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ABSTRACT

This book is the third volume in a series that challenges all Catholic educators to create a dialogue on the future of Catholic elementary/middle schools. The volume's 18 essays were written by members of the 1998 National Catholic Elementary/Middle School Principals Academy. Some of these brief chapters provide a vision of what a Catholic school should be like in the 21st century. Other essays describe a process that the authors' implemented to revitalize their schools or to introduce a new program. Some of the topics addressed in the book include the interparish school concept and fund raising, challenges facing Catholic school educators, Catholicity, a Catholic school graduate, tackling a curriculum guide for the 21st century, looking to the past to determine the future of Catholic schools, Catholic elementary schools in 2010, a vision of the Catholic school for the 21st century, the revitalization of schools, helping each other, serving the needs of early adolescents in a K-8 Catholic school, and parental involvement. It is hoped that through sharing these ideas and programs educators will find the ideas helpful in planning an effective educational program. The essays include: (1) "The Interparish School Concept: A Creative Approach to Funding" (Elaine Baumgartner); (2) "Are Catholic Schools Providing Just Wages for Teachers?" (Pamela Byrd); (3) "Tackling a Curriculum Guide for the 21st Century" (Barbara E. Leek); (4) "Our Catholic Elementary Schools in 2010" (Thomas McKenna); and (5) "A Secret to Success: Parental Involvement" (Anita J. Westerhaus). (RJM)

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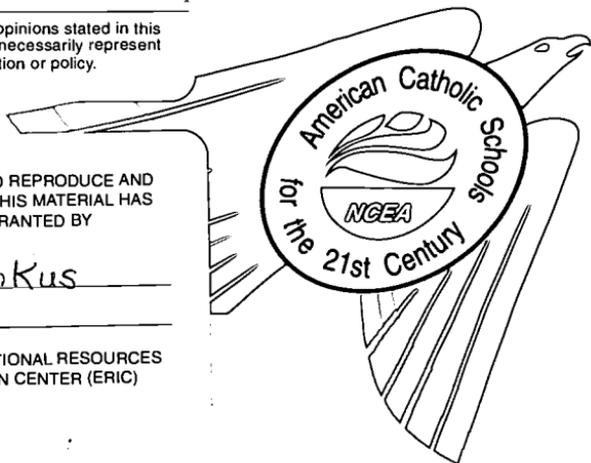
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Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association

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**American Catholic Schools
for the 21st Century:**

**Reflections on the Future of
American Catholic
Elementary Schools**

Volume 3

**Robert J. Kealey, Ed.D., Editor
Executive Director
Department of Elementary Schools**



**National Catholic Educational Association
Washington, D.C.**

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PREFACE

This is the third volume in this series. This three-year program seeks to create a dialogue on the future of Catholic elementary/middle schools. The approach of the new millennium offers all of us a time to review where we are and make firm plans for the future. However, we need not do this planning in a vacuum. One of the functions of NCEA is to share successful ideas among the membership so all can benefit from what one school has done. This sharing of ideas illustrates the fact that Catholic schools across the nation form a community.

The authors of the essays in this volume were the members of the 1998 National Catholic Elementary/Middle School Principals Academy. Participants at the principals' academy always state that the most valuable aspect of the academy is the opportunity to share ideas and listen to other principals. By writing these essays these principals are sharing their ideas with the larger Catholic school community. Some of the principals elected to provide a vision of what they believe a Catholic school or one aspect of it should be like in this new century. You may agree or disagree with the ideal they described. This is what makes this book a dialogue. Other principals have described a process that they implemented to revitalize their school or to introduce a new program. This is what makes this book a sharing.

If you are challenged to vision the future of Catholic school education or if you decide to take steps to change a particular aspect of your school, this book will be successful in its intent. You are encouraged to share with the editor your reactions to what you read, your vision for the future, or how you implemented a new program. These may find themselves in a future NCEA publication of similar style.

The NCEA Department of Elementary Schools thanks the authors for their willingness to take part in this national dialogue on the future of Catholic schools. It expresses its gratitude to Sr. Ann Sciannella, SND de N, who typed the original manuscript and Tara McCallum who did the copy editing of the text. Both of these are members of the staff of the department. Finally it expresses its gratitude to Beatrice Ruiz of NCEA's computer graphics department who designed the cover and laid out the book.

The Department of Elementary Schools offers this book to its members with the hope that they will find it helpful in planning an effective educational program for a new millennium.

Dr. Jim Brennan
President

Dr. Robert J. Kealey
Executive Director

Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association
Feast of the Birth of St. John the Baptist

THE INTERPARISH SCHOOL CONCEPT: A CREATIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL FUNDING

The city was growing to the west. The parish and school were located in the eastern, older section of the city. The parish, once the home of large families with many school-age children, was now populated with older people, many of whom were empty-nesters or retirees. The school, being the only Catholic school in the city and the surrounding area, had many students from the other three churches within the city. Even with the three-tiered tuition system (parishioner, nonparishioner, and non-Catholic), the parish struggled with the financial burden of the school. Tuition increases, in addition to the distance of the school caused financial difficulties.

The scenario above is not surprising to any involved in Catholic education prior to the nineties. Many Catholic schools facing these problems closed their doors, and a Catholic education—so important to the growth of our church—was lost to those who sometimes needed it most. Priests and dedicated religious women in all areas of the country, determined to continue the great tradition of affordable Catholic education, found solutions to these situations. St. Patrick Interparish School in Gainesville, Florida, is one such success story.

St Pat's, established in 1959, is still the only Catholic school in the Gainesville area. In the late seventies, the enrollment soared to 320 (40 students per class in grades 1-8). Gradually, with the population moving west, enrollment began decreasing, and concern for the financial stability of the school increased proportionately.

Recognizing the trend toward early education, and hoping to add numbers, a kindergarten class was added in 1983, followed by a pre-kindergarten in 1986. During this time, creative solutions for keeping the school operating without causing undue hardship on St. Patrick Parish were being considered. The fact that so many children came to St. Pat's from the other parishes and that those parishes had no schools gave impetus to the idea of our school being supported by all the Gainesville churches. As discussion and organization of this new concept grew, enrollment continued to increase in the lower grades, and a step in faith was made with a commitment to add two kindergarten rooms and enlarge the library in 1988. Each year as our double class advanced, portables were added and much talk was given to building an addition. At this point, all parishes were involved with financial assistance to the school, and a structural reorganization was needed to assure guidance at the spiritual and educational levels.

*THE INTERPARISH SCHOOL CONCEPT:
A CREATIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL FUNDING*

In 1995, a new building opened with six middle-school classrooms (one being a science lab), a computer lab, a gymnasium, a lunchroom, and assorted offices. The school has seen continued growth, with enrollment of 550 students in pre-kindergarten to grade 8 in fall 1998. The four parishes continue to cooperate in the operation of the school, and the pastors meet with the school advisory board and meet regularly among themselves. This interparish concept not only has been the salvation of one Catholic school but has added a depth of cooperation and collaboration among the Catholic community in Gainesville.

*Elaine Baumgartner, M.A., principal, St. Patrick Interparish School,
Gainesville, Florida*

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS

Nearly 25 years after her death, I can see her clearly, even now. Always neat in appearance, with soft, curly, reddish-gray hair, a beak of a nose covered with freckles, and a beautiful, sweet smile that even today, when I think of it, warms my heart. She was my next-door neighbor as I was growing up in a small rural town in Indiana. In the 86th year of her life, when I was still an impressionable 19 years of age, I remember the symbols of those qualities she possessed that made such an impact upon my life: *generosity* - a small black purse with two compartments, one containing money for her day-to-day living expenses and the other containing money for God's use; *reverence* - a small TV table set and prepared on a Sunday afternoon with food that had been prepared the day before so her hands would remain idle on the "day of rest"; *dedication* - an old, '49 Plymouth loaded with eight neighborhood children making the Sunday morning journey to the community church; *wisdom* - a sweet smile on her face when she asked to see our hands when we arrived in costume on Halloween and the laughter we shared when we finally caught on and learned to wear gloves so she would not guess our identity; *charisma* (gift of God's grace) - the tears in her eyes when four Christmas trees arrived on her doorstep because no one wanted to see her go without. So many wonderful qualities she possessed! Since her death, there is rarely a day that goes by when she does not come to mind. Mrs. Pearce was the best teacher I ever had, and she never sat behind a desk in any classroom. If only our students could all have the chance to know a Mrs. Pearce in their life.

The biggest challenges facing Catholic school educators in the new millennium will be teaching our children the importance of living their faith, finding a way to make religion "a take-home experience," and continuing to model the master teacher, Jesus.

The associate pastor of our parish challenged parents to teach their children to live their life with integrity. The dictionary defines integrity as the quality or state of being complete, whole, of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity. One small woman certainly taught me about dignity and integrity, and it made religion for me a take-home experience.

In order to instill in our students a sense of integrity, of wholeness, we must first plant the seed of faith in their hearts and minds. I remember complaining once to our pastor about so many of our children leaving the

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS

Church during their teenage years. His reply was so simple, but it meant so much to me: “God said you have to catch the fish; he didn’t say you had to clean them.” Our job is to plant the seed and to place our faith in God that the seed will be nurtured and will grow. Creating service opportunities for our youth and allowing them to experience firsthand the satisfaction received while helping neighbors in need are among the many ways we can nurture the seed of faith.

Catholic schools have been successful in the 20th century because we have sought ways to implement the Gospel values throughout our curriculum, school, parish, and community. The plan of action begins with establishing goals and developing a mission that encompasses those goals and assures the school of a God-centered educational environment. According to Richard M. Jacobs, OSA, in his *The Grammar of Catholic Schooling* (National Catholic Educational Association, 1998), finding the right administrator, one who can establish a strong sense of purpose and can lead others (students, teachers, staff, and parents) to share the school’s purpose, is essential.

Involved parents, and students engaged in the learning process, will open the door for technological advancements within the school. I once read an article that stated that more money needs to be spent on playground equipment than on computers for the classroom. I would have to disagree, especially as we enter the 21st century. Students are becoming increasingly engaged in the learning process. Our Catholic schools still emphasize the basics. Technology is not a step away from the basics, but a way to enhance the basics. Global information is now available to our students at the press of a button. No longer will our educational arena be confined to inside the four walls of a classroom. Our children will be challenged to open their hearts and minds to all.

The need for children to be able to converse in a foreign language is becoming more and more a necessity. Bringing the study of foreign languages to the elementary level will enable children, by the time they reach the middle-school years, to converse in a second language. Technology is no longer a tool for the trained professionals; it has become a tool for us all. New strides in writing across the curriculum have been made through the use of word processing, database, and spreadsheet options. While understanding the current trend of bringing computers to the classroom and the advantages it brings, I would still discourage the

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disbanding of computer labs. I see opportunities for teachers to schedule lab time for classrooms to enable students to make use of reference materials readily available via the computer.

The 21st century will be an incredible journey for our youth. I only wish I could be there at the end of that century to see firsthand what incredible strides will have been made. I place my faith in our youth. They are the only hope we have, and I pray they are ready for the challenges that await them.

Kathy E. Boice, M.S., principal, Resurrection Parish School, Jacksonville, Florida

ARE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PROVIDING JUST WAGES FOR TEACHERS?

For generations, men and women of religious communities have served the Catholic elementary schools in the United States. It was not uncommon for a religious order to accept the responsibility of staffing a parish school and for the entire faculty to include men and women who belonged to that particular religious order (Griesgraber, 1998).

Vatican Council II has changed the thinking of the Catholic Church in many different aspects. One aspect of this change has been the rethinking of the roles for priests and nuns. As a result, nuns have been leaving their ministry of teaching in the parochial schools for other ministries. Catholic schools have had to pay higher salaries for lay teachers and lay principals. This chain reaction has led to the closing of many parochial schools nationwide (Schoppmeyer, 1992). Vatican II also has given parents the right to choose the appropriate education for their children. This right differs completely from the mandate in 1884 by the Council of Baltimore, which told parents they had to send their children to Catholic schools.

Over the last decade, there has been an explosion of new students in Catholic schools. Schools that once had empty classrooms are filled to the brim with students. It is not unusual for Catholic schools to have large waiting lists. New schools are opening all over the country. The total number of Catholic schools in 1993 was 8,293, whereas that total number in 1998 was 8,300. This increased student enrollment in the new Catholic elementary schools reflects high interest from the Catholic community. A 12 percent increase in the numbers of school-age children enrolling in Catholic schools has been projected for 1992-1993 to 2003-2004. Reasons for this projected increase include (a) migration of families from the northern states to the southeastern and southern states; (b) the public's continued general dissatisfaction with the public school; (c) migration of the Catholic population to the suburbs, where there have not been any Catholic schools; (d) expressed concern of parents of school-age children about the secular trends in society and their desire to provide a value-based education for their children; (e) a conservative trend in this country that has led to increased interest by parents in spiritual values and a desire for a more Christ-centered education for their children; (f) a stronger economy in recent years, giving parents the opportunity to afford Catholic education; and (g) a national campaign by the National Catholic Educational Association for marketing Catholic schools (Meitler, 1996).

The National Catholic Educational Association reports that in 1997-98,

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regard to its own practices, possessions, and style of life. "The bishops commit themselves to paying a just wage for all church employees. For this they will need the support of all the baptized, not just the users of services or staff members" (p. 197).

There are those who think that it is just to give a teacher a contract with a salary agreement that is well below salaries in the same area simply because a contractual agreement has been fulfilled. My opinion is that this justice is inadequate; therefore, according to our faith, this practice is wrong. There are dioceses/cities that have a salary schedule the Catholic schools must adhere to in their teacher contracts. Many of these schools could pay substantially higher teacher salaries because of the financial solvency of the parishes, but they do not. There are those who think that since most of our teachers are women, they have an income from their spouse. This also is not just. Everyone has a right to a living wage.

According to income eligibility guidelines for the National School Lunch Program, in a family of four, the children can receive free lunch with a family income of \$21,385 or receive reduced-price lunch with a family income of \$30,433. Statistics from the *Balance Sheet for Catholic Elementary Schools: 1997 Income and Expenses* (Kealey, 1998) show that teachers in government-controlled schools earned an average salary of \$39,580 for the 1996-97 school year. The average salary of a Catholic elementary school lay teacher with a bachelor's degree and higher degrees was \$21,882, or 55 percent of the average salary of a teacher in a government-run school, according to the report.

"Salaries also differed in 1996-97 according to the geographic region in which the schools are located. Catholic elementary schools in the West/Far West paid the highest average salary in the country, \$23,840, almost \$2,400 more than the national norm. Schools in the Plains states paid the lowest average salary, \$19,480, about \$2,400 less than the national norm. The other regions paid close to the national norm" (Kealey, 1998, p. 21).

According to Almade (1990), "Indeed, the Church should be exemplary. There should be nothing grudging on the part of pastors and church administrators. People engaged in the ministry of works of the church, whether lay faithful, religious, or clergy, whether janitors, musicians, parish priests, or skilled administrators, deserve to have their dignity upheld in concrete actions, by visible structures. Receiving a just wage is foundational to upholding dignity" (p. 201).

ARE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PROVIDING JUST WAGES FOR TEACHERS?

there were 2,648,850 students in Catholic schools. Although there are 760 fewer schools than there were in 1986, there are over 25,000 more students in our Catholic schools. In the past 10 years, 140 new schools have been opened.

Unfortunately, Catholic schools are notorious for paying teachers less than their public-school peers. The excuses, whether valid or invalid, run from “It’s your duty as a Catholic/Christian to earn less money as a teacher in a Catholic school” to “There is not enough money in the parish to subsidize better salaries.” I realize that there are some parishes that struggle just to keep their doors open, but there are many who can afford to pay 100 percent of their local public-school salaries. The question is, “Why don’t we?”

What is a just wage? According to *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, “a just wage is remuneration for work that allows workers to support themselves and their families in human dignity. A just wage is a compensation package that includes monetary payments, benefits, vacation and personal days, health insurance, and so forth” (Dwyer, 1994, pp. 491-492).

A just wage is rooted in the basics of our Catholic religion. Catholic school teachers deserve fair remuneration to support their families. Pope John Paul II affirms the centrality of the dignity of human work and of workers in socioeconomic systems in his commemoration of the 100th anniversary of *Rerum novarum* (Dwyer, 1994).

As explained in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, in the encyclical *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II stresses the opportunities for “co-creation” with God through human work. John Paul states that labor has priority over capital because capital is the result of human work. The just wage, therefore, is central to social ethics. The just wage secures a fair relationship between teachers and parishes.

Justice goes beyond fairness, however. According to the Golden Rule, fairness is not simply a disengaged objectivity such as one brings to aesthetic judgment, but rather it is an impartial concern for all people, patterned after one’s concern for oneself and all of God’s children (*Welcome to the Catholic Church*, 1996).

Almade (1990) states that the 1971 Synod of Bishops document on *Justice in the World* supports a critical self-examination of justice of the Church in

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There are many schools, mine included, that pay extremely fair wages and strive to keep up with the public schools in their area. These schools believe that Catholic school teachers are deserving of a just wage, and it is their Christian/Catholic duty to uphold the Church's teachings that have been handed down for centuries. I challenge all pastors and school board members in Catholic schools to develop a plan to increase Catholic school teachers' wages. The ultimate goal is 100 percent. It may take 10 or 20 years, but at least it is a plan.

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CHALLENGE AND CHANGE

As I reflect upon the future of Catholic education, two words continually come to mind—challenge and change. With challenge and change comes a vision of faith and hope. On the threshold of the third millennium, education faces new challenges. Rapid structural changes, profound technical innovations, and the globalization of the economy affect human life more and more throughout the world. We have witnessed change in the past and will continue to do so in the future. We cannot become stagnant but must move ahead to insure a better future for those who come to follow. Our legacy is one of technological endeavors and dreams for a better tomorrow.

What are some of the challenges and changes that must be dealt with in the Catholic educational realm? First, surely one sees the family structure as crucial to the Church and to society at large. Without it, the world would be in turmoil and war. Being created in the image and likeness of God and baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we share in the relationship of God's unselfish love. The ultimate purpose of Catholic education, therefore, is to encourage human growth in that type of unselfish love that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have for one another. It will be up to principals, teachers, and parents alike to collaborate in establishing ways to keep families together in order to develop a relationship of love and caring.

Traditionally, parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education. The Catholic school does not usurp the role of the parents but assists and guides the parents in forming their children as children of God. In addition to teaching the secular subjects of math, reading, science, social studies, and the arts, it is the privilege of the Catholic school teacher to help parents with the moral and spiritual training of their children. The children in a Catholic school environment, therefore, are immersed in an educational culture that is Catholic. Teachers, by their very modeling of the faith, provide an atmosphere of love and community. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* states, "The more completely an educator can give witness to the model of the ideal person that is being presented to the students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated. For it will then be seen as something reasonable and worthy of being lived, something concrete and realizable" (#32). The future of Catholic education is therefore deeply rooted in partnership. It will be the role of the school to constantly seek out innovative ways in partnering with the parents to form and establish a community of believers.

CHALLENGE AND CHANGE

Secondly, the world is engaged in rapid advances in communication technologies. New paradigms are emerging. Virtual communities, customized knowledge banks, and virtual experiences provide shifts in communication for educators to consider. Along with these new technological advances comes the concern for finding ways to finance the technological advances as well as the means to provide the training and support needed to implement such changes in the methods of instruction. While technological gains are being made, the educator needs to be alert to the fads and thus be able to differentiate between what is necessary for the advancement of education and what may be the downfall of the educational system.

Technology must be used as a tool and not become a god in itself. No computer can suffice for receiving hands-on experience, taking a field trip, reading a book, watching a beautiful sunset, or listening to a live symphony. In addition to being exposed to life experiences, the human mind needs to be challenged to memorize, calculate, make decisions, comprehend, and perform the fundamental tasks associated with reading, writing, and mathematics. It must be remembered that in educating the child, it is a disservice if the whole child is not taken into consideration. In looking to the future, one needs to build upon the past.

Lastly, one of the most evident challenges facing the Catholic school system is a crisis of values. This crisis assumes the forms, often exalted by the media, of subjectivism, moral relativism, and nihilism. Community identity is undermined, and behavior patterns are so opposed to one another that man is almost robbed of human dignity. "The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching; this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school," says John Paul II in his 1991 *Address to the First National Meeting of the Catholic School in Italy*. In committing itself to the development of the whole man, the Catholic school does so in the awareness that all human values find their fulfillment and unity in Christ.

The challenges facing Catholic education today are unmatched in American history. Confusion prevails regarding the role of the teacher in the context of the Catholic school as well as in a changing society. Family structures and societal pressures impinge upon the lives of our students as never before. Heavy burdens are placed on the shoulders of those who lead the educational world into the 21st century. Faith and hope endure,

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and they will be virtues of strength and gifts of grace to guide us in meeting these challenges. It will be the work of the prophets to envision the future and the work of the educators to fulfill the mission of teaching all nations.

Susan M. Clark, M.S., principal, St. Vincent de Paul School, Hanover, Pennsylvania

CATHOLICITY: OUR CENTERING FORCE

The 21st century—for some, the thought of it brings a sense of excitement, for others, a sense of foreboding. The fact remains, it is on our doorstep, and we as educators need to plan now for welcoming it into our schools.

We already live with the precursor of this new age in the form of computers. One hundred years ago, our forbears had trouble dealing with the notion of talking to someone not in the same room; today we talk with people not on the same planet. Though we must put our energies into enhancing our technological programs to ensure that all our students will be sufficiently competent in the use of computers and all that they preclude, we must not lose our focus: Catholicity must remain our centering force.

In the December 15, 1997, issue of *Newsweek*, guest editor Ronald Dahl pointed out, “Our fast-paced lives lead kids to seek ever bigger thrills with ever decreasing satisfaction.” Today’s teen is turning in ever-increasing numbers to the Internet to get away from parental prying eyes. The Internet is a place where teens now do and say things that would normally bring detention or a month’s loss of privileges.

So, what will be our role as Catholic educators in the next century? It will be the same as it has always been. The message of Pope John Paul II spoken in the Basilica of St. John’s in St. John’s, Newfoundland, on September 2, 1984, is today’s message: “Our world searches for a new sense of meaning and coherence. A Catholic school through the ministry of Catholic teachers is a privileged place for the development and communication of a world view rooted in the meaning of creation and redemption. You are called, dear educators and parents, to create those schools which will transmit the values which you would hand on to those who will come after you.” Catholic schools can provide young people with insights and spiritual incentives that are badly needed in a materialistic and fragmented world. Catholic schools speak of the meaning of life, of values, and of faith that makes for a meaningful life.

Today’s students, more than at any other time in the history of mankind, need such a moral touchstone to guide them. We need to be that touchstone. Let’s get on the technology bandwagon, but let’s bring along our Catholic teachings to lead the way.

Anne M. Donovan, B.A., principal, St. Mary’s Academy, Hoosick Falls,

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

“Ms. Henninger, I got baptized, now can I go to communion? My dad said it was okay.” Eight-year-old Rachel had come to me as principal first thing in the morning to get permission. She was so excited. Since second grade I had had conversations with her about the Eucharist and her ineligibility to “go to communion” at mass. As I continued our conversation, Rachel implored me for permission. She had been baptized in the Baptist faith over the weekend. It was difficult for me to explain the difference of faith to one so young, but Rachel surprised me when she added, “But only here can I receive Jesus at mass, the bread and wine. Jesus will be a part of me.” Oh, the faith of one so young! She had had the same instruction as all our other students and believed as they did.

Eventually, after more discussions with Rachel and her dad, we all agreed that Rachel could decide for sure which faith to embrace when she was “18 and grown up.” Periodically Rachel will give me a hug and tell me, “When I’m 18.”

What is Catholic education about? It is about high academic achievement, good discipline, and service to the parish and the community, but most of all, it is about faith—Catholic faith. Every school has a story to tell about a child, a family, or a parent who converted to the Church or returned to the faith. The child does lead and leads well to the faith. The seeds are sown, and the Catholic school nurtures them.

Those of us who grew up in California elementary, secondary, and even college education are truly blessed. Many of us are now the leaders of the Church, religious and lay, and we are preparing the leaders of the future. Sometimes we become impatient, wanting results from the Catholic education quickly. Seeds germinate at their own rate, however, and all can be inconsistent, with results seen only years later when maturity is reached.

I have a bush on my side yard that I have nurtured and encouraged for over 10 years. Finally, last year (probably due to a frost-free spring) it bloomed. A joy to behold! Likewise, our children will mature and bloom.

The Catholic schools give our students a balance. We emphasize the basics of reading, writing, and math, with technology and content areas added on. The students’ days are filled. Their sights are set on the future—on university studies, jobs, careers, success. Here we differ little from other school systems. Our job is to root these seedlings in fertile soil, to

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root these future adults and leaders of the Church and of our nation in the faith of Jesus Christ.

It is encouraging to see a few of our graduates continue to serve in the parish in the many ministries. As part of our five-year plan, our school intends to more purposefully train our junior high students to assume an active role in the ministries and commissions of the parish, where feasible.

As a principal of a Catholic school looking to the third millennium, I struggle to keep our focus on our Catholic identity. Our seedlings must be nurtured, but we also need to educate and nurture the parents and parish about our value and importance to their future and to the future of the Catholic Church.

Mary E. Henninger, M.Ed., principal, St. Ann School, Cincinnati, Ohio

A CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE

It was 10 years ago that Sidney Morris graduated from Central Catholic Grade School in Anytown. He still keeps in touch with many of the graduates of his eighth-grade class, and he writes or E-mails several of them on a regular basis. Sidney is now a junior lawyer for a large law firm in Chicago. In addition to his regular duties at his firm, Sidney volunteers one afternoon a week at the Storefront Center as a legal counselor for the poor who live in an adjacent housing project. He offers his services free of charge. Sidney also has been an advocate for a group of elderly citizens fighting the Chicago Redevelopment Authority, which wants to demolish their block to build a freeway interchange. Sidney has met with the city council members and the mayor and has convinced them to look at several alternatives to tearing down the block.

Sidney recently bought a house only four blocks from All Saints Church and School. He and his wife felt that it was important to be near the parish because they have two children who are able to walk to the school every day. Sidney is now a member of the board of education, and his wife is an officer of the home and school association. A challenge facing All Saints School is the growing number of students of color who wish to enroll but cannot afford to pay tuition. To help ensure that all students who wish to attend All Saints can do so, Sidney has talked to several neighboring Knights of Columbus chapters regarding an Adopt-a-Student program. So far, over \$75,000 has been pledged by the different chapters to get this project off the ground.

Sidney and his wife recently established "family nights" in their home. On these nights, there are no outside-of-the-family activities planned, and the family always does something as a unit. Also, Sidney and his wife try to spend one evening a month away from the children. Their favorite place to stay is a small bed and breakfast in Wisconsin.

As a lawyer, one of Sidney's biggest concerns is that he will be forced into situations with various cases for which he will have to compromise his principles in order to win. Sidney prays about this on a daily basis, and he has consulted Church documents in several instances before taking a position. He is quickly coming to realize that he may have to quit his present firm and strike out on his own because of this dilemma. He and his wife worry about how they could financially do this, but they also trust that God will guide them to do the right thing.

Above all, Sidney is a man of hope who believes strongly in the Catholic faith, and he remains active in the sacraments. Beyond this,

however, he strongly believes that Catholics today must be countercultural, and he feels proud to call himself a Catholic when the Church takes an unpopular stand on issues such as the banning of land mines or abortion. Sidney makes a point of sharing his view of the Church with his children, in the hope that they will grow up to be Catholics who are loyal to the teachings of the Church and to the principles of social justice; in other words, Catholics who teach *and live* as Jesus did.

Thomas K. Joseph, Ed.S., principal, St. Joseph School, Rosemount, Minnesota

TACKLING A CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

No matter what buzzwords are being used in educational arenas, the fact remains that the curriculum is at the heart of any strong academic institution. Teachers graduating from colleges and universities today are being immersed in an understanding of the need for continuity in, and building of, the curriculum. Such was not the case for those teachers educated even 15 to 20 years ago. Every school is unique, as reflected in its mission statement. Common to every school, however, is the need for a strong curricular program that builds upon itself from year to year as students progress through the system. Although most state and local systems provide curriculum guides, it is the responsibility of the local school administration to provide the professional development necessary to ensure that teachers clearly understand the skills for which they are responsible. Teachers must also understand how what they teach broadens or sets the foundation for teachers at other grade levels in their buildings.

Our faculty has committed to accomplishing this goal, and so can yours. The interest and involvement of the entire faculty are needed to accomplish this awesome task. The project will make an excellent staff-development plan for a whole school year. The conversations will make even the best of teachers more proficient. Teachers will discover what skills are being covered at each grade level and what skills are being slighted. The strengths of the existing academic program will be identified, and its weaknesses will most certainly be uncovered. Teacher and student accountability will be increased. Curriculum questions will be able to be answered more clearly and concisely by all faculty members. In all probability, this project will lead to an increase in student achievement.

The first thing to do is to delve into the existing curriculum guidelines that are available through the state or the diocese. Many times these guidelines are written in a way that allows staff at each grade level to see what they are responsible for and little else. Agree upon an overarching goal for each subject area, and list the learning expectations. Rearrange the proficiencies so that the entire faculty can see how the skill builds from kindergarten through your highest grade level. Be sure to leave some blank spaces so that as a faculty you can add any items that are uniquely yours. Then decide how your faculty wants to identify responsibilities. A good system might be to indicate where each proficiency is introduced, concentrated, maintained, or mastered. On the next page is a sample grid for one social studies skill.

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Subject: Social Studies

Goal: The development of responsible citizenship based upon thinking and decision-making skills that allow students to

- a) gain knowledge
- b) process information
- c) consider the importance of values and beliefs
- d) actively participate in a democratic society

Proficiency Statement: Through learning opportunities leading to the development of thinking and decision-making skills, students should acquire the skill described below.

Skill: Identify themselves as unique individuals who interact with other individuals and with many groups, including family, school, nation, and the world.

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	Grade Level						
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Assess their unique qualities, and select qualities of others that make them unique individuals.	I	I C	C	M	M	M	M
Identify actions or feelings of others that are similar to or different from one's own.	I	C	C	M	C	C	C
List family members, and describe family relationships and roles.	I	C	C	C M	C M	M	C M
Recall name, home address, and state name of school, community, and nation.	I	C	C	C M	C M	M	C M
Assess their unique qualities and those of others.	I	C	C	C M	C M	M	C M
Analyze their feelings, and determine how they compare to the feelings of others.	I	C	C	C M	C M	M	C M
Describe how family members and friends provide for each other's needs for love and respect.	I	C	C	C M	C M	M	C M
Give examples of how people in the school and neighborhood depend on each other.	I	C	C	C M	C M	M	C M
Give their own name and address the name of the school, community, and nation.	I	C	C	C M	M	M	C M

- Introduce** The student sees the skills or concept for the first time.
- Concentrate** Emphasis is placed on teaching the skill or concept.
- Maintain** The skill or concept is reviewed to hold the student's level of knowledge.
- Mastered** The student is proficient at the skill or concept.

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Now, imagine each area of academia, multiply by all the necessary skills and individual proficiencies, and you will have some idea of the monumental task that lies before you. A portion of each faculty meeting, all your in-service days for the year, and a few additional hours will be needed to give this project the concentrated effort it deserves.

By the time you are finished, every teacher will claim ownership of their responsibilities in a way even they never dreamed. With this project, the faculty become more appreciative of each other and the challenges found at each level. Each one will have a more thorough understanding of the skills and proficiencies for their grade level. They will know what the teachers before and after them teach and how that relates to their own program. Every teacher, therefore, will have an overview of what the learning expectations are for graduates of your school.

Barbara E. Leek, M.S., principal, St. Christopher Catholic School, Indianapolis, Indiana

LOOK INTO THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

We cannot reflect on the future without looking to the past. What have we done in our Catholic schools in the past that makes us great? We have been striving to give our students an education that is intended to make their Catholic faith alive, conscious, and active. In today's society, that is especially critical because of the influences that constantly are trying to weaken our basic beliefs.

Teaching our students the fundamentals of their faith is our most important duty, whether it be the 19th, 20th, or 21st century. We must not become too bogged down in technology, new curricula, or educational fads that seem to be the craze of the year. Our public schools, especially those in the Midwest, are good educational institutions; academically, they cannot be faulted. What they do not have is the chance to allow students to experience learning and living integrated in the light of faith.

As Catholic administrators, we must call upon the members of our Catholic communities and ask them to do all they can to maintain and strengthen our Catholic schools. Only then can we continue to provide the institutions needed to educate our students academically and spiritually. We must integrate religious truths and values into everyday living.

Our Catholic schools must be unique in their commitment to the three-fold purpose of Christian education—to teach doctrine, to build community, and to serve. Catholic schools must also be contemporary, however, in order to enable students to use Christian values when confronted with the many problems that face society today.

Our Catholic schools have a future in the 21st century only if we do not forget our mission to prepare our students to be effective Catholic adults who will continue to live and share their faith with others.

Nancy J. Leifer, M.A., principal, Holy Rosary School, Kewaunee, Wisconsin

OUR CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN 2010

In the next 13 years, our Catholic elementary schools will undergo some major transformations. These significant, and from some viewpoints radical, changes will follow one of several scenarios. Over some of these, we will have little control.

The first scenario may come from nature. If air pollution and related thermal warming is not abated, we will face some dramatic changes in climate. Some parts of our country will become much hotter and drier in the summer and colder and wetter in the winter. Alternatives to fossil fuels will be required. As a result, our costs to light, cool, and heat buildings and to transport children will soar. Food prices will skyrocket as stress on crops increases.

Or, consider the consequences of just one greater-than-usual solar storm. Such a storm could destroy most of the capabilities of satellites floating over our planet to conduct the business of communication. Few, if any, of these satellites to date have been constructed with this condition in mind. Such an event would cause a vast failure of many functions of government, education, transportation, communications, commerce, and finance around the world. We may have become too dependent on this very fragile and susceptible system. Such a storm failure also would take months or perhaps years to restore. Do we have an alternative plan to meet such a crisis? No. The troubles caused by the change to the year 2000 for many computer systems are just minor examples of what problems may lie ahead. We can act to limit the harm such a storm could cause, however. Governments can require more testing and innovative shielding of the satellites we place in orbit. Older and less-protected devices need to be eliminated. Above all, we must develop effective alternative systems to compensate for the havoc this sort of failure would bring about, for only the foolish would become so dependent on one means of conducting business.

Polluted water supplies and the depletion of many ancient underground aquifers may render some parts of the country virtually useless for habitation. During the drought in Texas a couple of years ago, some towns had to truck water over 80 miles. In some villages in the Midwest and the Southeast, high concentrations of pollutants in well water and streams have been caused as not-so-sanitary landfills and large livestock feedlots have leaked chemicals into drinking water sources. The continual testing of a school's water supply, especially in rural areas, will be costly. The destruction of safe water resources will necessitate that expensive alter-

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natives be used, if possible. Private and parochial schools will not be able to count on severely strained public funding for help in meeting those costs.

Air pollution, water contamination, and other environmental hazards will bring many more children to school with chronic diseases. These illnesses will require the on-site availability of trained medical professionals, not just the principal or school secretary. Absentee rates will climb. The ability of many children to study and/or attend to their lessons will be hindered due to no fault of their own. We will have to find innovative ways to meet the needs of these children, which will place greater demands on our already-strained financial base. We can act to stop much of the environmental damage, but we must act promptly.

Now, let us presume that none of these things I have described will happen. What might another vision be? Unfortunately, this view may be virtually as bleak as the first. It is related to economics. As long as the average Catholic wage earner's rate of giving remains at the 1997 level of 1.5 percent and our pool of funding is centered on the individual parish as a solitary fiscal entity, schools serving the poor and lower middle-class urban or rural communities will die. Our schools may become options only for the economically advantaged. This would not have to be.

If we begin now to build far more effective programs of stewardship education for the child and the adult faithful, the level of contributions could climb within a generation to four times what it is currently. Even that increase, however, would not help many parishes. We also need to revamp the financial structure of the Church. If we could return to the message of the Acts of the Apostles about putting some of our wealth together for the good of all, coupled with an increase in giving, all parishes would prosper. Funding for our schools would be allocated on per-pupil and needs-adjusted formulas back to all of the parishes operating a school. A modified formula would be used to disperse funds for religious education programs for children enrolled in public schools and for adult education. Other charities and human services functions would also be funded from such a pool. The parish would be given funding to maintain the plant and to pay the salaries of support staff. Teacher and administrative salaries and benefits, special needs teachers, books, expendable supplies, and equipment would come from this pool. Our schools would be able to be competitive and open to all the faithful. The key is stewardship.

Still another play might be performed on our imaginary stage of the future. In this story line, I envision all schools being conceived and

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operating on the premise of addressing the various learning styles of the students. The schools would make full use of the telecommunications and computer networks available.

The school term would be year-round, with two-week breaks staggered throughout. Students would come to school for three and one half hours five days a week. Some would come in the morning, others in the afternoon, as defined by their learning style. While in school, they would study religion, science, reading, mathematics, writing, the fine arts, and physical education, each for 30-minute periods. These periods would be integrated study units whenever possible. Classroom instruction would be designed to introduce new concepts while affording time for some cooperative work, play, and sharing of experiences. The children would spend another three and one half hours at home or in a learning center, not a day care center, which may be at their school. In this setting, they would continue working on lessons individually or in small teams. Adult assistants would staff the centers. Computer, Internet, and televideo interaction devices would be available to each child. These tools would be provided as a direct benefit to the children, paid for by the states and/or the federal government.

There would be several central Internet services for children; all adult-oriented services would be unavailable. Master teachers and writers in various fields would be paid to participate in the Web sites. The Catholic school would also have a Web site available to the children for some work in religious education. This would be paid for as part of their tuition, not from public money. The students would practice and apply skills using various programs. Included would be computer and/or teacher simulations and problem-solving experiences. The Library of Congress would be accessible. E-mail systems would send and deliver children's writing to an Internet publication center where they could be shared. The E-mail system would also enable students to communicate with one another over long distances. In local communities, all students would have access to video conferencing services, which would enable them to contact resource teachers, set up work-team meetings with their peers, and conduct a variety of other school-related business. The students would do much of their art and music work at home, using their computers and the Internet. Students' work and evaluative commentary would be stored by scanners in computer files. These files would follow the students throughout their educational experience.

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On planned occasions, students would be able to go on field-learning experiences, which usually would be conducted on Saturdays. Saturday mornings also would be a time for competitive games and for skills-refinement and enrichment opportunities. These options would be offered at various local centers, such as parishes.

A home school option also would be provided. Payment for the costs of this plan would be given only for three and one half hours, however. The government would not pay a family for the time a child normally would be in school. The family could access distance learning centers for the child's other needs, at its own expense.

How could all of this be done? Who would pay the bill? Good questions. The answers are not so difficult, however. Half-day school means that professional staff costs would be reduced significantly. The cost of computer, telecommunications, or cable television linkages and costs for distance learning centers could be underwritten by the payment of tuition and the child-share subsidy to all children that is derived from tax funds. Through use of cable television or phone lines, the home- or learning center-based computers would essentially be dummy tools; a centralized series of servers would provide the needed databases.

Since all students would have equal access to the available pool of Telenet resources, field experiences, and various enrichment opportunities, we would see a real change in our work as educators. We would truly be stimulators of thought, presenters and clarifiers of concepts and skills, guides, and evaluators. We would all be required to be technologically skilled and creative. As Catholic educators, our mission would become more and more one of continuing evangelization of our students and their families.

These various visions are filled with challenge and opportunity. They call us to be insightful, courageous, creative, and generous. Isn't that the call Jesus invites us to respond to each day?

Thomas McKenna, SFO, M.Ed., principal, St. Anthony of Padua School, High Ridge, Missouri

FACING THE FUTURE: A FEW PROBLEMS, A FEW QUESTIONS, AND A FEW ANSWERS

This article reflects the hard drive of a three-parish community in the process of becoming an interrelated system without any of the parishes losing its individuality. Some basic information about each parish follows.

One pastor and one business administrator oversee three parishes and three fragile elementary schools, each with a unique personality, all serving different ethnic populations. Let's call these parishes St. Mary's, St. Ann's and St. Bridgett's.

St. Mary's has a history of being an immigrant parish. Today over 35 different languages and dialects are spoken within its boundaries, which embrace 1,500 households. St. Mary's School is identified as the last inner-city school in its archdiocese. The school once housed a student body of 500, but today its enrollment holds steady at 127. The student body, 98 percent of which includes students of color, is predominately Filipino, African American, Vietnamese, and Tongan. The majority of the families are Catholic, low income, and not necessarily from St. Mary's Parish. St. Mary's School strives to be innovative and has transitioned to a nontraditional curriculum that is delivered in a multiage configuration and focuses on language acquisition and multiple literacies. For now, its small student body is a blessing.

St. Ann's and St. Bridgett's schools are geographically close, bordering St. Mary's on the south and west. Each is a bit more suburban than St. Mary's. St. Ann's is a 500-family parish, and the school consists predominately of parish children. The school has a preK-to-eighth-grade student body of 225 children who are predominately Filipino, and it offers a more traditional curriculum.

St. Bridgett's is located on prime real estate with a gorgeous view of Lake Washington. Deferred maintenance is the number one issue for this community of 450 households. The school attracts mostly African-American and Samoan students and offers an interactive yet traditional approach to education.

At all three sites, external networking and internal reconfigurations began happening simultaneously two years ago, when one priest was assigned to oversee all three sites.

This is the story of how St. Mary's sought and attained internal and external compatibility. The data given reflect some of the challenges faced, overridden, and lived, as viewed through the eyes of a St. Mary's principal. This article focuses on 5 areas: school administration, commu-

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nication, tuition and enrollment, school governance, and development, with Catholic identity interwoven into all five.

School Administration. Four years ago, two experienced principals, one religious and one lay, arrived at St. Mary's School on the verge of its closure. The community, reeling from the unexpected loss of its principal, vice principal, and pastor, was in chaos. These two women, who have known one another for over 18 years, formed a coprincipal leadership team that remains in place today. The team functions by reviewing and subdividing the principal's job description, addressing yearly the upcoming needs of the school community.

A snapshot of their roles over the past few years would reveal: (a) one year, each principal teaching half-time and administering half-time; (b) one year, one principal teaching three-quarters of the time and administering half-time (yes, that's a job and a quarter) while the other administers full-time; (c) another year, one principal teaching half-time and administering half-time, with her partner providing staff in-services a quarter of the time and administration three-quarters of the time. This ebb and flow was necessary to stabilize the school, reclaim its Catholic identity, reduce costs, investigate and implement curriculum changes, collaborate with regional principals, and liaison with the larger community to include local universities and high schools.

In three years' time, St. Mary's has become an innovative educational site with a language-driven curriculum delivered in a multiage classroom configuration. Its inherited debt of \$90,000 has been paid off, and the 1998 school year began with a Catholic high school and university partnership and volunteer support from America Corp's senior division.

Communication. Communication at St. Mary's has been problematic, with the school's rich ethnic mix being both a blessing and a challenge. As new immigrant families continue to enroll, communication remains a critical issue. Written communication, even translated, is often ineffective.

In order to build community and replace written communication with the more familiar oral communication experiences of immigrant families, mentoring groups and phone trees in varying languages and dialects were established. On the surface, this appeared to be an effective means of contact; however, two incidents pointed to a myriad of complications that arose often. For example, a young adult from the Vietnamese community whose younger brother was in kindergarten offered to phone and convey

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information to other Vietnamese families. Because he was only 21, the news he shared with the elders in his community did not carry as much importance and validity as it should have, since culturally the elders are the traditional wisdom-bearers. On another occasion, it was discovered that repetition of information had been mistakenly interpreted as doubling or tripling the content. For example, in discussions about tuition in which the figure was repeated, the perception was that the amount had doubled or tripled. The cost to send a child to the school soon appeared to be astronomical.

Although St. Mary's has a small enrollment, the time it takes to nurture clear communication is itself doubled and tripled. Patience, humility, and hospitality gradually are replacing confusion, acquiescence, and marginalization. The process is ongoing.

Tuition and Enrollment with a Preference for the Poor. Most Pacific-Islander and Asian cultures have no experience with tuition. For the Filipino culture in particular, Catholic education is the nation's educational system. Other families, especially the Vietnamese and Tongan, see no possibility of offering a Catholic education to their numerous children.

Many of the immigrant families that belong to St. Mary's possess a fierce determination to not become participants in the American welfare system. Thus, the adults work two and three jobs. They send money back to their native country and give generously to their parish, archdiocesan, and mission appeals. They also enroll their children in public schools. Why? For some reason, requesting financial aid for elementary children is perceived as asking for a handout and is a matter of "losing face." Establishing at St. Mary's a tuition/scholarship process that invites enrollment while fostering personal integrity, therefore, has been very challenging. St. Bridgett's and St. Ann's face similar problems.

One baffling occurrence that all three schools experience is that school families have little problem applying for financial aid for the local Catholic high schools and colleges in the area. They will, however, place their elementary school-age children in public school rather than disclose financial information that would make a Catholic elementary education possible for the younger members of their family.

Another baffling point arose in spring of 1998. At St. Mary's, several of the new immigrant families live in community, which means that one

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family member has a business and the rest of the family work at the business in exchange for housing, food, clothing, and so forth. The family member who owns the business is the only family member who files income tax returns, but that member is not the one who has children at St. Mary's. When the enrolling family seeks financial aid, it claims no income, because in essence it has none. The challenge then becomes how to negotiate a tuition figure outside of the subsidized/nonsubsidized structure while remaining just and consistent. In the spring of 1998, St. Mary's aligned itself with St. Bridgett and St. Ann by moving from a fair-share tuition structure to subsidized/nonsubsidized rates. All three schools aligned their fees, enrollment policies, and parent handbooks to reflect solidarity and prevent school shopping, which happens frequently in communities where parish fidelity appears to be less important than cultural loyalty and financial obligation.

The issues of communication, cost, financial disclosure, saving face, and a school re-visioning itself have resulted in a church community that spends 28 percent of its ordinary income to support the enrollment of parish children in a school that parish children do not attend. It is not at all atypical for scholarship money earmarked for Catholic students to be granted instead to non-Catholic applicants for lack of Catholic applicants. When this happens, the parish questions its mission of providing Catholic education for its own children first.

Catholic Identity. First of all, where are the children? The religious education program at St. Mary's Church averages about 50 children for preschool through eighth grade. There are approximately 60 parish children in the school, and yet children are abundant at all masses.

Observations over the past three years have revealed profound moments of catechesis taking place at gatherings outside of the Sunday rite and ritual. The faith sharing that takes place at Tongan wedding receptions, Filipino baptisms, and less formally structured community celebrations teaches the Gospel far better than any text series can.

Profound Eucharist celebrations appear to take place in locations other than at the cold-marble altar located 55 pews in front of the back doors of the church. Perhaps herein lies one of the greatest dilemmas facing St. Mary's community: Does the American model of faith formation fit in such an ethnically diverse population? If not, what does? Are we trying to fit square pegs into round holes? So, the question becomes,

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Should we build on the *natural gifts* of each parish?

Of the three parishes—St. Mary's, St. Ann's, and St. Bridgett's—St. Bridgett's has an emphasis on the youth. To build on St. Bridgett's natural gift, the pastor for all three communities has designated that parish as the center for youth activities and faith formation. St. Bridgett's staff provide workshops and catechetical training for the other two parish teams, and they facilitate baptismal preparation classes, house youth ministers to serve in all three communities, and will add a Sunday evening mass to attract the high school and young adult population of all three parishes. Getting parish children to attend their parish school, however, is still an unresolved issue.

School Governance. Where are the parents? What governance structure would fit such a richly diverse community? These were two more haunting questions. Yes, the number of single-parent households has been a huge factor; language barriers, another. Burnout continues to rage among the active 10 percent of St. Mary's 98-parent community. Apathy, deference, and lack of collaborative experiences, therefore, were assumed in finding the answers.

For the 1997-98 academic year, St. Mary's school commission was replaced by an ad hoc committee of three—a president, the pastor, and one principal. As the pastor began his work with the three parishes, he established consultative bodies at each. These groups consisted of the pastoral council, finance council, ad hoc school commission leader, and a principal. During that first year, many meetings were held for the three communities to learn the collaborative skills of the document *The Vine and the Branches*. Each community discerned its strengths, and the pastor began a process to build on the gifts that surfaced. Today a structure is in place that allows each parish to work from its gifts in support of the other two parishes. As mentioned earlier, St. Bridgett focuses on youth. St. Mary's strength is outreach to the newly arrived, and St. Ann's houses the financial/administrative center for the three parishes.

At St. Mary's during the same year, the parent club ran with an ad hoc leadership group of one principal and two parents. In the spring of 1998, the school parents were asked to list the names of parents they would follow. The 16 parents who were named from this process were appointed by the pastor to define the goals of parent support for the school and to write a proposal outlining an infrastructure to allow parents to meet those

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goals.

In August of 1998, the team made its presentation to the pastor and both principals. The structure proposed builds on the natural complexities of St. Mary's population. A liaison team of two will have direct relationship with the administration, its primary role being to keep communication flowing, current, and corrected. Those serving on the re-visioning group will become team leaders, two leaders to a team. The remaining families will be assigned a team, much as students are assigned a homeroom. Each team will be grouped homogeneously, sensitive to language needs, family structure, and ethnicity. Each team also will have a focused mission, i.e., hospitality, communication, fund raising. The teams will meet in homes prior to the monthly parent association meeting.

Development and Financial Sources. Fifty-one percent of St. Mary's school budget comes from outside sources, many of which are dwindling. The bare-bones budget supports a staff of 12, with teachers being paid at 78 percent of their public-school counterparts. With a sparse staff, a frugal budget, cultures that differ in their experience of the American Catholic elementary school, and an unskilled force of volunteers, developing, marketing, and financially sustaining the school are a bit like building a plane while flying it.

Attracting teachers of color is also very challenging. Often these teachers are trying to break the bonds of poverty themselves, so if they do come, they do not remain. The work is too hard, the salary too low, and the American dream too illusive. The same can be said of lay administrators.

Why is it that those who could invest wait to see if such schools as St. Mary are worthy of investment? It seems like a vicious cycle that ironically builds strength. This awareness came about during the Advent season in 1997, at a time when all of St. Mary's administrators were feeling impoverished and victimized by various systems. Everywhere they looked they saw infant ideas, underdeveloped connections, helpers who lacked necessary skills, fragile promises, more and more things to tend to. It became quite clear that if things were going to change, they had to act, not wait. The coming of a savior just was not going to happen.

In the tending and the nurturing, the three communities began to grow in wisdom and grace. The exhausted bodies and fragmented minds of in charge decided to celebrate. Lent was near, and Mardi Gras

FACING THE FUTURE: A FEW PROBLEMS, A FEW QUESTIONS, AND A FEW ANSWERS

provided the occasion. Pooling resources from the three communities, in less than six weeks a renewing celebration was held. What resulted was a tri-school video and brochure. A cadre of supporters from throughout the city who believed in the mission of the three schools came showing their support. They consumed an authentic New Orleans roasted pig, bought Mardi Gras wares, listened to jazz, and danced the night away, each leaving with trinkets, beads, and Cajun treats.

That was the beginning of our collaborative fund-raising efforts. The party, a real celebration, provided energy for the next collaborative event—a three-school auction that the spontaneous Mardi Gras profit seeded. An auction consultant was hired. In the summer months, training was provided, teams were built, databases were established, and the communities networked together as never before to coordinate the project that was scheduled to kick off Catholic Schools Week for 1999. The joint-school auction touted the acronym DREAM: Destined to Reach Exemplary Academics Mutually.

So, what have we learned? From a small school in the middle of a big city, our experience tells us the future requires the ability to move beyond parochialism, to fiercely commit to collaborative models, and to never give up a dream, because that is where you hear the voice of God.

Patty Mitchell, M.P.M., coprincipal, St. Edward Parish School, Seattle, WA

A VISION OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The Catholic school of the next millennium must be foremost a community that proclaims the Kingdom of God on earth.

It must be a community of harmony and support, where, regardless of person, gift, or talent, all members (children, staff, and parents) feel accepted and nourished, free to risk, to grow, and to embrace their God-given potential.

It must be a community of justice, where concern for others is equal to concern for self, where service and servant are the foundation of action and discernment.

It must be a community of love, where to witness love is to see the presence of Jesus in the face of each member of the community.

It must be a community of educational excellence, where children are encouraged to stretch their minds, ideas, and interests, where discovery is encouraged, and questions are basic to discussion.

It must be a community of teachers who emulate the model teacher, Jesus, teaching with compassion, understanding, story, and example.

It must be a community of hope, where members ask how they want to be, not what they want to be, for what one is, is not the same as how one is.

It must be a community of leaders who are willing to stand for what is right and just, to make decisions, and to be examples of faith.

It must be a community of faith, where all believe that God acts through them, that they can make a difference, that they can touch all the future, that they can build the Kingdom of God!

Sherilyn M. Moon, M.S., principal, St. John the Baptist School, Green Bay, Wisconsin

ON THE REVITALIZATION OF SCHOOLS

As we stand on the brink of a new millennium in Catholic education and bend our efforts toward readiness and planning for the new challenges that it may bring, it is imperative that we consider the diversity of our schools and avoid the temptation to overgeneralize our position. While many Catholic schools throughout the country continue to thrive with waiting lists and endowments, for many others the challenges of a new millennium are the subject of anxiety and consternation. The pervasive struggle to keep school doors open, to meet the payrolls and pay light bills, are, for far too many of us, the focus of intense struggle. Efforts to keep pace with technological advances, state-of-the-art materials, and quality staff development programs are simply overshadowed by efforts to keep our heads above rushing water.

Ours was, and in many ways is, such a school. We now stand poised, however, and are looking forward with a bit of confidence and widely held faith in our ability to meet whatever challenges that may befall our plunge into the new millennium. Certainly, a fervent attitude suggests that we can and will do what we need to get where we need to be. Truly, for a struggling school to look forward with any degree of certainty, it must be able to dream about new possibilities. Dreams, however, are often couched in apprehension. It is difficult to dream of a new horizon when obstacles seem to obscure the present vista. Ours is an enjoyable story to tell. It is a story of the process of revitalization that has delivered us to this point, in time to face the new millennium with enthusiasm and confidence. Our story is by no means a model for revitalization; it is simply the story of one community that managed to turn itself around in order to face the future squarely.

Five years ago, our school faced a number of challenges that posed a direct and obvious threat to the financial stability of the school. The community had endured a dreadful tragedy; the staff was left in the throes of turmoil; there was evidence of physical plant neglect, with a devastating list of capital needs; and many engaged in considerable speculation about how long the program could stay afloat before crumbling. Most typical indicators led to the presumption that the school was on the path to closure. The program was permeated with an obvious lack of confidence.

There had been changes only recently in parish administration, less than a year prior, and in school administration, immediately prior. It is entirely possible that the progress of the ensuing five years was solidified in the first meeting of the new principal and pastor. It was then, when asked what

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he envisioned for his parish school, that the pastor simply replied, “a little peace.” Compelled by a vision for peace, the community began to take the steps necessary to move forward.

Initially, parents met in small groups in order to accomplish three simple tasks: to discern the school’s identity, to articulate the school’s mission, and to dream. Concurrently, others, including staff members, the school board, the pastor, and parent association officers, were called to participate in parallel processes. Though dreams were pleasant and numerous, they appeared frivolous and unattainable. As might be expected, discussions uncovered a virtual Pandora’s box of problems, issues, obstacles, and concerns. Discussions also gave life to the basis for an initial draft of a philosophy and mission statement and an outline for a subsequent, rudimentary planning document.

Discussions, while fruitful, were not the end product. Though the talks certainly did much to raise spirits and generate enthusiasm, in this case the production of an actual document was an essential goal. Drafts of the document were taken back to the staff, school board, and other parent groups and eventually were refined into a product that most were able to support, even if only in spirit. Although the document took nearly five months to compose, it was pivotal in that its completion was the first step in the revitalization process. Not only did it articulate the needs, wants, and desires of the community, it also was symbolic in its representation of a cooperative, successful, community effort.

Though excitement seemed to be growing, skepticism was still a permeating reality. Tangential to the evolution of a planning document was the implementation of the initial stages of a capital improvements plan. In this endeavor, cynicism again began to make its presence known. That is not to say that folks doubted the need for change; rather, the reality was that capital improvements required substantial funds in addition to operational costs for which there seemed to be no available source. The community, though hesitant, moved forward with a cursory listing of needs, which was later prioritized and subsequently became the blueprint for the capital improvements plan.

Internal issues needed to be addressed as well. Staff members engaged in a long and detailed process of surveying current needs, selecting materials, developing wish lists, and other similar activities designed to focus on curricular needs. Approved courses of study were acquired for all staff members, and textbook adoptions were compared to those approved for

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use in schools of the diocese. Where necessary, programs not in compliance became objects of immediate attention. The initial focus of attention was on religious education. A revision of scheduled opportunities for prayer and liturgical celebrations, assessments of staff development needs, dialogue with those involved with other parish education efforts, and a revision of the student service program all ensued relatively quickly. Parents were apprised regularly of improvement efforts and revisions that came as a result of this activity, so that changes were more easily demystified.

To make a sense of administrative and financial integrity more obvious to the various constituencies, several internal procedures were revamped. The budget process was revised, and new procedures were developed for the expenditure of funds and for fiscal accounting and reporting. The entire collection process also was revised. Monthly reports were provided to the board, and annual reports were provided for parents and parishioners. The principal was invited to consult with the parish finance committee. Prior to implementation of the new procedures, parents were invited to a series of forums concerning school finance, provided with copies of the working budget, and given a detailed explanation of the new collection procedures, particularly those regarding tuition collection.

There was an intense need to clarify roles of the various publics with regard to school life. On the surface, this may appear trite, but when any enterprise finds itself struggling, a typical result is role confusion. In an effort to help, many take on responsibilities that are not theirs while others try to take up the slack in other ways. Typically, folks begin to trip all over each other in an attempt to make things right. After consulting several national models, particularly ones published in relevant NCEA publications, we wrote new charters for the school advisory board and the home and school association. Both of these groups expressed a rejuvenation of purpose and focus. Similarly, staff roles and responsibilities were defined through the composition of clearly outlined staff handbooks. Considerable time was spent on reviewing guidelines regarding state standards and on an extensive overview of diocesan policies relative to staff activity. Additionally, parent roles and student expectations were specifically addressed in a revision of our home handbook. All documents were published; all were disseminated appropriately.

Prior to the conclusion of that school year, an enlivened community found itself with a number of resources to help it gain a sense of direction regarding school improvement. A philosophy and mission statement had

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been composed. A long-range plan had been developed that addressed short-term needs, long-term goals, capital improvements, and educational issues. New staff handbooks, home handbooks, a code of conduct for students, an internal procedures manual, revised by-laws for both parent-support groups, a religious education self-study, and a prioritized list of curriculum resource needs all found their way into the plan. This plan, then, served to direct improvement efforts over the next few years.

It seems compelling to characterize the posture in which we find ourselves at this juncture, five years later, in contrast with that of the past. We still need a broad-based approach to development funding, and our future stability depends on it. Nevertheless, we have experienced a modest yet distinct increase in student enrollment in each of the last five years. Concurrently, there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of parish subsidy in each of the last five years. As of fall 1998, unpaid accounts amount to less than 5 percent of the tuition income budget. Fund-raising efforts have vastly multiplied, and community support grants totaling over \$110,000 have been acquired within the last calendar year. Though certainly far from optimal, our financial posture is sound.

Our capital improvements plan has provided an impetus for improvement beyond what we anticipated. Within a few short years and on a shoestring budget, we have replaced all chalkboards, student desks and chairs, carpets, and windows. We are refurbishing the gym and are acquiring a new stage curtain and, to everyone's delight, a new playground structure to replace the one that had become so decrepit that it had to be removed for safety reasons. The computer lab and a number of classroom stations have been expanded, and new technologies have been acquired for instruction, including an extensive laser disc library. Restrooms have been renovated, and a number of related smaller projects have been completed. These changes have resulted from several factors, including redirecting state support funds and federal grant options, revamping internal financial procedures mentioned above, achieving a dramatic increase in the frequency and types of private donations, and accessing private foundation grants from within the community.

Although the original improvement plan addressed measurable objectives, there was a component that many insisted should remain despite the difficulty by which success might be tangibly measured. The community determined that success of the plan would be characterized by evidence of "energized, eager and empowered students; satisfied, supportive, and

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involved parents; competent, enthusiastic, and fulfilled staff members; cooperation and respect among all members of the community; and a Christian attitude that permeates all efforts and activities." In this regard, recent surveys indicate that we have indeed arrived, not in the sense that we have accomplished all we need or intend, but in the sense that we find ourselves in a position that was only a dream five years ago. Students do appear eager, parents are involved, staff members are enthusiastic, and a high degree of Christian respect in all facets of our work is obvious. No one claims that we have the necessary, immediate resources at this point, or even a majority of the means at our disposal, to take us where we need to be. What the processes of the last five years have provided us with are a clear picture of what our needs are, a belief that we will acquire what is needed for us to do what we must, and the audacity to dream of new possibilities, which, in our former life, would have posed seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

This small success story has several implications for school planning. In our experience, we found seven factors were crucial to our improvement efforts:

1. The ability to vision, dream, and conquer cynicism together
2. An orientation to the philosophical basis of our operation and mission
3. Broad-based consultation in the planning process
4. Well-defined and clearly communicated administrative processes
5. Clearly defined and communicated roles and expectations
6. A commitment to openness, honesty, and genuine dialogue
7. Closely monitored and well-documented progress

Undoubtedly, forward motion required carefully planned steps. The first was to assure that the house was in order, that specific, known procedures existed with regard to administration, finance, policy, and so forth. The community needed to see how things could and would fit together and under what organizational parameters we would operate. The need for the clear and distinct clarification of everyone's roles and responsibilities was of paramount importance. With these things in place, then, subsequent action could be better placed within a workable format for all operations.

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At the heart of what we have accomplished was the realization that we first had to dream. Time spent trying to articulate how our ideal school would look, feel, and be was a bit of a mental struggle in the face of then-existing turmoil, but it was a struggle well worth the effort as the dreams provided the impetus for change. Dreaming became a process of taking the time to identify our mission in light of our beliefs and the needs of our community and then brainstorming and prioritizing our ideas toward the development of a sense of vision for the future. Clearly, the breadth of input had a tremendous impact, insuring a greater degree of ownership, both of the process and of the product.

Subsequent to the development of the philosophy, mission, and planning documents, a good deal of progress depended on the frequency with which we revisited them. It was not enough to simply publish them, but reviewing them, documenting progress, and redirecting efforts as circumstances changed became essential to growth. Consistently asking ourselves how our choices, actions, and progress reflected our philosophy and how they fit into our vision had much to do with keeping us on the right path. It was critical for us to be continuously reminded of our mission, to consistently monitor our progress and clearly communicate that progress to our various constituencies. Gradually, it seems, the ability to observe a bit of progress increased the perception of possible future progress.

Finally, it became important to us to publicize and celebrate every small step forward. These steps were continually placed within the context of our original mission and plan. In this way, the planning and visioning process gained credence as a meaningful effort, as opposed to what might otherwise have been perceived as a purely academic endeavor. Encircling the entire process was a sense of openness about who we were, what we were doing, where we had been, and where we were going. The importance of candid disclosure could not be underestimated. As the public began to appreciate the genuineness of our efforts, intentions, and needs, supporters helped us to move further faster.

We also realized that there were many factors in our favor, despite the predicaments of five years ago. We enjoyed working with a pastor who sincerely wanted us to thrive responsibly as a gentle, peaceful, Christ-centered community. We enjoyed the services of a professional staff who, despite events of the past, maintained a genuine concern for children, a love for the community, and an uncanny commitment to one another as fellow educators and colleagues; and as friends. Parents were a certain

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source of strength that seemed to be ready to move, waiting to be validated in their intent to do whatever they could to assure a safe, happy, and compelling educational environment for their children. Finally, we had a parish anxious to see that the nearly 90-year tradition of Catholic education in the parish would be carried on. All of these factors were in our favor. We simply needed to actualize, unify, and channel them into a direction in which forward movement was possible.

We see ourselves as a school ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead of us as we greet the 21st century. We are well aware of our limitations and needs and know well that we have far to go before we can compare with many of the larger, more impressive schools. On the other hand, we view our program as one of integrity, stability, and substance. More importantly, we are a confident people who believe that we have the ability to muster the motivation and resources necessary to fulfill our educational mission for many years to come. We know this because we have allowed ourselves the opportunity to experience and measure our own progress. We believe that our progress is a direct result of our efforts at self-identification, community building, and planning, for which we believe there is no substitute in assuring forward motion.

We are a vital community, looking forward to a new millennium and the new direction in which the Spirit will lead us. We believe that we now enjoy this level of confidence because of the steps we took only a few years ago. Assuredly, our ability to meet the challenges of a new millennium rests heavily upon our ability to look ahead and to plan for new visions and dreams.

Scott M. Power, M.S., principal, Sacred Heart School, New Philadelphia, Ohio

ON HELPING EACH OTHER

Do you sometimes wonder and worry about the path on which you find your school? Is the school addressing the present and future issues that students will encounter in their lives? Is your school shortchanging the basics in order to be current? Unlike our public-school counterparts, who are more likely to have administrators to help in planning, Catholic school principals are most often on their own.

As a Catholic elementary school principal for 13 years, I have often thought that the insularity of this position causes me more anxiety than any other circumstance. I do not want to bring my worries home. I cannot share many of my concerns with the staff. In the past, I have likened the principalship to the role of a single parent—with lots of children. I make the best decisions I can, taking into consideration all the audiences that are effected.

Over the years, I have developed some ideas to address this issue. These partial solutions involve cultivating the fellowship and camaraderie of other principals. I hope these ideas, discussed below, encourage others.

Give the highest priority possible to a phone call or message received from another principal. We should be sincerely encouraging each other to lean on our fellow principals, and when it happens, to react accordingly. Along these lines, look for small ways to collaborate with neighboring Catholic schools. Practicing these behaviors gives witness to the strength of our shared profession.

Consider doing a job share. This school year, I am job-sharing the principalship with another person. I am working in the morning, and my partner is working in the afternoon. Our hours overlap for 90 minutes, during the lunch period. This allows us to discuss what is happening at the school, to share concerns, and to plan for upcoming events. There are obvious personal financial implications to this arrangement, but I am much more relaxed and feel less overwhelmed by the problems than in prior years. Again, to use an analogy, I now feel like a part of a two-parent family.

Get revitalized with continuing education. This can take many forms. A computer class at a local community college can make it possible for the computer-illiterate principal to learn how to join a network of other principals via E-mail. Organize a forum of principals, with a speaker on some shared topic of interest. In the summer of 1998, I was blessed to have been a participant in the NCEA Principals Academy in Washington,

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D.C. We had many inspiring speakers; we were given countless ideas regarding every phase of our job. For me, the greatest benefits of the academy by far, however, were the companionship and support offered by the other 41 Catholic elementary school principals from all over the United States who attended. For the cost of a plane fare, it was the bargain of a lifetime.

Built into our job will always be the anxiety attacks at 2:00 a.m. Our call to leadership is not founded in certainty, but in courage, intuition, and common sense. Added to these factors, we can all help ourselves and our school's future by leaning on our fellow principals.

Richard J. Shea, M.Ed., coprincipal, St. Aloysius School, Spokane, Washington

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK AT ST. TIMOTHY SCHOOL

As principal of St. Timothy School in Chantilly, Virginia, I was faced several years ago with a crucial decision regarding a family of five boys enrolled in our school. One of the boys, it was found, had a learning disability and needed special education services, which he could receive within the Fairfax County Public School System. The parents were faced with the wrenching decision to keep their son at St. Timothy School or enroll him within the local public-school system, where he could receive the educational support he needed. I knew the young man was capable of achieving at St. Timothy School if I could establish an appropriate educational setting. Determined that this fine young man would not be forced to leave the school, I began a concerted effort to investigate the possibility of establishing a learning center at St. Timothy School where his educational needs could be met and he would be able to receive the same Christian education as his siblings. Thus began the evolution of growth that marks St. Timothy School as a leader in the Arlington Diocese Catholic School System. By keeping on the cutting edge in special education trends and developing innovative programs aimed at educating the total child enrolled in our school, we have been able to offer academic support to the learning-disabled student, regardless of the child's condition.

Over the years, the learning center has grown to include not only a learning disabilities teacher but a resource teacher, a reading specialist, a speech pathologist, and a school counselor. The center's staff is mandated to participate in the learning-disabilities identification process by assisting the teacher in identifying the possible learning-disabled students in the classroom. Another important aspect of the process is to assist the parents in obtaining appropriate testing (at the St. Timothy School Learning Center or at a private or county center) and, most importantly, to participate as a child advocate in determining eligibility for special education services. The staff develops an appropriate individual education program (IEP), along with the parents and classroom teacher, to meet the particular needs of the student.

The learning center teachers provide individual and/or small-group instruction based on the needs of the student, and they go into the classroom to provide inclusion support for the student. The ultimate goal is to allow the student to remain within the classroom and receive the same academic instruction, experience the same social development opportu-

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nities provided through involvement with class activities, and, above all, reinforce positive self-esteem through academic achievement in a Christian environment. This is accomplished through closer interaction with the parents and teachers, providing test taking in a small group, and making any necessary accommodations the child may need to succeed.

The reading specialist provides a variety of services to the students, teachers, and staff. Among her duties, the specialist is charged with assisting the classroom teacher in developing and maintaining a strong reading program that is phonics based. The program follows specific guidelines to develop not only basic reading and comprehension skills but also reading in the content areas. Most importantly, the reading specialist promotes a love of reading. The specialist provides for formal and informal testing to determine the areas of strength and weakness of the students. She assists the teachers in developing instructional reading strategies and assists the classroom teacher in identifying those students who may need individual testing and/or remedial reading instruction.

For those students who may require speech and language remediation, the center provides the services of a clinical speech pathologist. The pathologist provides for the necessary screening of the individual students referred to her, reports her findings to the parents, and determines instructional strategies appropriate to individual students. The students may also be referred to Fairfax County Public Schools for screening and instruction for speech and language deficits.

St. Timothy School also has the services of a school counselor. The counselor is charged with a myriad of responsibilities. Within the learning center, the counselor is commissioned to oversee those students referred for possible psychological and educational testing. (St. Timothy School offers complete testing services for those students who may wish to decline Fairfax County Public Schools testing.) The referral for testing may be made by a student's teacher or parent. In addition, the counselor is available for individual student or group counseling, and she adds her support to the St. Timothy Awareness Round Table (START) program. START is the school community's anti-drug/substance abuse organization that has won national recognition for its programs.

Helping the children identified with a learning disability to succeed in a "regular" classroom setting and providing them with a Christian learn-

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ing environment will always be a major part of my philosophy as principal of St. Timothy School.

Marilyn S. Valatka, M.Ed., principal, St. Timothy School, Chantilly, Virginia

SERVING THE NEEDS OF EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN A K-8 CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The late 1980s saw rapid development of the middle-school concept in public schools, with a focus on resources and facilities that was very attractive to parents and students in a traditional K-8 Catholic school. It was not unusual to see serious drops in enrollment after fifth grade. This was the situation at St. Luke in 1990. We set about to identify the causes of the flight and what we could do to better respond to the needs of students and parents.

We looked at the spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and academic needs of our students. We tried to identify what we were doing right and what we must improve. A team of parents and teachers met to review research, visit our schools, survey our students, parents, and teachers, and brainstorm ideas. The breadth of the task and the depth needed to make meaningful decisions required a process that took almost two years. It was reaffirming to learn that we were doing many things very well. The resulting plan was presented to the faculty and parents and shared with the parish community. The plan had 33 recommendations, most of which have been implemented over the last few years. The work was hard and often painful, but the results have been worth the effort.

We used the term *middle school* in our discussions about meeting the needs of early adolescents. We differentiated middle school from junior high and elementary models. Our goal was to find the best mix that served the needs of our students. The basic concept of a middle school most often fit. A middle school has an integrated approach to meeting the needs of its students based on their developmental needs and including appropriate and challenging curriculum goals. We chose to have grades 7 and 8 function as an integrated middle-school unit in which the students interact with six core teachers (religion, language arts, math, social studies, science, and Spanish) and at least four special-area teachers on a regular basis. This was far too many staff for most sixth-grade students to handle. We decided, therefore, to keep grade 6 in the elementary division, but added some of the middle-school components, where appropriate.

Most students had been in our school for seven years by the end of the sixth grade. The need for something to be different was clearly identified. The simple idea of changing the middle-school uniform was an easy way to start. The students' uniform changed from the navy blue slacks of grades K-6 to khaki slacks for grades 7-8. The addition of lockers in the hall was another simple but meaningful step.

SERVING THE NEEDS OF EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN A K-8 CATHOLIC SCHOOL

A need for appropriate socialization and communication was noted. These students no longer went to the gym for morning supervision before the start of class. They could go to the hall area, where lockers had been added. This became a "legal" area for students to talk (quietly on most days) before classes, and it also seemed to decrease the need for note writing. It was okay to talk in the hall in the morning and between classes.

An advisory program was developed to provide a safe, healthy, and meaningful source of support and guidance on adolescent issues. One staff member served as advisor to 8-10 students in grades 7 and 8 in twice-weekly sessions. This provided a forum for student concerns with an adult who could help guide the students and serve as ombudsman, if necessary. It also provided a place for discussion on values and a scheduled time for all of those important but difficult-to-schedule activities and topics, such as vocational speakers, substance abuse prevention, and chastity programs. We added a three-day eighth-grade Christian Leadership Challenge retreat to help start off the year and form our advisory groups. The advisory program has provided innumerable benefits for all involved.

The curriculum was reviewed for challenge and appropriate content and style. We added a stress on integrated curriculum that tried to break down the barriers between the various content areas. A science unit on the origin of life might involve the science teacher working on scientific theory, the pastor talking about the teachings of the Church, and the language arts teacher reading *Inherit the Wind*. A Spanish class might involve the religion teacher and the art teacher discussing *Santos* in the Mexican tradition. The science fair would include, in addition to the science teacher, the math teacher for statistics and scientific notation; the language arts teacher for research, report writing, and oral presentation; the art teacher for display boards and design; and the computer teacher for data management and PowerPoint presentations. Increased teacher and student interest and excitement were clearly noted. Test and assessment results improved.

Coordinating schedules for at least one weekly meeting where the homeroom teachers, administrators, and the counselor meet to discuss student, curriculum, and schedule issues was difficult to do in a K-8 building. It is, however, a critical component of a successful program. Monthly team meetings of all teachers who work with middle-school students help to insure coordination and cooperation.

SERVING THE NEEDS OF EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN A K-8 CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Teacher training and expectations were also addressed. The staff joined the state middle school association and started attending conventions and workshops. The entire team attended the National Middle School Association convention when it was held locally. Journals and other professional materials have been a regular resource for the staff. Training for advisors was developed by our staff and is now part of a professional program for the archdiocese.

Increasing student involvement in Christian service and leadership was another goal. The student council doubled the student involvement by electing a first- and a second-semester council. Each group was in charge of planning service, recreational, and liturgical experiences. The eighth grade expanded its service beyond the confirmation requirement, using their advisory groups to coordinate the various programs. The existing first- and eighth-grade buddy program was enhanced. The seventh grade took up service roles for kindergarten and primary field days. Various outreach opportunities, such as food collections and preparation of holiday food baskets, helped to fill out the service plan.

The involvement of the entire middle school in a spring musical has become a key component. Over 100 students get involved with all aspects of the musical. They act, sing, run sound and light boards, play in the orchestra, make the scenery, sing in the chorus, provide the public relations, and develop the program. This is a massive undertaking, but the joy that comes from working hard on a difficult challenge and a job well done has been the best way to build students' self-esteem.

A new middle-school discipline policy, based on a Scripture-focused "Life Skills for Young Christians" theme, was developed. It stressed God's call to love, responsibility, and accountability. It gave the staff a more flexible response to the little things that often lead to larger issues than our former detention-based policy had given. It stressed recognition of those who made wise choices, and it provided guidance with appropriate consequences for those who did not. Parent, student, and staff surveys indicated great support for the new policy. Minor modifications made after the pilot year have improved an already-good policy.

The transition to middle school and communication were seen as problem areas. A conscious approach involving parents, students, and teachers was implemented. The middle-school discipline plan is used in the sixth grade. A meeting for grade 6 parents is held in the spring. The purpose

SERVING THE NEEDS OF EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN A K-8 CATHOLIC SCHOOL

is to be sure to open parent-to-parent communication and stress common values. It helps the parents know that they are not “the only ones” who will not let their kids do such things as take calls after 9:00 p.m. The students come to the middle school in late spring and spend most of the morning with the teachers and visit an advisory group. A special middle-school Back to School Night is held in the fall. The parents are given an overview of the middle-school philosophy at St. Luke. They follow their child’s class schedule and meet with each teacher. They also are given a syllabus for the year that lists course goals, content, resources, and major projects.

Middle-school students are expected to come with their parents to parent-teacher conferences. This helps to assure that the student owns his or her education, and it helps to avoid communication problems. Also, a special middle-school newsletter, *Middle Mania*, is mailed home at the start of each quarter. Each teacher, the principal, the counselor, the youth minister, and others write about what is planned for the quarter. This helps to keep parents informed, since often such information never gets out of their child’s backpack, or their child “forgets” to tell them. The middle-school newsletter is produced in addition to the regular school newsletter.

We continue to look at what is good and try to make it even better. The results to date are significant. Parents and students say that they are excited about coming to the middle school. Enrollment losses stopped, and classes are full. Student and staff morale are up. The feedback from our parents shows a significant increase in satisfaction with most areas of our programs. The hard and painful work of growth is worth it.

A Catholic middle school in a K-8 building is an excellent way to meet the needs of God’s children in early adolescence. In planning for the 21st century, consider giving it a try.

Stephen Weber, Ed.S., principal, St. Luke Catholic School, Indianapolis, Indiana

A SECRET TO SUCCESS: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Newspaper headlines daily proclaim problems with our nation's schools. No school is exempt from tragedy, but the long-standing traditions of the Catholic school provide some strategies for confronting problems in today's society. The foundation of Gospel values coupled with the support and commitment of parents provides means to prepare children for the new millennium. The *National Education Goals for 2000: American Act of 1989* originally included six goals as developed by governors and the President. Congress added two more goals, one dealing with drugs, alcohol, and violence and the other goal stressing the importance of parental involvement: "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children." The Catholic school is blessed with parental involvement, a secret to its success.

The Catholic school, though dependent on voluntary enrollment, will thrive in the new millennium by marketing the strengths of a value-infused education with parental involvement. The Catholic school recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children, and by marketing the unique opportunities of parental partnership, families will be attracted to the school. The African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," emphasizes the critical importance of the school and home working together for the good of the child. When there is an attitude of respect surrounding parent, teacher, and student, there is a better likelihood of effective learning. Communication between home and school is essential for student achievement and success. Without the vital component of parental involvement, student performance can suffer. Parental involvement with home and school cooperation is integral to Catholic education and is a tremendous asset for marketing the school.

Research supports the vital role of the parent in the educational process. Catholic schools enjoy exceptional parental support because everyone involved in the school is there by choice. Parents can assist by volunteering, by serving on boards of education, and by participating in parent organizations. With site-based management, the families have a real sense of ownership of their Catholic school. Our existing structures encourage parent involvement; nothing has to be created. Because Catholic schools exist to pass on the Gospel message of Christ, the community that worships and works together—students, staff, parents, and parishioners—is bound together by a common higher purpose.

A SECRET TO SUCCESS: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Research also shows that parent involvement in schools increases student achievement and improves student attitudes toward school. Parents can and do play a vital and constructive role in the education of their children. The partnership between home and school provides a support system for the child along with a sense of security that the community cares about his or her well-being. Catholic schools work together in an attitude of trust between home and school, between parents and teachers. Sr. Jude Fitzpatrick, former superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Des Moines, said that if parents know we love their children, they will trust us in the school to work with them to the best of our ability. Parents will accept all kinds of information, good and bad, because they know we care. The caring environment of the school encourages family support.

As we approach the new millennium, parental involvement grows in importance. In a quote from the 1972 document from the National Council of Bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did*, we are challenged:

While it was relatively easy in more stable times for parents to educate their children and transmit their values to them, the immense complexity of today's society makes this truly an awesome task. Without forgetting, then, that parents are "the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them" (*Apostolate of the Laity*, 11), the Christian community must make a generous effort today to help them fulfill their duty. . . . (#52)

By recognizing parents as the primary educators of their children, the school is able to form a partnership and enjoy parental cooperation throughout the learning process. Academics are given a high priority to help students to develop and appreciate their God-given gifts. Catholic schools prepare the whole child through the basic tenets of faith, community, prayer, and service. The school has the opportunity to prepare students who will be involved participants in a society, who will approach the world through eyes of faith. This dimension is much needed in our world today and into the new millennium.

Anita J. Westerhaus, Ed.S., principal, Sacred Heart School, West Des Moines, Iowa

WELCOME, 21ST CENTURY!

Almost everywhere we look—in magazines, on television, on signboards along the road—we see, read, or hear something about the year 2000 (actually 2001, since the next century begins with the year 2001). What is going to happen to computers when 1999 becomes 2000? What if the airlines are not ready? What if the IRS is not ready (that might be good for many of us)? What if, what if? We are all moving at such a fast rate of speed that when the new year strikes 2000, we may still be planning for it.

And so it is with educating our young children in our Catholic schools. We are forever planning for the future, but before we can get the plan in motion, the children are coming in the door. This is a good thing, for to stop this process would be our demise. The year 2000 strikes a special note in everyone, for it is a history-making moment and one of those “teachable moments” that will not happen again for many of us.

What a great time to be alive and involved in such a dynamism as guiding and developing young minds to live in the year 2000 and beyond. Tom Groome has a delightful, reflective book called *Educating for Life*, which is what we educators are called to do, not only for our students but for each one of us as well. We never stop educating ourselves and others. The Catholic school during the next millennium will be called to do just that to an even greater degree than in the past. Our teachers will be called to be even greater role models of morally sound Christian living. Children will be coming from even more dysfunctional homes, where *family* will be a new vocabulary word. Teaching styles have already changed but will continue to change to fit the needs of the “Child 2000.” And it goes on and on. Catholic schools, however, will continue to be the stabilizing force in many children’s lives.

Teachers will continue to be the guidance counselors, the baby-sitters, and the educators. We must be careful, however, to keep our school environment and our personnel in control of the future and not let the future take control of us. Let us keep in step with the times and sometimes ahead of the times. We must be watchful, though, of the “bandwagon” approach (hopping on every new thing that comes down the pike), especially in this pressure age of technology, where we might “surf” our students and ourselves into areas where we really do not need to be. Let us not forget the beauty of the person and the tool of good conversation. I fear that so many of our young people (and some old ones also) are becoming hooked on technology. As administrators and/or teachers, we

WELCOME, 21ST CENTURY!

are being inundated with E-mail, the Internet, integration of technology into the curriculum, development of technology plans, and so on. This too is a good thing, if it is kept in perspective; human beings before machines!

A somewhat new challenge, at least for most Catholic school systems, will be the whole idea of unions in the work force. With our church's teaching on social justice and, indeed, its teaching on unions themselves, our Catholic schools will see a lot more unionization among its workers. How will we address this issue?

With all of this, we must keep in mind our main reason for being—to share our faith and “to teach as Jesus did.” This brings me to perhaps the most important issue facing us in the 21st century: keeping our Catholic schools Catholic. One of the challenges may be vouchers. The idea is wonderful, but how do we accept government assistance without accompanying government controls, which could creep in very insidiously? We see it happen everywhere else, so what reason is there to think it won't happen in schools also?

Along with keeping our schools Catholic comes the challenge to keep alive the spirit of Vatican II. What a burst of energy we experienced at the conclusion of that council! Just one example was the integration of faith into our schools. Students found religion to be interesting. New and better textbooks abounded. Now, anyone on the “inside” can see and feel the constant pressure to abandon all this. If our Catholic school administrators are not careful, it will become as though that council had never spoken.

Yes, we have many challenges. We also have great hope for a bright future. We who have been there know our successes and failures. We say “Thanks” for all that has been and for all those who have made us who and what we are. For all that is yet to be, “Welcome, 21st century!” The Spirit is very much alive and will continue to be with us as we forge ahead into paths yet unknown.

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