therefore more likely to stay at the school.

★ Leadership keeps communication available. Their accessibility encourages reciprocation from within and outside the school community.

★ Leadership keeps communication transparent and their accessibility encourages reciprocation from within and outside the school community.

Why are Administrative Support strategies successful?

★ There are four parts of administrative support for teachers: Emotional support, instrumental support, informational support and appraisal support. All support systems are essential for an effective school system (Cancio, Albrecht and Johns, 2013).

★ When schools and families develop a contructive partnership, a positive school culture is created which encourages a more positive attitude towards the school (Scullin, Palan and Christiansen, 2016).

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How are Administrative Support strategies implemented?

★ Visibility

★ Accessibility

★ Open clear and concise communication

★ Transparency

★ Respect and Trust

Catholic Identity Strategies

★ Leadership develops and aligns curriculum using religious education, prayer, community service and school role models to instill values and Catholic identity on a daily basis.

★ Appropriate hiring and placement of school personnel for job task.

Why are Catholic Identity Strategies successful?

★ Instilling the Catholic identity sets Catholic schools apart from other schools. The role of a Catholic school is not only to teach the academics, but to teach students to receive Jesus and live out his call to create the Kingdom of God on earth. (Hobbie et al., 2010).

★ Catholic leaders and other members of the Catholic school community must be determined to ensure that the Catholic school identity of their schools is present, maintained, and enhanced for the very vitality of the school (Hobbie et al., 2010).

How are Catholic Identity strategies implemented?

★ Daily spiritual routines and religious education.

★ Community service events.

★ Collaboration with school personnel with spiritual program development, involvement and implementation.

★ Marketing of community service events.

★ School role models.

Safe Environment Strategies

★ Leadership gives effort to promote diversity as an attribute and safe learning environment for all students.

★ Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel to assist with educational program development and implementation and input for school policies and procedures during the school year.

Why are Safe Environment strategies successful?

★ Based on the newly proposed legislature of Every Student Succeeds Act, an essential practice for all students to learn is to provide a safe learning environment achieve (Vaillancourt-Strobach and Cowan, 2016).

★ Feeling safe and supported are necessary conditions for students to learn and achieve (Vaillancourt-Strobach and Cowan, 2016).

How are Safe Environment strategies implemented?

★ Implementing and enforcing school policies and procedures.

★ Communicating policies and procedures to school community and school personnel.

★ Embracing a diverse population and environment.

★ Positive marketing in the community.

Conclusions and Implications

★ School Size

★ Demographics- Geographical Area

★ Alternative School Options

★ Immigrant Population

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Professional Development Program

Three Day Professional Development

Successful Leadership Strategies for Secondary Catholic School Sustainability

Day One

Time	Activity	Location
8:00- 8:30	Check-in/Breakfast	TBA
8:30-9:30	Welcome/ Power Pt.	TBA
9:30-10:00	Keynote Presenter: School Leader Challenges	
10:00-10:15	Break	
10:15-11:15	Topic: Catholic Identity	TBA
11:15-12:15	Topic: Financial Planning	TBA
12:15-1:00	Lunch on own	
1:00-2:00	Topic: Collaboration	TBA
2:00-3:00	Collaboration, Conclusion and Evaluation	

Professional Development Program

Day Two

Time	Activity	Location
8:00-8:30	Breakfast	TBA
8:30-9:15	Welcome and Presenter:	TBA
	Effective Leaders Make a Difference.	
9:15-10:15	Topic: Communication	TBA
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:30	Topic: Leadership Qualities	TBA
11:30-12:15	Collaboration among school	TBA
	leaders.	
12:15-1:00	Lunch on own.	
1:00-2:00	Topic: Educational Programs	TBA
2:00-3:00	Topic: Administrative	TBA
	Support	
3:00-3:15	Evaluation	

Timeline

3-Day Professional Development
Conference Itinerary

Successful Leadership Strategies for Secondary Catholic School Sustainability

Day 1

Time	Activity	Location
8:00- 8:30	Check-in/Breakfast	TBA
8:30-9:30	Welcome/ Power Pt.	TBA
9:30-10:00	Keynote Presenter: School Leader Challenges	
10:00-10:15	Break	
10:15-11:15	Topic: Catholic Identity	TBA
11;15-12:15	Topic: Financial Planning	TBA
12:15-1:00	Lunch on own	
1:00-2:00	Topic: Collaboration	TBA
2:00-3:00	Collaboration, Conclusion and Evaluation	

Day 2

Time	Activity	Location
8:00-8:30	Breakfast	TBA
8:30-9:15	Welcome and Presenter: Effective Leaders Make a Difference. (continued)	TBA

Time	Activity	Location
9:15-10:15	Topic: Communication	TBA

10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:30	Topic: Leadership Qualities	TBA
11:30-12:15	Collaboration among school leaders.	TBA
12:15-1:00	Lunch on own.	
1:00-2:00	Topic: Educational Programs	TBA
2:00-3:00	Topic: Administrative Support	TBA
3:00-3:15	Evaluation	

Day 3

8:00- 8:45	Breakfast and Welcome	TBA
8:45-9:45	Topic: Diversity	TBA
9:45-10:45	Topic: Safe Environment	TBA
10:45-11:00	Break	
11:00 -11:45	Topic: Technology Use for Collaboration	TBA
11:45-12:00	Conclusion and Evaluation	

1-Day Seminar

Time	Activity	Location
8:00-8:30	Check-in/Breakfast	TBA
8:30-9:45	Welcome/Presenter: School Leaders Challenges of the Future	TBA
9:30-10:15	Guide for School Leaders on Successful Strategies: PowerPoint Presentation	
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:15	Topic: Collaboration	TBA
11:30-12:00	Collaborate with school leaders.	TBA
12:00-12:45	Lunch provided by site.	TBA
12:45-1:30	Topic: Communication: School Personnel, Parents, School Community, Recruiting	TBA
1:30-2:15	Topic: Financial Planning	TBA
2:15-3:00	Topic: Administrative Support	TBA
3:00-3:15	Topic: Diversity	TBA
3:15-3:30	Evaluation (Same evaluation as 3-day conference)	

Evaluation for Professional Development
3-Day Conference

Please rate the seminar/workshop and topics for Day ___.

Please circle the appropriate number for feedback and evaluation. The rating of 5 is most useful to you as a school leader and 1 being least useful to you as a school leader.

1. How would you rate overall usefulness of topic presentations for you as a professional?

    5   4   3   2   1

    Which topic presentation was most useful?_____

    Why?_____

    _____

    Which topic presentation was least useful?_____

    Why?_____

    _____

2. How would you rate the usefulness of the overall guide or PowerPoint for school leaders successful strategies?

    5   4   3   2   1

    What part(s) of guide or PowerPoint was the most useful?

    _____

Professional Development Evaluation
Long Term Effectiveness
Questionnaire

As a secondary Catholic school leader you participated in a professional development conference 6 months ago on Successful Leadership Strategies for Sustainability. It would be beneficial to know the effectiveness for any of the presented strategies you may have implemented to improve the sustainability of your school. Below will be a list of the strategies that were presented at the conference. Please rate them for usefulness of application and return by mail or e mail to: (contact information). Thank you.

Please circle and rate on a 1-5 level. The rating of 5 is a very useful strategy and 1 is a least useful strategy.

Strategies

1.Sharing the financial plans and procedure using a variety of venues as meetings, school promotional and procedural materials to reach the school community and outside community.

       1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

2 Leadership shares communication with school community ensuring all members are informed on school matters, program development and pertinent school information resulting in satisfied staff, parents and students, therefore more likely to stay at the school.

       1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

3.Appropriate hiring and placement of faculty by administration provides a quality education for the students.

       1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

4.Leadership uses a variety of venues as meetings, web site, memos, school promotional and policy material to collaborate and network in order to reach
all levels of leadership.

       1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

5. Leadership reaches out to diverse populations by disbursing clear promotional information and providing opportunities for visitations to the school.

    1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

6. Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel and community during the school year to provide a comfortable but yet professional rapport that builds trust and respect within the school community.

    1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

7. Leadership uses a variety of methods and events to consistently communicate to the school community and outside the community.

    1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

8. Leadership keeps communication available. Their accessibility encourages reciprocation from within and outside the school community.

    1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

9. Sharing the financial plans and procedure using a variety of venues to reach the school community and outside community.

    1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

10. Leadership reaches out diverse populations providing transportation for potential students from distant geographical area.

    1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

11. Leadership makes efforts to keep education affordable and accessible to more families.

    1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

12. Leadership gives effort to promote diversity as an attribute and safe learning environment for all students.

        1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

13. Leadership consistently collaborates and communicates with school personnel to assist with educational program development and implementation and input for school policies and procedures during the school year.

        1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

14. Leadership keeps an open door to be approachable, accessible and supportive of school personnel and school community on school matters.

        1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

15. Leadership keeps communication transparent and their accessibility encourages reciprocation from within and outside the school community.

        1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____
(continued)

16. Leadership promotes school community members as administration, faculty, alumni and students in promotional material, school marketing events and community service involvement.

        1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

17. Leadership develops and aligns curriculum using religious education, prayer, community service and school role models to instill values and Catholic identity for all on a daily basis.
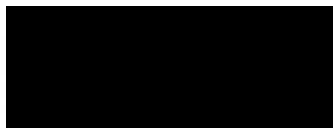
        1   2   3   4   5

Comments_____

Thank you. Please return to: (contact mail or email me).

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation

February 10, 2015

████████████████
████████████████
████

██████

My name is Diane Tucker and I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University. My doctoral study is on sustainability in a secondary Catholic school. Over the past five years ████████████High School has displayed exceptional stability and I'd like to understand how and why you have been so successful so I can help other Catholic schools to thrive.

I would like to receive consent to interview the Principal or President or both, development director (if any), a board member or trustee (if any), 1-2 teacher leaders, 1-2 alumni and 1-2 parents or community members in charge of a school committee. If possible, I would also like to meet with the Superintendent. I am trying to collect information that will explain how a secondary Catholic school remains sustained. In addition, I would like to seek the best strategies used from a successful and thriving secondary Catholic school in the Northeast region of the country. The Northeast region has had the highest number of secondary school closings the past two years (McDonald & Schultz, 2014). My hope is to assist struggling schools that may be in a challenging economical situation, possibly prevent closing and improve their potential to sustain. Keeping more secondary Catholic schools open will enhance the education system of our country by providing more educational choices for parents, increase competition among schools and improve the workforce in our country.

For your security, I will be using fictitious names or generalizations to protect the human participants and school name. Also, any written documentation would be sanitized to eliminate the school name. All collected information would be cross check among participants and followed-up with member checking for accuracy and credibility. In addition, after consent is given, interview topics will be emailed in advance of my visit so participants can be prepared and comfortable would the questions. I also have a background clearance from the State of New Jersey and Department of Education, which I could provide if a copy if needed.

The interviews will last about ½ -1hr in person. If an in person interview is inconvenient, I could Skype or complete a phone interview. Also, if it is more convenient, a written interview could be emailed or scanned in, which may take about 1 hour to complete. If I am permitted to do in person interviews, I would conduct the interview on site during or after school hours, whenever is logically feasible or convenient to meet with the participants. The more interviews I could complete in one day the better, however, I certainly could do two or three days if this is more opportune as long as the dates are predetermined. If possible, using a separate room to complete the interview process would be more appropriate for privacy, confidentially and provide a quiet environment for recording the interview.

The following are steps for procedures:
1. Consent requested from the Principal/President.
2. Consent of cooperation letter returned to researcher from the Principal/President.
3. Researcher requests for access to written documents below and will be collected during visits. Data Use Agreement for written documents will be signed for protection of both parties.
4. Researcher will inquire from Principal best times for interviews and contact information. I will then schedule, coordinate locations, dates and times for interviews through email of participants. (Unless the principal would prefer to do this).
5. An individual consent form and interview topics will be emailed ahead of time to participants for assurance of privacy and familiarity with requested data.
6. Interviews are completed and written documents are collected.
7. Data is analyzed and member checked for accuracy with participants.
8. Any follow-up interviews will be requested if needed.
9. Findings are completed, reviewed and displayed to principal.

If permission is granted, I would like to request copies of written documents to include the following:(I have already observed some on your website).
1. Marketing material as brochures, handbooks, flyers or public advertisements.
2. Financial material as: Tuition rates, any subsidies, budget allocations for marketing or financial aid, available academic award scholarships.
3. Recruiting plans and special programs to attract or recruit students.
4. Parent/Student Handbook
5. Schedule of promotional activities and events, including open houses or any type of shadow/visitation days.
6. Job Descriptions for Administration and Faculty
7. Trustee, Board or pertinent committee by-laws (if any).

When the research is completed, the findings will be shared with the Principal/President of the school. I hope you will allow me to pursue this study in an effort to keep secondary Catholic schools sustained, especially in the Northeast region of our country.

It would be appreciated if you could please sign and return the letter below within 3- 5 days of receiving this request. I will follow up this letter with an email to acknowledge receipt of this letter. I have filled in the pertinent information below for your information and convenience. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Diane Tucker
Walden Ed.D. Candidate
diane.tucker@waldenu.edu or dianetucker8@aol.com

McDonald, D, PBVM, Ph. D. & Schultz, M (2014). United States Catholic
Elementary and Secondary Schools 2013-2014, *The annual statistical report on schools, enrollment and staffing,* National Catholic Educational Association: Arlington, VA. ISBN No. 1-5583-502-1

Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Diane Tucker
2 Fox Run Drive
Pittsgrove, NJ 08318
dianetucker8@aol.com or diane.tucker@waldenu.edu

February 10 2015,

Dear Diane Tucker,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Sustainability in a secondary Catholic school within ███████████ High School. As part of this study, I authorize you to personally interview or collect written interviews, transcribe the collected data, member check for credibility and disseminate findings to the school principal. In addition, I authorize the distribution or access of requested written documents needed for data collection and interpretation. Also individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. I will provide contact information for the researcher coordinate interviews.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Providing access to interview a principal/president or both, board/ trustee member, development or advancement director, alumni, teachers (2 department heads), 1-2 parent chairperson(s) or a community member, a room for interviewing and access for requested written documents. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

███████████████████████████████

Contact information:

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verifies any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix C: E-Mail for Approval Permission

Hello Ms. Tucker,

██████ for a school trip █████ with a group of our students. He has approved participation in your study, and ███████████ al has signed the attached letter in his place, with his approval. I have attached it.

Her email is Thank you.   ████████████████████
                                 smacaluso@paramus-catholic.org
                                 ████████████████████

Executive Assistant to the President/Office Manager

████████████   High School

From:
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 10:49 AM
To:
Subject: Attached Image

Appendix D: Data Use Agreement

This Data Use Agreement ("Agreement"), effective as of ("Effective Date"), is entered into by and between Diane Tucker and ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ High School. The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set ("LDS") for use in research **in accord with laws and regulations of the governing bodies associated with the Data Provider, Data Recipient, and Data Recipient's educational program.** In the case of a discrepancy among laws, the agreement shall follow whichever law is more strict.

1. Definitions. Due to the study's affiliation with Laureate, a USA-based company, unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the USA "HIPAA Regulations" and/or "FERPA Regulations" codified in the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.

2. Preparation of the LDS. Data Provider shall prepare and furnish to Data Recipient a LDS in accord with any applicable laws and regulations of the governing bodies associated with the Data Provider, Data Recipient, and Data Recipient's educational program.

3. Data Fields in the LDS. **No direct identifiers such as names may be included in the Limited Data Set (LDS).** In preparing the LDS, Data Provider shall include the **data fields specified as follows**, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the research: **School activity schedules relevant to recruiting or marketing(open houses, shadow days), administrative job descriptions, by-laws for trustees/board members, marketing/recruiting materials(brochures, ads etc), tuition rates, student or parent handbook, enrollment numbers for last five years, financial aid and available scholarships, subsidies from other resources as parish or diocese.**

4. Responsibilities of Data Recipient. Data Recipient agrees to:

    a. Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;

    b. Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

    c. Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

    d. Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and

e.   Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.

5. <u>Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS.</u> Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS **for its Research activities only.**

6. <u>Term and Termination.</u>

   a.   <u>Term.</u> The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.

   b.   <u>Termination by Data Recipient.</u> Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.

   c.   <u>Termination by Data Provider.</u> Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.

   d.   <u>For Breach.</u> Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.

   e.   <u>Effect of Termination.</u> Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.

7. <u>Miscellaneous.</u>

   a.   <u>Change in Law.</u> The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.

   b.   <u>Construction of Terms.</u> The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.

   c.   <u>No Third Party Beneficiaries.</u> Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.

d.   <u>Counterparts.</u> This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

e.   <u>Headings.</u> The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.
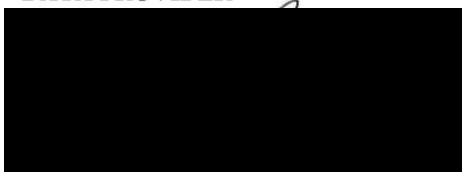
DATA PROVIDER   **DATA RECIPIENT**

Signed: _____

Print Name: Diane Tucker
Print Title: Walden University
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E: Interview Questions and Executive Summary

1. Sustainability: In your opinion what are three key strategies that have sustained the school over the last 5 years? Who were the key participants and their level of involvement in these strategies?
2. Collaboration: Do you feel collaboration between different administrative levels has been incorporated during planning and developing strategies for sustainability? Can you give examples of this collaboration between administrative levels? How about nonadministrative levels as teachers, parents, students, community?
3. Leadership: Explain the leadership structure of the school? In your opinion, what strong leadership characteristics have assisted in attaining sustainability?
4. Financial Planning: -In your opinion, what has been the main objectives or goals when developing a financial plan for the school? Who participates in financial planning and how are they involved? Is there available financial assistance and how is it allocated for families?
5. Marketing: How is your school promoted to the public? Who is involved in marketing the school? Could you give examples of marketing or promotional efforts throughout the year? What school characteristics are emphasized when marketing?
6. Recruiting: Is there a recruiting plan in place? What does the recruiting plan consist of and who is involved?
7. Public Perception: In your opinion, what is the general public perception of the school? Has any publicity affected the public perception of the school either positively or negatively?
8. Alternative school options: Are there any other school options in the school area? (Within 10 miles) If so, have the options affected the enrollment of your school positively or negatively?
9. Demographics: Are you aware of any socioeconomic demographic shifts in the local area over the last 5 years? If so, do you think these shifts have affected enrollment positively or negatively?
10. Future sustainability: In your opinion, what are three crucial components necessary to keep your school sustainable in the future? What do you think are some future strategies or plans that will assist in maintaining sustainability?

Executive Summary for Participants

   The executive summary will be distributed to involved participants about 1 week prior to their personal interview. The intent of the executive summary is to develop trust and confidence with the researcher, familiarize the participants with requested information and for the researcher to collect pertinent information that will encourage an efficient, thorough and effective study.

Topics for Interview Discussion

1. Sustainability
   - Three key strategies that have influenced sustainability
   - Key participants involvement and level of involvement
     -Administration-Superintendent, Principal, President
     -Trustees/Board members
     -Teachers
     -Community-Parents
     -Other
2. Collaboration
   - Collaboration between all administrative levels: How has different administrators worked together for sustainability?
     -Superintendent-Principal; Principal-President; Principal-Board members;
     -Principal-Teachers; Principal-Parents; Board members-parents; Parish-Principal
   - Collaboration between nonadministrative levels
     -Teachers-Parents; Teachers-students; Principal-Community; Teachers-Teachers
3. Leadership
   - Structure: Principal-President; Superintendent-Principal;
   - Type of Board or Trustees- Who is accountable to who?
   - Characteristics of Leadership
4. Financial Planning
   - Goals for financial planning
     -Fundraising
     -Tuition
     -Donors
     -Subsidies
   - Who is involved?
     -Diocese, Principal, President or Board Members
   - Types of Financial Assistance and how is it allocated?
5. Marketing
   - Types of marketing tools and strategies: Literature, Programs, Publicity
   - Who is involved?
6. Recruiting
   - Is there a recruiting plan?
   - What does it consist of and who is involved?
7. Public Perception
   - General public perception of the school
   - Any type of negative or positive publicity that has affected the school's public perception.
     -New Academic or Athletic Programs

   -Successful academic or athletic programs
   -Community service events
   -Scandals
   -Rumors

8. Alternative school options
   - Any charter or choice schools in the local area that has attracted students?
   - How has your school handled this situation?
9. Demographics
   - Has there been a change in socioeconomic population in the area? What was the change?
   - If there was a change, has this affected school enrollment or marketing in a positive or negative way?
10. Future Sustainability
    - Three components to keep future sustainability
    - Strategies or plans for future sustainability
    - Who do you think needs to be involved for future sustainability?

Appendix F: E Mails to Principal and Participants

Hello ▮▮▮▮▮

This is Diane Tucker. We communicated a month ago about collecting data from **school name** for my doctoral project study. I have been approved by Walden's University IRB and am ready to complete the interviews at your school for data collection. My approval number is: **04-22-16-0224161.** The following information is needed with your permission:
1. Your approval for **dates, times and given location** for interviews (see below).
2. **Contact information** for participants (see below).
3. **Documents** for data review as mentioned in the signed Data Agreement (see below).

1. **Dates, Times, Location:** I would like to come on the following dates and times and if feasible, will need a somewhat quiet location (room) to complete the interviews. I am trying to complete a total of 10-12 interviews in 2 days to minimize school interruptions. Please let me know what times and locations will be appropriate.

   I just need **one set** of two consecutive days:
   ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

   Potential Daily Time Duration: **9:00 AM-12:30 PM and 1:15-6:00PM.**
   Potential Time Slots: **9-10 AM, 10:15-11:15 AM, 11:30 -12:30 PM, 1:15-2:15 PM, 2:30-3:30 PM, 3:45-4:45 PM, 5:00-6:00 PM**.

   After you approve the dates, location and times, I will schedule dates and times for each agreeable participant. I will also bring my **state** background check certification. If needed, I could interview in both ▮▮▮▮▮▮ .

2. **Contact Information:** I will need contact information or access to contact information for: superintendent, president, principal, department chairs or faculty leaders, parent leaders, alumni, trustees and development director or staff that may be directly involved with enrollment, finances or both.

3. **Documents**:
   Tuition rates and enrollment from the past 5 years,
   Amount of financial assistance or subsidies to the students or schools,
   Marketing or recruiting promotional material, administrative job descriptions,
   By-Laws for Trustees or Board members,
   School activity schedule or handbook that includes marketing or recruiting events as open houses.
   School handbook including policies and procedures.

I would appreciate these resources when I come to begin interviews at your school or, if more convenient, you may email these items to me ahead of time. If any are available on line, I could certainly work on line with the material.

I would appreciate a prompt reply email with the following: approved dates, times and location; contact information and any information to review requested documents before I come or collect them for when I come to **school name**.

As soon as you approve the dates, times and location, I will begin my process to contact participants using your approved dates and times. I look forward to completing my doctoral study on secondary Catholic school sustainability and working with **school name** administration, staff and school community. Most of all I thank you for your cooperation in allowing me to use your school data for my study.

Sincerely,
Diane Tucker
Walden University
Doctoral Student

Hello (Participant Name),

My name is Diane Tucker and I am completing a doctoral study through Walden University on Secondary Catholic School Sustainability using data from your school. If you agree to participate, please carefully read the attached informed consent letter and electronically return your answer to me, as requested at the bottom of the form. The attached informed consent letter includes information about the study, details and procedure for the interviews, sample questions, risks and benefits for participation and privacy guidelines. When I receive consent (return email consent) from you I will send a confirmation on times and dates of interviews when coordinated with your school schedule and an Executive Summary to familiarize you with interview questions and topics. If you agree to the interview, please make sure that you keep a copy of the informed consent letter for your records. The interview will be about 1/2 hour. Also, I would appreciate it if you could let me know as soon as possible of your participation by returning your reply within 3-5 days of receiving this email, so the process can move forward. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Diane Tucker
Walden University
Doctoral Student
Attachments area

Appendix G: Sample Member Check for Evidence of Research Quality

	Your Transcript	Researcher Interpretation	Action
A-5-School Leader	**Q1-Present Sustainability** Financial resourcefulness Facility rental for community use Programs-Music Dept. not every school has one Location of school-Plenty of area in an affluent area of the county. **Who is involved?** Students, Teachers All involved.	Creative use of school facility to gain financial resources. New programs to attract students. Geographical location attracts more families. Collaborative efforts by entire school community.	No Action
	Q2-**Administrative Levels and Collaboration** Have regular meetings between levels Communication Administration wears many hats. **Who in involved?** Deans/staff All on aboard with helping each other out. Same goals and objectives.	Timely scheduled meetings allow for good communication with school personnel and school community. School personnel share same objectives and goals.	No Action
	Q3-Administration Levels President, 2 associate principals, 3 vice principals, vice president (Business), dean of academics Directors: Guidance **Strong Leadership Qualities** Recognition of staff strength and weaknesses and place in appropriate positions Team effort	Separate Business and Education Tasks to reach goals Use personnel strengths in appropriate positions Work together for same goals	No Action

Title	Your Transcript	Researcher Interpretation	Action
	Q4-Finance Not sure		No Action
	Q5- Marketing Billboards, parish bulletins **Who is involved?** Admission director: school visitations with students, alumni director Expand reach every year.	A variety of marketing tools extend further geographically to reach and attract more students.	No Action
	Q6-Recruiting I did not ask. (Time issue)		No Action
	Q7- Public Perception Positive perception and athletics help. Programs affect enrollment positively Expanding geographically has helped and being able to provide transportation to these locations. Safe school environment	Strong programs as athletics have affected enrollment positively. Providing a safe environment is attractive to families. Expanding geographically has extended public perception in other areas and populations.	No Action
	Q8-Alternative school options: No charter or choice. More in an urban area ██████ (School names) ████████ may have an affect on some enrollment.	School choice or charter schools do not seem to have a major effect on enrollment.	No Action

(table continues)

Title	Your Transcript	Researcher Interpretation	Action
	Q9- Demographics Do not know of any affects.	Demographics have not affected school enrollment.	No Action
	Q10-Future Sustainability Keep affordable Continue to rent school facility to keep costs down Students are happy Community Efforts with school.	Leadership must continue to find creative financial resources to keep the school affordable. Strong programs for students interests and comfortable learning environment will keep them content and want to stay at the school.	No Action

Note: Adapted from Qualitative Research A Guide to Design and Implementation by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint: San Francisco, CA

Appendix H: Data Analysis with Cross Reference of Written Documents

*X-Evidence of responses to create theme; **Blank grid**- No evidence in responses*

Document Title	Name Written Documents	Themes: Financial	Educational Programs	Communication and Collaboration	Affordable	Marketing	Transparency
Financial Assistance/ Scholarship	School profile, student andbook Online/hard copy	Tuition rates, scholarship opportunities, deadlines for applying		X	**X**=average of $230. tuition increase Avg. last 15 yrs	X	X-Assessable for all families
Recruiting Material	Alumni Magazine	Available in alumni magazine and on line.	Found in school profile, alumni magazine, handbook	X	Free on web site and to those who visit school	X	Clear and accessible information for potential students
Enrollment Numbers- Past 5years	1560 in 2015 1600 applicants past recent years	X			X		
Tuition Rates- 5years	Found in school promotional material, school handbook Average of $230 increase over the past 15 years.	X		X	X	X	X
School Promotional	Targets potential students and families	X	X	X	*X*	X	X
Student /Parent Handbook	Hard copy and on line. Targets student/parents and school personnel	X Deadlines	Policies and procedures: Grading, athletics, discipline	X		X	Policies and procedures, due dates
Most recent edition	Alumni school magazine that targets students, alumni, parent and friends	X-Donors Potential Donors	X	X			

(table continues)

Document Title	Written document Name	**Themes:** Financial	Educational Programs	Communication and Collaboration.	Affordable	Marketing	Transparency
School Calendar	School activities schedule, Meetings with students/parents		X	X			

Appendix I: National Standard and Benchmarks for Effective Elementary and Secondary

Catholic Schools (Center for Catholic School Effectiveness (2012).

Mission and Catholic Identity

Standard 1: An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence and service.

Benchmarks: 1. The governing body and the leader/leadership team ensure that the mission statement includes the commitment to Catholic identity.

> 1.2 The governing body and the leader/leadership team use the mission statement as the foundation and normative reference for all planning.
> 1.3 The school leader/leadership team regularly calls together the school's various constituencies (including but not limited to faculty and staff, parents, students, alumni(ae) to clarify, review and renew the school's mission statement.
> 1.4 The mission statement is visible in public places and contained in official documents.
> 1.5 All constituents know and understand the mission.

Standard 2: An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life.

Benchmarks: 2.1 Religious education curriculum and instruction meets the religious education requirements and standards of the (arch)diocese.

> 2.2 Religion classes are an integral part of the academic program in the assignment of teachers amount of class time and the selection of texts and other curricular materials.
> 2.3 Faculty who teach religion meet (arch) diocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification to provide effective religion curriculum and instruction.
> 2.4 The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects including religious education.
> 2.5 Faculty use the lenses of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition in all subjects to help students think critically and ethically about the world around them.
> 2.6 Catholic culture and faith are expressed in the school through multiple and diverse forms of visual and performing arts, music and architecture.
> 2.7 The theory and practice of the Church's social teachings are essential elements of the curriculum.

Standard 3: An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.

Benchmarks: 3.1 Every student is offered timely and regular opportunities to learn about and experience the nature and importance of prayer, the Eucharist, and liturgy.

> 3.2 Every student is offered timely, regular, and age appropriate opportunities to reflect on their life experiences and faith through retreats and other spiritual experiences.
> 3.3 Every student participates in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action

3.4 n service of social justice. 3.4 Every student experiences role models of faith and service for social justice among the administrators, faculty and staff.

Standard 4: An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.

Benchmarks 4.1 The leader/leadership team provides retreats and other spiritual experiences for the faculty and staff on a regular and timely basis.

4.2 The leader/leadership team and faculty assist parents/ guardians in their role as the primary educators of their children in faith.
4.3 The leader/leadership team collaborates with other institutions (for example, Catholic Charities, Catholic higher education, religious congregation-sponsored programs) to provide opportunities for parents/guardians to grow in the knowledge and practice of the faith.
4.4 All adults in the school community are invited to participate in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action in service of social justice.
4.5 Every administrator, faculty, and staff member visibly supports the faith life of the school community

Governance and Leadership

Standard 5: An excellent Catholic school has a governing body (person or persons) which recognizes and respects the role(s) of the appropriate and legitimate authorities, and exercises responsible decision making (authoritative, consultative, advisory) in collaboration with the leadership team for development and oversight of the school's fidelity to mission, academic excellence, and operational vitality

Benchmarks: 5.1 The governing body, representing the diversity of stakeholders, functions according to its approved constitution and by-laws.

5.2 The governing body systematizes the policies of the school's operations to ensure fidelity to mission, and continuity and sustainability through leadership successions.
5.3 The governing body, in collaboration with or through the actions of the leader/leadership team, maintains a relationship with the Bishop marked by mutual trust, close cooperation, continuing dialogue, and respect for the Bishop's legitimate authority.
5.4 The governing body, in collaboration with or through the actions of the leader/leadership team, maintain a constructive and beneficial relationship with the (arch) diocesan Education Office consistent with (arch)diocesan policy pertaining to the recognition of Catholic schools by the Bishop.
5.5 In the case of a parish school, the governing body, in collaboration with the leader/leadership t team, maintains a relationship with the canonical administrator (pastor or designee of Bishop) marked by mutual trust, close cooperation, and continuing dialogue.
5.6 The governing body engages in formation and on-going training and self-evaluation for itself and the leadership team to ensure the faithful execution of their respective responsibilities

Standard 6: An excellent Catholic school 6 has a qualified leader/leadership team empowered by the governing body to realize and implement the school's mission and vision.

Benchmarks: 6.1 The leader/leadership team meets national, state and/or (arch)diocesan requirements for school leadership preparation and licensing to serve as the faith and instructional leader(s) of the school.

6.2 The leader/leadership team articulates a clear mission and vision for the school, and engages the school community to ensure a e that embodies the mission and vision.

6.3 The leader/leadership team takes responsibility for the development and oversight of personnel, including recruitment, professional growth, faith formation, and formal assessment of faculty and staff in compliance with (arch) diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies.

6.4 The leader/leadership team establishes and supports networks of collaboration at all levels within the school community to advance excellence.

6.5 The leader/leadership team directs the development and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction and utilizes school-wide data to plan for continued and sustained academic excellence and growth.

6.6 The leader/leadership team works in collaboration with

6.7 The leader/leadership team assumes responsibility for communicating new initiatives and/or changes to school programs to all constituents.

Academic Excellence

Standard 7:An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.

Benchmarks: 7.1 The curriculum adheres to appropriate, delineated standards, and is vertically aligned to ensure that every student successfully completes a rigorous and coherent sequence of academic courses based on the standards and rooted in Catholic values.

7.2 Standards are adopted across the curriculum, and include integration of the religious, spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions of learning in all subjects.

7.3 Curriculum and instruction for 21st century learning provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills to become creative, reflective, literate, critical, and moral evaluators, problem solvers, decision makers, and socially responsible global citizens.

7.4 Curriculum and instruction for 21st century learning prepares students to become expert users of technology, able to create, publish, and critique digital products that reflect their understanding of the content and their technological skills.

7.5 Classroom instruction is designed to intentionally address the affective dimensions of learning, such as intellectual and social dispositions, relationship building, and habits of mind.

7.6 Classroom instruction is designed to engage and motivate all students, addressing the diverse needs and capabilities of each student, and accommodating students with special needs as fully as possible.

7.7 Faculty collaborate in professional learning communities to develop, implement and continuously improve the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction to result in high levels of student achievement.

7.8 The faculty and professional support staff meet (arch) diocesan, state, and/or national requirements for academic preparation and licensing to ensure their capacity to provide effective curriculum and instruction.

7.9 Faculty and professional support staff demonstrate and continuously improve knowledge and skills necessary for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and modeling of Gospel values.

7.10 Faculty and staff engage in high quality professional development, including religious formation, and are accountable for implementation that supports student learning

Standard 8: An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.

Benchmarks: 8.1 School-wide and student data generated by a variety of tools are used to monitor, review, and evaluate the curriculum and co-curricular programs; to plan for continued and sustained student growth; and to monitor and assess faculty performance.

8.2 School-wide and aggregated student data are normed to appropriate populations and are shared with all stakeholders.

8.3 Faculty use a variety of curriculum-based assessments aligned with learning outcomes and instructional practices to assess student learning, including formative, summative, authentic performance, and student self-assessment.

8.4 Criteria used to evaluate student work and the reporting mechanisms are valid, consistent, transparent, and justly administered.

8.5 Faculty collaborate in professional learning communities to monitor individual and class-wide student learning through methods such as common assessments and rubrics.

Standard 9: An excellent Catholic school provides programs and services aligned with the mission to enrich the academic program and support the development of student and family life.

Benchmarks: 9.1 School-wide programs for parents/guardians provide opportunities for parents/guardians to partner with school leaders, faculty, and other parents/guardians to enhance the educational experiences for the school community.

9.2 Guidance services, wellness programs, behavior management programs, and ancillary services provide the necessary support for students to successfully complete the school program.

9.3 Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities provide opportunities outside the classroom for students to further identify and develop their gifts and talents and to enhance their creative, aesthetic, social/emotional, physical, and spiritual capabilities.

Operational Vitality

Standard 10: An excellent Catholic school provides a feasible 3- to 5-year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets and is the result of a collaborative process, emphasizing faithful stewardship:

Benchmarks: 10.1 The governing body and leader/leadership team engage in financial planning in collaboration with experts in nonprofit management and funding.

10.2 Financial plans include agreed-upon levels of financial investment determined by the partners involved who may include but are not limited to parishes, dioceses, religious orders, educational foundations, the larger Catholic community, and responsible boards.

10.3 Financial plans define revenue sources that include but are not limited to tuition, tuition assistance/scholarships, endowment funds, local and regional partnerships, public funding, regional cost sharing, (arch) diocesan and/or religious communities' assistance, foundation gifts, entrepreneurial options and other sources not listed.

10.4 Financial plans include the delineation of costs for key target areas such as instruction, tuition assistance, administration, professional development, facilities, equipment, technology, program enhancement/expansion, capital projects and other planned projects.

10.5 Current and projected budgets include a statement of the actual and projected revenue sources, indicating an appropriate balance among revenue sources, and a statement of actual and

projected expenditures including the actual cost per child, benchmarked compensation/salary scales, and other health benefits and retirement costs.

10.6 Financial plans include educational materials for distribution to all members of the community explaining the total cost per child and how that cost is met by identifying the percentage of cost that is paid for by tuition and the remaining amount of cost that is supported by other sources of revenue.

10.7 The governing body and leader/leadership team provide families access to information about tuition assistance and long-term planning for tuition and Catholic school expenses.

10.8 The governing body and leader/leadership team ensure that appropriately developed financial plans and budgets are implemented using current and effective business practices as a means of providing good stewardship of resources.

Standard 11: An excellent Catholic school operates in accord with published human resource/personnel policies, developed in compliance with (arch) diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies, which affect all staff (clergy, religious women and men, laity and volunteers) and provide clarity for responsibilities, expectations and accountability.

Benchmarks: 11.1 Human resource programs are professionally staffed at the appropriate level (ie; central office, school office) and ensure full compliance with human resource policies.

11.2 Human resource policies delineate standards for position descriptions including staff responsibilities and qualifications, hiring, compensation, and benefits, as well as standards for professional development, accountability, succession planning and retirement.

11.3 Human resource policies ensure that competitive and just salaries, benefits, and professional growth opportunities are provided for all staff.

11.4 Human resource policies ensure that institutional planning includes investment in personnel growth, health care and retirement.

Standard 12: An excellent Catholic school develops and maintains a facilities, equipment, and technology management plan designed to continuously support the implementation of the educational mission of the school.

Benchmarks: 12.1 The school's facilities, equipment, and technology management plan includes objectives to support the delivery of the educational program of the school and accessibility for all students.

12.2 The school's budget supports facilities, equipment, and technology management with specific funds for capital improvements, depreciation, and replacement.

12.3 The school's purchasing, and physical and technological improvements are, by design, done in alignment with the mission and the school's planning and curricular goals, and consistent with environmental stewardship.

Standard 13: An excellent Catholic school enacts a comprehensive plan for institutional advancement based on a compelling mission through communications, marketing, enrollment management, and development.

Benchmarks: 13.1 The communications/marketing plan requires school leader/leadership team and staff person(s) to insure the implementation of contemporary, multiple information technologies to reach targeted audiences, and to establish reliable and secure databases and accountability to stakeholders.

13.2 The enrollment management plan requires the governing body to review and the school leader/leadership team to supervise annual and continuous measurement and analysis of both enrollment and retention patterns for all student groups.

13.3 The development plan requires school leader/leadership team, in collaboration with the governing body, to insure that key strategies are in place to identify, grow and maintain significant funding prospects, including alumni (ae), over time and when appropriate.