

Educational Forum 2012



It is seldom that we as a community of educators and invested constituents are given the opportunity to create the future we want for our Catholic schools. In the Archdiocese of Hartford, we are gathering on the momentous occasion of the Educational Forum to do just that. Hundreds from across the Archdiocese will unite to learn from experts in the fields of mission formation and evangelization, leadership and governance, teaching and learning, and operational vitality; to enter into dialogue with colleagues and partners across the state; to create a ministerial plan that will stretch our thinking and our boundaries and move us toward the year 2020 with a vision that is clear and purposeful. We will gather to embrace our destiny and effect change using our new Purpose and Vision Statement and Archdiocesan Standards and Benchmarks as the foundation upon which we will build action steps and define effective characteristics for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford.

As we prepare for the Educational Forum, four research-practitioners offer insights and best practices for us to consider in creating our future in order to provide young people with core knowledge instruction and essential skills that are rooted in faith to succeed in today's world. Abraham Lincoln reminds us "The best way to predict the future is to create it..." We are reminded by the authors of these professional papers that the long term viability and sustainability of Catholic schools depends, in large part, on a proactive posture by clergy, educators, investors and the entire Catholic community. In a world described by Pope Benedict XVI as being in the midst of an educational crisis, we in the Archdiocese of Hartford are heeding the call to examine our mission and realize the vital role our schools play in the formation of our young people.

Dale R. Hoyt, Ed.D.

**Professional
White Papers
and
Archdiocesan
Standards and
Benchmarks**

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Mission Formation and Evangelization

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Introduction:

In the opening of Pope Benedict XVI's *Apostolic Letter for the Indiction of the Year of Faith* (Porta Fidei), the Holy Father writes: "I have spoken of the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ." (#2) It is exhilarating that the Archdiocese of Hartford is commencing a re-visioning process for Archdiocesan Catholic Education within the spirit of *The Year of Faith*. The Holy Father reminds us that "We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden (cf. Mt5:13-16). The people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, like the Samaritan woman, in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him (cf. Jn4:14)". (#3) As Archdiocesan Catholic educators, we discover an invigorating challenge in the Holy Father's message as he calls for awakening, arousing, experiencing, and rediscovering faith anew with a vigorous adherence to the Gospel message and values today. Our Archdiocesan Catholic school communities are called to re-inspire, to stir into flame afresh, educational and spiritual energy to reinvigorate a new perspective for Catholic Education in the 21st century.

The Gospel Message in Cultural and Global Evolution:

We are living in a cultural and global period of rapid evolution. Every dimension of our life is being affected by the plethora of shifting philosophies, theologies, technologies, political, economic and social worldviews. The energy that surrounds the immediacy and implementation of these changes does not always measure up to the moral energy present, or needed to address them. Their rapid advancement further generates a culture of distraction, or disorientation that may blind us from seeing what is essential for being authentically human, or being Christian today. In light of this plethora of shifting worldviews, Catholic educators are called upon to present a prophetic alternative Catholic theological anthropological perspective that respects and protects the dignity of the human person through proclaiming Gospel values. This is not always an easy task for Catholic educators. It is difficult. There are many factors demanding and capturing our attention, or the attention of our students that we (they) may fail to understand the importance of contemplation, solitude and an interior life of prayer for discerning a pathway through the evolving maze of contemporary being, or living! Yet, the vocation of a Catholic educator is one who is called to create portals for inviting our students and their families into a deeper appreciation and understanding of life-long faith formation for living as disciples of Jesus.

Thus, we need to ask ourselves the following questions:

What steps are we, Catholic educators, willing to embrace that will make a difference for the heart of Catholic education today, tomorrow and into the future? How can we rekindle the embers of our faith in order that our ‘hearts are burning’ with deep passion for living, witnessing and prophetically proclaiming Jesus within the ethos of our Catholic school communities? What steps are required to summons an ‘authentic and renewed conversion to Jesus’ in the lives of our administrators, teachers, students and families? For those of differing faith, or religious traditions, how do we receive and invite them into authentic religious dialogue for a deeper appreciation and understanding of their and our spiritual journeys? For those with ‘little faith’, ‘searching faith’, or ‘lack of faith’, what pastoral dimensions do our Catholic schools consistently make available to be a beacon of light along their journey?

Discovering New Methodologies for Communicating Faith:

We know that the profession of faith is an act both personal and communitarian (#10). Grounded in a personal encounter and affirmation of Jesus, we discover our faith is strengthened by studying the wisdom of the faith community which is articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The catechism is more than mere facts and knowledge but rooted in faith we embrace it as the witness of a living faith tradition that ‘opens a door into the fullness of the saving mystery revealed by God’. Catholic educators are called to introduce the Catechism not as a text, or a collection of theological ideas from the past but a living testimony concerning what and how we believe for contributing to the ‘work for renewing the whole life of the Church’ (#11) today. Thus, discovering new methodologies for releasing the wisdom of the Church’s teaching within a digital culture (civilization) is required. As new methodologies and classroom environments are shifting with the insights from evolving brain research due to the expanding engagement of digital tools and resources in our student’s lives, these new approaches need to find a creative home in our religious education and catechetical formation classes, as well. Where this is lacking in our Catholic schools it needs to be revisited and reimagined for the 21st century. If not, there will continue to be a growing gap, a lack of existential fit for proclaiming the Good News in a digital culture (civilization).

In light of the above, we ask ourselves:

How do we, as Catholic educators, understand and appreciate the living faith tradition presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church? Do the methodologies we utilize within other areas of learning influence how we engage in religious education and catechesis in our Catholic schools? How are they similar, different and why? Is how we engage in faith formation stimulating the religious imagination of our students for embracing and living as authentic disciples of Jesus? What are our benchmarks? Is the faith we endeavor to nurture in our faculty, students and family lives reflected in their being genuine ‘salt and light’ within our local communities and neighborhoods? How and why? Does the methodology and content of our

curriculum re-awaken those with ‘little faith’, ‘searching faith’, or, ‘no faith’? Is there an existential fit with what and how we teach within our religious education curriculum and the lives of our students? Or, the lives of our faculty and families? What do we need to do about it?

Christian Social Service: Our Vocation

The Holy Father reminds us that “The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us.”(#6) Our Catholic tradition radiates many heroes who are not only defined by a moment of superhuman effort, but by a lifetime of deeply human faith. The light of Jesus is radiated not only through those who have been explicitly canonized but there are many ‘hidden saints’ among us as well who radiate the light of Jesus. There are many and diverse ways that our faculty and students can radiate this light through Christian service and outreach events during the academic year. However, the challenge is not simply making available annual service projects, as valuable as they are, but in kindling a deeper dedication for a fresh way of Christian service living throughout their life. It is more than a project, or, a class event but a defined way of living (discipleship) into the future. Perhaps we need to bolster Social Christian service by contemplating it as a ‘vocation’. A ‘vocation’ that seeks to balance inward listening to our hearts and outward listening with our hearts to the community’s needs around us. It is not about ‘me’ doing a good deed for this moment in time and my personal fulfillment, but about ‘us’ and the common good. It promotes within our faculty, students and families lives an awakening where our “deep gladness” and the “world’s deep hunger” meet (Buechner).

In light of the above, we ask:

How does our Catholic school keep in creative tension the challenge of the witnesses of those whose lives embrace faith and are spiritual and social heroes into our Catholic schools ethos? How do we recognize not only the canonized saints but the ‘hidden saints’ in everyday life that are reachable within our student’s lives? What factors do we need to implement for contemplating and bolstering social Christian service as a ‘vocation’ and not simply a project, or event each year? How do we arouse hearts along with minds to bridge the ‘world’s deep hunger’ with the gifts, talents and resources our students may bring to the world?

In Conclusion:

In the past sixteen years, I have chaired the *Catholic Schools of Tomorrow Award for Innovation* (Peter, Li Inc). Each year our committee reviews hundreds of Catholic School entries from across the United States. Twelve Catholic schools are selected and recognized with a banquet during the NCEA Convention. The Catholic schools selected are addressing, or glowing with one, or more of the points I have addressed above. These are the Catholic schools that are making a faith difference within their Catholic ethos and the local community. There is no doubt that as the Archdiocese of Hartford’s Catholic schools endeavor to continue to critically

reflect on Benedict XVI's message for the *Year of Faith*, follow the conversations resulting from the October 2012 Synod of Bishops discussion on "*The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*", attentively listen and prayerfully reflect upon the experiences of your Catholic faith wisdom community, a reinvigorated, re-discovered, fresh perspective and energetic lived faith will emerge with new joy, hope and enthusiasm! Thus, the Catholic Schools are realized as being 'salt and light' within the Archdiocese of Hartford and the communities you serve!

Leadership and Governance

Reflections on Best Practices in Leadership and Governance

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Catholic schools in the United States are undergoing significant change. At one time, the job of a school leader was to oil a well-functioning machine. In our era the job of a school leader is to create and sustain new machines. The demands of leadership can be daunting, and it is important to consider the criteria that will lead to success. Management literature, much of it based on research, is replete with publications that list the qualities of an effective leader. One example comes from the late Sargent Shriver, an exemplary civil servant, who believed that leaders must have the following seven characteristics: a sense of purpose, fairness, temperance, respect, courage, and deep commitment.¹ While these seven qualities certainly apply to the leader of a Catholic educational organization, I will present seven qualities, garnered from best practices and future orientations, which apply specifically to leaders of Catholic schools in the United States today. Finally, in recognition that an effective leader never works in isolation or relies solely on his or her resources, I conclude the paper with a discussion of the crucial governance role of school boards.

1. Living a Catholic way of life

A number of years ago, I was involved in a dialogue with Jewish educators. When one of them was asked about the rationale for Jewish schools, she said, “Because it is so tragic for a young Jew to grow up without knowing the joy of a Jewish way of life.” I believe that Catholics should share that sentiment – isn’t the rationale for Catholic schools to pass on to the next generation the joy of a Catholic way of life? Living this way requires a fairly sophisticated knowledge of the tradition. Sadly, there is a high level of religious illiteracy among Catholics. For example, in a recent nation-wide test of basic knowledge, Catholics scored lowest, below Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Atheists and those with no affiliation.² The Catholic-school leader must know the tradition; knowledge of and assent to doctrinal truths are essential. However the leader must also create a living Catholic culture that is rich and compelling. Recent studies of religious affiliation in the USA show that fewer and fewer young people experience that culture at home. In Connecticut researchers found that 50% of Connecticut residents self-identified as Catholic in 1990 and only 38% did so in 2008. During the same time period, the number of those with “no affiliation” increased from 6% to 14%, the number of non-Catholic Christians remained stable, and the number of those who self-identify with non-Christian religions increased from 3% to

¹ Elias, M. The seven characteristics of a good leader. *Edutopia* April 4, 2011.

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/successful-school-leadership-social-emotional-learning-maurice-elias>

² <http://www.pewforum.org/U-S-Religious-Knowledge-Survey-Who-Knows-What-About-Religion.aspx>

8%.³ These data and others like them can either paralyze or energize. We are in a moment of potential revitalization. Next week, on October 11, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first session of the Second Vatican Council, which lasted for three years. Leaders should take advantage of these next three years to live out the themes of the Council: appreciation of scripture, the role of the Holy Spirit, dialogue with non-Christians, deepening of ecumenism, the sense of social justice, an important role for laity, and collegiality in the life of the church.⁴

2. Appreciating the catholic nature of Catholicism

In an era where all educators are talking about the need for global awareness, it is important to remember that the Catholic Church is catholic; it is arguably the most universal and multicultural organization in the world. Leaders should have the creativity to actualize the unlimited potential to educate young people for global citizenship. Catholic schools form the largest educational network on the planet. According to the Congregation for Catholic Education, there are 60 million students worldwide in 205,000 Catholic primary and secondary schools, 3.5 million students in 1,860 Catholic universities, and 110,000 students in 3,700 seminaries.⁵ The local Catholic schools should reflect the global breadth of vision that Catholicism affords. We have not even begun to take full advantage of the opportunities for worldwide collaboration that new technologies present.

3. Grounding in the local reality

A leader should have a broad Catholic and catholic worldview. In addition, she or he must be grounded in the social, cultural, political, and economic reality of the local community in which the school exists. Like most places, Connecticut has witnessed changing family structures and moral norms, a reduction in expendable income for most families and a vast increase in wealth for some, a rapidly changing workplace due to globalization and technological innovation, increasing debt and shifting property values, and bitter political polarization. Immigration has changed the ethnic and cultural landscape. Of particular concern to the Catholic community is

³ American Religious Identification Survey http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/08/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf

⁴ Comments of Archbishop Jean-Louis Bruguès, O.P. former Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education and currently Archivist and Librarian of the Holy See. June 22, 2012 at the Conference “Catholic Education Today and Tomorrow.” Rome.

⁵ Msgr. Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Undersecretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education. June 22, 2012 at the Conference “Catholic Education Today and Tomorrow.” Rome.

the influx of Latinos. Hartford and New Haven counties have seen a dramatic increase in the past 20 years. ⁶

4. Being clear about goals and objectives

Why should parents choose a Catholic school? In years past, large numbers of actively engaged parishioners could not imagine other options for their children. Parents in today's increasingly secularized society, facing pressures on expendable income in a time of recession, are finding compelling choices in a competitive educational marketplace. Like all of states, parents in Connecticut have a range of opportunities without financial burden. These include open choice, interdistrict magnet schools, state technical high schools, and public charter schools⁷. In an increasingly consumeristic society, Catholic schools cannot just offer "a good education." They must be unique, creative and compelling. Leaders must be visionary and have the ability to communicate that exciting vision to a broad range of constituents: parents, clergy, philanthropists, politicians, and pundits.

5. Creating a culture of evidence

In the competitive educational marketplace, standardized tests are the coin of the realm. Public schools, be they traditional district or charter, compete for students and dollars on the basis of publicly available measures. In this state, schools and students are graded on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and Catholic schools rely on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and standardized exams for college entrance. 21st century school leaders do not need to be psychometricians, but they must have a fairly sophisticated understanding of outcomes and their relation to curriculum frameworks, of ways to link testing measures to professional development of teachers, and they must be savvy about the politics of assessment in regard to public perception of quality. In addition, leaders in Catholic schools need to navigate accurate financial data systems in order to shape budget priorities and plan for future contingencies. Moreover, they must use data to shape successful development programs. Bottom line: Evidence matters.

⁶ In 1990, there were 71,575 Latinos in Hartford County. The number increased to 98,968 in 2000 and to 136,783 in 2010. In New Haven County, there were 51,003 in 1990; 83,131 in 2000; and 129,743 in 2010. U. S. Census Bureau. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/states/county/9003/>

⁷ http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/equity/choice/public_school_choice_2012.pdf

6. Having a habit of discernment

Decide or discern? Whether in the chancery or the superintendent's office or the local school, leaders are constantly faced with decisions. Sadly the urgent decisions sometimes edge out the important ones. Catholic-school leaders must distinguish between those matters that can be decided quickly -- and almost automatically -- from those that require more depth and care. Leaders need to learn methods of prayerful discernment in order to ensure that the core mission is not undermined by expedient responses to a world that is changing at an exponential rate. Leaders in Catholic schools must not only be smart; they need to be wise and prayerful.

7. Managing change

Change is essential if schools are to be in a mode of continuous improvement. Discerning leaders know how to overcome resistance from the various constituencies they serve. People resist change because they have emotional attachments to the status quo, they feel that they are left in the dark about the current reality, they are not engaged in the change process, they are in a state of denial about the challenges, they lack the ability to imagine alternative futures, they feel insecure about their ability to function effectively in the new reality, or they lack confidence in the wisdom of the decision makers. Leaders must be empathic and collaborative while being resolute and courageous.

8. The role of school boards

Prominent among the themes of the Second Vatican Council articulated by Archbishop Bruguès and cited earlier in this paper are the role of the laity, and collegiality in the life of the Church. One of the major developments of the past fifty years has been the development of boards that collaborate with the canonical administrators that sponsor the institution, be that the bishop, the pastor, or a religious congregation. Catholic colleges and universities, Catholic hospitals, and Catholic social-service agencies have come to take advantage of the skills and expertise of the laity. And, we certainly have seen the emergence of boards as a key feature of Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Eighty-two percent of Catholic schools nationwide had a school board in the 2011-2012 academic year. Among the 122 Catholic schools in Connecticut, 117 (96%) of the schools had a board.⁸

I believe that the growth and development of school boards are among the most important graces that have emerged from Vatican II. I have spent many hours as a member of the board at Catholic educational institutions at all levels.⁹ Several observations emerge from my experience. Board members have a fiduciary responsibility for the health and vitality of the

⁸ http://www.ncea.org/UserFiles/File/boards/Fact_Sheet_Tabels_2011-12.pdf

⁹ Cheverus High School (Portland ME), Boston College High School, Cathedral Grammar School (Boston MA), Nativity Preparatory School (Boston MA), College of the Holy Cross (Worcester MA), LeMoyne College (Syracuse NY), John Carroll University (Cleveland OH), Marquette University (Milwaukee WI), Loyola University (New Orleans).

school. The word “fiduciary” appropriately has its origin in the Latin word *fides*. Board members are trustees in that canonical authorities have faith in them, they entrust them with a sacred responsibility to ensure the well-being of the school. That entails fiscal health and sustainability. When a person accepts the responsibility to be a board member, the school should become his or her highest philanthropic priority, so to set an example for all members of the broad school community. Along with giving of their treasure, board members give of their talent. Many bring professional expertise in the law, finance, development, health, and education. They bring a knowledge of and connection to the local community. Perhaps most importantly, they bring insights into Catholic mission and identity that come from their lived experience as faith-filled (fiduciary) laypeople who are parents, spouses, and neighbors. The principal, pastor, or president, no matter how competent, cannot have all the answers or possess all the skills that I mention in the first part of my paper. In a spirit of collegiality with the members of the board, however, they can ensure that the Catholic school will achieve its noble mission.

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

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“I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.” It is with these words of Mark Twain that I would like to explore the topic of Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

The fact that 45 states (and counting) have adopted the National Standards movement, known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI), means that there is a new level of concern over the “state” of “schooling” in the United States. While being one of the states that has adopted the Common Core, Connecticut believed from the outset that its standards have always been rigorous. Given the tradition of the schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford, let me state that I believe your standards have met and exceeded those of the State. Yet, the intent is that implementation of the Common Core with its instructional shifts and common assessments will contribute to raising the bar for American “schooling” by encouraging (and sometimes mandating) states to take a close look at the depth of its curriculum. In addition we cannot forget that this implementation is occurring in the midst of an information explosion which is “impelled by ever more powerful tools of access and connectivity” (Berry, 2009).

As a Catholic school educator for 40 years and counting, I have traditionally taken the best that the various standards movements have had to offer as they were promulgated from the state or from national professional organizations because, I believe, that these movements served to highlight the many variables of teaching and learning and the centrality of curriculum development. I have also felt that, in many ways, these perennial movements reflected an attempt to mirror the tradition of excellence that has been a hallmark of the Catholic schools in the United States while, at the same time, serving as a reminder to us that we must continue to live out that tradition in a new century by highlighting those very same variables. And so, I urge you: please do not dismiss the Common Core as something that we already do; rather, embrace it as an opportunity to become better. Embracing the Common Core also means embracing the digital technologies that have given new meaning to teaching and learning. In truth, they have given new meaning to the human experience! According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, citizens and workers, [teachers and students] must “use digital technologies (computers, PDAs, media players, GPS, etc.), communication/networking tools and social networks appropriately to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information to successfully function in a knowledge economy” (2009).

It is clear to me that the Common Core Standards can represent for us a renewed commitment and an opportunity for us to reflect on exactly what makes good schools as well as that which makes good Catholic schools. We must remember that in addition to the traditional purposes of schooling - teaching children, alleviating poverty, perpetuating our cultural heritage, producing

intelligent and participatory citizens, encouraging innovation and creativity, etc. – the Catholic school also encourages the development of a moral conscience, creates a community of faith based on Gospel values, and produces intelligent, participatory members of the future Catholic Church. It is always “both/and” for Catholic school educators.

In a recent article on the Common Core, the author noted that a learning goal is only as good as the instructor’s ability to imagine what that goal looks like when it is being met (Fine, 2010). Herein lies, I believe, a significant mantra for what a Common Core classroom should look like and for what should guide us as we reflect on the teaching/learning process. It contains the three research-based components of curriculum - content, instruction and assessment (CIA) - and places them in a belief statement that encourages teachers to imagine the countless possibilities through which students can prove that they have reached the intended goal.

If teachers are encouraged to “imagine” their assessment protocols, the instructional strategies that support and lead students to be able to perform well on these various assessments must be vibrant, diversified, and technology-imbedded. Part of the rationale behind the need for the Common Core is that students do not know how to transfer knowledge from the point of contact to something they have never seen before. Therefore, one of the authors of the Common Core, David Coleman, has termed instruction to be its “heartbeat” (2011). Students have to be given strategic opportunities to use the knowledge they are learning, to solve interesting and complex problems, to grapple with good questions and pertinent issues. Students may not have to memorize as much as in the past. However, this is replaced with a need for students to have well-developed and honed higher order thinking skills. They learn how to do this by being with teachers who cherish inquiry, promote problem-solving, integrate technology-rich experiences, and invite students to collaborate with each other and with the teacher both in the classroom and through on-line partnering. Brain research tells us that it is through non-routine use of content and knowledge that the brain creates richer, deeper and more complex connections necessary for understanding and that without these connections isolated bits of information/facts never get incorporated into the larger schema and, therefore, are not retained. In their latest book, *That Used To Be Us*, Friedman and Mandelbaum (2011) propose that American workers who approach their jobs in a routine manner will find, in the very near future, that these jobs are being done by something or someone else. In the emerging workplace “most students – not just the elite few – must be able to find, synthesize and evaluate information from a variety of subjects and sources” (Berry, 2011). We must make the required changes in teaching and learning so that our students will be prepared for this future. I believe that Wayne Gretzky said it well when he proclaimed that [in hockey] you had to “skate to where the puck is going – not to where it has been!”

If instruction is the heartbeat, I believe, assessment is its support. Assessment invites all students to prove the depth of their understanding in multiple ways. In order to achieve this we must consistently link the types of evidence to the six facets of understanding: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy and self-knowledge (Wiggins and McTighe,

1998). We must pay our students the respect of high expectations which include the opportunities we give them to prove to us and to themselves that they have reached and exceeded those expectations! It is the quality of the assessment that determines the limits the students' minds will be stretched. It is the format and the delivery of the assessment that will provide an opportunity for all students with varying learning styles to excel. Good assessment drives good curriculum. The Common Core teacher creates diversified assessment protocols supported by diversified instructional strategies. The cycle is a dynamic one; it is one that is informed by the students themselves. We must create assessments based on the learning goal rather than only as a means for generating a grade.

The kind of assessment that supports the Common Core continues to be both formative and summative at various times and for various educational purposes throughout the students' education. However, assessment should always be viewed as integral to the curriculum process; it is never an intrusion. It is not something that "happens to" students. Rather, it is at the heart of the discernment process in teaching and learning.

No one will be surprised by the statement that the portrait of the Catholic school teacher has changed. Catholic school administrators and teachers were once predominantly members of religious congregations; today, they are predominantly lay people. While this fact has brought numerous challenges that continue to be faced by the Catholic Church and by leaders in Catholic education, one challenge that still persists is that of sustained professional development. Throughout my years in Catholic education I have found teachers to be most willing to enhance their modus operandi provided 1) that they are educated in the new practice and 2) that they are not being encouraged to make the change solely because that change may be the latest fad. Good teachers need to be supported to become great; bad teachers need to make alternative career choices.

The nightly professional development that was part of the fabric of convent living can never be replicated with the same consistency. Yet, sustained professional development must occur. Forming, informing, nurturing, challenging, supporting, mentoring teachers has to be a central component to any educational reform plan. The professional development plan must be collaboratively developed by the teachers, must be both age and need appropriate, must be done in the environment of a professional learning community – indeed, for us – in the environment of a vibrant faith community and must be supported by a budget line. The leadership of the schools need to be actively engaged in professional development of their own as well as being aware of new instructional and assessment strategies that the teachers will be using. The leadership must know what a Common Core/ 21st Century classroom should look like, support the efforts of their teachers as they introduce new and imaginative processes, be up-to-date on how to supervise these new processes and empower the teachers to collaborate.

The Common Core standards must be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich, locally envisioned curriculum that is consistent with the spirit and contents of the Common Core.

Curriculum development research has shown that the most enduring method for curriculum change is that of integration. The corollary between an integrated curriculum and the Common Core is extraordinary. Integration strengthens the skills that students may be introduced to in one subject and transfer to another. Referring to my earlier discussion of brain research, making connections among disciplines enables the brain to create a complex web of information that leads to understanding. It prepares students for a world that is not compartmentalized. Focusing on themes, big ideas and Essential Questions in the writing of Common Core extended units breaks down false barriers and highlights the relevance of the learning.

Neither should it be a surprise that Catholic schools traditionally have used integration in the development of curriculum. Curriculum is ripe with opportunities to teach Catholic values and to integrate Catholic social teachings. This is both an opportunity and a responsibility for the Catholic school educator. The task is fundamentally *a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second on the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian* (#37, *The Catholic School*, revised 2009). In essence, the conduct and content of schooling is founded on and brought to life by Jesus as celebrated in the Catholic tradition. Pope Paul VI (1975) has said that more than teachers the world needs witnesses and, if teachers, then teachers who are witnesses. The Catholic school educator, as tradition-bearer, is both. What a wonderful opportunity and responsibility!

A national working group has begun the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative to develop and disseminate resources and guidelines which will assist Catholic elementary and secondary school teachers in integrating elements of Catholic Identity into curriculum and instruction based on the Common Core State Standards. As more dioceses adopt the Common Core, this will be an invaluable resource in maintaining the Catholic Identity of the school and its curriculum. For more information please go on to www.catholicschoolstandards.org and follow the link to the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative.

An integrated curriculum can truly be the force that unites the intent of the Common Core, the entire teaching/learning process and the renewed commitment for Catholic school educators to intentionally integrate Catholic Identity throughout their curriculum. None of this happens by chance; it is the result of a well-crafted plan.

I offer the following considerations in your collaborative efforts to enhance teaching and learning in the Archdiocese of Hartford:

- 1) Create opportunities for Catholic school educators to be supported in and consistently informed of their roles as teachers and witnesses. This consideration carries with it not only a well-crafted professional development program within a vibrant faith community; it also includes the time, setting, resources and budget to make it happen. Think strategically around schedules and creatively around resources.

- 2) Enable teachers to meet vertically with teachers of connecting grades and horizontally with teachers of the same grade. Since many Catholic elementary schools have only one class per grade, this can be a challenge, albeit, a worthy one. In addition to in-person meetings, online tools (such as Skype) and teacher-created virtual networks should be explored to assist with this goal.
- 3) Raise the consciousness of teachers and administrators to the fact that curriculum is ripe with opportunities to integrate Gospel values into the Common Core and into their local curriculum. Provide information to teachers on the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative template which will guide their unit planning with the Common Core to include the integration of Catholic Identity. This template can be accessed at www.catholicschoolstandards.org.
- 4) View your locally developed curriculum with the lens of a gap analysis comparing it with the content, instruction and assessment of the Common Core and that of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Sample questions would include:
 - a. Mastery of content was and is not now sufficient. Do we need to use different content or the same content differently?
 - b. Are our instructional strategies based on a desire to promote knowledge, skills and understanding in an environment of inquiry, problem-solving and integrated Gospel teachings?
 - c. Do our classroom environment, instruction and grading practices have to change to reflect the pursuit of deeper understanding?
 - d. Designing instruction is complex and time-consuming. Can we create comprehensive, school-wide strategies utilizing a common vocabulary to assist in operationalizing and institutionalizing teaching and learning in a Catholic school faith community?
 - e. Does the variety of evidence that we design allow the opportunity for every child to prove his/her level of understanding?
 - f. Do we promote the skills necessary for success in a technology-savvy world?
 - g. Have we increased the complexity of expectations throughout the grades?
- 5) Grading policies never seem to keep pace with classroom and school assessments. Find ways, including a robust effort at school-wide rubrics, to link grades with the vast array of assessment protocols that are integral to student achievement and to career and college readiness.

- 6) Inspect what you expect.
- 7) Build a school and network capacity to sustain these efforts.
- 8) Look critically at what each level of leadership needs to make this happen.

While I began with Mark Twain, I'd like to end with Confucius who believed that teaching and learning stimulate one another. We can be good teachers only if we have an understanding of learning. We can be good Catholic school teachers only if we have an understanding of the person of Jesus who left us this message: "Let the little children come to me" (Mark 19:14). Make no mistake about it. Our vocation as Catholic school teachers, learners and witnesses is embodied in a good Catholic school that focuses on academic excellence and the Gospel message. We need to tend to both.

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Operational Vitality

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The Operational Vitality Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford (Standards 11-14) call for collaboration and planning in order to achieve financial viability through enhanced institutional advancement efforts and effective human resource management. Both research and experience suggest that operational vitality and, indeed, long-term viability are enhanced by the following:

- I. There is clarity with regard to the **roles and responsibilities** of ownership, governance, and administration.
- II. **Collaborative efforts** are encouraged and carried out among pastors, board members, diocesan officials, school administrators, faculty, support staff, parents, and volunteers.
- III. There are clearly written and well-promulgated **school foundational documents** including statements of philosophy, mission, vision, and a profile of the graduate at graduation.
- IV. A **strategic long-range plan** has been prepared with the active involvement of board members, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and benefactors, and implementation and monitoring policies and procedures are in place.
- V. **Operational plans** have been created to support the strategic long-range plan in areas of enrollment, finance, institutional advancement, marketing and communication, instructional delivery, technology, and student life.
- VI. **Professional development** is appropriately designed and carried out for administrators, faculty, and staff based upon the school's foundational documents and strategic and operational plans.

Among questions to be addressed as participants discuss and formulate strategies to implement the standards and benchmarks, I would suggest the following:

I. Is there clarity with regard to the roles and responsibilities of ownership, governance, and administration?

1. Are the roles of the Diocese clear with regard to the office of the superintendent of schools and the Diocesan fiscal office?
2. Has the pastor made his role clear?
3. Do the pastor and principal meet on a weekly basis with a prepared agenda?
4. Is the pastor supportive of the principal?
5. Does the pastor participate in administrator performance evaluation based on policies, procedures, and forms provided by the superintendent of schools?
6. Is the school board well populated?
7. Does the Diocese provide annual in-service training for board members with regard to roles, responsibilities and functioning?
8. Are the standing committees of the board established, appropriately “charged,” and well-populated?
9. Does the principal have a clear job description?
10. Is the principal’s annual performance evaluation based upon the job description?
11. Does the principal develop and promulgate annual goals for himself/herself?
12. Does the principal work collaboratively with the school board and pastor?

II. Are collaborative efforts encouraged and carried out among pastors, board members, Diocesan officials, school administrators, faculty, support staff, parents, and volunteers?

1. Is there a climate of collaboration evident?
2. Does the principal empower parents and board members to become involved in appropriate areas in school life?
3. Does the board meet on a regular basis with the pastor and principal?
4. Does the principal communicate effectively with teachers, parents, and other major constituencies?

III. Are there clearly written and well-promulgated school foundational documents including statements of philosophy, mission, vision, and a profile of the graduate at graduation?

1. Does the school have a well-written and promulgated statement of philosophy that discusses what the school is called “to be” as an educational institutional that seeks to integrate elements of Catholic faith with learning?
2. Does the school have a clear mission statement that positions the school within an appropriate environment and differentiates the school from other schools in close proximity?
3. Does the principal publish and regularly refer to a statement of vision that describes the ideal that could be achieved several years into the future?

4. Is there a clearly written profile of the graduate at graduation that describes key characteristics of the graduate in terms of academic preparation, spiritual formation, technological competency, communication, readiness for further education, ...?

IV. Has a strategic plan been developed in each school with active involvement of board members, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and benefactors?

1. Is there a clear strategic planning process and protocol?
2. Have appropriate inputs been sought?
3. Do we have an effective implementation and monitoring process for our strategic goals?

V. Are there clear guidelines for operational planning to support our strategic goals?

1. Enrollment
2. Finance
3. Institutional Advancement
4. Marketing
5. Internal and external communication
6. Instructional delivery
7. Technology
8. Student life

VI. Are professional development programs appropriately designed and carried out for administrators, faculty, and staff based upon the school's foundational documents and strategic and operational plans?

1. Is there a long-range professional development plan for the school?
2. Is the professional development plan tied directly to the strategic plan?
3. Are annual professional development goals set and monitored for administrators and staff?
4. Are professional development goals considered as part of the performance appraisal process?

Admittedly, the above are “high level” Operational Vitality characteristics. While we could spend time discussing the specifics of a tuition policy, financial assistance, or annual fund or capital campaign goals, I believe that the above are initially more important to the long-term viability and sustainability of Catholic schools. This Forum is an opportunity to challenge ourselves and stretch toward the exciting new horizon of 2020.

On a final note, long-term operational vitality for Catholic schools depends, in large part, on a proactive position by the office of the superintendent of schools with Catholic schools within his jurisdiction. A planned program of regular visits with school administrators and board members by representatives of the superintendent (either paid staff or professional consultants) helps to ensure both effective planning and monitoring of key metrics.

Mission Formation and Evangelization

An excellent Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Hartford:

Standard 1 is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that is consistent with the Archdiocese’s *Purpose and Vision for Catholic School Education* statement.

Benchmarks:

- 1.1 The leader/leadership team and the local school board ensure that the mission statement includes the commitment to Catholic identity.
- 1.2 The local school board and the leader/leadership team use the mission statement as the foundation and normative reference for all planning.
- 1.3 All constituents know, understand, and advance the mission of the school.

Standard 2 understands itself as a center of evangelization and catechesis for teachers, students and their families.

Benchmarks:

- 2.1 The leadership teams, faculty and local school boards educate the Catholic community to an awareness that Catholic schools are integral to the transmission of the faith and the evangelizing mission of the Church and local parish.
- 2.2 The leader/leadership team provides opportunities for parents to grow in the knowledge and practice of the faith.
- 2.3 The leadership and faculty engage in on-going formation in faith, the Catholic intellectual tradition and teachings of the Church in order to advance the mission of the school more effectively.
- 2.4 The leader/leadership team and faculty assist parents and guardians in their role as the primary educators of their children in faith.

Standard 3 provides opportunities for faith formation and action in service of social justice.

Benchmarks:

- 3.1 Every administrator, faculty, and staff member visibly supports the faith life of the school community.
- 3.2 Every student is offered timely and regular opportunities to learn about and experience the nature and importance of personal and communal prayer, the Eucharist, liturgy and age-appropriate retreats and other spiritual experiences.
- 3.3 Every student participates in Christian service programs to promote social justice.
- 3.4 All adults in the school community are invited to participate in Christian service programs to promote social justice.

Leadership and Governance

An excellent Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Hartford:

Standard 4: has a governance structure that recognizes, respects and collaborates with the appropriate and legitimate authorities.

Benchmarks:

- 4.1 The local school board, representing the diversity of stakeholders, functions according to its approved constitution and by-laws.
- 4.2 The local school board, in accord with its constitutions and by-laws, maintains a relationship with the canonical administrator (Archbishop or his designee, pastor or sponsoring religious congregation) that is marked by shared responsibility and participatory decision-making that respects the canonical administrator's legitimate authority.
- 4.3 The local school board, in accord with its constitutions and by-laws maintains a constructive and beneficial relationship with the school leader/leadership team marked by mutual trust, close cooperation and continuing dialogue.

Standard 5: has a local school board that exercises responsible decision making in collaboration with the canonical administrator and the school's leadership team for the development and oversight of the school's fidelity to mission, standards of excellence and operational vitality.

Benchmarks:

- 5.1 The local school board systematizes the policies of the school's operations to ensure fidelity to mission, and continuity and sustainability through leadership successions.
- 5.2 The local school board 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: has a qualified school leader/leadership team responsible for realizing and implementing the school's mission and vision guided by a strategic plan.

Benchmarks:

- 6.1 The leader/leadership team meets national, state and/or Archdiocesan 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 school culture that embodies the mission and vision.
- 6.3 The leader/leadership team establishes and supports networks of collaboration at all levels within the school community to advance excellence.
- 6.4 The leader/leadership team works in collaboration with the local school board to provide an infrastructure of programs and services that ensures the operational vitality of the school.
- 6.5 The leader/leadership team, in collaboration with the local school board, assumes responsibility for communicating new initiatives and/or changes to school programs to all constituents.

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

An excellent Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Hartford:

Standard 7: has a qualified principal/president and a leadership team empowered to guide instructional practices and curricular programs and provide opportunities aligned with the mission to enrich the academic program and support the development of student and family life.

Benchmarks:

- 7.1 The leader/leadership team takes responsibility for the development and oversight of personnel, including recruitment, professional formation including spiritual formation, professional growth, and community building, and formal assessment of faculty and staff compliance with archdiocesan policies and/or religious congregation.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 School-wide programs for families provide opportunities for them to partner with school leaders, faculty, and other parents to enhance the educational experiences for the school community.
- 7.4 Wellness programs, behavior management programs, and ancillary services provide the necessary support for students to successfully complete the school program.
- 7.5 Co-curricular, extra-curricular and service 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.

Standard 8: has a clearly articulated rigorous college and career-ready academic curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century fluencies, and Gospel values, implemented through instructional best practices and enhanced by effective use of technology.

Benchmarks:

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 The faculty and professional support staff meet archdiocesan, state, and/or national requirements for academic preparation and licensing to ensure their capacity to provide effective curriculum and instruction.

- 8.6 Faculty and staff engage in high quality professional development, including religious formation, and are accountable for implementation that supports student learning.

Standard 9: provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, diversity and life.

Benchmarks:

- 9.1 Religious education curriculum and instruction meets the religious education requirements and standards of the archdiocese.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 Faculty who teach religion meet archdiocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification to provide effective religion curriculum and instruction.

Standard 10: uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document students learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.

Benchmarks:

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 Criteria used to evaluate student work and the reporting mechanisms are valid, consistent, transparent, and justly administered.

Operational Vitality

An excellent Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Hartford:

Standard 11: collaboratively, with the local school board and leader/leadership team, generates a strategic plan encompassing all aspects of school operations.

Benchmark:

- 11.1 The local school board, in consultation with the Office of Catholic Schools and/or sponsoring religious congregation, takes corrective action in a timely manner in the event of a deviation from the plan.

Standard 12: collaboratively, with the local school board and leader/leadership team develops a comprehensive financial plan and ensures that it is implemented using current and effective business practices as a means of providing good stewardship of resources.

Benchmarks:

- 12.1 The local school board and leadership team publishes and disseminates a financial report on the status of the school on an annual basis.
- 12.2 The school's facilities, equipment, and technology management plan include objectives to support the delivery of the educational program of the school and its accessibility for all students.
- 12.3 The school's purchasing, and physical and technological improvements are aligned with the mission, strategic plan and curricular goals, are and consistent with good stewardship.

Standard 13: engages the broad support of the entire Catholic community in an institutional advancement program that is driven by a compelling mission.

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 local school board to review and the school leader/leadership team to supervise annual and continuous measurement and analysis of both enrollment and retention patterns and takes proactive actions when necessary.
- 13.3 The development plan includes strategies to identify, grow and maintain significant funding prospects.

Standard 14: operates in accord with the published human resource management policies of the Archdiocese of Hartford and/or sponsoring religious congregation.

Benchmarks:

- 14.1 Human resource management observes appropriate and effective best practices.
- 14.2 Human resource policies delineate standards for all position descriptions, hiring practices, compensation, and benefits, as well as standards for professional development, accountability, succession planning and retirement.
- 14.3 Human resources management includes the provision of professional development opportunities for all positions in the school.

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