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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

The Triage Principal:

An Autoethnographic Tale of Leadership in a Catholic Turnaround School

by

Corena Marasco

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

In partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2015

The Triage Principal: An Autoethnographic Tale of

Leadership in a Catholic Turnaround School

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by

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This dissertation written by Corena Marasco, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

March 25, 2015

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DEDICATION

To the students and families who I was privileged to serve in East Los Angeles during my journey as a first year, first time principal. Your love, dedication, determination, and support has inspired me day in and day out, and I will never forget you and the times we shared. This dissertation served to give us both a voice.

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Non sanz droict.

William Shakespeare

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Nelson Mandela

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ABSTRACT

The Triage Principal:

An Autoethnographic Tale of Leadership in a Catholic Turnaround School

By

Corena Marasco

Catholic schools are in need of innovative change. The problem lies in how to construct the elements of change to create viability for a school in the face of rapid declining enrollment. Responding to this type of environment as an educational leader requires qualities and characteristics similar to those of first responders in a medical emergency, a term I coined as the *triage principal.* This autoethnographic research study was designed to answer three research questions:

1. As a new principal at Michael, the Archangel School (MAS), a Catholic school in danger of closing, what challenges did I experience?
2. As a new leader, how did I respond to the challenges to bring about change at MAS?
3. What did I learn from this first year leadership experience?

This autoethnographic study is constructed from my voice as a first year, first time principal, using several data sources: my blog, my archival field notes, and three interviews from archdiocesan leaders. Each of the given data sources had contained a data collection procedure

resulting in overarching thematic patterns that led to generalizations based on the past experiences at MAS and my review of the literature. The weaving of the past and present of my life's leadership journey in combination with the culture and the people that surround me for this study, has made me realize that I do have a story worth sharing, a story that can potentially help others who might find themselves seemingly lost and alone.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Prologue: Background on the Journey of a Leader

My leadership journey chronicles my work as a leader in a failing Catholic school, my trust in my own intuition, my passion for serving urban youth, and my willingness to study my own experience. My journey began in the sleepy town of Glendale, California, when I was born one cold December night in the year 1985. From that moment, my life has been shaped by experiences, the trials and tribulations of life, and stories from the intricate dance of past and present. From my earliest memories, I remember my grandma who raised me, sitting at her dark brown chair with her dark gray hair perfectly coiffed and gentle smile, while I would sit in my bear chair as she would call it (which was simply a chair that was made out of a large bear stuffed animal). She would sit there in her special chair, one that I was sure was magic, as she would tell me story after story, transporting us each time to a different date, time, and world. She would talk about our family, her own life, Gospel stories, fairy tales, and even stories that she would make up, as I begged her each time for one more story and one more lesson that I could learn.

As a student of life, culture, and time, every experience has a lesson. As I embarked on the journey as a new, first time principal at Michael the Archangel School (MAS), a pseudonym created for confidentiality, at the age of 25 years old, I kept this belief of life's learning lessons in mind, as I wrote a blog entry every week for the entire year which detailed a story as it unfolded. Each week was a different story, with a different lesson—sometimes obvious and sometimes not. The following excerpt from my blog, titled *The Adventures of a First Year*

Principal (Marasco, 2011), serves as my first entry and sheds light on a piece of my personal journey and this autoethnographic research on my leadership:

> When I was a senior in high school, one of my teachers gave each of us a prayer card with a very unique photo of Jesus on one side and the poem "Footprints in the Sand" on the back. He explained to us that as we begin our lives, he never wanted us to feel alone or stressed and if we ever did, we could read the poem on the back of the card to receive comfort. He recommended that we keep the prayer in our wallet and always have it with us, which is exactly what I did. Periodically throughout my life, I have taken the card out of my wallet and have read it, which has given me comfort as he promised.
>
> In February, when I was still a teacher at Ramona Convent, I had a very strong yearning for wanting a change in my life. I attended a Ph.D. educational administration program meeting at UCLA and knew this was the route that I was being called. I spoke with people close to me and prayed about it and two weeks later, I submitted my resignation in one of the worst economic times in our country's history. Most people thought that I was crazy, because why would I give up a job in this type of atmosphere and not only that, but they assured me that I would never be hired as a principal or administrator due to my age. I could not explain the draw or desire, but was firm in this is what I am supposed to do. Then came one of my dear friends who is a Cabrini sister. After telling her of what I had done, she told me to say a prayer to Mother Cabrini before each interview and she would do the same. She and a few others had confidence in me and what I was being called to, so it made me feel a bit better.

I submitted for every principal job that I could find on the Archdiocese website and went on almost nine different interviews with various call-backs and learning a lot through the process. For a little background, these are not typical interviews, but are usually 45 minutes and there are a minimum of five people sitting around a table asking you questions. Needless to say, it was a very stressful process, which I used that prayer card from my high school teacher and prayed to Mother Cabrini more than ever.

In one interview in particular, I walked in to the waiting room since I was an hour early, and I sat down and pulled out my Mother Cabrini prayer and prayed. There was a wonderful woman in there as well who was waiting to speak to the priest, so I talked with her until she left. When I was sitting in the room alone, I started looking around and to my amazement, there was a picture right behind me with a beautiful frame—it was the exact photo of Jesus from my prayer card, which I had never seen outside of the card! I had a sense that something special was to happen that day and the interview was going to be very important. And it definitely was. The superintendent of Catholic elementary schools was in the interview because he had been principal at the school years before, and I hit the interview out of the park. I thought for sure that I was going to get the job, but I did not.

A week later, I received a call during one of my breaks at work from the Archdiocese, a Mrs. Lelana Moran, asking me to meet her at a school in 25 minutes to check it out. I got off the phone with her and when the Archdiocese calls, you jump, so I told my principal that I had to leave and met her there. This particular school was one

> mile away from where the California Cabrini sisters are buried and it was Michael the Archangel School. (Marasco, 2011)

This reporting of history can be looked at as being in the right place at the right time, or having the courage and faith that all will be well with an infectious sense of passion and mission—I prefer to believe in the latter.

What follows is an autoethnography reported by me as researcher and on my first year, first time as a Catholic school principal who grappled with innovation and change in a troubled school environment. Responding to this type of environment as an educational leader requires qualities and characteristics similar to those of first responders in a medical emergency. The *triage principal,* a term that I coined, is one that enters a traumatized school environment and acts as the first responder, quickly assesses the immediate needs, finds solutions, and implements strategies for environmental change, all the while involving the community. This autoethnographic research, one focused on my leadership, shifts from past and present, just as my grandma taught me so long ago, and explores the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a first time/first year triage principal of a traumatized Catholic elementary school bleeding enrollment in the inner city of Los Angeles.

This chapter covers the context, background, and framework for research on leadership in Catholic education. The next section delivers a brief introduction to the inner city Catholic elementary school, Michael the Archangel School, which was a pseudonym created for the confidentiality of the specific school site that I was called to serve my first year, first time as principal.

Introduction to Michael the Archangel School

In the heart of East Los Angeles, California, Michael the Archangel School (MAS) is a small, urban, Catholic, Archdiocesan school with a potential enrollment of 350 students. MAS was founded in 1914, nearly 100 years ago, and was one of the largest schools in the west of the United States with 1,000 students filling the halls of the school in 1944. From 1914 until the late 1980's, MAS was a double school, where each grade level had two classrooms of students, and the school was staffed by the Presentation Sisters. By 2010, there was only one Presentation Sister who volunteered in the afterschool program at MAS, and the rest of the school staff were laypersons.

East Los Angeles has historically been a primarily Latino community, and has been coined as an inner city environment, where MAS continues to service the community. In the face of declining enrollment and for a variety of reasons, the school was removed from its original governance as a parish school and was labeled as an archdiocesan school in 2010, where MAS was under control of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in regard to general school operations (See Appendix A for the permission to use the name of the Archdiocese). Then with a significant drop in enrollment that occurred in the 2010-2011 school year, the traditional one teacher per grade model was no longer viable due to finances and the school was on the closure list. This experience is best detailed in my personal blog (2011):

> This is my first year as principal at Michael the Archangel and my first year as principal overall. The school is in need of help, since there are only 35 students registered at the school. The Archdiocese was going to close the school, but the Archbishop said "No," so here I am. The Archdiocese asked me to come up with an idea to work with the current

> numbers, so I developed a pseudo-non graded method, where there will be three full-time teachers, an aide/secretary, and myself. The groups will be K-2, 3-5, and 6-8, where the last two groups will be switching between two teachers who will teach their specialty (Math/Science and English/Social Studies). You may be saying that this sounds crazy, but in reality, we've been doing this method for centuries, and the reason it will be more effective is because of the addition of technology. Now, I just need to gather up donations from the local high schools and reconstruct the classrooms over summer. It is a great project and is like building a whole new school, from the new website I developed to the uniforms. As I always like to say, Let the Games begin! (Marasco, personal blog, 2011)

As a result of limited funds in an already financially challenged environment, I did the only thing that I could think of—stay positive and research all that I could. I was not only thinking about the specifics of MAS, but what components of a model could be generalizable to other locations. After much research and as the new principal at MAS, I implemented a multi-age educational approach and developed the LITE Model that combined three reform elements: community collaboration; a unique reversed financial model; and a multi-age structure to reach all levels within a given class. Popular in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as in most Lutheran schools (Katz, 1985), multi-age education provided many possibilities for the future of MAS. MAS was the first school in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to attempt such a structure, and provides a course of action for schools in similar situations that are dealing with low enrollment.

After seven months of implementing the LITE Model, the enrollment at MAS went from 35 students at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year to 116 students at the end of the same

year requiring adjustments to the model. In the 2012-2013 school year, the enrollment was 216 students. And in the 2013-2014 school year, the enrollment was 301 students.

To situate MAS and my own experience in a broader context, the next section gives a brief background on Catholic education.

Background on Catholic Education

Catholic elementary education in the United States has an interesting history dating back to 1783, with the establishment of the first parish school at Saint Mary's parish in Philadelphia (Walch, 1996). Innovation has been a major factor for these schools as they appeared and disappeared from the landscape throughout history. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1973):

> While the Christian purpose of the Catholic school must always be clearly evident, no one form is prescribed for it. The search for new forms of schooling should therefore continue … Consideration should also be given to the relationship of parish and school where circumstances suggest that the traditional parish may no longer provide the best framework for formal schooling. (p. 35)

Each parish and school has a unique culture and circumstance, but historically speaking, parish schools have been the norm for Catholic elementary schools. As stated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1884), "no parish is complete till it has schools adequate to the needs of its children, and the pastor and people of such a parish should feel that they have not accomplished their entire duty until the want is supplied" (p. 33). This idea of Catholic education meeting the "adequate to the needs of its children" is one that continues to guide most of its schools to this day.

This autoethnographic study of my first year as principal explores how I struggled to lead a failing school and transform it into one that meets the needs of its children and community. The next section describes the problem the research sought to address and the link to social justice.

Problem Statement and Link to Social Justice

Catholic schools are in need of innovative change. The problem lies in how to go about this change, create viability within a school in the face of declining enrollment, school closures, growth of charter schools, economic challenges, community pre-conceived notions, and find a leader who can tackle all of these obstacles. As James (2007) stated, "numerous reasons for this decline have been offered that can be grouped into four broad categories: changing demography, value issues, economic issues, and leadership issues" (p. 288). Most of these issues link directly to social justice and leadership.

Social justice is a topic that has many meanings and contexts within our society. For me, it is about creating equity among all members of society despite their differences, including, but not limited to, ethnicity, gender, ability, and socioeconomic status. Speaking as a mixed-race female, who grew up in a predominately White town, there are many injustices in our world, especially in education, but all should have an opportunity to succeed, instead of being hindered from the beginning due to circumstances that are outside of her/his control.

It seems as though in today's world, leadership is also a topic of discussion in every realm ranging from politics to education. Many people want to know what constitutes a good leader, how we can help leaders improve, and even what constitutes real leadership. Each person

has his/her own views and perspectives on each of these points, and with no right or wrong answer, it comes down to personal philosophy, implementation of values, and right action.

As defined by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (2007), a leader is "one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of change" (p. 3). Leadership, to me, is the way a person moves a group of people from one point to the next point, where the person has to decide which times to guide, which times to lead, which times to direct the group, and when to get out of the way, all in a way that is based on values. Similar to a sports team, a coach has to determine when to coach and when to manage, while keeping the team working fluidly together to victory and focusing on sportsmanship. It is also similar to spinning many plates at the same time, while paying proper attention to them all as well. A leader is someone who is: authentic, leads with love, disciplined, self-aware, focuses on dialogue, and a true lifelong learner who yearns for truth and knowledge. These concepts are further strengthened by this exploration, as I describe in the next section the purpose of this autoethnography.

Purpose of the Study

Through this exploration and as a triage principal at MAS, I was from a different area of the local region and came from a different cultural background in comparison to the school community. Despite these differences, I quickly assessed the environment and culture that I was being called to lead and immersed myself in the community as I attempted to authentically assimilate to the new culture. As a new leader in a new environment, I learned to earn the trust of those that I was being called to serve, while embarking on a non-traditional grass roots leadership approach. Based on any information I could gather, I created and implemented an

alternative educational model in an attempt to help a struggling school, address the problem of equal access to success for the students, and eventually help other Catholic schools move forward in changing times. As I worked as a first responder, I realized my leadership was embodied in the Footprints prayer card I referenced in my blog and still carry with me today.

The purpose of this autoethnographic study is to examine myself as the leader on this journey, where I served at MAS during the 2011-2012 school year, my first year as principal, where I had to design and implement an alternative educational model, and build up a school from the brink of closure. This autoethnographic study, as told through my voice as leader details my overall experience at a new school site, in a new position, and the experience of constructing and implementing school-wide change with the pressure of potential school closure. I describe and analyze what I did, how I led, what successes I experienced, what mistakes I made, and what I learned as a leader.

In the following section, I discuss the significance of this study in relationship to my own leadership and how it benefits others.

Significance of the Study

Leadership insights and lessons I learned as a first year, first time principal helps new and veteran principals, as well as serves as a reference for future principals, in dealing with and succeeding in new environments. This personal account and reflective approach provides leadership strategies for innovative change and can help to inform struggling schools and the leaders within those schools.

As a triage principal, a term which I coined to describe a Catholic school or a private school principal who enters a traumatized environment, this study helped me grow as a leader as

I reflected on my own practices and demonstrated the application of theory into practice. Certain characteristics that define a triage principal emerged and could aid leadership in recruiting and identifying these types of individuals for principalships in various difficult environments.

Overall, I hope to inspire and invigorate leaders to become change agents for the transformation of education within all schools, not only schools in poor, inner city, or troubled environments. I wanted to share my leadership journey, the high and the low points, to help conduct a data analysis of leadership and help other leaders in the process.

In the subsequent section I detail the guiding framework for this study and its interconnectedness with my own life and learning.

Framework

For this study, the guiding framework is grounded in Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory, which is based on the leader as "one who motivates us to do more than what we originally expected to do" (p. 20). Bass argued that in examining outcomes and being aware of how to achieve these outcomes, motivation would be achieved. He also said the successful leader goes beyond self-interests of the team members and keeps them focused on what is good for the overall organization.

Growing up as an interscholastic and a collegiate softball player, this is a theory that resonates with me on the deepest level. When I close my eyes and silence the thoughts in my head, the aches and pains of an adult body, and bring forth the intricate dance of memories, I can still hear the crowds roar, hands clapping, and cheers coming from the dugout as I walk up to bat with confidence that is palpable. As a senior in high school, I was my team's team captain and had been for the previous three years. I was one of the most recruited softball players in the

nation and had played on many national levels, but each game, each at-bat, each pitch, brought new challenges, goals, and outcomes. This particular at-bat was no different as we were tied with our rival opponent and runners were on second and third base with only one out. When I approached the plate for my at-bat, I had a choice: I could swing for the fence and try to get a homerun, which I had easily done on this pitcher before and risk a strikeout; or I could hit a long fly ball for an out, sacrificing myself, so that the runners could tag-up and run home so we could win. I chose the latter where we ended up winning the game two-to-one due to self-sacrifice and focus on what was best for the team at that time. As I slowly open my eyes and the aches of age come back, that athletic mentality that I had been blessed with developing at a young age was one that prepared me for leadership in the real-world. Bass was right, in leading by example, transformation can occur.

Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory, the guiding framework for this study, is explained in greater detail in Chapter 2. Overall, this framework can be found in every aspect of my leadership journey at MAS as I sought to answer my research questions. The following section identifies these research questions.

Research Questions

This autoethnographic research study is designed to answer three research questions:

1. As a new, first time principal at MAS, a Catholic school in danger of closing, what challenges did I experience?
2. As a new leader, how did I respond to the challenges to bring about change at MAS?
3. What did I learn from this first year, first time leadership experience?

Research Design and Methodology

This autoethnographic research study is presented in my own voice as a first year principal at MAS. According to Spry (2001), autoethnography is defined as a "self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context" (p. 710). By using an autoethnographic study as my chosen strategy and process for data collection, it "brings forward the shifting aspects of self and creates ways to write about experiences in a broader social context" (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008, p. 22). With this approach, the concepts of self and other intertwine to describe the particular cultural context. This social context is defined as MAS, which is situated in an urban environment.

According to Chang (2008), "effective autoethnography requires a triadic balance between the following: ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (p. 48). Going further, Merriam (2002) state that "autoethnographers strive to understand the interaction of individuals not just with others, but with the culture of the society in which they live" (p. 38). As an autoethnographer and throughout my research, my voice is captured from postings in an online blog titled, *Adventures of a First Year Principal,* which represents reflections on the previous week at MAS at the conclusion of the particular week and was written during the entire school year under study. The school site, a brief background on myself, and the data collection method is further discussed in the following sections.

School Site

MAS is a small, urban, Catholic, Archdiocesan school with a capacity enrollment of 350 students. The school was established 1914 in East Los Angeles, California, and was servicing a

primarily Latino community for much of that time. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, which was the beginning of my principalship, the enrollment at MAS was 35 students in grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. By the end of the same school year, the enrollment was 116 students in grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. Focused on enrollment and knowing a school is not a school if there are no students enrolled, as a new, first time principal, I used my knowledge, skills, and disposition to identify and address the needs of the school. In the following section, I present a brief background on who I am as a person, which establishes who I am as a leader.

Background on the New, First Time Principal

Standing 5 feet, 5 inches with tan skin, brown hair with subtle golden streaks, lively brown eyes, and a gentle smile, I stood at the steps of MAS each morning greeting the students as they entered—no one passes unless they say “good morning” back and some come running up for high-fives or hugs. My name is Corena "Cori" Marasco, or as my students call me, simply "Miss."

For a little bit about myself, including basic statistics: I was raised for most of my childhood in Burbank, California, the oldest child in my family. My two younger sisters, Alina and Lea, are 15 and 10 years younger than I, so I lived my first 10 years as an only child—explaining my need to care for others, but inability to share my toys despite my affection for them.

I went to public school for grades Kinder through fifth grade, bouncing around to three different schools in various cities, and landed at Saint Finbar School in Burbank for middle school followed by Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks. During my middle school and

high school years, I found stability in athletics (specifically softball and basketball) and my education (where I held a 4.5 GPA in high school), where I brought my focus and drive on and off the playing fields. I attended Rutgers University in New Jersey on a full academic and softball scholarship, came home after six months, and finished my Bachelors degree in History from Cal State LA after only one and a half years for a four year degree. I hold my Master's Degree in Science Education, and a single subject teaching credential in biology. In 2008, I married Michael, who is from New Jersey and is a Catholic school principal in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

For me, education is my passion because there is no other avenue in which I can have so much impact on lives, especially in the inner city schools. Looking at what some children face, it is amazing to see their drive and determination, when even some of the toughest adults would not be able to function. To me, all children deserve a fighting chance in this world and at MAS, we have been striving to provide for them a solid foundation at the elementary and middle school level so that this can be possible. Some of the keys to success are innovation and ability to think creatively and I believe that this is what the education world desperately needs. This is the main reason that I decided to enter a doctoral program, and I wrote this dissertation.

Looking at where I am now, the big question seems to be how did I get here? There are many factors that shape a person's life from upbringing to specific life experiences. It is the total of all of this learning that creates the individual. As for me, as my blog states:

> I seek discipline in my life, whether talking of athletics or my prayer life. I enjoy helping others, making people laugh, and nature. I know my strengths and my weaknesses, and I am not afraid to look at myself in the mirror of honesty. And I yearn for knowledge and

> God's continued guidance through this puzzle of life. For Love, Discipline, Self-Awareness and Knowledge are the keys to becoming the best version of yourself and for success. Aspire and Inspire. (Marasco, personal blog, July 5, 2011)

My hope is that through this exploration and my journey of self-reflection as a leader, I inspire others to reflect on their own experiences as they move forward in their own lives.

In the next section I briefly describe the methodology of this study, as well as the data that was explored and utilized.

Methodology

In moving forward for this study, there are a multitude of data sources that were analyzed to provide for triangulation. These data sources consist of: my blog, *Adventures of a First Year Principal,* which serves as informal observations; my archival field notes; and three interviews of archdiocesan leaders. Each of the given data sources had contained a data collection procedure resulting in overarching thematic patterns that led to generalizations based on the past experiences at MAS and my review of the literature (Creswell, 2009, p. 63).

Limitations

Although this study is carefully designed and steeped in the literature, there are several limitations. First, there is a limitation of bias, which is one of the inherent risks of using authethnography as the chosen methodology. Since I am both the principal at MAS and the researcher studying myself as the leader at MAS, this is a limitation, but it also provides a unique perspective, as I analyzed my experience as a leader situated in the culture. According to Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013):

> The autoethnographer is not a traditional participant-observer, someone who infiltrates a cultural group and tries to become a part of the group (without going "native") while simultaneously trying to write about the group, and then leaves to write, sometimes never again making contact with the cultural group members. Centering the work inside personal experience, autoethnographers not only have an investment in the experience they study but can also articulate aspects of cultural life traditional research methods leave out or could not access. (p. 34)

The situations and experiences that I convey are personal and can be considered biased, but every experience in life can be seen from multiple lenses. In this study, the three interviews that were conducted "provide external data that gives contextual information to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively generated data" (Chang, 2008, p. 104).

With the use of introspectively generated data, and study of myself as the leader, the second limitation that could be argued is the generalizability of the study to other schools or leaders. According to Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013), "autoethnography does not claim to produce better or more reliable, generalizable and/or valid research than other methods, but instead provides another approach for studying cultural experience" (p. 33). This study is not meant to be a prescribed routine approach, but one that could be used as a point of reference for another school and/or leader, and serves as an example of innovation. The insights from a first year/first time principal may help others in a similar setting to provide innovative change for their school environment. Autoethnography is a practice that "does not simply describe the world, but offers great possibility for changing it" (Madison, 2012, p. 189). The results of the conducted thorough investigation of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a first year/first

time principal may help to inform others as they embark on the leadership challenge in saving a traumatized school.

Serving as a guide, the following section describes the outline of the dissertation content, as well as the chapter breakdown.

Outline of the Dissertation Content

Chapter Breakdown

In an effort to connect my data closely with my analysis in this autoethnography, I chose a four chapter format. In choosing to write in this format, there was much deliberation and intent for the structure of each chapter so as to honor the demonstrative nature of autoethnography as my chosen method, yet demonstrate proper adherence to the formal scholarly nature of a doctoral dissertation. The result is a dissertation that contains all of the traditional elements, in a non-traditional style, which is demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

Chapter 1 provides the background of study, including: introduction or background of the problem including my personal background, the background of MAS, and the background of Catholic education; statement of the problem and how it addresses social justice issue; purpose of the study; significance of the study; conceptual framework; research question; research design and methodology; limitations; and organization of dissertation.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review, which is centered on the knowledge, skills, and disposition that I needed to possess as a triage leader in a Catholic school. The chapter includes: a brief introduction including the concept of literature as knowledge, and the restatement of the research questions; description of the framework; key questions and limitations; the literature

review structured on the concepts of knowledge of context and climate, skill of community collaboration and the disposition of a leader for change; and a conclusion.

Chapter 3 serves as the methodology chapter, which includes: an introduction; a careful description of autoethnography; school site population and sampling; data sources and collection including archival data, interview data, and pattern analysis procedure and results; and limitations.

Chapter 4 focuses on my autoethnographic tale, as well as the analysis and reflection of the data presented. The chapter is organized based on my research questions where I sought to answer each research question individually: (1) What challenges I faced? (2) How I overcame those challenges? (3) What I learned from the experiences my first year and first time as principal? The chapter includes: an introduction, purpose, restatement of research questions, and the background on the context and climate of MAS before my official start date; knowledge, skills, and dispositions where I sought to answer my first two research questions as I recounted my challenges and responses in the order that I experienced them including my own personal challenges, the school, finance, enrollment and staffing, trauma and gang violence, and the Pastor influence; my interviewees' learned lessons; what I learned from this autoethnography where I answered my last research question; recommendations for future research and leaders; and a conclusion. Beyond Chapter 4 includes references and appendices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature as Knowledge

Literature, one of the building blocks of knowledge, is a refuge present as we enter, browse, learn, and challenge it. It can tell stories, give statistical information, or simply give insight into a problem that needs to be solved. Literature and its analysis are the foundations of education as students learn from early ages to read and write, adding to the expanding body of knowledge.

From my earliest memories, I remember being prepared for the day when I started school; a day that promised to be one where I could expand on my knowledge. Feeling these memories flood over me, I sit back, relax, and remember: The bell rang, I stood frozen with my grandma at my side—my palms were sweating and my stomach was in knots as we stood outside a large door that looks like a place where giants lived. My grandma, in her favorite blue striped shirt and white shorts, looked at me with her bright blue eyes and smiled.

"Are you ready to go in?" I just stood there, not sure if I had a voice to speak, even if I tried to answer—I simply nod my head. This was a day we had practiced all week, ever since she took me to register for kindergarten at our local school. After all of our practice of "good-byes" and play school, this was the real thing. As we practiced, I turned to her, gave her a huge hug, told her I loved her, and walked into class—my "real" teacher gave me a cubby to put my stuff in and showed me where my spot was on the floor. It was strange, because I heard school was going to be hard, but I wanted to be the best I could and worked each day to try and understand the strange words they all seemed to know. Each day I went home and cried to my

grandma and told her I did not want to go to school anymore because even though I tried hard, I just could not understand. This went on for almost two weeks until my grandma decided to go into the school to sit-in on the class and find out for herself what was happening. I felt relieved that at least I would be able to understand her and not this strange "school language."

It turned out, that school language was actually Spanish, which I did not speak nor understand. During the registration, the woman took one look at me with my grandma by my side and placed me in a Spanish only class for kindergarten, since she thought that I was Hispanic.

By the end of the day, my grandma had me moved into an English speaking class, where I promised her that I would learn to read and write quickly—getting the best education that I could. And I did just that.

Knowledge, such as the ability to read and write, is at its core, acquired information that helps to inform decisions—especially those decisions that a leader must make. What follows in this chapter is a review of the literature pertaining to Catholic education and the necessary foundational knowledge for this study of myself as the first time, first year principal and leader at Michael the Archangel School (MAS). The literature review focuses on: the knowledge of the context and climate of MAS and Catholic education; the skill of community collaboration in an educational setting; and the disposition of a leader for change. Each of these components is presented to understand the complexities of inner city education and all the aspects I understood before embarking on my leadership journey at MAS.

Similar to the story of my first day of school, this literature review is presented through the lens of autoethnography which will combine a presentation of the relevant literature that

framed my knowledge, skills, and disposition as a leader with my voice as an active participant researcher. The following section serves as an introduction to MAS, and provides the context for the literature review including the restated research questions.

Introduction

MAS is a small, urban, Catholic, Archdiocesan school that underwent a significant drop in enrollment that occurred in the 2010-2011 school year, causing a crisis within the school that needed to be addressed in order for the school to remain open. The community, consisting of the students, teachers, parents, and the principal had to work together to come up with a solution and devise a course of action for the school—the result was a new model. The enrollment at MAS went from 35 students at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year to 116 students at the end of the year. Similarly, MAS concluded the school year with a surplus of over $25,000.00 according to the MAS annual fiscal report from 2012. The following excerpt is from my principal blog, *The Adventures of a First Year Principal* (Marasco, 2011), which gives an insight into the mindset of the leader, especially in regard to MAS:

> The Archangel School is more than just a school, but it is a place where dreams are born. Our goal is to instill in our students the passion for life and belief that anything is possible if they really want it. We are teaching them that it doesn't matter that they are struggling financially, Latino, or from the "wrong side" of town, but what does matter is that they use their capabilities to the maximum and grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically into the leaders that we know that they can be.
>
> As a faculty and staff, we care about our students in a way that is seldom seen, even in the education world—we are truly a family, where each member brings

something new that can be celebrated and appreciated, whether it be humor, confidence, intellect, artistic ability, or expression. We do not want to hide who are students are, or lump them into a group; we realize that each of our students is unique and our job is to help them understand who they are and what their dreams are in this life.

From an administrative standpoint, I can honestly say that I have been transformed by my experiences at Michael the Archangel School. Seeing the students' faces as they come to school each day and greet us at the door is something that can hardly be described. A friend of mine recently asked me, "how does it feel affecting so many lives?" The truth is, I am not affecting them nearly as much as they are affecting me. The children make me smile and warm my heart each and everyday, and it seems that I cannot go 10 minutes without thinking about them and what more we can be doing at Michael the Archangel to help them and their families. As Easter just passed and we are now on Easter Break, it is giving us time to think creatively for more ideas and gives us time to relax, rejuvenate, and reflect.

This week the greatest lesson that we have learned is the importance of dreaming. Dreaming keeps us as adults focused, while for children, it is what makes their world turn round and gives them hope for the future. At Michael the Archangel School, we help our students to realize these dreams and hope and pray that this world becomes all that they want it to be. As we like to say, we are helping to turn our children today into effective leaders tomorrow. (Marasco, 2011)

As the triage principal at MAS, one that addressed the difficulties and complexities of a struggling school, there were many obstacles that I encountered as I entered a traumatized school

environment and acted as the first responder, quickly assessing the immediate needs with the community, finding solutions, and implementing strategies for organizational change. This chapter provides the research foundation for the triage principal, where members' input is valued and solutions are co-constructed, resulting in "buy-in" from the members.

Research Questions

Building on the foundations of a triage leader, this autoethnographic research study is designed to answer three research questions:

1. As a new, first time principal at MAS, a Catholic school in danger of closing, what challenges did I experience?
2. As a new leader, how did I respond to the challenges to bring about change at MAS?
3. What did I learn from this first year, first time leadership experience?

The following section describes the framework, which serves as the foundation and guiding concept for this autoethnographic study.

Framework

The framework for this study on a first year, first time principal is based on Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory, which is where the leader is "one who motivates us to do more than we originally expected to do" (p.20). Bass argued that in examining outcomes and being aware of how to achieve these outcomes, motivation would be achieved. He also asserted the successful leader goes beyond self-interests of the individual team members and keeps them focused on what is good for the overall organization.

The human beings that make up the organization, especially within a school, are important for a transformational leader to get to know, as they are human capital who give input

into the school achieving its goals. Owens and Valesky (2011, 2015) described the concept of human capital as they stated, "people's knowledge (their skills, attitudes, and social skills) are also assets that can increase in value over time—which, by definition, assets should do—or decrease in value, depending largely on how they are managed" (p. 121). Based on the statement above, the people who make up a school's community are just as important as the tangible assets of the school. By spending time and getting to know each of them, especially the teachers, students, and families, it allows for good community collaboration that is necessary to move the school forward when change is needed. Owens and Valesky (2011) stated:

> People should be managed so that their skills, motivations, attitudes, and knowledge develop, improve, and increase over time rather than level off at a steady pace or, worse yet, decline. This way of managing, to develop and increase the value of the organization's human resources, is the process of building human capital. (p. 122)

As a leader, it is essential to manage and lead in this way, where once the leader gets to know the individual members of each of the groups (teachers, students, and families), it provides clarity for the motivation and goals of the members. By leading in this way and taking the time out of a leader's schedule to personalize her/his work and decision-making, it provides fulfillment, as well as creates "buy-in" from each of the groups because they see that their needs are being listened to and met.

Figure 1 is a diagram that I created to depict the necessary components of a transformational leader attempting to reach a given goal—the leader must be selfless and motivated in order to achieve the given goal, which, in turn allows the followers to do the same. With the combination of the components of self-less and motivation, the arrow in the figure

symbolizes the equation's result of the goal of the group being achieved. Together, the group can focus on the results. The transformational leader is one who continually keeps community collaboration in mind and goes beyond the individual dialectical concepts of self and other, and works with the collective. According to Chang (2008), "self may need to start with 'denying self' by putting aside its own standards, crossing its own cultural boundaries, and 'immersing' self in others cultures" (p. 28). This action of "denying self" and embracing "the others" goes hand in hand with my story as a first time, first year principal.

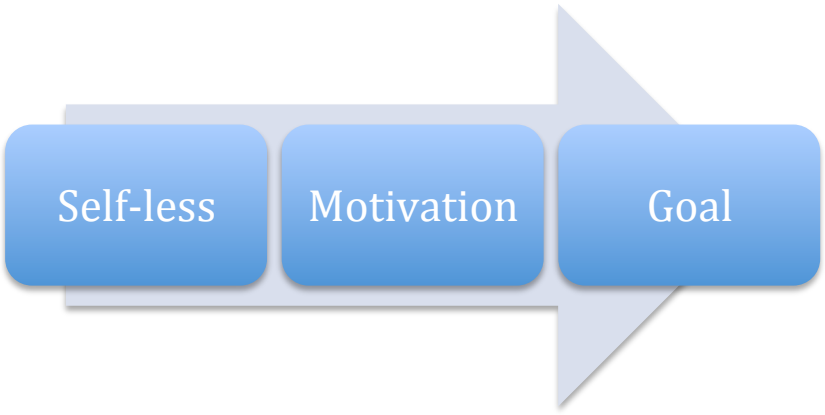


Figure 1. Transformational Leadership Goal Orientation.

The subsequent section describes the key questions and limitations of the literature review for this autoethnographic research grounded in the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985).

Key Questions and Limitations

This literature review builds on the knowledge required for a transformational leader, which I had to know and posses as the first time, first year principal at MAS, including: the knowledge of the context and climate; the skill of community collaboration; and the disposition

of a change agent. This literature review also adds to the general understanding of elementary Catholic school history, as well as defines other related key phrases that I needed to learn in order to appeal to the values of those I led.

The items I needed to learn were basic, but varied, since I was charged with the task of being the leader as a stranger in a new environment. I had a number of challenges that I faced considering: I grew up in a middle socioeconomic state (SES), while this environment was extremely low SES; I was not a Latina and this was a 100% Latino environment; I did not speak Spanish and talked like a "whetta" (White person), while most of the parents only spoke Spanish; I grew up protestant and became a Catholic as a convert, while in this environment the majority were raised Catholic; and I never knew the gang life, while this environment did. So, I truly was a stranger in a new environment—one entirely different from my own. Key questions addressed in this literature review are crucial to what I needed to know as a new Catholic school leader, what I did in order to be successful in this new environment, and how I was influenced by those I led. The main questions are: What is the history of Catholic schools in regard to the key elements for a first time, first year principal, such as governance, school finance, school financial models, and community collaboration? What is community collaboration? What does the Catholic school culture convey? What is the role of Catholic school leadership? How are change and transitions viewed in Catholic schools?

In an effort to answer these questions, an extensive search of the literature on Catholic school history, leadership, and Catholic school leadership was conducted. I found that there is very little research on Catholic schools, especially at the elementary level. This lack in literature

results in a primarily descriptive review with few qualitative and quantitative studies. Since this is an emerging field of study, the majority of the literature is found in dissertations.

The literature is organized and presented by the themes of the knowledge of context and climate, skill of community collaboration, and disposition for a leader for change. Each theme is further organized by categories of topics that are relevant and necessary for a transformational leader to grasp as a Catholic school leader. The first theme of knowledge of context and climate includes: relevant Catholic school history; Catholic school governance models such as single parish school, inter-parochial school, diocesan school, and private school; Catholic school finance; Catholic school financial models such as cost-based tuition, stewardship model, and negotiated tuition; Catholic school culture; and diversity and school culture. The second theme of the skill of community collaboration includes: Catholic schools and community collaboration; and Maslow's (1987) Hierarchy of Needs and needs assessment. The third theme of the disposition of a leader for change includes: school leadership; history of leadership studies; the Catholic school principal; and change and transitions in Catholic schools.

The following section presents a synthesis of the literature of the first theme of the knowledge of the context and climate.

Knowledge: Context and Climate

One of my professors during my doctoral coursework on leadership would always say to my class, "context matters." This statement was simplistic in structure, yet complex in meaning, as it resonated with each of us differently. In regard to this study, context certainly matters in regards to MAS and my leadership journey, specifically as a transformational leader. In this section, an extensive review of the literature was conducted on the context and climate that I

encountered as a first time, first year principal in a Catholic, diocesan, elementary school, including what these descriptive terms convey. I present the very foundation of Catholic education, stripping it of its air of mystery and austere appearance, resulting in its unexpectedly pliable structure in which a new leader must be well versed in order to be successful. In this section, I discuss: relevant Catholic school history; the various governance models and what they mean; the structure of Catholic school finance; the various financial models for Catholic schools; and Catholic school culture and how diversity impacts this culture. In examining these areas, especially Catholic school history, it gives the perspective of where the schools have been and where they can go.

Relevant Catholic school history. Catholic elementary education in the United States has an interesting history dating back to 1783, with the establishment of the first parish school at Saint Mary's parish in Philadelphia (Walch, 1996). With the increase in immigration from Europe to America, Catholic schools provided a refuge where the immigrants' ethnic values, culture, language, and faith were respected (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). As stated by Caruso (2012) in his study:

> The Catholic Church built the largest private school system in the world to serve these immigrants, and congregations of sisters provided the workforce to help these people find their way in their new homeland. Their commitment to staffing these schools subsidized a system that was denied financial assistance through public funding. (p.14)

The Catholic school system in the United States was built by religious congregations of sisters as they fought against the discrimination of the Catholic immigrants by the Protestant public. Catholic schools spread across the country because "Catholics were offended by the overtly

Protestant ethos of public schools and that various Catholic ethnic groups sought to preserve their respective cultural traditions" (Youniss, 2000, p.6). Continuing with the expansion, in 1884, the Catholic U.S. bishops met in their annual meeting in Baltimore, also known as the Third Plenary Council, and made it mandatory for every parish to open a school for their parishioners. From the late 1800s until the mid-1950s there is scant information on Catholic schools as new schools were built and enrollment increased (Youniss, 2000). This growth and success of Catholic schooling was felt until the 1960s, which was the height of enrollment for Catholic education. In the past decade, however, the number of religious sisters in schools decreased from 16% to below 7% (McDonald, 2005).

According to DeFiore's study (2011), "from the mid 1960s until now, the data indicate an almost 67% decline in Catholic school enrollment" (p. 3). With declining enrollment and declining numbers of sisters who were staffing the schools, the bishops showed their support for Catholic education. According to Harris (2000),

> In November 1990, the American bishops affirmed their commitment to schools in the pastoral letter, In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools. The bishops asked that new initiatives be launched to secure sufficient financial assistance from both private and public sectors for Catholic parents to avail themselves of the opportunity to send their children to Catholic schools. (p. 60)

Although there are a variety of reasons for the decline in enrollment in Catholic education, McClellan (2000) argued the primary reasons are the influence of church hierarchy, attitudes of Catholic parents toward enrolling their children in the schools, and theological shifts due to

Vatican II. In order to better understand the present Catholic school system, and the specific state of MAS, it is important to look at the structure of the organization of Catholic schools.

Catholic school governance models. As Youniss (2000) stated "to an outsider, the Catholic Church seems like a textbook case of a hierarchically organized institution. … There is no single official Church body that is administratively responsible for schools" (p.5). Although the Catholic Church seems to be organized nationwide, Catholic schools seem to operate as a system of schools, rather than a school system. In this structure, each individual school reflects the cultural environment in which it is physically located, and provides great flexibility for decision-making at the school-site level. As far as the school-site, there are several models for governance, which the O'Brien (1987) discussed in a document titled *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church.* James (2007) wrote, "it identified new organizational models that had begun taking shape that were in conformity with canon law. The primer identified four basic school governance models: the single parish school, the inter-parochial school, the diocesan school, and the private school" (p. 292). Governance is defined by Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011) as "the articulation of mission, policy development and enforcement, establishment of core priorities, and employment and evaluation of key leadership (e.g., the principal). The governance model establishes the framework within which administrators manage the operations of the schools" (p. 14). In each of the governance models including single parish school, the inter-parochial school, the diocesan school, and the private school, the frameworks differ. As the leader at MAS, a diocesan school, it was important for me to know the different models that are possible for a Catholic school, as well as the specifics of operating as a diocesan school in comparison to other more common models.

Single parish school. The parish school, also known as the parochial school, is the most common governance structure for Catholic elementary schools in the United States and accounts for 77% of all Catholic elementary schools (McDonald, 2005). In fact, as a student in a Catholic middle school, this was the model that I experienced, and I believed all Catholic schools were governed in this form. Under this model, a parish school is governed by a single parish, where the pastor of the given parish controls and operates the school, while the superintendent serves as an advisor to the pastor. Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011) stated:

> The parochial model was instituted by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884, obligating all pastors to establish a school at their respective parishes Parish elementary schools peaked in the 1960s at almost 10,000. At that time, the parish model was utilized by 95% of all Catholic elementary schools in the United States. (p. 14)

In this type of model, the pastor has the authority for hiring and firing all school personnel, as well as overall control of the budget. According to Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011):

> Schools can benefit from a parish that is committed to Catholic education, views the school and Catholic education as being central to its mission, and has sufficient funding to support operating deficits. When these three elements are not in place, parish schools are vulnerable. (p. 15).

In the case where a single parish school is vulnerable, inter-parochial schools are another option.

Inter-parochial school. The inter-parochial elementary school, also known as the inter-parish school or regional school, is a governance model where multiple parishes located in a geographically close proximity, govern the school. This model is used by approximately 12% of Catholic elementary schools in the United States (Goldschmidt & Walsh, 2011). Under this

model, the school "typically leases the building of a former parish school. An inter-parish school can be established as an independent 'juridic person' or as part of the juridic person of the lead parish" (Goldschmidt & Walsh, 2011, p. 17). A "juridic" is defined by Canon law as a "person or thing ordered for a purpose in keeping with the mission of the Church" (Brown, 2012, p. 17). DeFiore, Convey, and Schuttloffel (2009) found in their study that "reporting lines, areas of responsibility, and final decision-making might lead to tensions that strain the viability of the structure or individual school" (p. 15). This model was developed to increase viability of a school by increasing enrollment and revenue by combining multiple parishes. In cases where this is not possible, diocesan schools are an option.

Diocesan school. The diocesan school, the model implemented at MAS, is a governance model where the superintendent manages the operations of the school, becoming the designated canonical administrator of the bishop, while the property remains owned by the bishop. This model is used by 10% of Catholic elementary schools (Goldschmidt & Walsh, 2011). This model is used when the pastor no longer wants authority over the school, or when a school is re-opened after closure. According to Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011):

> The diocesan superintendent oversees these schools. Participating in a larger diocesan system potentially facilitates access to improved practices in curriculum, instruction, professional development, strategic planning, and pooled resources such as Title funding. Pastors also report feeling "freed up" of school administrative duties to focus more on pastoral ministries. (p. 18)

An example of the successes found with this model are the Jubilee Schools in Memphis, which were reopened Catholic schools that now serve 1,300 students. These schools illustrate "what

works [and] what is possible" (Humphrey, 2008, p. 19) for Catholic schools in inner city neighborhoods, as they have increased enrollment with creative marketing and development campaigns. These schools operate similar to private schools, although they have the financial support of the diocese.

Private school. Private schools are defined as "a school owned, operated, and financed by a religious community or by a board of trustees. The school is under the authority of the local ordinary/bishop of the diocese in which it is located" (Brown, 2012, p. 22). Most of these schools are not affiliated with a parish, and are used by 5.6% of Catholic elementary schools (Goldschmidt & Walsh, 2011).

Although I only had previous experience with two of the four governance models, and began as a new leader in the diocesan model, it was all important to understand as it added to context. As a leader, I needed to know who I reported to, what was the chain of command and why, which this examination helped to answer. In examining the governance models, Catholic schools seem to have some flexibility, especially in regard to governance—this flexibility provides both positive and negative impacts. These impacts are primarily in financial terms, as finance and financial structures in Catholic schools are extremely intricate and essential for leaders to completely understand.

Catholic school finance. Financial structures of Catholic elementary schools are aspects that are seldom discussed within the education world, let alone researched. There is very little literature on the topic, which causes some confusion as well as differences in opinions of Catholic school finance. On one hand, "Byrnes (2003) observed that schools have often not taken the time to rigorously determine the cost to educate, especially when they share staff or

facilities with the parish" (James, 2007, p. 293). This lack of analysis leads to "guess-timates," where educational leaders estimate the costs of operation, and guess how much to charge for tuition to cover these costs—sometimes it is accurate and sometimes it is not.

On the other hand, Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011) disagreed. They found that in most Catholic schools, the tuition rate is calculated using a cost-per-pupil portion. As Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011) stated, "the average per pupil tuition rate for parish elementary schools in 2010-2011 was reportedly $3,383, 62% of the reported per-pupil cost of $5,436.83" (p. 28). This discount in tuition, in comparison to cost-per-pupil is attributed to the Catholic schools desire to make education affordable to the low and middle-income families. Also, Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011) found:

> Tuition and fees represent the most widely utilized source of income for Catholic elementary schools. The NCEA reported that on average tuition and fees represent about two thirds (64%) of the operating income for Catholic elementary schools. This, of course, can vary greatly, depending on the demographic situation of a school. (p. 28)

With the majority of income for a Catholic school being generated by tuition, it places the burden on the parents, which is not a problem in affluent areas. Harris (1996) examined the viability of inner city Catholic schools, also known as schools in non-affluent areas across the United States, found that from 1983-1993, school expenses grew three times that of the parish revenue across all income levels. Later, Harris' (2000) study revealed that:

> In 1980-81 the average elementary school had 283 students and cost $184,372 to operate.…The tuition payment averaged $490 per household…. 1993-94 the average school enrolled 280 students and operated with a budget of $547,751….The average

> household tuition would be $1,591….The burden that elementary tuition placed on an average Catholic family increased by 70% between 1980 and 1993. (p. 63)

According to Harris (2000), "the problem with the present system is that it works well when parents can afford to pick up the tab; otherwise, schools simply close. Some of each has been happening over the past 40 years" (p. 55). As schools begin to close, a variety of financial models begin to emerge.

Catholic school financial models. According to Kruska (2008), "how has the financial climate in Catholic education impacted the quality of the Catholic educational experience? Nuzzi and Hunt (2008) affirmed that financial challenges have led to a lower level of academic achievement, resulting in students leaving Catholic schools" (p. 65). One would think with students leaving the system, it places the burden on the Catholic school's parish, as there are not enough parents in the school to carry the burden alone. Yet, Harris' (2000) study found that "when the [NCEA] first surveyed elementary school finances in 1969, parishes paid 63% of elementary school costs. By 1994, parishes paid only 25% of the same costs" (p. 56). With a need for an increase in revenue, Catholic schools are forced to look elsewhere beyond the parish, and the leader is forced to become creative in finding new funding sources. In 1989, Kealey (1990) surveyed 907 Catholic schools and found the average tuition to be $804, with 44% of the surveyed schools adding extended day programs to adjust to the increased financial need. Five years later in Kealey's (1995) follow-up study, she found tuition to be $1,433, with 66% of schools adding extended day programs, as well as 55% of schools adding prekindergarten classes.

As the enrollment is dropping, parish support is dropping, and tuition for the families is rising; educational leaders are seeking innovative financial models for their Catholic schools to survive. With this in mind, there are several innovative financial models that have been documented and discussed—cost-based tuition; stewardship model; and negotiated tuition. Each model must be researched, analyzed, and fully understood by a new leader since most Catholic schools operate as businesses without government funding or support. At MAS, I needed to understand each of the models and determine what was our best option in order to keep our doors open, while remaining accessible to those who wanted our education but could not necessarily afford it. Each model has its own strengths and weaknesses, but the common thread is some form of tuition must be collected from the families for the school to survive and thrive.

Cost-based tuition. Cost-based tuition (also known as the Tuition Covenant) is defined as a "financial model that redirects the parish subsidy, which is traditionally given by the parish to the parish school in the form of a block grant, to tuition aid given directly to families with demonstrated need" (James, 2007, p. 294). This type of aid is distributed to the families through a third-party. Gelo and Meitler (2003) found that only 7% of Catholic elementary schools use this approach, while almost 85% of Catholic elementary schools use the traditional block grant. The Archdioceses of Baltimore, Washington DC, Cincinnati, and Chicago, as well as the Dioceses of Dayton, Cleveland, and Columbus use the cost-based tuition model.

An advocate for the cost-based tuition model states, "we believe that the Tuition Covenant is one tested way to enable the Archdiocese of Chicago to continue its mission to educate the minds and inspire the spirits of the young people in our schools" (Tomaszewski, 2003, p. 30). The transition to this model is not a simple shift and requires much thought and

analysis of the advantages and disadvantages. As James (2007) found, "while the cost-based model has significant advantages over the traditional block grant model, it requires sufficient wealth within the parishes for redistribution; a nominal block grant remains nominal when redistributed to families with demonstrated financial need" (p. 293). Even using the cost-based tuition model, tuition is still the key factor for revenue within schools.

According to O'Keefe and Murphy's (2000) study, if Catholic schools "are to survive and thrive, breaking the pattern of the past 20 years, they must reduce their dependency on tuition, which now accounts for about two-thirds of their income" (p. 133). This concept, moves toward the stewardship model.

Stewardship model. The stewardship model is "one in which the parish assumes the entire cost of educating every student who seeks enrollment in the school and induces families to give sacrificially through the Sunday collection (a tax-deductible donation)" (James, 2007, p.295). Gelo and Meitler (2003) found that only 3% of Catholic elementary schools use this approach. According to Harris's (2000) study, he found that "small parishes do not sponsor schools. […] The one-third parishes in the United States that do sponsor schools include about 55% of all registered Catholic households" (Harris, 2000, p. 61). With this in mind, the stewardship model is one that must be built on trust and the wealth of the parishioners, and if implemented correctly, has many areas of strength. According to James (2007), "stewardship has significant advantages over the traditional model and the cost-based tuition model in that no tuition is paid and all contributions made to the Church are tax-deductible" (p. 295). The stewardship model has worked effectively for the Diocese of Wichita (Gelo & Meitler, 2003).

Negotiated tuition. One of the possible precursors to the stewardship model is negotiated tuition. The negotiated tuition model is:

> Very similar to the cost-based tuition in that tuition is based on a family's need. However, instead of determining the needs of individual families by means of a third-party provider, this model involves a negotiation between the student's parents and the principal, pastor or committee. (James, 2007, p. 294)

In this model, the principal, pastor, or committee meets with the family annually and discusses finance, as well as comes to an agreement about the tuition amount. According to Gelo and Meitler (2003), the model is used by approximately 3% of Catholic elementary schools.

As stated earlier, Catholic education finance remains flexible and provides for freedom for the leader of the school to determine what model best fits the location. At MAS, this was a process that required attention, focus, and input from the community to analyze what would be acceptable and what would not be acceptable, especially in regard to finance. With the foundational knowledge, the transformational leader is tasked with the challenge of immersing himself/herself and understanding these basic elements of the culture—especially the intricacies of Catholic school culture.

Catholic school culture. According to Owens and Valesky (2011):

> The term organizational culture refers to the norms that inform people about what is acceptable and what is not, the dominant values that the organization cherishes above others, the basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of the organization, the rules of the game that must be observed if one is to get along and be accepted as a

> member, and the philosophy that guides the organization in dealing with its employees and clients. (p. 126)

Related to education, this culture is what can set one school apart from another, and is essential for a transformational leader to get to know since it can vary from site to site, even within the same school system. The organizational culture can change based on the needs of the school as well.

Flynn (1993) expanded on the definition of organizational culture and defines specifically Catholic school culture as "the culture of a Catholic school expresses the core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols and patterns of behavior which provides meaning to the school community and which helps shape the lives of students, teachers, and parents. In short, culture is 'the way we do things around here'" (p. 39). This concept is further explained by Youniss (2000), who found that "from their inception, Catholic schools served multiple functions. They socialized children into the Catholic faith, while they provided basic academic skills, with some advocates claiming that these two functions were inseparable because a religious outlook permeated all subject matter" (p. 7). Religious values are a large component of Catholic school culture, but so is a strong sense of community that involves intergenerational collaboration. According to DeFiore (2011):

> Coleman and Hoffer (1987) posit a strong, functional community is one in which a single value dominates and is shared by all. They argue further that when a functional community is intergenerational, it provides social capital particularly for young persons requiring multiple and meaningful social interactions—it should not be unexpected that the power of community in a Catholic school is strong and unusual. Thus, what the

> Church is in danger of losing—indeed may have already lost in large measure—is the intergenerational, shared culture of a Catholic school experience and its fruits. (p. 39)

This idea of Catholic school experience and culture is one that is based on the explicit curriculum and the hidden curriculum. As Martin (2012) states, "hidden curriculum consists of the values, beliefs, and messages we give our students in the informal, non-instructional areas that permeate the entire school culture….All students need to be able to see themselves in some way in the school culture" (p. 53). Catholic schools have been successful in this area and have had various effects on many students, especially those in the inner city schools.

A team of researchers from Marquette University analyzed 54 inner city schools in the six largest Archdioceses in the United States and they found that although Catholic schools had a reputation for being elitist atmospheres, where only the "best and brightest" were accepted, this was not the case (Walch, 1996). According to Walch (1996), "to be sure, these schools were distinctive, placing heavy emphasis on moral values and discipline. But there was no evidence that these schools rejected students because of their personal problems" (p. 204). Going further, the researchers found that 56 % of the schools accepted transfer students with discipline problems, and 80 % accepted general transfers from public schools. The team also found that parochial schools had an impact on academic achievement and discipline on inner city students. Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe (1982) stated in their study, "the data shows that the school has the greatest impact on improving behavior for children from poor homes, with less impact on those from middle class backgrounds" (p. 43). With this data in mind, Catholic education and its culture are essential in inner city environments, where they can influence the students they serve.

The survival of this system is crucial, especially in the present state of Catholic education change and adaption.

Catholic education is facing a crucial time in its history. In Hallinan's (2000) work, she stated:

> Catholic education is in state of dramatic change. In the past, the Catholic school system evolved gradually, adapting to its environment as the nation grew. The accelerated rate of change that characterizes today's society requires that Catholic schools accommodate quickly to a new and different environment and that they take on challenges not confronted earlier in history. At the crossroads in the life of Catholic education, it is imperative to engage in a reflective evaluation of Catholic schools, to ask honest questions about their future, and to ascertain whether they can continue to be a vital force in American society. (p. 202)

In order to move forward as a vital force, Catholic educational leaders need to analyze and address the needs of the cultural diversity that is present within the schools and our society.

Diversity and school culture. Diversity is another major reality that leaders throughout Catholic education history have had to consider. The Apostle Paul likened diversity to a human body, where the individuals make up the whole and if one suffers then all suffer (Martin, 2012, p. 49). This same concept applies to the educational environments where diversity and unity have central roles—all school community members make up the whole, and if one suffers, then all suffer. As Martin (2012) stated, "diversity does not mean we let go of our bottom line, which is to form other-centered men and women who can make a difference in this world, but that we use what our students bring—their home cultures and their funds of knowledge—and we gently

but deliberately invite them to live their lives according to the Gospel" (p. 49). The Gospel serves as the foundation for Catholic education, as the students bring their own diverse backgrounds into the classrooms.

According to Barton (2000), Catholic education fosters a "climate where diversity is not just tolerated, but celebrated,…creating an instructional environment where all children can develop their God-given gifts and feel lovable, capable, and valued as contributing members of the community" (p. 330). Catholic education in the United States has been built on the very idea of diversity, where ethnic minorities were not only accepted, but welcomed into the Catholic schools (Higareda, Martin, Chavez, & Holyk-Casey, 2011). According to *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society* (1988):

> The Magisterium of the Church has always highlighted the importance of an education that stresses what is common to all. It is also important to show that others, precisely because they are different, can enrich our experience. While it is normal, for instance, for history to cultivate esteem for one's country, it is regrettable that it can lead to a blind chauvinism and to according only a secondary place to the achievements of other nations, considered inferior….More and more, the school provides the occasion for the children of immigrants to mix with the children of the receiving country. Hopefully this will provide an opportunity to help both groups to know one another better and to prepare a more harmonious coexistence. In addition, many young people today seem to be less prone to racial prejudice. This provides a hope for the future, which must be fostered….Unless they are ideologically nurtured, racial prejudices most often come from ignorance about

others, which gives full vent to imagination and engenders fear. (Pontifical Commission for Peace and Justice, 1988, p. 28)

This idea of hope can be seen as the numbers of minorities are increasing in the United States. As is stated, the "Catholic school community is increasingly diverse in ethnicity. As a percentage of total U.S. Catholic school enrollment, the number of ethnic minority students increased from 10.8% in 1970 to 30.2% in 2010-2011" (Higareda et al., 2011, p. 6). This data is shown in Figure 2, where the minority population has almost tripled from 1970 to 2011.

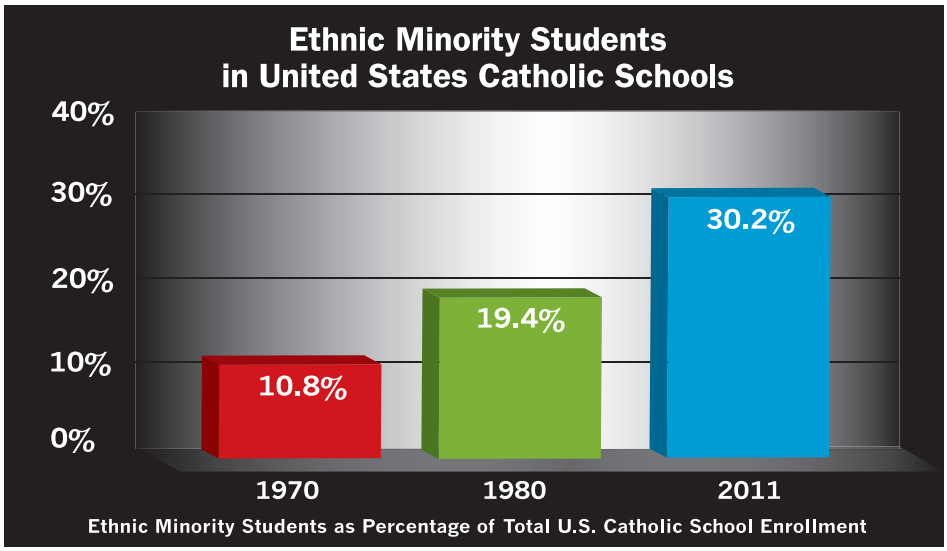


Figure 2. Ethnic minority students in US from 1970 to 2011. Adapted from "Ethnic Minority Students in US from 1970 to 2011," by I. Higareda, S. Martin, J. Chavez, and K. Holyk-Casey, 2011, *Los Angeles Catholic Schools: Impact and Opportunity for Economically Disadvantaged Students*, p. 7. Copyright 2011 by Loyola Marymount University: School of Education. Reprinted with permission.

With the increase of diversity in Catholic schools, some major studies have been conducted (Bryk et al., 1993; Greeley, 1989; Nelson, 2000; O'Keefe & Murphy, 2000), and they have found that Catholic schools are effective at educating minority groups while engaging parents in the educational process.

Expanding on the research, Higareda et al. (2011), were focused on Catholic schools in the Los Angeles Archdiocese, where the diversity is much greater than that of the rest of the United States—especially in the inner city environments such as MAS. According to Higareda et al. (2011), "Catholic schools in the United States enrolled approximately 30% of their students from ethnic minority backgrounds in 2010-2011, while the enrollment in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles was 69.5% for the same populations. This includes Latina/o students attending Los Angeles Catholic schools at 46.5% and 23% of students from other ethnic minority backgrounds" (p. 11). This data is shown in Figure 3, where the United States data is compared with the Los Angeles data from their study. Overall, Higareda et al (2011) found that:

> Despite the challenges, the data in this study [demonstrated] the success of Catholic schools for some of the most economically disadvantaged youth in Los Angeles and across the country. There are strong indicators from the qualitative and quantitative results that Catholic schools are making a tremendous impact, not simply for the Catholic community but for the common good of all of society. (p. 22)

Going further, as Martin (2012) stated, "with more than thirty percent of U.S. Catholic schoolchildren coming from ethnic backgrounds, Catholic schools reflect the cultural diversity of the communities that they serve" (p. 53). In order to move forward as a vital force, Catholic education will need to rely heavily on its historical success, diversity, and school leadership, specifically the principals that are "called" to lead their school sites.

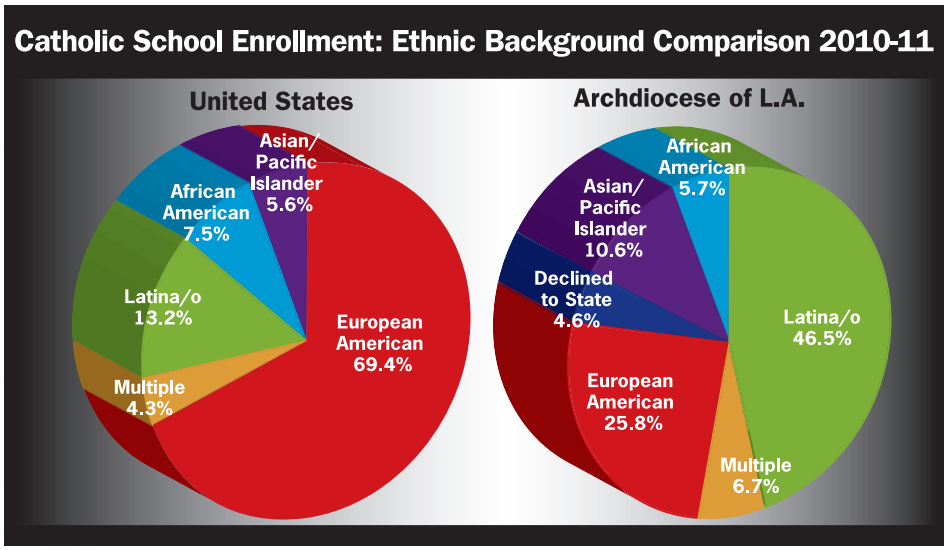


Figure 3. United States versus Los Angeles Catholic school ethnic breakdowns. Adapted from "United States versus Los Angeles Catholic school ethnic breakdowns," by I. Higareda, S. Martin, J. Chavez, and K. Holyk-Casey, 2011, *Los Angeles Catholic Schools: Impact and Opportunity for Economically Disadvantaged Students*, p. 11. Copyright 2011 by Loyola Marymount University, School of Education. Reprinted with permission.

Transformational leaders, especially those in Catholic schools, that are "called" to lead by a higher power and a value-based mission, must have the knowledge of the context and climate in order to be successful. As the leader at MAS, I had to know and understand the information that this next section sought to provide including: the relevant Catholic school history, the various governance models and what they mean, how Catholic school finance is structured, what are the various financial models for Catholic schools, and what is Catholic school culture and how does diversity impact this culture. In examining these areas and attaining the knowledge, it gives the leader perspective of where the schools have been in the past, which in turn empowers the leader to build upon this knowledge and use her/his skills to motivate others with energy, enthusiasm, and determination for where the schools can go in the future. For a transformational

leader, the knowledge of context and climate serves as the foundation and lends itself to the skill of community collaboration.

Skill: Community Collaboration

Building on the knowledge of context and climate, the transformational leader must use the skill of community collaboration as a vehicle to affect change in a positive and lasting manner. Understanding this concept, as well as the rationale and steps necessary to attain true community collaboration is an effective vehicle for a true transformational leader. The process required is one that begins with the leader, and in turn, transfers to the followers. According to Bolman and Deal (2011), "the spiritual journey that we as leaders must take to inspire others begins with ourselves but not necessarily by ourselves….The external journey is a search for collective spirit, for true community with others" (p. 67). As a leader gaining the knowledge of the particular context, the skill and need of community collaboration is strengthened, where the journey moves from singular to plural. In this section, an extensive review of the literature was conducted on the building blocks, as well as the art of, community collaboration, as I analyzed the concepts of: Catholic schools and community collaboration; and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1987) and needs assessment. Each school site varies, as does each community, as does each leader, but by understanding where we are and where Catholic schools can advance, it is important to understand who we need on the journey and why.

Catholic schools and community collaboration. Traditionally, Catholic schools are governed by Church hierarchy with a principal serving as the educational leader, as was the case at MAS. Greeley et al. (1976) argued that the only remedy to the declining enrollment and school closures would be the control of the schools by laity instead of clergy. Koob and Shaw

(1970) stated that the paternalistic approach by the clergy towards the uneducated Catholic population was not viable in today's world and that "people accustomed to having control of their own affairs in other areas of life are not likely to acquiesce in unilateral decisions by an authority—whether bishop, pastor or religious" (p. 46). These unilateral decisions at each specific school site lead to the relationship between the local ordinary and the elementary school "described as autonomous, with the direction of each school independent from a centralized authority" (Sabatino & Montejano, 2012, p. 92). This hierarchy provides some flexibility for principals and pastors to involve the community in certain decisions, where each site may appear different from the next due to differing community needs and wants.

Catholic school community collaboration is a relatively new idea, where members are able to give input and help to mold their schools. In many cases, it requires a shift in thinking on the part of the educators and administration. As is stated, "educators must be prepared first of all to acknowledge that the traditional guiding model of education is no longer relevant in a post-industrial, knowledge-based society. Second, they must embrace ideas and assumptions that are radically different than those that have guided schools in the past" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 20). This acknowledgement and embracing of ideas can lead to a structured model that can transform a school site, as well as its members in various aspects. As is stated, "this model requires schools to function as professional learning communities characterized by a shared mission, vision, and values; collective inquiry; collaborative teams; an orientation toward action and a willingness to experiment; commitment to continuous improvement; and a focus on results" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 45). From my experience, each of these requirements are

complex to accomplish as a school leader, but by breaking the process down into steps provides more clarity.

As an educational leader attempting to participate in community collaboration, as I did at MAS, the first step in this process was to know the human beings that are involved with the school. These people are just as important as the tangible assets of the school or organization and by spending time and getting to know each of them, especially the teachers, students, and families, it allowed for good community collaboration and a positive climate. As Quinn (2010) states:

> From an educational perspective it is important that principals work at building a school environment where collaboration exists. Collaboration offers a myriad of opportunities for Catholic school principals and parents to communicate student needs as they arise. (p. 36)

In looking beyond an individual student's needs to the needs of an entire community, Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs addresses factors that affect students, parents, faculty, and staff at a school site. As Maslow indicates, without the essential basic needs being addressed and met, collaboration cannot occur.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs and needs assessment. According to Maslow's (1987) theory, life's basic needs, such as food and safety, must first be met before a person is open to addressing any higher order thinking, such as that which is required in collaboration. In identifying the needs of the community a main mode of change can occur by a leader being aware of the hierarchy of needs that Maslow describes. As Owens and Valesky (2011) stated, "Maslow described the fact that one cannot be motivated by a higher need until the lower needs

are met first" (p. 299). Once this is achieved, especially the need of safety, true motivation for change can occur. In relationship to schools, "from an educational perspective, the basic necessity for food, shelter, personal safety, socialization, and belonging must be adequately satisfied before the higher goals of academic success can be achieved" (McCullough, Graf, Leung, Stroud, & Orlando, 2008, p.4). This approach requires patience by the school leader, and must be a facilitative approach if it is to be successful—otherwise, members will not have any "buy-in" and the motivation will be fleeting.

Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs are diagramed in Figure 4, where individuals begin at the lowest level of the hierarchy and only move upward depending on the environment and overall maturity. According to Quinn (2010), "students usually do not achieve the fifth stage of needs until late teens or adulthood, since it requires a sense of maturity to make decisions and accept outcomes. This…is also important in viewing school change" (p. 38). As educational leaders, principals, need to acknowledge the needs of all school community members, and make strides in addressing the needs of all beginning from the bottom of the hierarchy to the top. For example, if a student is not feeling safe at school, she/he will not be able to demonstrate achievement unless the lower order needs are met first—the student needs her/his basic, safety, and social needs initially met. Figure 5 depicts Maslow's hierarchy of needs in relationship to educational practice, specifically within schools. This hypothetical application demonstrates the importance of meeting a student's needs.

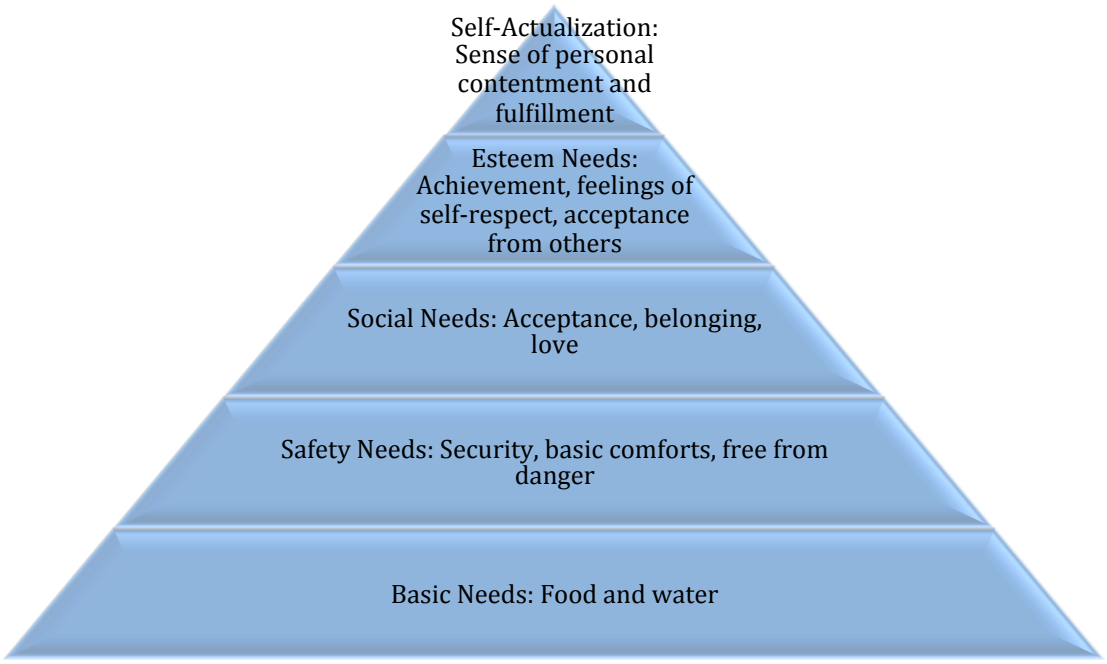


Figure 4. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Adapted from "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" by A. Maslow, 1987, *Motivation and Personality,* p. 62. Copyright 1970 by Harper & Row Publishers. Reprinted with permission.

Hierarchy of Needs	**School Considerations**
Basic psychological needs (food, water, shelter, air)	Does the student appear hungry, undernourished, tired, or unclean?
Security and safety needs (physical safety)	Has the student expressed any anxiety about their home or classroom? Does the student appear provided for? How is the student with the parents?
Social affiliation (love, belonging, acceptance by others)	Does the student demonstrate normal social behavior or are they removed and withdrawn?
Self-esteem (self-esteem, respect, recognition by peers)	Does the student seem to exhibit moderate self-esteem?
Self-actualization (autonomy, influence, self-direction)	Is the student willing to take ownership for their success and/or failures? Is the student motived to succeed?

Figure 5. Maslow's hierarchy of needs in educational practice. Adapted from "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in Practice" by M. K. McCullough, V. L. Graf, B. Leung, M. E. Stroud & M. Orlando, 2008, p. 5, *Building Community through School Success Teams*, p. 5. Copyright 2008 by NCEA. Reprinted with permission.

A welcoming school environment and Catholic school culture is built on this very idea of meeting the needs of the students. According to Martin (2012), "because culture is changing and dynamic (Martin & Litton, 2004), efforts in this area must be purposeful and thoughtful. Catholic schools, however, do have a legacy of responding well to the needs of ethnic minority and low-income students" (p. 50). This mindset is what sets Catholic schools and Catholic school leadership apart from other types of schools, especially in inner city environments.

Although community collaboration is a relatively new idea for Catholic school leaders, it is a necessary skill for moving Catholic schools forward in changing times. As a leader, I saw community collaboration and input from stakeholders as a crucial process, where I made sure their basic needs were met first, their input was valued, and they were present in the process. This view of community collaboration as a skill comes from my own experiences as a young athlete in high school—there is no greater sense of community than that of a sports team. I remember specifically my varsity basketball team my freshman year, where our coach would have us watch game film from our upcoming opponent the start of the week. At this session, we would watch the film, give our comments, volunteer for our assignments, and help our teammates on their assignments based on the film that we saw. We knew ourselves, as well as our teammates' strengths and weaknesses, and each practice leading up to the game, we would challenge each other. We were a unit, a community, and through the collaboration that our coach developed, he made each of us feel as though we were an important part of the team and our input was valued—it was not his team as some coaches prefer it, but it was our team. This skill that our coach taught us, is even more important for an educational leader to possess, especially that of a transformational leader in a Catholic, inner city environment. All members

need to feel as though they are an important part of the journey and their input is valued in a respectful, safe environment.

Disposition: Leader for Change

The leadership journey at a Catholic school is one of change—the experience instills in the leader a sense of significance and how to bridge communities to achieve this significance together. According to Bolman and Deal (2011), "you can't impose significance. People have to create it together. Significance comes from doing something worth doing, making a difference in the world" (p. 106). As a leader for change, a transformational leader, after gaining the knowledge of the particular context and implementing the skill of community collaboration, then the leadership disposition for change becomes apparent, where the journey for the leader and the community merge together. This journey is a complicated path filled with trials and tribulations as the leader uses the knowledge and skills that she/he has developed, and at times is left with nothing but her/his disposition and core values to guide her or him on her/his path. In sports terminology, which I am very comfortable with, this concept is known as the "un-coachables." This concept of "un-coachables" came into my life when I was about 16 years old. The following exemplifies a scene I remembered when I first encountered the concept.

It was about 5 a.m. on a cold Saturday morning, with the mist beginning to dampen the field. The dew was covering the grass as I sat on the cold metal bench in the dugout waiting for my coaches and teammates to arrive. I have always had a thing about time, where I have wanted to be the first one to practice and the last one to leave—maybe afraid deep down that someone was going to put more work in than me. I was completely alone, enjoying the stillness, fresh scent of newly cut grass, and the time to think.

Across the distance, I could see my head coach walking over, carrying his ball bucket and large black "body bag" as we would call it. When he made his way over to me, he dropped his belongings and sat on the bench next to me. He looked over at me and grinned with enthusiasm, as his eyes seemed to dance with life. "Guess what?" he said. "What?" I responded. "I received three more phone calls from Division 1 college coaches who want you to come to their program!" As the words danced out of his mouth, I sat there, not sure how to respond as I felt excited, yet confused at why this was happening to me. So I decided to ask, "Why?" I said. I will never forget his face as he looked at me as though he was looking at a puzzle. "Why?" he said. "Because you have it all: you are a smart player who knows the game like the back of her hand; you have great hands, speed and a decent bat; and most importantly, you have the un-coachables!"

"What are the un-coachables?" I asked, especially since I knew that being called un-coachable was a bad thing in sports.

"This is a term that I stumbled across," he said. "It's those skills and lessons that you cannot be taught by a coach, but are at your core. It's the determination to make things work, when most think it won't happen. It's the desire to win, but to differentiate what that means exactly: to be able to actively listen, respect others and make the necessary adjustments; hustle on and off the field; the ability to control yourself and not over-react when pushed; and the part of you that makes you come to practice an hour early and stay an hour after everyone has left."

This same concept of the "un-coachables" as the inner workings of the athlete is also crucial for leaders in education, or any field for that matter. There are certain traits and characteristics that leaders must possess.

So in turn, moving from the knowledge and skills a leader must gain, this section analyzes the disposition of a leader for change. In this section, an extensive review of the literature was conducted on the school leader and the disposition a successful leader must possess in a change environment. The areas reviewed include: school leadership; history of leadership studies; the Catholic school principal; and change and transitions in Catholic schools. In examining these areas, the focus moves from the general to the specific in regard to leadership and leadership of Catholic schools.

School leadership. Catholic school leaders are charged with an enormous task as they are asked to analyze the past and decide which route to take for the future for Catholic education. In dealing with the past, Owens and Valesky (2011) noted that "the schools ain't what they used to be and probably never were, despite the unending din of criticism with which we are all familiar today. It seems clear that 'what everyone seems to know' is, as Rothstein has described, a culturally embedded fable" (p.43). Based on the statement above, Owens and Valesky's (2011, 2015) work focused on giving aspiring and current educational leaders the tools to differentiate between what is real and what is not within the education world as they find their own game plan. They include the basic facts of various topics related to education dating back to the 1800s and allow the readers to discern what their own opinions of the events were as they are probed with guiding questions.

Moving from questioning to leadership, as Owens and Valesky (2011, 2015) state, "educational leaders do not merely survive in their competitive, conflicted, fast-paced world of work. To paraphrase William Faulkner, they prevail: They succeed in the work and find it challenging, zestful, and rewarding" (p. 34). Finzel (1994) defined and described this idea of

leadership as the ability to influence others in such a profound way that they are empowered to travel paths that they may not have ever traveled. Throughout time, leaders have come and gone dating back to ancient times, but studies of leadership did not develop until the 1930's.

History of leadership studies. In 1938, Lewin, Lippitt, and White were a few of the first documented to study leadership (Owens & Valesky, 2011, 2015). Their 1938 and 1960 studies resulted in the development of three fundamental leadership styles: "(a) autocratic-unilateral leadership, (b) democratic-participative leadership, and (c) laissez-faire-hands-off leadership aided in the development of the educational leadership models of today" (Raines Evers, 2011, p.19). Going further, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y model attempted to explain behaviors of leaders from Lewin, Lippitt, and White's autocratic and democratic leadership styles. Theory X was more closely aligned with autocratic leadership, and Theory Y was more closely aligned with democratic leadership (Owens & Valesky, 2011, 2015).

In 1978, Bass (1985) formed his Transformational Leadership Theory, which is the framework for this study. His theory is based on the leader as "one who motivates us to do more than we originally expected to do" (p. 20). Bass argued that in examining outcomes and being aware of how to achieve these outcomes, motivation would be achieved. He also said the successful leader goes beyond self-interests of the team members and keeps them focused on what is good for the overall organization. In contrast and at the same time, Bass also coined the term Transactional Leadership, which is where the leader and the followers work to reach their individual goals, rather than the collective goals, which are essential for transformational leadership (Raines Evers, 2011, p. 20).

Collins (2001) framed his leadership studies on the Transformational Leadership Theory, which led to the highest categorization of effective leaders as level five leaders. This type of leader was one who would find the right people for the organization and then find their right place within the organization (Collins, 2001, p. 39). As is stated, "he also noted that the right people will understand the dynamics of challenges and will be equipped to handle them, which often led to vigorous debate on the course to great decisions such as that allowed by democratic leadership" (Raines Evers, 2011, p. 19).

Schmieder and Cairns' (1998) study was focused on the leadership skills as opposed to theories. They surveyed 206 superintendents and 450 principals to determine the most important leadership skills for successful schools. Figure 6 describes the 10 characteristics of successful educational leaders that were found in the study.

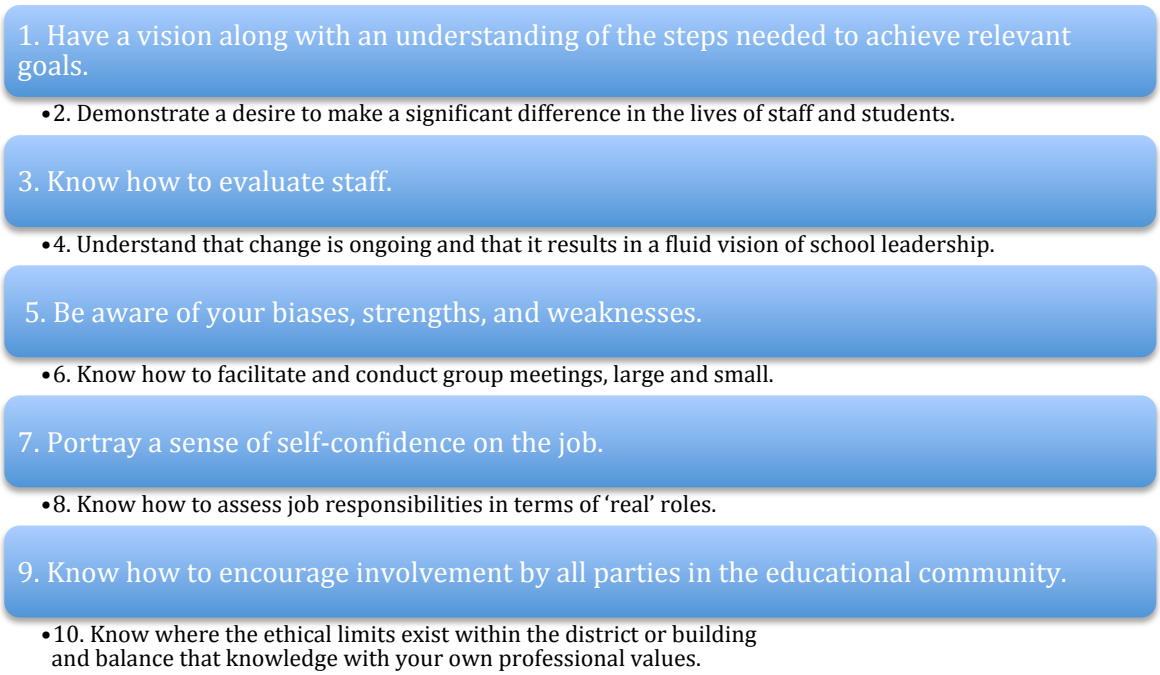


Figure 6. 10 skills for Catholic school leadership. Adapted from "The Top 10 Skills of Successful School Leaders," by J. Schmieder & D. Cairns, 1998, *Technique*, *73*(1). Copyright 1998 by Techniques Magazine. Reprinted with permission.

Going further, Kouzes and Posner's (2002) leadership model was constructed of five traits that exemplary leaders possessed leading to what Covey (2004) called "win-win situations" for employees and leaders who take care of every aspect of the employee's mind, body, and spirit (Covey, 2004). Looking at roles of school principals specifically, Sergiovanni (1987) states:

> Descriptive research accounts suggest that principals see themselves in a variety of ways: the instructional leader of the school, the maintainer of a rapidly changing institution, the disciplinarian, the supply clerk, the protector of teachers from the parents, the conduit of the community to the school, the philosopher king, the benevolent dictator, and so on. All principals seem to be granted the right to play the role as they see fit. (p. 286)

Currently, the role for principals has expanded with the needs of struggling schools that the leaders are charged to lead—MAS is a prime example. Within the public sector solely, this type of environment has been coined as the "turnaround schools," which are the lowest achieving schools that are in need of change—the leaders of these environments are in turn, called "turnaround principals."

Keval (2012), in his analysis of three significant studies conducted concerning turnaround leaders, found:

> All three studies stress the importance of hiring the right leader in order for a dramatic turnaround to take place. The studies noted that confident, well-trained, action-driven leadership is critical in bringing about changes, which are much needed in low performing schools. Additionally, the findings emphasize that the leader must have an early win by bringing about a couple of rapid but positive changes. Leithwood, Mascall,

and Strauss (2009) in particular, considered this a period when the leader must be more directive. Once the direction has been set and the vision communicated, the leader must also possess good interpersonal skills to motivate parents and staff and increase collaboration among them and the school. All three studies stress the importance of using data and holding teachers accountable. All three stress the importance of complete district support, which allows principals the freedom to hire motivated teachers and fire the naysayers. Districts must be willing to allow leaders to break organizational norms. (p. 48)

Figure 7 outlines the actions and attributes that define this type of turnaround principal. The Catholic school principal can also fit this description in particular traumatized school environments where change and reform are needed. Catholic school principals not only serve as the educational leader of the school, but the spiritual leader as well.

Action	Attribute
1. Finding the Right Leader	Action Driven
2. Early Win (Rapid but Positive Change)	Confident; Direct
3. Sets Vision	Good Communicator; Visionary; Goal-Oriented; Ability to Influence People
4. Develops People	Builds Trust; Provides Intellectual Stimulation and Support
5. Redesigns Organization Based on Data and Learning Communities	Organized; Collaborative; Accountable; Good Interpersonal Skills; Instructional Leader

Figure 7. Actions and attributes of a turnaround principal. Adapted from "Actions and Attributes of a Turnaround Principal," by F. Keval, 2012, *Moral Imperative as Strategy for Transformational Leadership and Sustainability: An Autoethnography*, p. 47. Copyright 2012 by Fawzia Keval. Reprinted with permission.

The Catholic school principal. The roles of the Catholic school principal are often described as spiritual leadership, educational leadership, and managerial leadership (Schafer,

2004). As far as spiritual leadership, Gilbert (1983) described the school principal as the "pastor" of the school, where the principal serves as a liaison between the Church and the school and makes certain guidelines are followed. Cardinal Bernardin (1989) claimed that Catholic school principals must be visionary leaders who "believe in and are able to articulate in clear and emphatic terms the mission, the purpose of Catholic education" (p. 213). Overall, Catholic school principals are responsible for: the faith formation and catechetical formation of the faculty and the students; for building a Catholic welcoming community within the school; for the moral and ethical development of the students; and for knowing the history of Catholic schools and formulating a clear Catholic school mission statement and philosophy for their schools (Ciriello, 1996).

The Catholic school principal is also responsible for the building of a Christian community within the school. According to Schafer (2004), "shaping the culture and forming Christian community within the Catholic school is at the heart of the Catholic school principal's role. [They] are responsible for the facilitation of the moral and ethical development of the students" (p. 246). This is one of the most important roles of the Catholic school principal as they lead to shape the school culture, model the Gospel values and hold the community to a moral and ethical value system through education. Educational leadership ties the Gospel values in Catholic school into curriculum as the Catholic school principal also serves as the instructional leader.

As the educational leader of a school, a Catholic school principal must provide instructional leadership. During a 1999 forum on educational leadership conducted by the United States Department of Education, "most participants agreed that the number one

characteristic of an effective leader is the ability to provide instructional leadership" (United States Department of Education, 1999, p. 4). Going further, according to Robinson, O'Leary, and Ciriello (1993), the Catholic school principal is expected to: demonstrate symbolic and cultural leadership skills in developing a school climate reflective of its Catholic identity, apply a Catholic educational vision to the daily activities of the school, promote healthy staff morale, recognize and foster leadership ability among the staff, interpret and use research to guide action plans, identify and effect needed change, and attend to his or her personal and professional development.

According to Schafer (2004), the Catholic school principal must demonstrate a knowledge of the content and the methods of religious education, know and understand the developmental stages of children, recognize and provide for cultural and religious differences within the school, provide leadership in curriculum development, recognize and provide for the special learning needs of each child, demonstrate a variety of educational and pedagogical skills, effectively supervise instruction, demonstrate an understanding of appropriate student assessment techniques, and be capable of evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school program (Schafer, 2004, p. 247). Effective Catholic school principals are visionaries, role models, instructional leaders, faith-based, and know when to manage their followers, when to coach their followers and when to step aside.

As managerial leaders of the school, Catholic school principals must select the proper staff for the school, evaluate the staff, manage the school environment and be fiscally responsible. According to Schafer (2004), the "managerial role is so complex, that it could easily overshadow the other two roles: principal as spiritual leader and principal as instructional

leader. The effective Catholic school principal must keep all three primary roles in focus" (p. 247). Catholic school principals and leaders have the responsibility to nurture their school community and culture where members are aware of current issues and the need to adjust. It is their responsibility to inform their community members of the changing needs within a given school and within education.

Change and transitions in Catholic schools. Since the late 1700s, educational leaders have wrestled with school change and reform, especially within Catholic education. Cuban (1993) recognized school change requires school leaders to navigate through many obstacles. As is stated by Bridges (2009), "it isn't changes that do you in, it's the transitions….Change is situational….Transition, on the other hand, is psychological" (p. 3). He found that good changes, which lead to transitions, begin with an ending in mind and letting go of the present reality. There is an in-between time when the new reality isn't fully operational and moving from the transition, a new beginning emerges. This process takes anywhere from three to five years for the overall change to be effective (Bridges, 2009).

Leading to this effective change, McCullough (1997) devised a model, known as the Vision-Implementation-Assessment (VIA) model which is known as "'the way' to successful organizational change [and] has three components: vision, implementation, and assessment. The unique feature of the VIA model is that all three components must be thoughtfully crafted and well developed before beginning any new organizational change" (McCullough et al., 2008, p. 19). Figure 8 depicts the model, as well as its components, leading to a desired change and renewed vision.

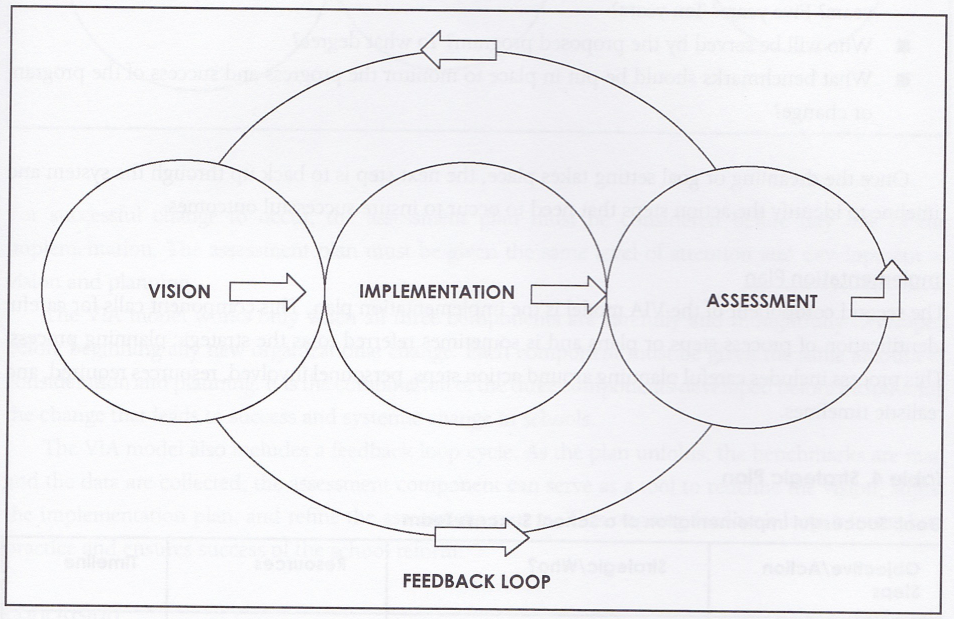


Figure 8. Vision-Implementation-Assessment model. Adapted from "The Vision-Implementation-Assessment Model" by M. K. McCullough, V. L. Graf, B. Leung, M. E. Stroud, & M. Orlando, 2008, *Building Community through School Success Teams,* p. 19. Copyright 2008 by NCEA. Reprinted with permission.

Catholic schools nationwide are in need for this overall change as they "face issues including the need to grow enrollment and raise money to support school programs" (Scanlan, 2007). Catholic schools also find the need to cultivate responsibility among communities and improve services and resources to students" (Quinn, 2010, p. 36). In order to improve services and resources to Catholic school students, as well as increase enrollment, change is needed. According to Cuban (1993), principals can be change agents, with profound impact at the individual Catholic school sites. Sabatino, Huchting, and Dell'Olio (2013) expanded on this idea of change as they stated:

> Unlike public education, in Catholic elementary schooling, the efficacy for programmatic change rests primarily at the local school site level. The pastor is responsible for the well being of the parish and therefore, the Catholic education of the members of his parish,

> including the viability of the school (Code of Canon Law, 1983). The pastor hires a principal to serve as the chief operating officer of the school. The effectiveness of the academic program, the financial strength of the school's operating budget, and the presence of the school's Catholic identity are the responsibility of the principal with delegated authority from the pastor. Supporting them is an internal collaborative of people pulled from parent and parish leadership to advise in the operations of the school. (p. 393)

Since a Catholic school is governed primarily by the principal and the pastor at the site level, change also originates at the site. According to Graham (2005), he found that there are many research designs addressing educational policies and practices, however the reality is that these designs usually do not adhere to realities in individual schools. Due to this, transformational educational leaders, and principals specifically, must understand their individual school climate and culture, incorporating change into their programs based on the unique school needs with community collaboration (Owens & Valesky, 2011, 2015; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Conclusion

Every school is unique and when the bell rings and the shrieks of students are heard as they enter for their first day of school after summer break, the knowledge of the context and climate, the skill of community collaboration, and the disposition of a change agent, are surely utilized and built upon by the transformational school leader, the principal. In this literature review, I provided a synthesis of the areas of knowledge, skills, and disposition, which I needed to know and possess as the first time, first year, transformational principal at MAS. Through the literature review process and the analysis of historical, theoretical, empirical, and contemporary

knowledge, including both quantitative and qualitative research, there are a few conclusions that can be drawn.

As my professor stated, "context matters" and the context of Catholic elementary education has a rich history with various governance and financial models, but there is much debate on the future of Catholic education—especially in regards to urban education and urban schools are financially viable or not (Youniss, 2000). On one hand, according to Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011), "Catholic urban elementary schools are not sustainable on tuition and parish subsidies alone. It appears that urban Catholic schools will need substantial external financial support on an ongoing basis" (p. 50). Guerra's (2000) study added to this argument that "development programs, including endowments, must enable Catholic schools to reduce the operating budget's dependence on tuition or provide increased tuition aid to middle and lower class income families" (p. 28). On the other hand, Harris (2000) found that "the strategy of relying on tuition has worked in many situations" (p. 64). Despite which side of the debate one finds oneself, the consensus is that "the problem is that the assumptions on which the organization has been built and is being run no longer fit reality" (Harris, 2000, p. 53). In order to cover costs, Catholic schools raise tuition, which causes fewer families to provide Catholic education for their children—especially those situated in inner city environments such as MAS. As Kruska (2008) stated:

> With the increase in tuition, families choose to leave Catholic education or choose to not enter Catholic education and enrollment drops. As enrollment drops, a major source of revenue decreases and Catholic schools raise tuition to meet the higher cost per student with fixed expenses spread across fewer students. The financial environment in a

> Catholic school has a system-wide impact, influencing quality of education, teacher retention, leadership possibilities, professional development options, and educational resources. (p. 64)

This leads to a cycle of governance and finance-based decision points. Despite the governance model chosen, Catholic schools, specifically those in the urban areas are in need of a new financial model, as the number of students are dropping, in turn, dropping revenue, and as fixed costs are rising. As Andrew Greeley (1989) stated, "Catholic schools seem to be entering a twilight—not facing immediate extinction, perhaps, but slipping slowly into darkness" (p. 106). With this knowledge comes power, as the leader can impact the system by fully understanding the task in which he/she is facing and involve others.

Moving away from the darkness, Catholic schools have a history dating back to the 1780s, but community collaboration is a relatively new idea for the institution, as is school culture, school leadership and change and transitions. The schools were run by clergy for most of Catholic school history, yet there was a drastic decline beginning in the 1960s in regards to enrollment and number of clergy working in schools. As the times are changing, Catholic educational leaders must have advanced skills in creating, implementing and assessing the change process within their schools in order to adjust to the new times. Innovation lies at the specific school site as the Catholic school system is seen as a system of schools as opposed to a school system. Therefore, the context of the particular school site matters, and involvement of the stakeholders is essential for change to result in effective transition—without this, change is fleeting and short-lived, especially in the inner city Catholic school where funding is limited and tensions can run high.

When tensions are high in an environment, the leadership style of the individual guiding the change process is a large factor in the success of the transition. With the many theories of educational leadership that are available, Leithwood et al. (2004) warned that researchers should maintain a critical view of "leadership by adjectives" and labels such as those found in most leadership research (p. 4). Leadership research did not begin until the 1930s and with its short history, many styles and approaches have come into fruition. This allows the leader to select the style that best suits him/her and provides a framework, or lens, to look at issues and topics. With this in mind, there is little longitudinal or even quantitative research on these models and styles, but the findings from the literature review give insight into Catholic school community collaboration through the years in terms of Bass' (1978) Transformational Leadership Theory.

The research indicates that Catholic school leaders have many descriptors for their job descriptions, which may be overwhelming to some, yet they have the ability to lead their schools based on their particular context. Oversight for the principals is minimum, yet their responsibilities are a maximum with continuous need for improvement and adjustments. The leader not only needs to motivate her/his followers to achieve greatness, but the leader must motivate oneself—as is true for a transformational leader. Although there is little research on the Catholic school principal, as Fullan (2009) stated, "an understanding of what reality is from the point of view of people within the role is an essential starting point for constructing a practical theory of the meaning and results of change attempts" (p. 55). As a Catholic school principal, the knowledge of the context and climate, the skill of community collaboration, and the disposition of a change agent provides elements of hope for Catholic schools in a changing time.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Catholic schools are in need of both innovative change and innovative change agents who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be successful in these changing times. What follows is the autoethnographic story of my first encounter with a small Catholic school situated in the heart of Burbank, California. I was a new sixth grade transfer student, tall for my age, in my newly pleated green plaid skirt, white tennis shoes, and my yellow polo shirt tucked in with the school logo on the pocket. Standing perfectly straight in line when the bell rang, and terrified of what my public school friends told me those "mean nuns" would do to me if I misbehaved, a woman in white caught my eye behind all of the kids at the basketball court. She was dribbling and shooting in her blue Air Jordan basketball shoes as students passed her, pretending as though she was playing in a championship game and cheering after every made shot. I later found out that her name was Sister Joan and each and everyday my friends and I would shoot baskets with her before and after school—she inspired me, she motivated me, and she even made me want to be one of those "mean nuns" that my friends referred to, even though I was not Catholic.

Times have changed in Catholic education since Sister Joan left after my sixth grade year, as the number of nuns has dwindled and schools are now solely staffed by lay employees. These employees, following a rich tradition of mission and vision, are now charged with the task of rescuing Catholic schools from a game of real life, where similar to Sister Joan, they must be cheered on and celebrated.

As I said before, Catholic schools are in need of both innovative change and innovative change agents who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be successful in these changing times. My story as a first year principal, as a first time leader who enters a changed and challenged environment, is one where I hope to inspire and invigorate others to become change agents for the transformation of education within all schools, not only schools in poor, inner city or troubled environments. Through this research, I wanted to share my leadership journey, the high and the low points, to help conduct a data analysis of leadership and help other leaders in the process.

This chapter serves to present the research design and methodology, and is comprised of an explanation of the methodology, description of the school site and sampling technique, as well as the description of the data sources, method of collection, limitations, and overarching thematic results. The following section defines autoethnography, the chosen methodology for this study, and explains its benefits.

Autoethnography As Research

When choosing a research methodology, autoethnography, although controversial, fit my life and my story. The methodology is neither new nor outdated, but provided a glimmer of hope in the humanistic eyes of research. According to Kitrina Douglas and David Carless (2013):

> Rather than appearing now for the first time, personal and subjective experience has instead been systematically removed from human and social science research over the course of the past century in response to calls for methods that more closely parallel research in the natural sciences. Thus, it is not by chance that "something is missing" from human and social science research texts of our times—this omission can be

> understood as a result of the dominant culture and political conditions of our times. This absence or gap can usefully be construed as a "problem" for which autoethnography offers a solution. (p. 89)

By using an autoethnographic case study as my chosen strategy and process for data collection, it "[brought] forward the shifting aspects of self and [created] ways to write about experiences in a broader social context" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 22). According to Stacy Holman Jones (2005):

> Autoethnography is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation…and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives. (p. 765)

From my own stories to the social context, which is situated in an urban environment with a primarily Latino population, my research "[strove] to understand the interaction of individuals not just with others, but with the culture of the society in which they live" (Merriam, 2002, p. 38). As an autoethnographic researcher, by virtue, I served as a privileged active observer, where I was actively engaged at Michael the Archangel School (MAS) as the school leader through lived experience, and was also able to stand back and observe. According to Bryant Keith Alexander (2013):

> Through the performed engagement of cultural dialogue, autoethnography becomes a public pedagogy with several characteristics: It is designed to make public the often privatized, if not secularized, experience of others.[…] It makes present and visible the lived experiences of self and others—giving students, performers, and audiences access to knowledge that one hopes will open spaces of possibility. (p. 545)

This possibility served as my motivation as I struggled to tell my story, move my inner thoughts and motivations from the safety of my own head into the unchartered waters of the public space. It is true that I could have had someone study me, or I could have studied another leader instead of doing this non-traditional approach, but I knew and understood that by using another method, something would have been lost—the personal and the people. The following section describes the specific school site for this study, along with the sampling technique.

School Site Population and Sampling

The school site in this study is defined as MAS, a small, urban, Catholic, Archdiocesan school with a potential enrollment of 350 students. The school was established in 1914 in East Los Angeles, California, and was servicing a primarily Latino community for much of that time. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, which was the beginning of my principalship, the enrollment at MAS was 35 students, who were all Latino, in grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. By the end of the same school year, the enrollment was 116 students in grades Kindergarten through eighth grade, leading the entire Los Angeles Archdiocese in enrollment increase. For this reason, MAS and the leader were purposively selected for this study, as were the interviewees, who served as archdiocesan leadership in the 2011-2012 school year. As defined by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011), purposive sampling is a sampling technique where the participants are "believed to be a representative of the given population" (p. 629), as is the case for this study. The subsequent section describes the data sources for the study, along with the data collection method.

Data Sources and Collection Method

Similar to identifying participants, it is also important to identify the proper data sources and quantities of each. As Gay et al. (2011) stated, "researchers should not rely on any single source of data, whether it be interview, observation, or survey instrument. Therefore, the strength of qualitative research lies in its multi-instrument approach or triangulation" (p. 427). For this study, there are five data sources that were analyzed to provide for triangulation, and served to further strengthen the study. These data sources consisted of: my blog, *The Adventures of a First Year Principal* (Marasco, 2011), which serves as my own informal observations; my archival field notes; and three interviews of archdiocesan leadership from the 2011-2012 school year. Each of the given data sources had their own data collection procedure resulting in overarching thematic patterns that led to generalizations based on the past experiences at MAS and the literature review (Creswell, 2009, p. 63). The following two sections further detail the main data types: archival data and interview data.

Archival data. Since most of the data were archival, meaning that the records were from the past, the collection procedures included gaining permission and collecting the data directly from the school and other sources (Gay et al., 2011; Merriam, 2002). The archival blog data from the dates July 5, 2011 to July 5, 2012 were secured directly from the active online website, and were compiled onto a word document. The archival field notes were secured from my offices files where I kept my notes from the 2011-2012 school year. Following the careful collection of the archival data, specifically the collection of my blog data and field notes from the 2011-2012 school year, I conducted interviews which added to the overall validity and

trustworthiness of the study. The interview process is further explained in the subsequent section.

Interviews. Adding to the validity and trustworthiness of this study, as well as providing for triangulation, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with key adult stakeholders. These stakeholders included: Kevin Baxter, the elementary Superintendent for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles; Lelana "Lee" Moran, who was both the 2011-2012 Regional Supervisor for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and was the principal at MAS from 1986 to 1995; and Father Albert Bahhuth, who was the Pastor at a local Catholic school. Each of the stakeholders held key roles at MAS and fully knew me as a leader, as well as the details of my first year at MAS. In addition, they are transformational leaders in their own settings, where I sought representation from the parish level, the school level, and the Department of Catholic schools level. By interviewing each of them separately, I sought to specifically validate and triangulate my personal leadership story, as well as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for a transformational leader for change, which I possessed (See Appendix B for the complete template). I asked them separately, in a single one-hour meeting, the following questions:

- What did you see?
- What did you see in me?
- What led you to hire me?
- How did you see me evolve as a leader?
- Why do you think MAS was successful?
- What do you hope others learn from my story?

The interviews were held between January and February 2014, where I recorded the interview, and later transcribed each interview myself (See Appendices C, D, and E for the signed informed consent forms from the interviewees). Once the data collection occurred, I, as the researcher, "[used] these sources of data to gain valuable historical insights, [identified] potential trends, and [explained] how things got to be the way they [were]" (Owens & Valesky, 2011, p. 389). The following section further explains this data analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study consisted of separating each data source, inductively coding the data, and looking for thematic patterns that emerged (Chang, 2008; Merriam, 2002). In order, I analyzed the interviews, the archival field notes, and then the archival blog, where each method is further detailed below.

Interviews. The primary method of analysis for the three interviews that I conducted was inductive coding that resulted in overarching thematic patterns as prescribed by Chang (2008), and strengthened by Miles and Huberman (1994). In analyzing the interview sets, I coded and labeled each interview individually as I was looking specifically for the knowledge, skills and dispositions for a transformational leader for change, which the interviewees identified I possessed. I then sorted the data into groups for later analysis (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Father Albert's interview resulted in eight characteristics that emerged; Dr. Baxter's interview resulted in seven characteristics that emerged; and Lee Moran's interview resulted in nine characteristics that emerged. I formulated these characteristics into a matrix, and re-examined the characteristics that were listed and discussed them with a colleague. I then analyzed my blog and field notes data, which follows in the next section.

Blog and field notes. The primary method of analysis for my blog and field notes was inductive coding that resulted in overarching thematic patterns as well. In analyzing the blog entries and notes, I coded and labeled each as I was looking specifically for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for a transformational leader for change, which I identified that I possessed. I then sorted the data into groups resulting in seven characteristics that emerged. I then entered the characteristics into the matrix from the interview data, and re-examined the data. There were five overarching categories that emerged from the matrix, where each category was divided into the characteristics related to the category as evidenced in Figure 9.

The five categories presented in Figure 9 seem to best identify the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for a transformational leader for change, or a triage leader. The categories seemed valid based on the three interviews, the blog data, and the field notes.

Category Title	Characteristics Related to Category
Authenticity	Prayer & faith-filled, celebrate the small successes, infectious energy
Love	Compassionate, "out of the box," enthusiastic, creative
Discipline	Goal-oriented, not willing to give up
Self-Awareness	Not afraid to fail, doesn't believe in failure
Knowledge	Visionary, problem solver, free thoughts, thrived on challenges, very bright

Figure 9. Categories and characteristics of the triage leader.

Autoethnography Analysis

Similar to the previous section, the autoethnographic components of this study, which are presented in Chapter 4, are organized based on thematic patterns that emerged from the archival field notes, blog, and interview data (Chang, 2008). The overall structure of Chapter 4 is designed to answer the three research questions for this study in an organized, logical, and astute manner. The three research questions for this study are:

1. As a new, first time principal at MAS, a Catholic school in danger of closing, what challenges did I experience?
2. As a new leader, how did I respond to the challenges to bring about change at MAS?
3. What did I learn from this first year, first time leadership experience?

The first two research questions are answered in the first part of the chapter and the last research question is answered in the last part of the chapter. Prior to presenting the data to answer the first two research questions, I present a section on the background information that emerged from the interview data. This section is titled MAS Story: Context and Climate, which consists of a sequential account of events up to my hiring as principal at MAS.

In the section Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions: Challenges, Responses, and Learning, the first two research questions are answered as I analyzed what challenges I experienced and how I responded to those same challenges. The data for the section were compiled from the interview data, archival field notes, and blog entries, which were also coded. There were seven themes that emerged from the data sets, as each theme served as a subsection: Inexperience; Culture; School Plant; Finance, Enrollment, and Staffing; Trauma and Gangs; Pastor Influence;

and Interviewee's Shared Lessons. Each subsection includes stories and accounts from the data sets, and is organized from an internal to external outlook.

In the section Learning Lessons from this autoethnography, I answer the third and final research question for this study as I analyzed what I learned from this first year, first time leadership experience as I reflected on what I have encountered through this study.

Limitations

Although this study is carefully designed and steeped in the literature, there are two limitations. First, there is a limitation of potential bias, which is one of the inherent risks of using authoethnography as the chosen methodology. Since I was both the principal at MAS during my first year and the researcher studying myself as the leader at MAS during that initial year, this is a limitation, but it also provides a unique perspective, as I analyzed my experience as a leader situated in the culture. According to Holman et al. (2013):

> The autoethnographer is not a traditional participant-observer, someone who infiltrates a cultural group and tries to become a part of the group (without going "native") while simultaneously trying to write about the group, and then leaves to write, sometimes never again making contact with the cultural group members. Centering the work inside personal experience, autoethnographers not only have an investment in the experience they study but can also articulate aspects of cultural life traditional research methods leave out or could not access. (p. 34)

The situations and experiences that I conveyed through this study are personal and can be considered biased, but every experience in life can be seen through multiple lenses. In this study, the three interviews that were conducted "[provided] external data that gives contextual

information to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively generated data" (Chang, 2008, p. 104).

With the use of introspectively generated data, and study of myself as the leader, the second limitation that could be argued is the generalizability of the study to other schools or leaders. According to Holman et al. (2013), "autoethnography does not claim to produce better or more reliable, generalizable and/or valid research than other methods, but instead provides another approach for studying cultural experience" (p. 33). This study is not meant to be a cookie-cutter approach, but one that could be used as a point of reference for another school and/or leader, and serves as an example of innovation. The insights from a first year, first time principal may help others in a similar setting to provide innovative change for their school environment, as well as to understand the importance of transformational leadership. Autoethnography is a practice that "does not simply describe the world, but offers great possibility for changing it" (Madison, 2012, p. 189). Conducting a thorough investigation of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a first year/first time principal may help to inform others of the impact of transformational leadership as they embark on their own leadership challenges.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Introduction

As I sit here, I can feel the sun beating down on my head, as the soft breeze whistles past my face, and I hear the sweet sound of children playing and birds singing. In this moment, the freshly cut grass smell floods my nose and sends me back to my own childhood which was full of school, softball fields, friends, and laughter. Reflecting upon my childhood, these were the categories, school, softball fields, friends, and laughter, that I felt comfortable with and in control of in my young life—while everything else went seemingly out of control; these were the things on which I could rely.

For as long as I can remember, the park has always been a sacred space for my life; a place where I can enjoy the beauty that surrounds me; a place where I can reflect, pray and listen; a place where I can just be. Growing up as an athlete, a softball player specifically, I spent most of my life at the various parks around the country, traveling for tournaments and practicing on the fields for sometimes six or seven hours straight; but no park holds fonder memories for me than Olive Park.

The park is one of the only places where all people are welcome despite their ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic level, religion, profession, height, weight, disability, or any other defining characteristic. It is a place for all people of all walks of life, where all cultures from the community are represented, as each park resembles the local demographics. According to Olmsted (1858), "it is one of the great purposes of the Park to supply to the hundreds of thousands of tired workers, who have no opportunity to spend their summers in the country, a

specimen of God's handiwork that shall be to them, inexpensively, what a month or two in the White Mountains or the Adirondacks is, at great cost, to those in easier circumstances" (p. 279). Fast-forward almost 150 years, the park still serves its purpose for all people of all walks of life, despite income level. As I sit on the grass, soaking in the sun's rays, I realize this is the place where I first learned how to spell, the first place where I made friends, and the first place where I really talked to God. One of my favorite quotes about the impact of a park on the mind and body is from Frederick Law Olmsted (1858), where he stated:

> If we analyze the operations of scenes of beauty upon the mind, and consider the intimate relation of the mind upon the nervous system and the whole physical economy, the action and reaction which constantly occur between bodily and mental conditions, the reinvigoration which results from such scenes is readily comprehended....The enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system. (p. 17)

Olmsted was right, the park is my special place, a place where I go for rest and reflection, as I ponder the past and future, while enjoying the present.

In gaining the courage to explore my study, my dissertation using an authoethnographic research methodology about my experiences as a first time, first year leader at Michael the Archangel School (MAS), I found myself once again at the park, struggling to find the courage to tell my story, a story that reveals the inner workings of who I am as a leader and as a person, what I have experienced in that first year, and what in my young life has shaped my journey as a leader. Similar to my days as a softball player, I reminded myself that I must approach the plate,

or in this case, my research, with the same audacious attitude to do the best that I can, while learning through this exploration, and helping others along the way. What follows in this chapter is my account of my leadership journey in my first year, first time as principal role, which is told through my voice, along with the voices of Lee Moran, Dr. Kevin Baxter, and Father Albert Bahhuth who I interviewed for this study. The next section details my purpose as I embarked on my inner journey.

Purpose

Through this exploration and as a triage principal, an extension of a transformational leader at MAS, I detail my inner journey with a new culture that surrounded me—a culture that took one look at me, "sized me up," and eventually accepted me. It is true that I grew up only 15 miles away from the school, but worlds apart in consideration to income level, demographics, and gang violence. I was a 25 year old, young non-Hispanic woman, who knew how to deal with trauma from my own life experiences, which was a skill that I quickly put to the test with my new position at MAS. As my grandma always said, "things happen for a reason," and as I embarked on my journey, I kept that saying in my mind each and everyday as I never gave up, when many people had. Despite the differences between the new community that I was charged to lead and myself, we worked quickly together as I assessed the environment and culture, and we created and implemented an alternative educational model in an attempt to save a school, address the problem of equal access to success for the students, and eventually help other Catholic schools move forward in changing times.

The purpose of this autoethnographic study is for me to examine myself as the leader at MAS during the 2011-2012 school year, my first year as principal, where I had to build up a

school from the brink of closure. This autoethnographic study, as told through my voice as leader, also details my overall experience at a new school site, in a new position, and the experience of constructing and implementing school-wide change with the pressure of potential school closure. I interviewed three key stakeholders, each from a different branch of my local Catholic school governance for full representation, who knew the intricate details of my journey the first year: Dr. Kevin Baxter, the Superintendent of Elementary Schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, my direct supervisor; Lelana Moran, who interviewed, hired, and mentored me since she served as a former principal at MAS some years before; and Father Albert Bahhuth, who was the Pastor of Saint Finbar Church in Burbank. Their voices are heard in this study, as is my voice, as I coded their responses to a series of questions about me and my leadership journey to validate the trustworthiness and triangulate the data for this study. Overall, I described and analyzed what I did, how I led, what successes I experienced, what mistakes I made, and what I learned as a leader. This chapter presents the data collected on context, challenges, and experiences of my leadership journey through my voice, as well as the voices of those I interviewed. This chapter also links the data to my analysis related to my research questions.

Research Questions

Building on the foundations of a transformational leader, this autoethnographic research study is designed to answer three specific research questions:

1. As a new, first time principal at MAS, a Catholic school in danger of closing, what challenges did I experience?
2. As a new leader, how did I respond to the challenges to bring about change at MAS?
3. What did I learn from this first year, first time leadership experience?

The following section describes the organization for this chapter, which will serve as a map for this autoethnography.

Organization and Voice

The autoethnographic components of this study, which are presented in this chapter, are organized based on thematic patterns that emerged from the archival field notes, blog, and interview data (Chang, 2008) that were described in Chapter 3. The overall structure of this chapter, detailed in Table 1, is designed to answer the three research questions for this study, presented in the previous section. The first two research questions are answered in the first part of the chapter and the last research question is answered in the last part of the chapter. Prior to presenting the data to answer the first two research questions, I present a section on the background information that emerged from the interview data. This section is titled MAS Story: Context and Climate, which consists of a sequential account of events up to my hiring as principal at MAS.

In the section Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions: Challenges, Responses, and Learning, the first two research questions are answered as I analyzed the challenges I experienced and how I responded to those same challenges. The data for the section were compiled from the interview data, archival field notes, and blog entries, which were also coded. There were seven themes that emerged from the data sets, as each theme served as a sub-section: Inexperience; Culture; School Plant; Finance, Enrollment, and Staffing; Trauma and Gangs; Pastor Influence; and Interviewee's Shared Lessons. Each sub-section includes stories and accounts from the data sets, and is organized from an internal to external outlook.

In the section Learning Lessons from this autoethnography, I answer the third and final research question for this study as I analyzed what I learned from this first year, first time leadership experience as I reflected on what I have encountered through this study.

Table 1
Chapter 4 Organization

Section Title	Research Question Answered	Data Source	Themes Emerged
MAS Story: Context and Climate	Background information only	Interviews	Sequential account of events up to my hiring as principal at MAS
Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions: Challenges, Responses, and Learning	Question 1 & Question 2	Field Notes; Blog; & Interviews	Inexperience; Culture; School Plant; Finance, Enrollment, and Staffing; Trauma and Gangs; Pastor Influence; & Interviewee's Shared Lessons
Learning Lessons from this Autoethnography	Question 3	My Thoughts; Field Notes; Blog; & Interviews	Reflection on what I have encountered through this study

Although the following sections are organized by the themes detailed above, the content is written using stylistic elements that are typical in a traditional autoethnography, where feelings are expressed in an explicit manner. My voice is heard throughout, as are my interviewees' voices, where my story is situated in the park, my place of reflection, as I weave together the past and present in a dreamlike fashion to best detail my experiences, and the culture in which I found myself.

In the following sections I detail my story, always beginning with a park scene that I encountered which hints at an implicit theme of the section, and is written in the present tense. Subsequently, I detail the stories of those I encountered that left a lasting impression on my life prior to and during my first year, first time as principal, as I answer the research questions and

weave in various park scenes throughout. Again, each park scene hints at an implicit theme of the section.

In the following section, I begin in the park and present the background information for my story, which emerged from the interview data, and is told in a sequential account of events up to my hiring as principal at MAS.

MAS Story: Context and Climate

The glare from the sun is enough to blind me, as it reflects off of a dirty windshield of a dark blue car that enters the parking lot on the far side of the park. The wheels are tattered, and the car has rust, dings, and scratches, serving as battle scars from seemingly years of use, while achieving its job of getting the owner from one place to the next. As the owner parks the car in the last marked spot next to the tall oak tree, all four doors open at the same time as two children, a boy and a girl, dart out of the rear doors, and a man and woman jump out and chase them. They are laughing and joking, as the man walks back to the car and closes the four doors. In this moment and after watching this family, I wish I could ask the car where it has traveled, what it has done, and what experiences it has witnessed. That is my reality with inanimate objects, I cannot ask them questions, but must rely on the answers of the human beings who have knowledge and experience with the given questions.

Similar to the old, beat up car that must have traveled far, there were so many questions, I wished I could ask MAS, a small Catholic school in the heart of the inner city, as I took over as the new leader of the school. I had never been principal before, and wanted to calm my nerves as the butterflies flew in my stomach, with the knowledge of the history. History, the context and climate, I knew could inform my practice as I walked the halls in the completely empty

building my first day on the job. If the walls could talk, they would be able to tell me about the students, teachers, staff, parents, and principals who had been at the school, and what situations they had experienced. They would be able to tell me about the laughter, the cries, and the love of learning that had filled the halls, and what had led to its decline. They would be able to tell me, why as a 25 year old, I was being called to lead a school that had only 35 students left at the school and why they had stayed. These were some of the questions I yearned to know, the background of the context and climate of the place and people I was leading. Instead of asking these walls, and saving myself from looking like a crazy person, I had to rely on what I knew, and ask others I trusted and from their perspectives to inform my practice.

My first day. On July 4, 2011, I woke up extra early at my Glendale home. Trying to not wake my husband, as he was peacefully asleep in the oversized king bed, I slipped out of the covers, went to the living room and picked up my laptop. I sat down on our brown corduroy sofa, with my laptop in my lap, and I began to write. I wrote about what I knew, where I was going, and the new adventure that laid ahead of me. I was anxious, excited, and thrilled to be able to have such an amazing opportunity ahead of me, and I knew deep down that all would come out well. I posted in my blog:

> This is my first year as Principal at [MAS] and my first year as Principal overall. The school is in need of help, since there are only 35 students registered at the school. The Archdiocese was going to close the school, but the Archbishop said "No," so here I am. The Archdiocese asked me to come up with an idea to work with the current numbers, so I developed a pseudo-non graded method, where there will be three full-time teachers, an aide/secretary, and myself. The groups will be K-2, 3-5 and 6-8, where the last two

> groups will be switching between two teachers who will teach their specialty (Math/Science and English/Social Studies). You may be saying that this sounds crazy, but in reality, we've been doing this method for centuries, and the reason it will be more effective is because of the addition of technology. Now, I just need to gather up donations from the local high schools and reconstruct the classrooms over summer. It's a great project and is like building a whole new school, from the new website I developed to the uniforms. As I always like to say, Let the Games begin! (Marasco, personal blog, July 4, 2011)

From the first day, I approached my journey as a leader, the best way I knew how—as any other athletic event that required my preparation. I had the rough details of the history, the outer sketch of what I was getting myself into as far as context and climate, and had to rely on others to fill in the details later.

MAS's history prior to my hiring. The details came later, three years later, when I was conducting interviews for this research study. Waiting in the cold lobby with no pictures or paintings, sitting in an uncomfortable chair, the place seemed more fitting for a doctor's office than the Archdiocesan center. I waited for Dr. Kevin Baxter, the Superintendent for one of the largest Archdioceses in the country. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw one of Dr. Baxter's secretaries come out of the elevator as the security officer, standing behind the only desk in the room, gave me a gentle smile—it was my turn finally, my turn to get some answers. Dr. Baxter's secretary led me to the elevator, up to one of the floors, as I gripped my notebook to ease my anxiety in preparation for the interview.

I passed several cubicles, a room full of them actually, to the end of the building, which had several built-in offices. Dr. Baxter's office was to the far right, with a city view, and books and papers strewn all over his executive desk. His dark brown wooden bookshelf caught my attention as it was full of books, as he sat in his chair waiting for me. He was much younger than what most would guess for a Superintendent in Los Angeles, in his mid-to-late 40s, in good shape, with blue eyes, and a charming grin. I had met with him many times before, but this was my first time for an interview.

After some small talk, I asked him what he remembered about the history at MAS before my first year and he stated candidly:

> I am going to speak really freely, okay? [Laughs]. I will speak really honestly….We had concerns about leadership, I think in the principal, and not even that the principal was ineffective, it was the principal had been a principal for a long time—it was her community, it was her parish, and she was not someone who could drive in … substantive change. There was a pastor there…who was not helpful and not very cooperative. He…tended to have a temper, and the personality of the principal was one of deference to him. So [those are] the personalities that [jump] out at me.
>
> The school was clearly declining and dipping in enrollment. The one thing about [MAS] that I always felt strong about, as opposed to other schools that kept closing around that same time, is that it had potential—there were kids there; they had the Yellow line, the train line, put in; and I always joked with people, that there is a Starbucks down the street. And you know, we shouldn't close Catholic schools with Starbucks down the street [because] someone realized that they could put a Starbucks there because people

could buy coffee everyday. And so, [since that's] the case, it should have the potential to have a school. Contrast that with some locations that have aging populations in the parish, that there were not kids there, [MAS] was surrounded by charters that were draining kids out of the system, and that presented a different reality.

What I would kind of summarize about [MAS] is that there were some concerns about leadership, both the pastor level and principal level, enrollment was a concern, but that there was potential to grow, and that potential for students to populate the school was always there. (Baxter, January 21, 2014)

Although Dr. Baxter was not from the area, and had never worked there, he saw potential. He relied on Lelana "Lee" Moran, who was a supervisor for the Archdiocese and was a previous principal at MAS, to provide additional information on the school.

For my interview with Lee, we decided to meet at MAS and conduct the interview in my office, since it is a school that connects us together. She was principal and so was I—a common journey that forever links us to the history at MAS.

As Lee walked into the school, arriving early as usual, I ran out of my office, over to her and greeted her at the half-door that separates the school office from the passers-by. She is about 5 feet, 4 inches, stocky build, with grey hair to her shoulders, bright blue eyes, and an unmistakable laugh. She is in her mid-to-late sixties with gentle wrinkles on her face, that go perfectly with her larger than life attitude. She is in your face, completely herself, and to me, one of the most amazing women I have ever met. By the time I walked her into my office, we had talked like schoolgirls, quickly and abruptly, about what felt like a million topics. To me, she is a mix between a mom and a grandma—someone I look up to, respect, and admire. Probably one

of the only people in this world who can tell me like it is, without me letting my fiery temper get the best of me. Today, she was at the school to be interviewed though, my one and only chance to ask her about what really happened at MAS three years back. During this interview, she told me about the beginning, about Dr. Baxter's questions, and need for answers. As Lee stated in her interview:

> I had been the supervisor in the San Fernando region, and Dr. Baxter had known that I had been a previous principal at [MAS], and that there was only one principal you know, since my leaving. [I had known] the community pretty well and his question to me before we took the school over was: was the school viable for this community? And of course I had a long time historical knowledge of the community, and certainly well aware of [MAS's] prestigious tradition of being [a] place to go to school to rise out of poverty, and become successful. And that was [the] kind of image that went back to the 50s. [This image] was pretty much still in place for the five years that I was principal [at MAS]—when I left the school, the school was fully enrolled with long waiting lists. We had 347 kids in the school, and that's without a pre-school and that was just K-8. [MAS] was considered to be the most successful school, or one of the most successful schools in [the area].
>
> So I said, no, I think the school could be very viable; that it had been, and that there was no reason that [it shouldn't]—there was a large number of kids in the community that [were] desirous of Catholic education.
>
> Now, [the year before] you came, it became obvious to me in working with [the principal] that [the pastor] still did not want the school—that there [were] more issues to

> it than finances. [He] was not supportive of the school whatsoever, from the pulpit his attitudes were that both "poor" kids and "stupid" kids did not belong in Catholic education. And, I put the two together because…he felt that if you could not afford the tuition, you could not have Catholic education. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

A Catholic school faced with declining enrollment, and a seemingly insurmountable problem, MAS needed immediate assistance. Dr. Baxter, best accounted the details of what was ahead of the school and what he did next. He stated:

> In the spring of 2011…Archbishop Gomez became the Archbishop of Los Angeles, and that was the official transition period between Cardinal Mahony and Archbishop Gomez. And so we were looking at [MAS] as a closure….We had closed maybe two schools the year before, and my first year, we had closed maybe two or three. So, we had closed schools every year my first two years as Superintendent. [We] started talking about [MAS], and Lee Moran was the supervisor at the time for [MAS]. We sat down and recognized that there were really fundamental problems—the principal was retiring; the pastor was really incorrigible; and we really did not know how we could deal with him. We did feel like closure was probably the best recommendation at that point. So, we brought [the recommendation] to the Archbishop, and the Archbishop's response was that you know, he had just become Archbishop in March, and he did not want one of his first acts as Archbishop to be closing a school. So he said hang in there. Let's think of something. Let's create something.
>
> We went back to the drawing board, and we said, what are we going to do? And at that point it was bleeding enrollment because people knew; [they] could see the writing

on the wall. I think there was a concern that we had about 100 kids that last year or about 120 kids….And, as word spread that this was a possibility, I think people went running to the exits. And so, we decided that we had to have someone come in as principal, and obviously, your hiring and that whole process…was significant in deciding to move forward in the model that we had wanted to move forward with. (Baxter, January 21, 2014)

An unknown position for an unknown future. In Lee's interview with me, she detailed the angst that went with hiring for an unclear position in a school with an unclear future, as she stated:

> I was going to work with [our Human Resources Department] to post that I had a principal opening at [MAS], umm, reluctantly. I had to post because I needed a principal to open up a school that I had no idea what it was going to look like other than it was going to have to be financed on a pretty tight budget. Well, actually, I went back to my good buddies, you know, the other supervisors. At this time, everyone was looking for principalships because everything had opened up. And I am listening to all of the supervisors who are sitting on search committees. And so I am going to post the position, but I am also listening and looking specifically for someone who has to be highly, highly, energized and creative. And so, I am listening to Sr. Jill and Dr. Baxter and I am listening to Carla, because they are sitting on search committees. I am sitting on search committees too. So you know, who's interviewing? And I am listening to Lou Anne, who's interviewing? Who are our candidates? Who's looking for work? So

I kinda know who's looking for work, and, and you know, I have some feelers out. So I post the opening and I go after you.

Me: Why?

Lee: Because Dr. Baxter had told me, "you know last night, I was in on an interview with this really interesting, young principal, but she will never get the job because she is too young. But she interviews very, very well. Very energetic, very good interview." (Moran, January 15, 2014)

In the right place at the right time. When Dr. Baxter was asked in his interview about his comments to Lee and if he remembered them, he stated:

I do. I remember this pretty clearly. [Laughs]. You had interviewed at [Mother Cabrini School] and I was on the board and am still on the board at [Mother Cabrini School], because that was the school where I was principal. And so, we were interviewing candidates there, and we had a number of good candidates. There was an internal candidate, the vice principal, had applied. And, you interviewed and your interview was spectacular, and you did a great job interviewing and you had a ton of energy and a ton of great ideas and creativity and talked about a lot of things. And the whole hiring committee got very fired up about you and thought that you were a breath of fresh air. All that being said, you know, [the vice principal] was the stable, sensible choice. But, in my head, you know, I said, Cori definitely has potential and we are always looking for principals. So when I came back to Lee, I said that there was a candidate who I just interviewed who could be great for [MAS]. And now, you had never been a principal. [Laughs]. And I did not know anything about you; so it was a little bit of a shot in the

dark. And I think I said something to that effect to Lee: "you know she has never been a principal, she has been a high school person; she is at Ramona Convent Secondary School. I don't know, but she's got creativity, she's enthusiastic and she's energetic!"

And so, I was supportive and said go ahead and check it out. (Baxter, January 21, 2014)

Lee certainly checked it out as she heard more and more about me and where I was interviewing. According to her interview, she stated:

> Your name was bouncing around as one of the better candidates that was not going to get hired, maybe. Because of age. [Silence] Meanwhile, I know that I have to have someone who doesn't know a damn thing, because if they know anything, then they are going to throw their hands up in despair. [Laughs]. So I need somebody who is going to be free.
>
> Me: Free in what sense?
>
> Lee: I could have really appealed to your emotional heart strings and laid a wonderful guilt trip on you, but I am sure Father Albert did it on you for me. (Laughs).
>
> Me: Yup, pretty much.
>
> Lee: So he did it for me. [Laughs]. You know, I remember asking Jill, how good do you think that this one is, I mean, do we want to lose her? And Jill said, "I have heard that she just has a lot of energy and that she is real bright." Two qualities that I need and that she is married to one of our other principals. Well, I know the other principal that she is married to and I thought, this is getting better. And that's when I called you. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

Listening to Lee speak, I remembered clearly my interview with Dr. Baxter and that entire search committee, which was composed of Dr. Tony Sabatino and Monsignor Tim Dyer, to name a few. In all honesty, as I sat in the hallway waiting for my turn, I knew that something special was going to happen in that interview—it was a sense of calm that had come over me, even though it was going to be my fifth school that showed interest. The interview went extremely well, and as I walked out, Monsignor Dyer jumped up and volunteered to walk me to my car. Along the way, he told me how well I did, and that although he did not think I was going to get the job at his school, I was going to be a true "mover and a shaker" in the near future. He told me to not ever get discouraged and know that based on his many years of experience in dealing with educators, I was destined for greatness based off of my personality and qualities that he had noticed in our hour and a half interview. When we got to my car, he gave me a hug and wished me well, as he watched me drive off.

I was certainly in the right place at the right time, and knew that as I drove away from one of the most important interviews of my career—it proved to shape the beginnings of my leadership journey.

The phone call. One day passed and I continued to reflect on the interview experiences. Finally the call came. In my interview with Lee Moran, I wanted to know what she remembered about our initial call, so as I sat across from her in our interview, I asked her:

So you did your homework before you called me?

Lee: Oh yeah.

Me: So you called me, during the school day?

Lee: I called you, right, where I knew you were, because I did not have all this other stuff because you did not come through the Archdiocese. So I gotta call you where you are. I know where you are during the day [Pause]. I call you, and I say I hear that you are looking for a principal-ship and will you consider at least looking at a school to see if it's something that you would be interested in looking at. And then I got this whole line of excuses! I needed you to come before you had a chance to talk to somebody who had some sense. [Laughs].

Me: What kind of excuses did you hear?

Lee: Well, uh, I heard just excuses! Something about you being involved with some sort of a sports activity, and you are wearing sweat suit, and you are cleaning out rooms, or whatever the hell you are doing. You are too grubby to do an interview. So I tell you that I don't want you to do an interview, I just want you to come and look at the school to see if it's something that you might want to have an interview for—this is not an interview! I am not interviewing you, because I had already done my homework. [Laughs]. I mean, I had already done my homework; I never do not do my homework. I had already done all this kinds of reasonably done background, but close enough. And I could not, and I did not want you to come home and ask people, because people knew the condition of the school, people knew that if Lee said that school needs to close that it was probably beyond redemption, because they knew of my passion for the school. I could not have you talking to too many people for too long.

Me: So you gave me how much time to make it to the school, when you finally got me to agree? It was like 10 minutes, right? And you would meet me there in like 30 minutes or something, right?

Lee: Right! I knew how long it would take you. Well, first of all, when I figured out that you were cleaning out classrooms, I knew you were not teaching. [Laughs]. You were through teaching for the day, but I needed you to be there with the kids there. I mean, I am not going to be able to sell it with just the building; the building […] isn't sellable. [Laughs]. I needed you to see the kids. I did not have a whole lot of leeway. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

Lee's planned approach to making me come to MAS without being able to communicate with anyone, including my husband, was certainly well thought out and executed. I knew, even at that time, when the Archdiocese calls and asks someone to do something, the person had better respond quickly—and that is exactly what I did. In typical Lee fashion, she gave me clear directions in a very direct and stern manner that left me little choice in the matter.

Initial visit. Continuing with the story and background on my entry to leadership, I asked Lee during our interview:

Okay, so you met me here?

Lee: I met you here at about 2:15 or 2:20 pm, I wanted you to see the kids. I wanted you to rub elbows with the kids. I wanted you to have some idea of what little East LA Mexican kids looked like, because you were not going to see them at [Mother Cabrini School] because those aren't Mexicans. You were not going to see them at [your other interviews] because those are White schools. [Laughs].

You were not going to see that. I wanted you to see what there was to see and I needed to be seen without anybody having any chance to taint the pot. I did not want the teachers to have any idea, 'cuz I did not want you reading anything off of their body language. I did not want [the previous principal]; I did not want anybody messing with this. And, I did not do anything other than walk you through the school, if you remember.

Me: Uh huh, from class to class.

Lee: Yup, class to every class, I wanted you to see them all, everyone one of 'em. Because every one of those kids' future depended on whether or not you were going to like them—if it was meant to be. You see, I also have a strong faith Cori, and I think that's important—if it was not you, I would just have to wait a little longer to find somebody else. But I really believe these are God's schools, and if it was meant to be, it was meant to be, even if I could not find anybody else. [Pause] There is plenty of turkeys looking for schools, so I knew I could get a turkey, as a matter of fact, I had seven or eight turkeys send me in applications and some that I knew quite well that wanted to have the chance. So I mean, I had people to take over the school, but I knew that it would last a year.

Me: So what [was] your main goal that first meeting was for me to see the kids?

Lee: My main goal that first meeting was for you to see the kids and see if you would be willing to think along those lines because it was not where you were interviewing. You did not send me a resume. I had already posted it by a day, but see, word like that travels very fast.

Me: So what did you, I mean, I remember you asked me a question while we were here, what did you pose to me? I mean, I remember you showing me the kids and then you asked me…

Lee: I said to you, would you consider this kind of school? And I was very upfront and I told you what our problems were. And that we were going to have to look at a very different financial model because by then, I had pretty much done in my head the financial model that we would need to be in—it was a very simple financial model: we see what we have, see what they can pay, and then see who we can buy. I knew I could get enough money to pay for the principal because…

Me: Wait, that's all you thought you could… [Laughing hard].

Lee: Well, that's what the subsidy was for, the subsidy would pay for the principal and a little bit more, but not much more. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

With the initial school visit, Lee succeeded in her goal—she showed me the school, showed me the students, and planted the seed in my head of all the possibilities the school possessed for its students. Seeing the children face-to-face and their adorable smiles, warmed my heart and left an impression on me that could not be forgotten.

A proposal. In our interview, I continued on the story with Lee, as I said:

So then there was like a period in between. … And then I gave you a proposal.

Lee: I sit there and said you know, think about it, but before, you need to think about what it would look like, what it would look like in your head.

Me: Uh huh.

Lee: And you hand me this; it is probably in the school file still; this 25-page proposal [Laughs] with first year, second year, third year, fourth year and I think it went down to… I think it might have been a five-year proposal.

Me: It was a five-year proposal.

Lee: Uh, that there was going to be this, this, this, this, and this. I mean, it was like a 30-page document and I remember going to Sr. Jill and saying, "well, you told me to interview this kid and that she might be able to think out of the box. And well, let me show you a box." And, she goes, "she did this? Have you read it?" she said, and I said, "not yet, but I have glanced through it." And then I showed it to Kevin. Now I just had to wait… I knew [Mother Cabrini School] was not going to hire you, but I knew that you were either the first or second choice at [another school]. And then you sent me this bizarre thing about this priest (laughing hard). And I thought, Shit and a half, this gal has gone to all kinds of research, and I wanted to know what she was going to find out about me. And I thought, why is she telling me this? But I just sat, and I did not push, and I did not pressure because I did not want you to give up something that I knew was going to work, for something that I did not know was going to work. [Pause].

Me: So then…

Lee: You said yes! (Moran, January 15, 2014)

As a leader discerning, and interviewing at multiple locations, my choice came down to two locations that were at polar ends of the spectrum in many regards, but were united in the need for enrollment increases. One school was in a wealthy area with predominately white

students and a lot of resources, and the other school was in an economically disadvantaged area, with predominately Latino students, and hardly any resources. The reason I said "yes" to the latter, MAS, was primarily because of the guidance of Father Albert Bahhuth, who at that time, was the Pastor of my alma mater, Saint Finbar School in Burbank, was my husband's boss, and was the priest who married us.

The "yes." Father Albert is one of those guys that I would do anything for and I know if I called him and needed him, he would be there for me—which is something that I used when I told him that I needed to interview him for my research. Driving up to his new parish in Valencia, St. Kateri's Tekakwitha Church, I had made the drive before, but this time seemed so much quicker. Before I knew it, I was driving up the long driveway, passing the trees, beautiful white and red roses, and statues that are laid on the grounds—it seems more like a retreat house than a standard Catholic church. The buildings are brand new and almost sparkle as I parked my car in the space that says reserved for guests. I quickly got out of my car, stretched my legs, and grabbed my bags, as I was mentally preparing myself to ask yet another person who I cared about and respected, questions about my own journey as a leader. As far as I am concerned, at this point, there is nothing more awkward than researching oneself and interviewing others about me, while listening and writing notes. I guess some people would probably like this, but for me, personally, it is as close to torture as I can get, considering the task.

I walked up the stairs briskly that led to his office, as he greeted me at the entrance. Father Albert is a tall, stocky man of Lebanese decent and has a thick accent that I have grown to understand. His dark hair, or that which he has left, is always perfectly cut and in place, as his dark eyes seem to stare straight into your soul. He is one of the few people that I dare not lie to,

because I feel as though he can see right through me, and I would rather be honest than deal with a look of disappointment from him. He is much more of a businessman than a typical pastor and carries himself in a very professional and distinguished manner—although in private, he is very charismatic and funny. Sometimes in our conversations, I play a game with myself, where I see how long it can take me to make him laugh.

Walking into his office, he holds the door for me, like the gentleman that he is, as we both find our seats at his conference table. His office is large, much bigger than his office at Saint Finbar, with elegant style and solid looking dark brown wood finish. His bookshelf near the window is full of books on leadership and books on our faith, as all of the items in his office are neatly placed.

As we sit there, he gives me his gentle smile and standard nod that it is time to begin. I take a deep breath and begin:

> So you actually knew me before I was the principal at [MAS] and we kind of walked that journey as I was going through interviews, and you helped me out with that as well. Um, what was it that you saw at [MAS], as well as any research that you did on your own; what was it that was different, or why did you um… why did you help me to decide to choose [MAS]?

Father Albert: I think mostly knowing you personally. And like you mentioned, knowing you before and your personality. I think you, uh, are very passionate; very determined; you are a leader; and I think you like a challenge. And like we were talking about the different opportunities or openings that were there. I felt that [MAS] would provide you more of that challenge and will get you to be excited

about the challenge! And really to use your gifts and talents in a creative way to, you know, give you a motivation, or a driving force as you were becoming a principal. Also, obviously the need in many of the inner-city schools to have men or women who are willing to serve, and who come with a passion, with a drive to be willing to make a difference—I thought that was what really would satisfy you more than anything else. [Pause]. Seeing that you were really making a difference in the lives of these children and their families. [Laughs].

Me: And you were right! (Bahhuth, January 25, 2014)

Father Albert's words helped me to see that my own passion for education, especially for the poor, allowed me to focus my energy on helping others and feel as though I was making a difference in the world. Making a commitment to myself, to the children and their families, and most importantly, to God, I accepted the new journey that I was sure would be filled with hard-work, sweat, and tears—I expected no less from something that served as my passion. From the moment I said "yes," which was May 5, 2011, I was working nonstop, almost obsessed with the details of making this work.

The beginning days and initial parent meeting. The games did begin. What follows is data on my first days as MAS' principal.

Once Lee was given the green light from me, we had our first parent meeting a few days later—all much before my official start date of July 5, the typical start date of a new principal due to the new fiscal year. Lee would call me daily and would refer to me endearingly as her "filly in the paddock, who was getting ready for her first race." This first meeting was crucial: one where the parents were able to first see me, and to see what the plans were.

Sitting across from each other at my desk, Lee looked at me with her wild eyes, as her energy was palpable. After the official "yes," and being probed on what we did next, she said:

> I think, did we have a parent meeting and announce to the parents what it was going to be, or did I introduce the new principal? Somewhere along the line, I introduced the new principal.

Me: Yes, we had a meeting.

Lee: Because I signed, I signed your contract fairly early on. And you know, and wiped it in and dah, dah, dah, dah…

Me: You brought me downtown.

Lee: Probably.

Me: And I actually got to see the building.

Lee: Oh, ya, ya, right.

Me: Because I wanted a contract in hand.

Lee: Right, you wanted a contract, huh? She wanted a contract! Hmm, let me show you where I work; … and let me show you the Chancellor lives here; and the Archbishop is over there… You know, I am sitting there dragging this 25 year old in tow, and … [introducing you to everyone as] the new principal at [MAS]. [Laughs]. Well, you wanted a contract; I gave you a contract.

Me: Um…

Lee: I had nothing to lose. I had already lost the school. … I had the world to gain. Well, you had the world to gain. The only thing was that I did not want to lose

[Pause]… future leadership for the diocese and I was very well aware of that. So, I probably stayed as close to you as flypaper. [Laughs]

Me: That is true… even now!! …

Lee: The other original piece was that I was staying close to you because I knew just how very fragile that [the situation at MAS] was.

Me: So we had the parents' meeting right after you signed the contract?

Lee: That's right and that's when we had the new things, and they had their questions, and you had your visions and the things that you were going to do. … They wanted to know that the school was staying open, and yeah, I have hired a principal. [The principal] will hire whatever staff is needed and it is just a matter of signing [up and] registering, and so they began the registration process.

Me: What do you think was the most important about that meeting?

Lee: The fact that the diocese was committed to keeping the school open.

Me: What about me as a leader? What did I do in that meeting that was important?

Lee: You were young, I mean, well, uh, young is probably the wrong word. You were vibrant, energetic. You were energetic and you came across with a great deal of positive attitude with an open mind to change—that there was going to be technology in the school; that, we were going to become active in sports. You had an interest in sports, and technology; and you had an interest in the community. You came across as excited to be there and really looking forward to working with them. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

During that time, and even in current times, many Catholic school leaders are in need of thinking outside of the box, especially regarding dealing with declining enrollment.

A new challenge. Interview data reveal the many challenges I had to overcome as the new leader at MAS. As Father Albert and I were getting further along in our interview, and he seemed to loosen up from nerves of being recorded, I asked him about what challenges he saw were going to be an issue at MAS including enrollment trends. He stated:

> I did not know particularly about [MAS], but more in general, you know—especially when you mentioned their enrollment. And obviously, I know about the economic situation of that area, and that funds are not going to be easy to come. So, it was not just like helping a school in a middle class area to, you know, to become more profitable or run better; but, it really I thought, it would be a challenge to come up with new creative ways, new approaches. And I thought that you were qualified for that; that you would bring that creativity. It was in a way, to go where no one has gone before type of thing. Rather than, "okay, this school needs more students, what can I do?" (Bahhuth, January 25, 2014)

The context and climate of MAS, including the beginnings of my leadership journey, certainly fit Father Albert's description of "going where no one has gone before type of thing." MAS was a school that had experienced various traumas, and similar to a paramedic arriving on an unknown scene, as the leader, I needed to quickly assess the situation and help the location to the best of my abilities to have a fighting chance. It was not about fixing the school or saving the school, but it was about a deep commitment and passion I had for the community and the students and families that I was called to serve. It is true that I could have chosen a more "stable"

environment that served a different population, but instead I chose to learn about a new culture, a new way of life, and immerse myself in the unknown.

I hear a loud shriek from the playground, as the little girl from the dirty, dark blue, beat up car, fell to the ground next to the slide. The little girl gets up, with tears in her eyes, looks around, and wipes off the sand on her shorts and her shirt. Her parents are talking enthusiastically to each other on the bench next to the playground, and are seemingly unaware of anything but their conversation with one another. Another little girl, about the same age, with brown hair, pale skin and blue eyes, runs over to the girl standing next to the slide. She is dressed in brand new clothes that look as though they were freshly pressed in the morning, a stark difference from the girl from the dirty dark blue car, who looks as though she has rolled out of bed. The girls exchange words, as the new girl bends down and looks closely at the injured girl's knee. She helps her brush off the rest of the sand as the two girls go running off to the swings. I glance over to the parking lot, and the dirty, dark blue car stands in the distance, witness to the entire scene. I again wish that I could talk to the car, just as I wish I could speak to MAS—instead, we have to rely on our own memories and views of what was seen. In the beginning of my leadership journey at MAS, I simply walked into my new role as principal for the first time with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that I naturally possessed as I encountered challenges, responded to those challenges, and learned through the process. The following section describes these challenges that I encountered and how I responded to those challenges, as I answer my first and second research questions for this study.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions: Challenges, Responses, and Learning

Reminiscing back to those first days as principal, I remember my first day vividly. It was a warm July morning, with the sun barely beginning to show its rays, as I was driving to work along the 5 freeway with my palms sweating as I was gripping the steering wheel of my silver Lexus SUV. I could not sleep the previous night, yet I felt the energy flowing through my body because today was not just any other day; today was my first day and first time as a principal. Although my husband and I lived in Glendale, which was only 15 miles from MAS, and I had watched him as principal at Saint Finbar School in Burbank, I knew he and I would have vastly different experiences and lots to talk about at night—we were serving two very different communities with very different needs, yet I was hoping to find some strand of similarity.

Inexperience

I had never worked in the inner city before and had a total of five years experience in education, as I began teaching at Ramona Convent Secondary School, a private, elite, all-girl school when I was only 19 years old. Back then, I graduated college with my bachelors in only two years and was hired to teach math and science, with my oldest students being seniors. I remembered my first day. I was terrified as a teacher and literally refused to smile until Christmas because that is what all of my teacher friends told me—I only found out after that first year that it was a figure of speech. When my students at Ramona Convent found out where I was going to be working as principal, they told me I would be fine, as long as I did not open my mouth—otherwise I would get shot. They told me that I looked the part, that of a young Latina, with my dark brown hair, tan skin, dark brown eyes and athletic frame, yet when I opened my

mouth, I spoke like a "whetta" (Spanish slang for a White woman), not to mention the fact that I did not know a word of Spanish, other than what I learned in my high school Spanish classes.

Culture

As I was driving down the 5 freeway, getting closer and closer to the exit, I was kicking myself for not studying Spanish and taking it more seriously like my step-dad always encouraged. He had been in my life since I was four years old, and married my mom when I was 9 years old. His name is Luis Carranza, and he is half El Salvadoran and half Mexican, which I knew was a strange mix since the two ethnic groups usually hated each other; but I figured that had to count in my favor for something. I grew up with his family and all of the parties on the weekends, as I bounced from: my mom's family, the standard White family, to one side of my step dad's family that was Mexican, to the other side of my step dad's family that was El Salvadoran, to my dad's family, an interesting Creole group that I have never been able to pinpoint. Holidays were extremely confusing, although I did not think so back then, and I learned the various cultures and traditions from each group. Growing up, people would walk up to me on the streets speaking their own culture's language ranging from Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, to Mandarin, asking questions and staring at my mom as we walked through a store. To me, I never really identified with any group, as most people considered me a "mutt" with a White mom and a dark-skinned dad, that's all I really knew.

Back to day one, I was now one exit away as I realized it might actually be a relief to be in a 100% Latino environment, where I could learn their particular culture, as an outsider and pray that I would be accepted. I knew I had not only my age, races, language, zip code, and income level against me, but the fact that my husband and I did not have children to relate with

the parents was yet another potential struggle. Even with all of this, I exited the freeway with a sense of calm and confidence that I had what it took inside of me to make MAS work.

I made a left down the street, passing the graffiti-covered signs, old beat up cars parked on both sides of the road, and passed two neighboring Catholic churches and schools. Stopped at a red light before my turn, I sat and watched a family cross the street: a young mom, about four and one half feet tall in torn, dirty-looking clothing, pushing an old stroller that wobbled as she pushed it with four other children ranging in ages of about four years old to 11 years old that followed behind her, looking like little ducklings following their mother. The last one in her line was a young boy, who was about nine years old. He was wearing blue jeans that had a few holes in them, a grey and blue striped shirt, and had his greasy brown hair neatly combed. He stopped in front of my SUV, looked straight at me with his big brown eyes and gave me a huge grin, as he ran after his mom. I knew in my heart at that moment, that whatever would come my way, MAS would be fine as this I believed was a sign from God.

God was with me then, just as I believe that He is with me now, as my consciousness brings me back to the present. Looking up at the clear blue sky, and watching the birds flying with outstretched wings, I center myself on the beauty that surrounds me—God's creations. It is in moments like these in the park that I have moments of clarity, where everything makes sense in the world. Yes, there might be challenges; yes, they need to be addressed; but these challenges should be seen for the beauty that each possesses and the opportunities for learning that they require. As a new, first time principal at MAS that July of 2011, the odds seemed to be against me as I was inexperienced and new to the culture that I was called to serve, yet I possessed the "un-coachables," my disposition and core values that would lead me on my

leadership path. I also possessed Bolman and Deal's (2011) theory of significance, where I knew I was doing something worth doing, and could make a difference in the lives that I was being called to lead. Yes, I was and am a change agent, a transformational leader, but in this moment of clarity, I also had to remind myself that what happened at MAS before I arrived for my first official day, July 5, 2011, was not my doing. I had to examine each challenge as it arose and understand its impact before I could proceed.

School Plant

Walking into the school building for my first day of work was probably one of the biggest shocks of my life. Fortunately, I had Marina Najera, one of my student's older sister from Ramona Convent, start work the same day since she was my new secretary and translator. I knew I would need someone that I trusted in an environment I had only read about as we embarked on this journey, and Marina was just that. She is a Latina herself, and was about 19 years old at the time, extremely thin, with pale skin and dark hair; she was dressed in a very professional pink suit with black high heels. She was waiting for me in the school's parking lot,, sticking out like a sore thumb, as her mom waited anxiously to drop her off. She also had never been in the inner city before, so it was a first for both of us.

Marina and I greeted each other, as I gave her mom a nod that she would be okay, and we walked over to the school building. We opened the front door with my set of keys, and walked to the school office door, fumbling for the right key—we must have tried them all before we found the right one. As we opened the door, we were shocked! There were holes in the walls, the desks were broken, and everything was stripped away from the dusty shelves. We walked into each classroom and found them in the same shape with holes, rat and mice droppings,

cockroaches, and ants everywhere. All of the books were thrown into one room, and I mean thrown, and strewn everywhere. The closets were full of trash; the student desks were too small and too worn to be safe; and the rooms were so hot I sweat through my suit, as did Marina in hers. The textbooks were outdated by a good 10 to 15 years, and we had absolutely no supplies. We found some computers that were so old that I did not even know how to turn them on, and a copy machine that was literally taped with shipping tape to hold it together. We walked out to the front of the building, trying to find some form of redemption, but there was none. The school fence that surrounded the building was about four-feet tall, and could be easily jumped by an intruder, not to mention, it was completely rusted. There were large bars on the windows that we could not see through that were also rusted, making the school look more like a prison than an educational facility. And all of the plants and patches of grass mixed with dirt were completely dead. It was our absolute worst nightmare, a horror scene from a movie. At one point, we really thought someone was playing a trick on us and must be filming our reaction somewhere to surprise us later—that never happened and we were not so lucky.

After making our complete walk-through of the school, I felt sick with anger and disgust as I thought about my husband's school just 15 miles away. He had a beautiful building, technology throughout, grass and trees, and the most up-to-date resources for his teachers—and we had absolutely nothing. As best described in my blog:

> Just because our students are not rich and live in the inner city, does not mean that they do not deserve the best education; if anything, they deserve it that much more. Life can be cruel and unfair, which our children already know; our challenge is to make them see the other side of life that is full of possibilities, fun, and love. It does not matter what car

> one drives, what city one lives in, or even how one physically looks, but it is about who a person is and what drives the person through this puzzle of life. This is what we are hoping to teach our students, while they keep God at the center of their lives. (Marasco, 2012).

The apparent disparity between rich and poor, even within Catholic schools themselves lit a fire within me. I did not want our school to be just good for an inner city school, but I wanted it to be great despite the location. I wanted to create a place where people would want to send their children, even if they were middle-class or high SES parents, and would not be appalled as Marina and I were, walking through the building. From a new parent's position, the school building is the first thing that the parent sees, and I knew the school had to sell itself, or we would never be able to move forward. Maybe it was my real estate background, or growing up with a mom who was a real estate agent, but curb appeal is the first thing that buyers see and the walkthrough has to be impeccable to have a chance. So, putting myself into the perspective of a middle-class parent, I walked through the building once more with my notebook that I brought from home, writing notes of what needed to be changed. I knew money was tight, and we had no workers other than Marina and myself, but I also knew summer was the time that the high schools and businesses cycled out their old materials for new, which we could solicit for donations. This was my number one task and I gave myself a deadline of three weeks—I figured, what was the worst that someone could say? I could handle hearing "no," but if I heard a "yes," I vowed I would make the U-Haul trips myself if needed.

By Wednesday of that first week, I scheduled my first U-Haul trip! As I wrote in my blog July 10, 2011:

> This was my first week as principal of my new school, and I have already learned a ton! Tuesday was my transition meeting, Wednesday was picking up donations with a U-Haul, and Thursday and Friday were moving and painting days mixed in with meetings. The greatest lesson that I have learned, similar to any other profession or area of one's life, is discipline. I cannot, nor do I want to do everything on my own, and I have reached out for help from my family (my husband and my little sister have both been instrumental), and to the teachers, parents, and families of the community. We have had a remarkable showing and we are fortunate for having such support. Material donations have continued to come in and they are MUCH needed, based off of what I walked into on Tuesday. This will be a great task, but with the rejuvenation of the school inside and out, and support of many, it has a great chance for success.
>
> My view of the job as principal has changed. Since the beginning of this week I have been a visionary, leader, boss, mover, painter, exterminator, and planner—And this is only my first week on the job! As Barbara Sher once stated, "Doing is a quantum leap from imagining." The "doing" is the hardest part as I continue this journey. (Marasco, 2011)

As I was working hard each day and each week, I was trying to lead by example because I knew that in order for the school to move forward, the community would have to get involved. By getting “my hands dirty” while doing the manual labor myself, I hoped to inspire others to do the same, so we could work together, side-by-side. On July 16, 2011, I wrote:

> Life is amazing in the sense that you never really know what is coming next, but you just have to have faith in God and in yourself, and move in the direction you feel is right.

With my second week finished, this seems to be most true for me. For the last two weeks, as I have said before, I have been working hard on tasks that most people do not think that Principals do, from painting to exterminating, and mixing that with many parent and other individual meetings.

We have been fortunate in the sense that donations have been continuing to come in, and most importantly, the word has spread throughout the community that we are working above and beyond at the school to make the changes that are necessary. Up until Monday it was my sister (who is a high school sophomore), one of my ex-students from Ramona, one of my teachers, my secretary and myself, who were there every day, all day. As Tuesday arrived two more volunteers came in, and by Friday I had about 10 of the local children and adults helping us to reshape this school. With that, we still need more help, and without my knowledge, my sister created a Facebook event to reach out to her friends and others that she knew to have more volunteers and donations come in to get the school into the shape that it needs to be in—she is at 35 confirmed and counting! It is astonishing to me what can happen when one person or group "lights the fire," and how quickly it spreads. As far as I am concerned, I feel blessed to be in this position and to see firsthand the power of prayer and humanity.

The lesson that I have learned in my second week as principal has been that if you work hard, stay focused on your goals, and are confident, it will be noticed and generally others will follow. Thomas Jefferson's quote comes to mind. He once stated: "Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you." The same rings true for principals or whatever your profession may be. Don't ask what your

> role should be, just act, and do what you think is right. This is where I am today, where actions speak louder than words. (Marasco, 2011)

Actions certainly did speak louder than words those first few weeks, as the community came together and we had outpouring of support in material donations and volunteer labor. Feeling as though this mission and the rejuvenation project were going in the right direction, it made it exciting to go to work each day. As I wrote on July 23, 2011:

> There is nothing like loving what you do for a living, and being excited every morning to see what the new day will bring you. This is how the last three weeks have been for me, especially this past week. We hit the ground running on Monday and continued moving, arranging, and organizing items so that the school could finally take shape. The focus was to clear the hallways as much as possible, and finish the library and science lab (which were both non-existent)—and we accomplished our goals by Friday thanks to all the help we received. Since my sister put up the Facebook event, we had a lot of extra help in addition to the community children who continued to come in everyday to be a part of the project. Also, my family and friends have been very involved as well and I am so thankful for them and all that they have done and continue to do.
>
> In addition to the manual labor, I had a lot of parent meetings to try and get more students into the school. Thankfully, the word is continuing to spread through the community and we are getting quite a few walk-ins for new registrations.
>
> As William James once stated, "Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." This statement completely sums up what I have encountered and learned from my

> third week as being Principal. With prayer and continued guidance from God, I am focused on leading by example as we continue this journey. (Marasco, 2011)

From the original walkthrough, I gave myself a three-week goal for updating the physical plant and making it attractive to parents—a task that I felt needed my attention first and foremost, despite the other issues I faced. The school needed to be welcoming, a place that the students and parents would want to come to, and I succeeded in achieving that goal with the community's help and outpouring of support. The school still had a long way to go, but in celebrating the successes, as minor as they might be, I felt confident that we could achieve whatever it was that we needed to, despite my frustration of being young and impatient. On July 30, 2011, I wrote:

> As someone once told me, "Rome was not built in a day." After reflecting on my first month as Principal, this is something that I have continually been telling myself. Patience is a difficult lesson to learn, but in this profession, like any other, when you are seeking change, it takes time. In consideration of this and walking through the school, it is amazing to see the transformation that has happened. We now have a library, two computer labs (although I am still missing some hardware and software), a science lab, a waiting room, a conference room, and most of the classrooms are set up (in addition to my office). None of this could have happened without the generous support from people, ranging from donations of time (community service) to material donations. Currently, the school is the only one in the East Los Angeles region to have two computer labs and a science lab. The school was in shambles, but now it is almost ready for life [to return to it "like the Phoenix!".

> Speaking of life, my school numbers are continuing to climb as well. I have doubled my enrollment since July 4 (when I took over) and I still have two more weeks to go before school starts. We had our first event yesterday, which was a uniform sale for the students—it was also the first time the parents and students have been able to tour the campus since the changes have occurred. I had one parent begin to cry after I had showed her around, and she said that the school is now amazing and she wishes she could come back to school as a student. That was the kind of encounter that makes my profession unbelievable. With God's guidance, I feel like I am truly making a difference in others' lives.
>
> As C.S. Lewis once stated, "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither." In conclusion of my first month as Principal, I intend to continue aiming at heaven. (Marasco, 2011)

Throughout that first year, I continued to "aim at heaven," especially regarding the school's facility so that it would be welcoming to all, even to those who didn't attend our school. By the end of the year we had accomplished much, including securing a very generous foundation to paint the exterior of the building. The foundation erected a wrought iron fence to replace the rusted chain-link fence; they added security cameras; they removed the bars on the windows; and together we had completely changed the physical appearance of the school. At the same time that this was happening, I drew up a proposal for a conversion of our dilapidated auditorium into a sports center, and on June 23, 2012, I wrote:

> Ever since we began this journey at [MAS] one year ago, we have always dreamt big whether we were talking about potential growth in our school or structural changes. This

week, it is now official that one of our biggest dreams will become a reality! Next week, we will begin conversion of our current auditorium into an Activity Center. The [MAS] Activity Center will have a full basketball court, two volleyball courts, and theatre capabilities—the only of its size and kind! We are so very excited about what this means for our school, in addition to our neighborhood, and the whole Archdiocese.

There are several reasons why the Activity Center was chosen, not only because it would greatly enhance the marketability of the school, but because it would also increase the morale and provide safe and more secure extra-curricular activities for our current student body. The main reasons are outlined below:

1. Community Need. Currently the schools in the local CYO league have to find other gyms to play their games and have been using [Bird] Recreational Center. This center and others have been charging each school $120 a sport, in addition to the general CYO fees, solely to use their facility. By eliminating this expense and making our Activity Center available for games, many more schools will be able to participate in CYO sports, whereas formerly, they had to cancel their season due to cost associated with other venues.
2. Marketing. An Activity Center on campus will attract many more students from the neighboring areas and can truly raise our enrollment numbers even more. It is an attractive asset to a school.
3. Importance of Extra-curricular Activities. Within schools, especially Catholic schools, extra-curricular activities provide the "fun" to the students' overall experiences. Just because these students are in a low income, "inner-city" area, does

not mean that they should have less access to what students have in other areas—if anything they should have more. These activities keep the students out of trouble, teach them life lessons, and give them a solid foundation for their futures.

4. Safety. An Activity Center on grounds allows the school to control who enters and exits, unlike the parks that have been typically used. The children are protected from possible predators and gang activity that are present elsewhere. Also, there is an existing parking lot on the school grounds that will readily be used.
5. Legacy. [MAS] has a rich history of success in sports and academics. By having an Activity Center, it allows us to continue this legacy.

In summary, by converting the current auditorium into an Activity Center, it is going to truly enhance the lives of the students of [MAS], and is supported by all those who are part of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. It is a central location that has been and will continue to be used for meetings. And with this change, it will be able to host CYO games, host CYO tournaments, and provide a whole community with the hope and pride that they deserve to have in their Catholic school.

This week, the greatest lesson that we have learned is to always dream big. With God, all things are possible, no matter how big or small! In our case, we are so thankful and feel so blessed for all that we have been given. [MAS] has been around for 100 years, and this is only the beginning. As we like to say, "the secret is out"—[MAS] is the place to be! (Marasco, 2012)

MAS, by the end of that first year, had become "the place to be," but it had also become the place for the community—it was a complete transformation. I had a vision for the physical plant

and knew from the knowledge I possessed about budgets, that we did not have the money to accomplish that vision, yet I was able to seek out those who were able to help us achieve our goals. Unlike a transactional leader where I would have sought donors to increase each person's salary, instead I acted as Bass' (1985) transformational leader, where I kept the group focused on our vision for what was best for the entire organization—updating and upgrading our physical plant so that others would come.

As I am sitting on the grass thinking about MAS and all the people who did come to the school, my neck begins to cramp from gazing up at the birds in the sky. I slowly move my head to the left and to the right, loosening up the muscles that go into my shoulders and my back. Looking back up at the birds in the sky, there is a group of seven that are flying in a "V" formation. I wonder where are they going? I watch the leader fly seemingly alone with outstretched wings, putting in just as much work as the other birds, and I realize my journey as a leader was not so different from that bird—you may seem alone, but you never are, as everyone is flying in formation with you.

Finance, Enrollment, and Staffing

It was a very early morning in July, and I was the first to arrive at MAS—beating Marina in our game of who can get to the school earlier. I am still not sure why we called it "winning," when neither of us wanted to be in the eerie school building alone, especially since the entire community believed Sr. Mary, a nun who died in the school, haunted the building at odd hours. This one morning, since I "won," it was my job to open up the large metal gate that was painted green to hide the rust, so that we could park in the parking lot that is just past the gate. I also had to unlock the front door to the school building, along with the door to our offices. As I was

completely alone, putting my stuff away and getting ready for the day, I heard someone yell "*buenos dias*," which is good morning in Spanish, in the hallway. A bit of me was afraid to see who it was, since I was there by myself, a 25-year-old young woman, in the heart of East LA.

"*Buenos dias!"* This time it was much louder and closer to my office. It took every ounce of courage I had to walk to the hallway. Standing before me was an old woman, I could not tell her exact age, as the dark wrinkles on her tan face seemed to be like rings on a tree's trunk. She had a soft expression, apprehensive maybe, as she seemed to be analyzing me as I analyzed her. Her short, dark brown hair with grey streaks made a harsh contrast with her light pink dress with roses on it, which looked as though it had been worn for years with stains marking the front mid-section. She was maybe in her mid-to-late 60s, as she held tight in her right hand a folded piece of paper. I said to her in my best Spanish, "*yo hablo poquito espanol*"—making me think of Mr. Ferguson, my high school Spanish teacher, who would have been so proud.

She looked at me closely, with her dark brown eyes, and she smiled, showing two yellow caps on her front two teeth. "It's okay," she said. "I speak English too." Thank God, I thought to myself, as I introduced who I was, and that I would be serving as the new principal at the school. I asked how could I help her. She told me, still holding her piece of paper, "I know who you are. I have heard about what you are trying to do here and that you are trying to make Catholic school for everyone. It's a very small community," she said with a smile, "word travels very fast." I looked at her, not sure how to respond, especially since I had only been at the school for a few weeks officially and a couple months before that unofficially, working with the current families. I thanked her and invited her into my office so that we could sit down and talk.

In my office, she seemed hesitant, she looked down at the piece of paper, which she was still gripping with all her might, and she asked me if it was possible for her to send her grandchildren to our school. I sat back in my chair, a little more comfortable, knowing exactly why she was here, and told her we had room in every grade, proceeding through our standard registration process that I had learned from my husband. It turned out though that it was far from "standard," as were most students that I have registered, which woke me up to the community that I was being called to serve.

The reason she came to the school, she explained, instead of her grandchildren's parents, is because the parents were both incarcerated for gang-related violence, and she had full custody of their four children—a first grader, a fourth grader, a sixth grader, and an eighth grader. She did not want them in the public schools because she told me that the schools in the area were just "gang breeding grounds," where if a child showed promise, the gangs would try to recruit them, despite their age. She had lost her son to gangs, and now her daughter was in prison due to gangs, and she did not want to see the same happen to her grandchildren. I looked at her, as tears were rolling down her face as she was telling me her story, and her family's story. She showed me the piece of paper in her hand and it was her tax form, showing that she made only about $1,000 per month. For four children, I quickly did the math in my head, and her tuition was supposed to be $925 per month for the 10-month payments, not including the fees and added expenses that would come up during the year. At that point, I had a choice: I could tell her that I was sorry and that she could not send them to our school, even though we were a Catholic school, because she could not afford it; or, I could find a way to make it work. Looking at her, as she stared at me with pleading eyes, I made one of the most important decisions that shaped

my career—I asked her to tell me, honestly, how much she could afford. She told me $100 per month, which I agreed to, and she began to cry.

Since May 5, 2011, the day I accepted the job as principal at MAS, finance, enrollment, and staffing were on the forefront of my mind. I did my homework on the local demographics, learning that the median household income was nearly $18,000, where most households had multiple children—and our tuition was marked at $3,300 per child. I researched the various governance models and financial models of Catholic schools, as I relied on my husband to teach me about the basics of Catholic school finance in general. I needed to know what we had to pay, why we had to pay it, and how that would impact the students. But also, I wanted to know what innovative models were out there, and what had worked in inner city schools. To my dismay, there was not much research on the topic, and not only that, there was not a financial model that was proven to work and in existence for inner city Catholic schools. Instead of relying on something that was proven to work, I was forced to try something new—something innovative—something that could help other schools beyond just our school. Lee's words from my first meeting with her rung true in my mind, as she recounted the conversation in her interview:

> I said to you, would you consider this kind of school? And I was very upfront and I told you what our problems were. And that we were going to have to look at a very different financial model because by then I had pretty much done in my head the financial model that we would need to be in—it was a very simple financial model: we see what we have, see what they can pay, and then see who we can buy. I knew I could get enough money to pay for the principal. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

Those words, "we see what we have, see what they can pay, and then see who we can buy," shaped my vision for MAS, as I began planning out how I was going to create financial stability in a system that had proven to be unstable and not viable for inner city environments. Breaking the statement into three parts, I had to see: "what we have" in regards to enrollment and recruiting; "what they can pay" in regards to income on the finance side; and "who we could buy" in regards to expenses for staffing. Although these statements may seem to be an obvious approach to staffing and finance, it was a completely revolutionary idea in the Catholic school world—an idea that had not been done for centuries. These three statements, after review and research, seemed to be a logical approach to solving the problem of financing inner city schools that survive solely on tuition and fees from families that are below poverty line. The statements brought finance, enrollment, and staffing together as a major challenge that I needed to attack, even before I officially took over.

Immediately after my meeting with Lee, I went home and began writing my plan. I would stay up for hours each night reading various parts of my plan to my husband, and asking for his advice while adding parts here and there. On April 15, 2011, I completed my 19 page paper with seven chapters, including: a minimum resource portrait; school scheduling and staffing; the classroom structure, as well as the school structure; the ideal resources I wanted; how we would retain Catholic identity; how we would "sell" multi-age schooling to the community; and a complete five-year plan including budgets and enrollment targets for each of the five years. My plan read like a manual, where I took Lee's words to heart, as I was hoping our experiences at this one school could help other schools in similar situations. The process of

writing the plan and Lee's original statement focused what I did, how I acted, and what tools I sought, as I was structuring how to attack these very difficult tasks.

The LITE Model as I named it, is the model that I devised in my plan and is one that combined the three components of community collaboration, reversed-financial structure and multi-age education. The written plan proposed that we would have only three teachers for three classrooms, myself as principal, and one aide, who would also operate as a secretary and translator. The students would be grouped in kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade, and sixth through eighth grade, where the last two groups would rotate to the latter two teachers who were specialized teachers—one would teach science and math, and the other would teach English and social studies. The goal was to make the school operate more like a high school, where students would rotate classrooms, since that is what I knew considering my background as a high school teacher. I wanted to have clubs, sports, and events that would make the students want to come to school, and feel safe in our environment. According to Dr. Baxter, in his interview, he spoke about my original written plan as he stated:

> [The Archdiocese and I] were very, very impressed with when you put that plan together, kinda like the one room school-house kind of model with the three classrooms. … I definitely went through it [Laughing hard]. I have shared it with other people across the country actually, including superintendents with rural schools

Me: Really?

Dr. Baxter: Because they kind of look at it from a rural school perspective and it's a similar issue: they can't have the population to fill up a 300 kid school. They are

> only going to max out at 90 kids or 100 kids because it is so rural. And yet that model can be something that can work it back to place and so, that's one of the things that we have actually talked about….One of the things that has really hit me, that across the country, is that I think inner city schools, because of low-income families who cannot afford tuition and rural schools, where you just don't have the numbers of kids, have very similar challenges of low enrollment—but enthusiastic enrollment is present, right? Inner city parents want their kid in a Catholic school, even if only 100 kids can be there, they want them there. So if you can create a model that creates financial viability, that's a wonderful thing because you are providing that service to the kids. Same thing in a rural school, those parents really truly want a Catholic school for their kids, but they are never going to hit 300 kids, so you have to create a finance mechanism that creates a quality program—so there are very similar challenges there. (Baxter, January 21, 2014)

In consideration to MAS specifically and the challenges presented, I knew I had a plan, and more importantly, I believed in that plan. I had a sense of ownership with the model and I also knew looking at the school's enrollment numbers and comparing these numbers with the local public schools, charter schools, and other private schools, I knew there were children in the area—lots of children actually, but MAS had not attracted them in quite some time.

Initial parent meeting. It was hot, extremely hot, my palms were sweating profusely, my stomach felt as though there was a giant knot in it, and my throat was dry. I had this fear of public speaking for as long as I could remember, even trembling before back to school nights

when I was a teacher. I stood in the office, finally completely alone, and sat down in the chair behind the desk. I had prepared and was ready; I even brought my own translator, Dora, so worst case scenario, I thought to myself, if I passed out, she could continue without me since she had a copy of my speech. I told myself, trying to calm myself down: I had practiced this speech hundreds of times and could do it in my sleep; I did not know any of these people; I could picture them naked, well on second thought, that would be too awkward; and finally I gave up. I gave up trying to convince myself to do this, as I slumped in the chair and put my head on the desk. I was certainly dressed for the occasion in my brand new black pin-striped pants suit with a royal blue button down shirt that was freshly pressed. On my lapel, I had a red apple with a cross pin that I had received from one of my high school students when she heard that I had accepted the job as principal at MAS. Tonight was the night, May 11, 2011, that I was going to meet the parents for the first time and present to them my plan for MAS, as well as answer any questions they might have.

As I laid my head on the desk, feeling the room was spinning as sweat dripped off of my head, I decided to talk to God. It was a simple conversation really, where I prayed for wisdom and guidance, as I was to embark on this new journey. I said the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and any other Catholic prayer that I could remember—ending with the poem from Teresa of Avila. It went:

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

compassion on this world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours. (Marasco, 2011)

Although I was young, and was being charged with an enormous task—I found confidence and trust in my mission and new vocation. God was listening as far as I was concerned, as I asked Him, begged Him really, to give me the courage to do what was asked of me, and lead me on this path. I felt excited and ready to go as Lee walked into my office to lead me to the auditorium for the meeting.

All the seats in the old auditorium were full, as my husband and Lee stood on the side of the room in support. I walked into the middle of the room, with each person watching my every move, and Dora following right behind me. I stood next to the rickety podium, with the microphone attached to the top, and the blank white screen behind me, which was ready for my presentation. Looking into the audience, the people resembled my step-dad's family, with the dark features, dark hair, and various types of clothing. I could see a great disparity between those who had and those who had not—some people were dressed very well, and others were dressed as though they had worn the same clothes for months. For some reason, I felt a sense of

calm come across me, as I looked into the audience and smiled. This was it—I was going to give it my all. I began in Spanish:

Buenas noches MAS padres! Mi nombre es señora Corena Marasco, y es un honor para mí estar aquí esta noche, y para ser su directora para el próximo año. Entiendo mucho español, pero mi hablar todavía está mejorando, así que tendré esta presentación traducido para usted por la señora Dora Morales. Estamos haciendo esto porque los temas son muy importantes. Gracias por su comprensión.

[Repeated in English] Good evening MAS parents! My name is Mrs. Corena Marasco, and it is my honor to be here tonight, and to be your Principal for next year. I understand a lot of Spanish but my speaking is still improving so I will have this presentation translated for you by Ms. Dora Morales. We are doing this because the topics are very important. Thank you for your understanding.

For a little about myself, I grew up in Los Angeles, and attended Saint Finbar School followed by Notre Dame High School. I have played various sports throughout my life and went to college on a full softball and academic scholarship. My family is very important to me, especially since I have two younger sisters with whom I am very involved. I am married for the last 2 1/2 years to Michael, who is also a Catholic School Principal. We are both very involved with our church. I am amazed with the rich tradition here, especially since the school has been around for 97 years. It is a very exciting time and it is my pleasure to introduce the new innovative school model that we will be using next year.

First of all, what is a multi-age school? I have heard people say different things about it, but the model that we are using is somewhat similar to what exists now. The main difference is the structure and the addition of a lot of technology that will help the students for high school and for the future. I came from Ramona Convent down the street, so I know what is used in high school and what can help the students to become successful. This model does just that.

The most important component is that we are a Catholic school! We will have weekly mass, prayer, and we will have religious studies throughout everyday. We will also increase family involvement with school by having an "Open Door Policy," where parents can come and speak with me whenever they wish. And of course, we will prepare the students for the sacraments, and will demonstrate a welcoming environment for all people.

In regard to the structure of the school, since we currently have a low student population, we have enough money for three teachers and the principal. The goal is to attract more students so that we can hire more teachers. The groups will be divided based [upon] grade level and the number of students. This is truly an innovative program!

For the daily schedule, we will begin with Prayer and Announcements, followed by Period one, Recess, Period two, Lunch, Reading Time, an Elective Period, and then Dismissal. Yes, I did say an elective period, followed by art, dance, P.E., yearbook, as well as some other options. By using this structure, the students will understand what is asked of them and will have various teachers helping them through the process. This is similar to what most high schools and elementary schools do and it is very effective.

For the weekly schedule, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday will follow the above schedule. Wednesday will be the "Enrichment Period Day," where the students may have an assembly, guest-speaker, games, or something else of the like. This Enrichment Period Day will replace the elective period and will be a school-wide event. Friday will be a 1:30 p.m. dismissal so the teachers and I can have our weekly meeting.

Most of you are probably thinking that with three teachers, this seems crazy, but with structure, faith, and hard work, it will happen. Looking at the classroom diagram, the students will sit in the instructions area of the class and the teacher can tell them what will be happening for the day. Within each classroom, there will be three defined stations for activities that include: hands-on activities; technology programs; and classroom instruction by the teacher. The students will rotate through these stations throughout the day. The specifics will be left to the teacher, but technology will be essential, especially the Smartboard-type technology that we will get for the classroom.

Speaking of technology, we will get the E-Beams, which is the Smartboard technology I spoke of, with projectors; iPads or laptops for students use each day; updated computer lab with access all day; software that can be used anywhere, such as Gradelink for checking grades online, a new website, an online calendar, and even updated textbooks with internet versions. All of these upgrades will be obtained through grants that we receive, so the cost will not be directed at you alone.

For community outreach, I plan on meeting with all families in school and CCD program, and I will be starting an incentive plan called Lion Friends. If a family brings in a new family that stays for atleast a year, I will give the family who brought them in

$250 at the end of the school year. I will also be doing negotiated tuition based off of need and for those who would otherwise not be able to pay the full tuition. I will be changing the school uniforms by adding some new items, but I will allow the current uniforms to be worn as well. Currently, we have a Marketing and Outreach team, but the what is important is that everyone joins the "Spread the Word Campaign" and gets the news out to the community that [MAS] is the place to be! I also want to form a School Board and PTO that are active in the school life.

As you can see on the board, there is a need for new programs. These programs would include: more CYO athletics; an After School Program with a Homework Club; Student Council; Academic Decathlon; Liturgical Choir and Arts; Community Service Program; and any other programs that the community may request.

Now, why should you send or continue to keep your child in Catholic schools? Well, if not for the education and Catholic faith aspects, then you should consider the statistics as well. Currently, 65% of students in public schools drop out of school before they graduate, while 99% of Catholic school students graduate. We need to keep Catholic education vibrant and alive!

To some this may seem like a hard task, but it really is not with this new model and outreach. Remember, the more students, the more teachers we can get. We can do this! By working together, what appears to be a dream will become reality! I may have a vision, but without you, the vision cannot be realized. We need each and every one of you!

> Thank you for your time. This concludes my presentation, but please sign up for a meeting time with me in the back. I have a paper there with time slots and I'd love to speak with each family. Thank you again! (Marasco, 2011)

As a transformational leader, this was my first interaction with the community I was called to lead—they listened to me, asked questions, and I answered the questions to the best of my ability. I opened with showing the community and their culture respect, by at least attempting to communicate in their language, and showed that I was willing to step into their world if I was accepted—this in turn, earned me respect as well, as I articulated my overall vision which clearly included the community and their input. According to Quinn (2010), community collaboration is necessary for building a school environment, and thankfully as a new principal, it was also a skill that I intrinsically possessed.

As a new principal that first year, no one knew more about the first meeting with the parents than Lee Moran, especially since she was present for the entire speech. In our interview, as I looked at Lee sitting across from me, in the very office where she had served as principal her first time some 25 years back, I wondered how she felt in that hot auditorium in 2011, and what she really thought about my presentation. So I asked her:

> What about me as a leader, what did I do in that meeting that was important?
>
> Lee: You were young, I mean, well, uh, young is probably the wrong word. You were vibrant, energetic. You were energetic and you came across with a great deal of positive attitude with an open mind to change—that there was going to be technology in the school; that we were going to become active in sports. You had an interest in sports and technology, and you had an interest in the community.

> You came across as excited to be there and really looking forward to working with them. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

I was extremely excited to work with the community—I could not stay away from the school. I would do my work at Ramona Convent and would come after work to MAS to meet with families and talk with them about what they wanted from their school. As a leader, I knew that if the children were happy then the parents would be happy as well—so I started with the students.

Classroom visits and parent meetings. My first classroom visit with the students was in a room that felt as though the temperature was a million degrees, and there were about 15 students sitting down in their old desks that seemed to me was reminiscent of something that belonged in the 1940s. The students were dressed in their gray pants and white collared shirts, as I could see the perspiration dripping off of their foreheads. Facing me, the students were completely silent as I felt their eyes sizing me up and trying to figure me out. I sat down in their teacher's chair and explained who I was, giving them a little background on myself, especially my sports background—as their faces lit up when I spoke of my "likes" such as basketball, video games, and softball. My job that day was for me to get to know them, and for them to get to know me—and most importantly, I wanted to know what their likes were. Similar to the previous classes, since this was my last one to meet, I was honest with them about what I was being asked to do, as far as reshaping the school, and I asked for their help. I could see the excitement in their eyes, as for some of them, this was the first time that they were being asked to help by an adult. I told them that MAS was not my school, it was our school, and I wanted them to be a part of the process.

I asked them to get out a piece of paper and a pen, and they quickly did as I had asked without making a single noise, other than the shuffling of papers and unzipping of backpacks. Within a minute, they were ready and staring at me intently. I asked them to write down the five top things they wanted to see changed in their school and that they needed to be reasonable with an explanation of why. I also explained to them that I would tally them all up, list the top five for the whole school, and would make sure the items were in effect before school started in August of 2011 (See Appendix F for the complete template). They began writing when I told them to, and I could see the intensity and thought that they were putting into whatever was in front of them. After about 15 minutes, I collected all of the papers, answered a few questions about myself, and walked out of the room. Since it was towards the end of the school year, and my predecessor was still in her role as principal, I wanted to give her as much space as possible, and so I created an office across the schoolyard in the old convent. I had a makeshift office in the old library, and made my way over to it from the classroom, as I was excited to see what the students had written. I sat alone at the long conference style table, stacked all of the papers next to me, and began to do what I had promised; I tallied each and every answer, and read what the students had to say.

By the time I finished reading the last page, and put my last tally-mark on my count sheet, I had tears rolling down my face. Their requests, the top five things that they wanted in their school, said so much about what they had experienced and some of the reasons the school had dropped in enrollment. I made a promise to myself that day that MAS would be a place that the students would see as safe and fun, first and foremost—once that occurred, I knew the rest of the pieces would fall into place.

As far as the students' list, the five things that I had to implement were: (1) to change the uniforms since they had said they were not changed in practically forever; (2) get a new logo that had a lion on it since they were the lions and were proud of it; (3) take them on field trips outside of East LA, since their previous field trips had only been around the city and some students had never been out of the city's boundaries; (4) bring technology into the school since the computers were old and they only had about six that worked; and (5) buy new textbooks because their textbooks were really old and falling apart. This list served as a list of to-dos for me, as well as a starting point for my individual parent meetings with the current families that were scheduled for May and June.

For weeks, I continued to do two jobs, as I would go from Ramona Convent to MAS and visa versa, to have face-to-face time with every family that was at MAS. Each of these meetings ranged from 30 minutes to one hour, as I would talk to the family about my to-do list from the students and ask for their input, as the families would vent their frustrations, ask me questions, begin the registration process if they were ready, or simply discuss what they wanted to see in the school. For some, the changes were too much and the uncertainty that had existed for so many years had broken them, and they needed to move on to another school. In those cases, I would listen to them, give my apologies for what they had gone through, and cross them off of my list. By July 5, 2011, my first official start date, I had met with every family and knew I had exactly 35 students enrolled. So, there was a plan, there were some students enrolled, and now we needed some staff.

Staffing. When I officially started, Marina Najera and myself were the only official employees of MAS, and we were entirely new to the location and the surrounding environment.

Per Lee's instructions, all the other teachers and staff from the previous school year had to reapply for their positions if they wanted to stay. According to Lee, when I asked her about this during her interview, she exclaimed:

> I did not have a contract to give them! They knew, because I was very clear that the school was going to work: we may have one teacher, two teachers, or three teachers. [I told them] you are welcome to stay, if you want.
>
> Me: So, everyone was gone basically?
>
> Lee: No, [Jessica] stayed, [Mike] stayed.
>
> Me: Oh, no no no, I remember, you told me to go through and pick the ones that I wanted.
>
> Lee: Well, yes, I was not walking this journey, but you were. I am not just putting the nameplates on the board and throwing darts at it. I mean, they had to work for you. And I told them that—they are not working for me, they are working for [you]. Now, I am trying to think about who we had. We had a couple of people who did not have degrees. And everyone else did not want to come. One teacher lived who knows where, and was pregnant. I mean, one by one, they went elsewhere because it was too risky for them. They did not want to work for you; you were too much energy for most of them. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

Lee's observations were my reality in building a staff willing to work with me, as we embarked on this journey together. On this journey, we began with two of the previous teachers who were willing to walk with me along our path—people that were willing to try something new and different, with a new and different type of leader of the school.

The two returning teachers were aware and involved with the changes we were seeking to make, but they also brought a sense of stability, history, and continuity to a community that had gone through so much upheaval. I only had to hire one teacher from outside of the community through the standard process, where I posted the vacancy on the Archdiocesan webpage, gathered resumes, interviewed, and selected my final candidate. Through the process, I also selected secondary candidates since I knew our enrollment would be growing, and we would need teachers in the middle of the year to staff the expanding classrooms. Not having any formal training for the hiring process, I relied on my husband to practice my interview techniques, and I approached the process the best I knew how—I found this to be similar to selecting members on an athletic team.

From my athletic mindset, I was not looking just for candidates who looked great on paper, but I needed to speak with them to get a sense of how they would perform on the job, and if they would be a good fit for our "team" at MAS. With this in mind, I made my selections—and the members certainly pulled their own weight through the ups and downs of the year. In my blog post on September 17, 2011, I wrote:

> There is nothing like going to work everyday, being excited for what the day will bring, while having passion for what you do. Each and every member of our staff has this attitude and it can actually be felt as you walk through our campus—the school is just full of life and this transfers to our students!
>
> This past week: on Monday, we had our family bingo night planning meeting for grades 2 and 8; Tuesday was our Back-to-School Meet and Greet; Wednesday, we had our first school-wide retreat; Thursday, we hired our new science teacher; and Friday, we

had our Mexican Independence Day Celebration with ice-cream and churros. Each event that we have at the school seems to be better than the previous, and we are looking to make this year the best that it can possibly be for our students.

From an administrative standpoint, this week was a very important week for the school. Not including the general weekly tasks of the principal, this week we added a new teacher, and re-arranged our teaching "line-up." With our model, we knew that flexibility would be our greatest task, and this week it has been put to the test. Since we added our science teacher, it adds relief to our math/science teacher, but we also needed to switch our K-2 teacher with our English teacher. With that being said, it has been a week of transitions, and with God's grace, we believe this will all work out in the best interest of the school. We are very fortunate that our teachers and staff are true team players, and they are willing to do whatever it takes to make this school, and our students, succeed.

So, as far as the lesson of the week, it would be that of flexibility. Flexibility is key to change, because without it, one would remain rigid as life and ideas pass them by. In the case of [MAS], we welcome this new life and seek any ideas to make us better. (Marasco, 2011)

As a leader, and dealing with a staff for the first time, I had to really focus on what I saw the role of the principal to be, and remain flexible—the role of principal is vast, and the tasks had to be prioritized in order to be effective. According to Collins (2001), to be effective as a leader, or what he would define as a level five leader, my first priority was to find the right people for

MAS, and make sure they were in the right places—I essentially needed to find the right people for the "bus," and make sure that they were in the right "seats" as we embarked on our journey.

Once we began our journey, and all of the hiring was completed, I needed to adjust my focus on what I envisioned the primary role of the principal to entail. During my interview with Lee, she shed light on the topic as she stated:

> The most important role of the principal is the teacher of teachers. It's not that you are the teacher of teachers, but it is that you are empowering your staff because they are the ones delivering your product. And you can sit here and create, as you did, all day long, all different kinds of scenarios, but you never executed any of them with the kids, or very few with the kids, or you might have done some with the kids to model it—but the day-to-day instruction with the kids is done by your staff. It's not done by you. What's done by you is giving them the joy, the freedom, and the support so that they can do their job… [Laughs] And the resources. So as an administrator, you are providing the resources; and for [MAS], the very first year, you were providing resources on two levels—the biggest level was the customer. Teachers don't have any problems teaching when there is nobody in the room [Laughs]. So you are filling it in two ways: so here are your customers, and here are the resources that your customers need. Now the resources that they needed—you had some of that already in school; you had more of that than kids. So you had to get the kids and then match the resources. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

Whether it was acting on instinct, intention, or prayer, I knew as a leader in my beginning days, I needed to gather resources. Once I had the resources for the school, along with knowing the

starting enrollment and staffing for the starting enrollment number, I knew we needed more students to keep the momentum moving in the right direction. I also knew that more students meant more resources.

Marketing enrollment blitz. From the moment I signed my contract with Lee that afternoon in May, I knew that building the enrollment was going to have to be my major task for the entire first year at MAS in order for the school to survive. I knew we needed to have a program to attract new students to our small Catholic school. Our school needed to be different and it needed to stand out in a community that had seen Catholic schooling as only for the elite. This elite status was a misconception that hurt Catholic education across the Archdiocese and at MAS specifically, and that misconception needed to be changed or corrected as soon as possible. Therefore, I devised a plan where I needed to be present to the people and to the community; I needed to meet the community wherever they were, and I needed to be ready to answer questions and tell them about our school. The first step was to use our parents in a "Spread the Word Campaign," build a website, and introduce various incentive programs.

Incentive programs. Standing in front of the parents in that hot auditorium in May of 2011, I spoke to them about our need for the parents to spread the word to their friends and family—we needed more students in the school, and we needed to be a team to get the job done together. Not only that, but I also told the parents that if they recommended a family and the family stayed for a year, the parent who recommended the family would receive $250 in cash for the referral. In business terms, I knew this tactic as a referral fee, which I had seen my mom do a number of times when she sold real estate to new clients. At MAS, when I had the various individual meetings with the parents, they seemed to be enthused by the concept, and it was

mildly successful as we received new students, but it was not as successful as I was hoping and needing. As a Catholic school, we operated solely on the revenue that we were able to gather from the school families in the form of tuition, where a majority of the families were on negotiated tuition, and were paying a fraction of the full tuition cost. I knew that our income was low and our costs were continuing to grow yet I wanted to make sure that MAS was a place where any child would want to attend. Kruska (2008) referred to the climate of Catholic school finance in current days where students were leaving the Catholic schools due to lower achievement; I wanted to make sure this was not the case at MAS. We wanted students to come, and we needed them to come in order to achieve our goals, so we began attracting them to our school through events and programs.

One such event that we held to attract students to MAS was our Open House. I will never forget that day as I remember standing in front of my office on August 3, 2011. I decided to walk the hallway as I waited for the time to pass for our start of our first Open House. Our teachers had worked hard to set up their classrooms, although there were only three classrooms, and each of the remaining rooms, seven altogether in our school building, had a purpose. I believed that when walking through the halls, each room needed a function so that the school did not appear to be empty—we had a science lab, two computer labs, a library, a game room for students who earned time to play for positive reinforcement, a staff room, and a conference room. As I was walking the halls, Marina came out of her office and told me it was time for us to open the doors. We had our new uniform company in the conference room so that current families could buy their new uniforms with the new school logo, and I could introduce the new school website in our new computer labs. As far as our students' list of changes, I wanted to

show the students that I had already started what I had promised them earlier, and I was addressing their needs and wants. Before we opened up the school, I gathered my small staff and we held hands and prayed in the middle of the hallway. We asked for God's continued blessings and guidance as we embarked on this journey.

When I walked with Marina over to the entrance so that we could unlock the front door, we were amazed to see parents already lined up with their children—they were so excited to see what we had done with the inside of the building since the community had been buzzing about all of the u-haul trips we made, the students who had come to help, and what was inside of the school. That night, I personally toured the families, opening each door and showing them what each room was—they were able to see first hand what we had to offer and could spread the word to their friends. As I was walking one mother, I opened the computer lab and she just broke down crying. She told me that she was an alumna and her daughter was going to be in eighth grade, and she had never seen anything like what we had. She told me that she wished she could come back again as a student and experience everything that we were giving our students so that she could have had a better life. Altogether, that night, we registered some new families from our spread the word campaign, but again, not enough. I watched the students and how happy they were and excited to be in their school—although it was not new, it had new things in it. The students begged their parents for different clothing items from our new uniform company, and I watched as the parents would give in and say "yes"—even though I knew very well that most did not have the extra money for the items. This scene sparked my imagination and led to the new incentive program, where instead of the parents getting new students to come to our school, I wanted our kids to get new students to come to our school.

The Lion Incentive Program was unveiled a few days later, a program where students would refer other families and if the family stayed for a year, the student would have a choice from three items: an X-box 360, a Nintendo 3DS, or a netbook computer. The student had to choose the netbook computer first, because I just had WiFi installed throughout the school and knew the following year we would go one-to-one where every child would need to bring in a netbook. This was also an incentive for the parents so that they would not have to buy the netbook for the following year. The Lion Incentive Program created a frenzy, where students were coming to my office wanting more and more flyers for our school. One of our students would go everyday to the parks and pass out a stack of flyers, and she quickly brought in four new families herself.

By the start of school, we had 83 students enrolled! That first week was a week that I will never forget as I wrote in my blog:

> This was by far the best week yet of being principal—it was the first week of school, beginning with our first day with students on Tuesday! The energy was amazing on the part of the community, which included the teachers, students and the parents. No one really knew what to expect with Tuesday, but once the nerves passed, we settled into a wonderful program.
>
> With the increasing enrollment throughout the week, we needed to make some adjustments in the class divisions, but our teachers and the students handled the transition with an ease that can't even be explained. We ended the week with 83 children enrolled, and are continuing to receive phone calls for registration appointments with new students as the word spreads. We have four appointments already set for next week! It is an

amazing blessing to witness as this school is truly coming back to life in front of our eyes. The students are eager to learn, and I have never actually witnessed this, but they do not want to go home at the end of the day—it's not because of recess or being with their friends, but they have a thirst for knowledge and our program that is unimaginable. We also had football try-outs this Wednesday through Friday and after hearing that only eight showed up total (for both A & B teams), we decided something needed to be done. So, on Thursday, I visited the classrooms and told the students that as an incentive to play sports, they would receive free dress every Friday as long as they wore their Lion sports jersey. On Friday, we ended up with 16 students-athletes—now we will see what happens with cheer and volleyball try-outs next week!

Today was also our Welcome Back BBQ, and you could feel the spirit in the air. They had said that no one would come since they never had something like this before, but we had almost every one of our 60 families show up. It was an AMAZING event that would have been nothing without Marina's hard work in organizing the event. We had a jumper, free food, and beautiful decorations in our hall. Every family came up to us and thanked us for what we are doing at the school. It is truly an amazing community that is finally beginning to believe in themselves. God has been great to us and I thank him everyday for bringing me to [MAS].

As the cliché goes, "seeing is believing," and in the case of [MAS], you cannot help but believe. (Marasco, 2011)

Inspired by the Welcome Back BBQ and the school community's outpouring of support, I was inspired and motivated to do as much as I could on my part as the leader to get to know the

greater community. I kept hearing over and over, from new families that were registering that they did not know a school existed at our location, even though it had been servicing the community for nearly 100 years. So I decided to solve the problem: instead of the community coming to us only, I was going to go to the community as the next step in my plan.

Door-to-door. Standing in front of the door, I look to my right and I have first grade Adriana next to me, in her perfectly ironed white blouse with her royal blue tie, and her plaid skirt, white socks, and light-up tennis shoes. She had a huge smile on her face because she was walking with me to every house in a half-mile radius around the school, and was accompanied by an eighth grader, Steven, who was on my left. Steven is wearing his blue Dickey pants with the red tag colored black with a sharpie (one of my pet peeves that I make the students do), white button-down collared shirt and his royal blue tie—making (or earning) his perfect mass attire marks (a grade that Catholic students typically receive for dressing in a special uniform that is more professional in appearance for school Mass) as well.

I recruited both Adriana and Steven a few days earlier by asking their parents if it was okay if they went with me on my door-to-door campaign as I was hoping to meet the community. Steven was a little more reluctant than Adriana, yet I told him, he would be my bodyguard and translator for the trip, which made him happy. Behind us, Steven's mom and Adriana's dad were walking with us, although they were not going to each door—standing to watch us and be our support. As I turned around from them, I lifted my hand in a fist and knocked on our first door. As I heard the loud sound, we stood and waited, as I pounded again on the door. A few seconds later a small elderly woman answered, "Buenos dias." Steven looked at her with a soft smile and had a conversation in Spanish entirely, as I only picked up on the word "Directora" as he pointed

to me, which I smiled at the woman as I assumed he was introducing me to her as the new principal at MAS. He handed her a flyer, one of the hundreds we had made before we left the school, as she smiled and closed the door. Our first encounter was complete and I had no idea what was said. The remaining 40-plus houses we visited, some that answered, some that did not, and others that were downright strange. Overall, it was a great start for the community to meet me personally and know that MAS was right down the street and ready and able to accept their children if they wanted a Catholic education for them.

The experience of going door-to-door through the community was one that I will never forget, as it was a real eye opener for me. I was able to see the community members, where they lived, what state their homes were in, and I had a first hand encounter with the abject poverty that I could not believe was present in our country. I knew that I was working in the inner city, but walking the streets and meeting people, I actually felt it for the first time—although it was only about 15 miles from where I grew up, it was worlds apart. I grew up not knowing about East Los Angeles, not knowing anyone from the area, and not knowing that people lived in homes that were held together by duct tape and cardboard. I am not saying every home was like this, but there were certainly more than a few, and yet the people were so kind and willing to meet me—even inviting us into their homes to sit and talk.

From the door-to-door experience and the positive response we received, I wanted to immerse myself more fully into the community and again, meet the members where they were, instead of them coming to us. So, I decided to go to a place that I knew best, and a place that I knew would be a place for families with children—I decided to go to the local parks.

Park visits. Pulling into the parking lot, I finally felt some familiarity with the community as I sat in my car and took in the sight of the park. It looked like any other park that I had been to in my life with huge trees providing shade, large patches of grass, two softball fields, fenced-in tennis courts, outdoor basketball courts, a playground with swings, and a large park and recreation building, where I was assuming the indoor courts and the pool were. It was a large space with the 60 freeway to the far left, and it was boxed in by three other streets that surrounded it. There were children playing on the swings and in the playground, with people playing basketball on the courts that were directly in front of me. On the softball field, a youth soccer team was stretching, which looked like it was the beginning of their practice. To me, this felt better— an area where I was comfortable, as I shut off the car and grabbed my ball, the school flyers, and basketball shoes from the passenger seat.

This was not the first time that I had come to Salazar Park, but after the last time, I was better prepared and better dressed. Our previous attempt, I wore my dark suit and collared shirt and passed out flyers with Marina alongside me. One of the parents that we were speaking to, pulled us aside, and in a low whisper told us that next time we came to the park, we had to dress differently because we looked like cops and she did not want to see anything bad happen to us. After that experience, and the glares that we received, I vowed to approach the trip differently the next time. So, as I said, this time I was better prepared and better dressed since I was wearing my navy blue Nike basketball shorts, and a bright yellow t-shirt with the MAS logo.

Marina was waiting for me at the bench next to the basketball courts—I did not go anywhere without her since she was my translator and carried my schedule, especially on our trips into the community. I handed her the flyers, put on my basketball shoes, and walked over

to the court to warm up my shot. As I was shooting some hoops, kids came over to me from the playground and asked if they could shoot with me since I had the only other ball that was around. In shooting with the children, I heard about their stories from school to their home lives, as they asked me questions about myself—mainly trying to size me up. I answered their questions, showing that I was not a threat to them, as I told them where I worked and what I did for a living, asking them if they had ever heard of our school. Most of the children were amazed and said that they had never seen a Principal play basketball before and I did not look like a normal Principal. Not knowing what a "normal Principal" meant, I assumed they meant it as a good thing. The children had never heard of our school though, but after telling them about what we offered, they were excited and wanted me to talk to their parents. As each parent came over, I spoke to them about our school, who I was, and handed out a flyer—Marina had her hands full, because she usually had to do most of the translating since most of the parents were more comfortable with Spanish. We always told them, "don't worry about the money, if you want a Catholic school for your children, we will make it work for your budget"—which was a promise that we always tried to keep. I would rather have children in the seats, than an empty classroom that was only filled with the select few who could afford the full tuition. That day, I also went over to the soccer practice which were children about 8 years old, and I talked to their parents as well, telling them about our school and what we were doing.

After that experience, we frequented the parks, continuing to recruit new families and we paid specific attention to practice schedules so that we could be there when children were practicing for various sports teams—with consideration to our mindset, we needed to go to the

community and not wait for them to come to us. It was a huge success as students continued to enroll in our school.

We continued this for a few weeks until there was a drive-by shooting from a local gang on a rival member that took place on the opposite side of the park. The gunman pulled out his gun and began shooting, pop, pop, pop, as everyone at the park froze and hit the floor—four people were shot, and two were killed on the spot. I heard about the shooting the next day from Marina who was in a panic because we had left the park only 10 minutes before the shooting began. The vision of the scene infuriated me, since parks were supposed to be places of peace, and family life according to my own upbringing. The park was a sacred place where children should be able to only think about the game that they are playing and not have to think about constantly looking over their shoulder to avoid danger. Because of this vision, I decided then and there that MAS was going to have attributes of a park, since the community was lacking these necessities—MAS would be a place of safety, family events, games, fun, laughter, and all the good that goes along with childhood. This approach, creating a park-like setting for a school, not to mention my overall recruiting tactics, was something that was very different for the Archdiocese. After the "drive-by" experience and speaking to my husband, we decided the park might not be the best place for Marina and me, two young females, to go to for recruiting.

Charter school lottery visit. With the same vision for recruiting where I wanted to go to the community instead of waiting for them to come to us, we decided to target the local public schools and charters schools in the area—especially the charter schools. The community, although impoverished, was full of children, and since children attended schools already, we went to the schools and passed out flyers on the corners. In one of our attempts, we actually

researched when the local charter school was having their enrollment lottery, and we decided to go. On April 26, 2012, I recounted the experience in my blog stating:

> In life, some days are more significant than others, and for me, this was one of the most significant days that I have experienced. Being a Catholic school Principal, marketing strategies are something that are focused on each and every day as Catholic school's seem to be losing enrollment and that is a reality we are battling. Today, my vice principal, secretary, parish priest, and myself went to [PIP], which is a local charter school because they were having their enrollment lottery. We figured that since many students would be rejected, it would be a great opportunity to market our school and pass out flyers. Plus, a piece of me wanted to see what these famous charter schools were all about because many people talk about charter schools as being a great alternative for a Catholic school. What I witnessed will definitely stay with me forever.
>
> Once we arrived, we struggled to find the entrance to the school, which was situated on a busy street in East LA, not to mention the fact that the building was previously a "Big Lots" store. It was two stories with fresh paint and seemed to stick out like a sore thumb. Going in past the gates, children were playing in the playground on a tall slide and children's bikes that were left out for them to play with. We decided to wander into the lottery to see what that was about as well. The room was large and sterile with white walls and bright lights. Parents were all sitting in chairs starring at a screen and a man in a black tuxedo with a microphone. We were not sure exactly what he was doing until we saw the screen and him press a button that said simply "shuffle." The names in the database were then randomly chosen and within five seconds, 32 names

were shown on the screen. He then spoke into the microphone and said that "the lottery for second grade had finished and all parents from the second grade were to leave the building." Parents and children left crying and some children clutched their parents and grandparents as they left knowing that they had lost. There were also those students who were chosen who were jumping up and down with excitement for being picked. For me, this was amazingly appalling. Here was a school that was claiming to be for the inner-city children and was providing them a foundation for their future, yet they were having the cruelest of occurrences—the lottery of a human child. Each of the students are just another number, and it did not matter their qualifications, grades, area code, but only if they were picked from the magic computer program. It was absolutely traumatizing.

Going further, the students outside were unsupervised and would take the bikes laying around up the two story parking ramp and would come down as fast as they could. These students were probably 4 or 5 years old. We saw six teachers come out and not one told the students to stop. One teacher actually got into her car and came down the ramp without even looking as the kids ran to the sides before they were hit. Two of the teachers came out of the building, walked out of the gate, and began watching the students come down the ramp. One student came down, lost control and crashed, while the teachers were watching. They laughed at the boy and continued walking down the street.

Before tonight, I was not against the charter schools and am still not against all charter schools. We, as Principals, see the various schools as we are all in this together—public, private, Catholic, and charter—and we are seeking to improve the lives of

> children. After tonight though, I am not sure if this is 100% true--especially in regard to the lottery system. Gambling with a child's life and treating them literally like just another number is not okay to do, and the affects are lasting. Seeing the people's faces as they left, you could see the chosen ones were filled with hope in the future and those that were not, had a little piece of them that had died. Like we told the parents leaving the gate, who were consoling their crying children, we are here as another option for you, as we gave them a flyer for our school. (Marasco, personal blog, April 26, 2012)

Communicating to the community that MAS was "another option" for their children's education, was not an easy feat and was one of my major challenges as a first year, first time principal. I approached the problem fiercely and invested the majority of my time and effort into getting students into the school in creative ways. To me, it was like a harsh game of life, where each new student equaled a point in the game and that point provided MAS and the school community a chance to breathe and celebrate.

With the increase in enrollment, we would have to change and adjust sometimes on a daily basis—we would have to assess and reassess our vision and sometimes adjust accordingly. As the transformational leader at MAS, according to Owens and Valesky (2011), I needed to fully understand the culture and climate at MAS, while incorporating change based on the unique needs of our changing school. I would call Lee and ask for her guidance along the way and as each new student came in, sometimes requiring drastic changes to our program.

Sitting in my office for the interview four years later, I asked Lee about those phone calls I made to her and how often I called, as a huge laugh erupted from her body. She stated:

> Two to three times a day [I spoke to you]

Me: For the entire year?

Lee: Uh huh [Laughs]

Me: During breaks?

Lee: Uh huh [Laughs hard]

Me: Weekends?

Lee: Right! And they kind of fell into three categories, and we had three kinds of talks: one was guess what exciting has happened; what should I do about this…; and the third one was, what do you think about this idea? You reshaped and reformed your faculty even though you met with them once a week and did week by week. You reshaped, reformed, remodeled your faculty on a daily basis, at least once per day. "What if I moved so and so to such and such? What if we added one more hour to this one? And, what if we put this one in this one?" Those poor teachers, I swear to God, probably did not know in the morning what they would be doing in the afternoon, because you did not know what they would be doing in the afternoon—somewhere between the two times, you created another scenario that needed, or they might be doing in the afternoon.

I think you were trying to think of ways to make things work, but you did not know what they were supposed to look like. See that's the other piece, and that was the piece that I was most afraid of. And that was I knew that you were clueless about elementary education, clueless, not even on the same planet—because you had no experience. What you knew about elementary, you knew from your own elementary experience. Period.

Now, you had all of the qualities of a great leader. Lets just list. One, you were very optimistic. Two, you did not believe in failure—failure was never an option with you. Three, there is no cat that can be skinned in 55 different ways…

Me: What's that mean?

Lee: It comes from being very bright. Very bright children and very bright adults can think of four or five different ways to accomplish a goal. It comes from thinking out of the box. It's the ability to see that there are many ways to solve a single problem.

Me: Like a problem solver?

Lee: Like a problem solver that has multi-methods. You could go and see that there is a broken line in your sewer and you can say, well it's not backing up the toilet, so no problem, I will just plant flowers over it, which is what we have done with Catholic education for quite a while is that we maintained. Ok, you can have those that sit there and say, I wonder why it broke and they spend their time trying to figure out what 25 different occasions caused it to break, and spend their time making sure it never happens again. And you have those that can sit there and say, this is how we fix it. Now, you have to have, and YOU have the ability to do all of the above, and you need all of the above, because if you just maintain, the problem doesn't go away. If you think of all the ways that could have caused the problem and you plug up those holes, you still haven't fixed the problem, but you have to fix the problem too. And that's the quality, I don't know what

> characteristic to give it; it's a leader that is hell bent to make sure that it all comes out fine in the end. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

I was certainly "hell bent to make sure that it all came out fine in the end" as Lee eloquently stated, and as a first time, first year principal, I utilized the resources available to me, including Lee, my own knowledge base, and our community, to make the school work. I was not afraid of the charter schools in the area that were pulling in students, I was not afraid of attracting the low income community to our Catholic school, and I was not afraid of pretty much anything. As far as I was concerned, there were no excuses and nothing too big to overcome for MAS to be successful—which it was. We increased enrollment and led the Archdiocese in enrollment increases continually—no one had seen or even heard of anything like what was happening at MAS.

After reflecting on MAS, specifically the enrollment increases during that first year and going further, Dr. Baxter sat back in his chair at our interview, and recounted the significance of the occurrence at the school. He stated:

> It's great you know. We have had a number of schools have some significant growth in enrollment these last few years. So we have seen a number of people, you know, take schools that were low and grew. But, I don't know if anyone has done it kind of like MAS—like you have done it. …
>
> [What] was really powerful for me in this office in this chair, was all the sudden telling staff and telling principals it can be done. It can be done and I am kind of tired hearing everyone say: you know, the economy is bad; you know, people can't afford it; charter schools are here; you know, there is a good quality public school down the street;

> I can't get kids. You know, we hear those all the time. We hear those excuses all the time about this is why we can't get more than 150 kids in our school. And I think that you really demonstrated in a very… and there were others who did this too… but you did it in a very clear way to me, is just, don't give me your excuses anymore people! There aren't any excuses because this place has all of those characteristics: it's low income; it's struggling; there is charter schools in the area; you know it's East LA. For all those inherent challenges that you are describing, [they] are present here and it's up 100 kids, or it's up 150 kids, it's up 200 kids, it's up… You know, I could keep pointing back and say that this place continued to grow and, and… So, it just showed what was possible.
>
> On just a side note, and this is why this dissertation is so exciting because it comes back to that same issue: get a quality person, get a quality leader, make sure that they are trained and supported, and then once that happens, I think the sky is the limit with our schools. You know, there are schools that should be packed and we know that, and that's why the growth is the vision, and leadership is the pillar, and innovation, is being creative and different—that's the whole piece of it. And I think [MAS] exhibits that. (Baxter, January 21, 2014)

At MAS, we were certainly creative and different, as each new student came, I knew we were that much closer to hiring more staff and providing some relief to my overly exerted staff. The numbers did soar, and at each enrollment marker, I went to the school community, including the staff, parents, and students, and asked them what they would like to "buy." I would ask them if they felt we needed another aide, a teacher, another office assistant—I wanted to know what they were seeing and feeling, and be honest through the process. I was also honest with the staff,

where I told them continuously where we were at financially, and what we could do for them. As a leader, I exhibited McGregor's Theory Y democratic leadership model (Owens & Valesky, 2011, 2015), where each person's opinion was valued through dialogue, on the various decisions we made together.

With all of this open dialogue taking place, we had to change and adjust continuously as well—as new students came, we had to adjust our schedules, classes, and everyone remained flexible. Sometimes we would do a schedule and it would not make sense by the end of the week, so we would adjust it again, especially as new staff members were hired. This process continued through the year, and each milestone brought new changes: on September 10, 2011, that was our first new hire of a part-time aide for Kindergarten through second since we were at 75 students; on October 30, 2011 we were at 88 students and hired another part-time aide for K-2 and a part-time social studies teacher for grades third through eighth; on December 1, 2011 we were at 97 students and we hired a part-time science teacher for grades three through eight; on Feb 1, 2011 we were at 111 students and made one part-time teacher full time and hired another part-time teacher for religion for grades three through eight; and finally, on May 1, 2012, we had 116 and we hired a full-time teacher for Kindergarten. Finance, staffing, and enrollment were all tied together as we continually grew, transformed, and kept the community motivated, involved, and excited throughout the year.

Financial reports. Every month, just like every other Catholic school, I had to do a financial report so that we could compare my budget to the actuals—the only difference is that most schools had a bookkeeper to do this, but we did not have the money for one. So, I learned everything that I could about school finance from my husband, the Internet, and would ask Lee

questions when I could not find the answer. I absolutely dreaded the date each month that I had to do these reports, because I would have to lock myself in my office, be away from the students, and balance the accounts, while making sure that everything was inputted correctly. To me, it looked like a giant checkbook, and I would "psych" myself into it because I would tell myself that it was the same as my checking account at home. All of the reports combined at the end of the year though, and I had to submit a giant report called an annual report, which included all of the finances for the whole year. This was quite a scene and I again had to resort to my husband and Lee for help.

Even now, four years later, I realize that Lee continues to help. In my office during the interview process, sitting across from each other, I looked at Lee, and asked her about the finances at MAS that first year, and what she thought about it:

> I think it seems to me, you worried about money a whole lot that first year. You were always on the budget sort of thing, but you budgeted not doing a real budget; you budgeted what I call a checkbook economy. You know, checkbook 101, and as long as there was money in the bank it balanced; but you were really clueless as to employers part of social security, duh duh duh, and what real payroll was, and all that kinds of stuff. You did not get it, but I looked at it as: hey it works, and I can only do so much at once [Laughs]. Was not bothering you until you had to do the annual report and then it bothered you [Laughs]. And I said, ok, well lets explain it. You know…

Me: But do most principals do their own finances themselves? I mean annual reports and all of that?

Lee: I don't know whether they do or they don't. My general sense is for many of our principals, finance and marketing are not their strongest suits. They are not business people; they are educators. That's the other thing: you brought in a pretty good sense of business. You understood that the school was a business, and you were not afraid to operate it. I about dropped my teeth when the guy came into wire the school [for Internet] and he was going to charge you $5,000. And I thought you did not have $5,000 to wire the school, but you said "No, I will pay it over a five year period!" And I said, "And he's willing to do that?" And I was just like, "AND HE SAID THAT HE WOULD DO THAT?" You gotta be kidding me—what an optimist that this school is going to be here for five years and at ZERO percent? I mean, you were not afraid to ask for the moon, you know, and when the moon sat on the desk, you were just glad to see it (laughs). I would go home and think, man, I never had that kind of *cajones*. I mean is that a characteristic? *Cajones*? I mean, you were not afraid to ask everybody you knew and anybody that you did not know, but that someone you knew, knew for all kinds of help, for material things. From paint to plants to bricks to the paintings to, you know, gates to uh, wiring the school, laptops… I mean, I never saw such a useless pile of computer crap in my life, and I thought ok, you be my guest. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

The finances, and those reports, were somewhat of an obsession for me that first year. I wanted to make sure that we stuck to the budget and we only bought what we could afford—asking for a loan from the Archdiocese was not an option as far as I was concerned, and I checked the

numbers before every purchase. At the end of the year, with all of the focus on enrollment, marketing, correct staffing, finance, and getting the best deals that we could, we ended up with a surplus of nearly $25,000 on our annual report. This may not seem like much, but to us, it was the first year the school was not in debt and in the "red"—we were actually in the "black," even though we were under-enrolled by normal standards! As a transformational leader, I linked a part of myself with MAS, and refused to believe that failure was an option, especially in regard to the school's finances. I was motivated and determined to turnaround the financial situation at MAS, and proved that it was possible as I led by example.

Thinking back to that grandmother that I encountered my first week in the school from the story earlier, I knew then that anything was possible at MAS. She inspired me and served as my motivation, as I looked at the finances each day—I had purpose, and was helping others. I remember after she left my office, I sat alone that morning in July, as I sat back in my chair and stared out the large window next to my desk. There were children playing in the two-story apartment building across the street, as they were boxed in with the rusty chain link fence that surrounded the yard. Watching the children laugh as they were running around the yard, I replayed the scene that had just happened in my mind. A grandmother came in with full custody of her grandchildren, who had extreme circumstances, and needed help. She left crying after she jumped up to hug me for making a Catholic education a possibility for her grandchildren, even though she could only afford $100 per month for tuition. In my head, the words, "we see what we have, see what they can pay, and then see who or what we can buy," jumped into my mind, as it shaped my vision for MAS. We were going to accept all children who wanted a Catholic education, despite their income level, yet they would have to pay whatever it was that they could

afford—no one would be free even those who had experienced life's harsh realities. In the next section, I describe the challenges I encountered in dealing with the trauma the students encountered and the gang violence that was prevalent in the community.

Trauma and Gangs

In addition to experiences in parks, I observed a variety of activities in the community, including the following description of an athletic event. A loud cheer erupts, startling me, and it seems to be coming from the building across from where I am sitting. There seems to be more children playing on the playground compared to earlier, as the adults line the way around the sandpit—some of the adults are talking, and others are staring at their phones.

Another cheer comes from the building, which grabs my attention, as a loud buzzer rings. I decide to move from my spot on the grass, fold up my blanket, and follow the sounds to the front of the large building. I stand at the entrance, which is all brick, and written over the walkway in large letters it says "Recreation Center"—it looks like a style from the 1970s more than anything else. I walk up about five stairs to the entrance, where there is an automatic door that opens up. I walk through the doorway into the building, where I immediately see the backs of probably 20 people seated on a bleacher looking the opposite direction. On the wall to the far right, I see a black score board that says home and away in red, and there is a score posted with the home team winning. The buzzer goes off again as both teams run from the right side of the gym over to the center of the court. The athletes look to be about six-year-old boys dressed in their team's jerseys with tall socks and their basketball shoes. I walk over to a bench that is right next to the bleachers and sit down. The referee's blow the whistle and hand the ball to a boy in blue. I watch the boy look at his team and look at his opponents, trying to decide who to throw

the ball to as his coaches and the people in the stands are screaming out different names—"Tommy," "Michael," "George," "Al," "PASS IT!" The boy, frozen from all of the screams, holds onto the ball for too long as the referee blows the whistle again and takes the ball away from him. The boy looks at the ball, he looks at the referee, he looks at the coaches, he looks at the stands behind him, and he walks back onto the court, where you can see his face turn red from embarrassment as his eyes well up with tears—it's the other teams ball. Within seconds, the other team, the green team, passes in the ball and everyone is chasing after the ball again. The boy from the blue team, no longer fazed by his previous mistake is focused as he runs after the ball. As I am watching the rest of the game, I cannot help but wonder what was the boy from the blue team's story? Why did he freeze? Who did he blame for his mistake? Did he blame his coaches, the stands, or himself? Focusing on the mistake itself, as adults typically do, I realized that I was missing the bigger picture. The boy made the mistake, but he moved on from it, and he was given a second chance to play. Not only that, but all of the athletes who made mistakes, had second chances, and in some cases, third, fourth, and fifth chances. In real life, in the real world, this is not always the case, even in education. Just because a student made a mistake, we, as educators, sometimes forget that the students are just children, and that they should have another chance, while we use the original mistake as a teaching moment. This same concept was the driving vision for our students at MAS—all children should receive a second chance and an opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

At MAS, with the increase in enrollment, and our focus of providing every child who wants a Catholic education, a spot in our school, we attracted many different types of students. We had students transfer into our school from every grade, from every socioeconomic status, and

for many reasons. Although the majority of the students were from East LA, we also became somewhat of a commuter school. Despite where the students came from, the one thing that I noticed, and had to deal with as the principal, was that the students all experienced some sort of trauma, most with violence. Not all of our students were taught by their parents, if they had parents involved at all, what was right and what was wrong, but in many cases, they were looking to us to teach them the basics of life. We had students coming to school from a variety of experiences: gangs, severe trauma, issues of disrespect that came from home, and general family issues. As a new principal, I did not have the heart to say "no" to any family who walked into our door as long as I thought we could reach the child at their level and help them to move forward. With that attitude, new students continued to come to our school, as the school was transforming before our eyes. According to my blog post on May 26, 2012:

> As each day passes, it never ceases to amaze us at the transformation of MAS. People are continuing to come in each and everyday for new registrations for next school year, while "the word" continues to spread throughout our surrounding communities. As one of the new parents said, "[MAS] is the place to be, and everyone is talking about us." The students feel pride in their school and it's amazing to see the transformations in some of them as they grow spiritually, academically and emotionally. For us, we never give up on our students or see them as a "lost cause," but attempt to reach them at whatever level they are at, and build from there. For some of our students, that may mean baby steps, and for others, leaps and bounds, but it doesn't change our goal of leading them in the right direction. The Spirit is alive in the school and we firmly believe we are making an impact on lives—including our students, staff, parents, and extended families. By us

even reaching one life now can mean hundreds in the future and that is one of the amazing miracles of a Catholic school, especially our school as it was on the brink of closure.

For a variety of reasons, we are a bit unorthodox at [MAS]. For us, detentions, suspensions, and even expulsions are not seen as effective, and we try to find other ways to communicate with our students as far as correcting behaviors. The former is more an "out of sight, out of mind" approach that rarely works, and for us, we want to adjust behaviors to meet our Catholic standards in a lasting way. We attempt to find the reasoning behind the problems and work on those, while showing our students that we truly do care about them. There are many ways that this can be done from shooting baskets with them if it's an attention issue, extra tutoring, if it's because they are behind and are acting out, and can go to meeting with a counselor, if it's a spiritual or emotional issue. As far as we are concerned, no student is a "problem child," but one that is experiencing something difficult or has never been taught correctly. We attempt to break down the barriers, and get them to look forward to coming to school rather than dreading it.

This week was a short week, but still filled with fun events, and the greatest was Friday when I switched places with a student. He was "Principal" for the day and gave the entire student body free dress (with my consent), except he asked me to come in full uniform to add to the experience. To me, it's all about the kids, and they loved it (plus, once a year is okay)!

> Life at [MAS] is amazing and the puzzle pieces are falling into place, which is a true miracle. The lesson that has been learned this week is that of trusting in the slow work of God. Impatience can lead to many problems, especially in dealing with children, and we always need to keep the Big Picture in mind. Progress does not happen over night, but by taking one-step or one day at a time, and having faith in God, all things are possible. This is something we keep in mind as we are working to turn our children into the leaders of tomorrow. (Marasco, 2012)

Continuing the mission at MAS, as a leader, I needed to learn patience, which was not one of my strengths, while we led students of all walks of life into our school community. My experience led me to conclude that Catholic schools thrive in trauma stricken neighborhoods if they are welcoming, nurturing, and accepting of the particular circumstances that exist, as the school trains the students how to cope and thrive in our society.

Experiencing gang violence. One month into my principalship, I sat in my office, preparing myself for the day and the few appointments that I was going to have, when Marina knocked on my door. She came in, closed the door behind her, which I knew was never a good sign, as she made her way to the chair across from me and sat down. "Yes?" I asked her. She proceeded to tell me that there was a family outside, a mother and a son, and the son was a 7th grader, who desperately wanted to come to our school. She said that they had a pretty extreme experience, and she wanted me to meet with them right away instead of making an appointment for the following day, as was the usual protocol for new students.

Our protocol was that I would meet with each and every new student as well as their family, so that I could assess the situation, and assess if we would be able to accept the student—

there were no exceptions to this. As a new leader, I felt that this was also more personal, and I could get to know the family's story, and they could get to know me directly.

I looked directly into Marina's face, and I could see that there was something that was bothering her about this case, so I told her to bring them into the office. She jumped out of her seat and walked hurriedly to the door, where she disappeared. It felt as though it was only about three seconds later when she appeared in the doorway with the registration folder in her hand, as the mother and son trailed behind her. She handed me the folder, as I faced with the family. I stood up to shake the mother's hand; the mother was dressed in jeans, black heels, and a black button down shirt. She shook my hand as I introduced myself, as she said "mucho gusto." I turned to the boy, who looked more like a man—he was about my height, heavy build, with dark brown eyes, acne on his cheeks, and a shaved head with black stubble that was visibly growing in. His face looked worn and tired, more than I had ever seen a child's face, as I reached out and introduced myself to him as well. He looked at my hand, looked at me, unsure of exactly how to respond, as he reached his arm out and said, "My name is Juan." They both sat down in the chairs, as Marina translated for me since the mother was more comfortable with Spanish, and she proceeded to tell me that she wanted and needed her son in a Catholic school. His brother was a gang member with a violent past, and the mother did not want her only other son to go down the same path that he did. The older son no longer lived with them because she had to kick him out—the rival gang had broken into her house looking for him, and stole everything of value, but thankfully no one was home. She did not want a next time to happen, so he was forced to leave. The boy, the younger brother, sat there and listened as the mother was telling me about his older

brother, as he did not move. He kept his eyes to the ground, refusing to meet my gaze, as I was trying to figure him out.

I heard enough from the mother, but I wanted to hear from Juan, so I went through a series of questions directed towards him. He had terrible grades dating back to second grade, many absences and tardies listed on his report cards, and he had terrible comments from the teachers. I told him there was no way that we were going to accept him into our school unless he did some serious explaining for himself.

He looked up at me for the first time, and his eyes welled up with tears, as his tan face turned bright red. He began crying as he told me that he was also in a crew, which is a lesser version of a gang, and he had entered the crew when he was only in the third grade. The older kids at his school had recruited him because he was smart, outgoing, and pretty much willing to do whatever was asked of him—not forgetting his brother's reputation as a big gang member. He was following in his brother's footsteps, as his brother followed in his father's—it was a family cycle. He told me that he had stolen things, he had ditched school consistently, he had been held back twice in school, he had been in a number of fights, and had done some pretty bad things, but he wanted to change his life. He did not want to be a part of a crew or a gang; he just wanted to be a boy again, and get out of East LA as soon as he could.

I sat there, looking at this tough looking young man, as he was crying through his story. He wanted a different life. He wanted to be surrounded by the Catholic faith. The only thing I could wonder was, what had caused him to want this change? And what had caused, a kid that was trained to be tough since third grade to cry in my office in front of strangers. So I waited for him to finish his story, and I asked him the former question. He looked at me, not sure really

how to respond, as his head fell into his hands and he really began to cry. I reached and grabbed a tissue from the corner of my desk and handed it to him, as I was beginning to get chocked up myself. He pulled his head up, as he wiped his face, and he looked at the floor. He told me that he had borrowed a gun from his brother last year, and had pulled the gun on a local crew member who was picking on his crew. He waited for him to be alone at the local park, and told the boy who was two grades older to leave his crew alone. He walked away, feeling proud of himself, as the older boy had run away from him, and he had earned "street creds" for doing what he did—everyone left him alone as well as his crew until two weeks ago. He proceeded to tell me that he was walking home with his best friend, another kid who was "straight laced" (not in a crew), when a car pulled up on them and opened fire for bullets that he was certain were for him. They both dropped to the floor and covered their bodies, as all do during drive-by shootings, as Juan popped back up after he heard the tires shriek far down the street. Juan told his best friend to get up, as the boy moved his arms to flip himself over. He was covered with blood as he had been shot in the stomach, and Juan grabbed him and yelled for help. His best friend died in his arms that day, right there in the streets, with his blood all over Juan.

Juan lifted his eyes, which were now blood red, from crying, as his brown eyes stared straight into mine. He needed help, he wanted help, so that he did not end up dead like his friend. He had searched the last two weeks for who did the shooting, looking for revenge, but a piece of him knew that wouldn't bring back his friend, and could result in something much worse—he could be dead or in prison, but worse in his mind was something bad happening to his ma'ma.

He had spent only limited time in a classroom since the third grade, barely knew how to read and write, but wanted this—he needed a second chance. I looked at him straight in the eye, thanked him for being so honest, and said we would try to help him, but he had to do exactly as we said. I proceeded through the registration process with his mother, and he started school the next day.

We put Juan in with his class, which lasted only for a few weeks, because he did not know how to control himself in a classroom. He wanted the attention, would shout out, and would say inappropriate things. So I came up with a better idea. He had an isolated classroom as I called it, which was a conference room that I converted to look like a classroom, and it was attached to my office. Each day he would report to his teachers, get his assignments and would get to work, not having recess or lunch with the rest of the students, as we worked backwards to teach him what he had missed from his time in the crew. Each day was a struggle and certainly was not easy, but each day he got better and better, even if it was a baby step. I would write notes on my posted calendar in my office that only he could decipher, as we would track his progress and behavior as he acclimated to a school environment.

Juan was not alone in our school, although he was an extreme case, because we had a number of families who were previous or current gang families seeking something better for their children. Gang violence was an everyday reality for a majority of our students, as many transferred in from the local public schools, where gang members would hand-select students for their cause. It was a reality that as a leader I had never dealt with before, but at MAS I was confronted with the hard facts. As long as students wanted the Catholic education for the right reason, was not a current member of a gang or a crew, we would take them in and work with

them. As long as they were moving forward and not backwards, that was our deal with them, as we took each day at a time. In conjunction with the gang violence, were the traumatic experiences that some of our students also faced.

Observing more trauma. As a new principal, one of my favorite parts of the school day was roaming from classroom to classroom, observing the students learning, as they interacted with each other, and with the teacher. The students typically laughed, joked, and were happy, as our school had the aura of a family. I made my way through the lower grades, and entered my last classroom—the oldest students at our school. Walking in, it felt different in this classroom as all of the students and the teacher were surrounding one of our 8th grade girls as she was visibly upset and crying. I walked to the back of the room to where the student was, as the rest of the students saw me, they went back to their seats. I whispered in the girls ear for her to go to my office so that we could talk. She immediately got up, picked up her backpack, and walked to the door. We walked down the hallway in silence as she continued to sniffle. When we made it into my office, she collapsed in the comfy blue chair that I had in the corner, as she began to cry again. She was wearing her blue plaid skirt, white polo shirt with the MAS logo on it, white knee high socks, and blue Vans shoes. Sitting in the chair, she was curled up, and although she was an 8th grader, the oldest grade in our school, I could see how much she looked like a small child. She kept saying, "why not me?" over and over, as I pulled up a chair next to her and sat down.

"What's going on?" I asked Christina, as she looked up at me.

"I want to know why I am still here? Why I am alive and they're not?" she exclaimed, not sure if it was a question or a statement.

"You're going to have to walk me through this Christina. I haven't been here long, and I am not sure what exactly you are talking about?" I told her, since I knew she had been at MAS since Kindergarten, which was before my time.

She looked at me, and with tears streaming from her hazel eyes, and she began her story. A few months ago she was in a car with her *niño* and *niña* (aunt and uncle), as well as two of her cousins who were their kids. They were going to a family party and they had stopped at Christina's house to pick her up on the way, as she sat in the middle of the backseat like she always did. She did not get carsick, but her two cousins did, so they always sat by the windows. When she got into the car, everyone was silent, and she could tell that something was not right, but she did not think anything of it.

As her *niño* began to drive the car, her *niño* and *niña* began arguing. He was extremely jealous and was accusing her of cheating on him, as they approached a stoplight that was red. Her nina was not responding and just looked out the window, as Christina could see that she was getting angry. They began yelling back and forth, as her uncle reached under the seat and pulled out a gun. He pointed it at her nina and shot her in the head, as he turned around and shot both of her cousins in the head. He looked at her, turned the gun on himself, and shot himself in the head. She had to climb over the dead bodies of her cousins to get out of the car as she screamed for help.

Christina wanted to know: Why was she still alive? Why had God allowed this to happen? And what reason did she have to live? She had obviously been traumatized by this obscene occurrence in her life, as I sat across from her, equipped with no training in counseling or answering such questions. I tried to answer her the best that I could, and said that I would find

her the help she needed, as I called a good friend of mine who was a therapist and asked him to come to speak with her. I was not trained for this, and did not want to pretend to be, so I went to those who I knew who were, and who could help our students. Christina was not the only student who had experienced severe trauma, but she was the first that I encountered in a year of firsts.

Growing up, I experienced trauma myself, nothing to the degree of Christina, but I knew that in order for someone to recover, they must feel safe and secure in their environment. This approach fed more into my focus at making MAS a fun place, where students felt secure first and foremost. Following Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1987), students need their basic needs met first before any learning could occur, and this shaped our school. In experiencing this fun approach, many students were receptive, but few had troubles in the transition to our school, especially in regards to respect.

Winning respect. One of my absolute pet-peeves is disrespect. Coming into MAS, I vowed as a leader I would give respect, but also demand respect in return, just like in every other realm of my life—I did not care if it was parents, students, teachers, the gardener, someone walking down the street, or anyone for that matter, but respect was essential. In my third month as principal, I was challenged by one of our 8th grade transfer students, Daniel. Normally, I did not accept 8th graders as transfer students because all of the Catholic schools that I knew refused the practice, but Daniel was an exception. He had a sister who was in the third grade, and their mother was newly divorced, new to the area with the kids, and was struggling. If the third grade girl was to come, I had to accept her brother as well—so I did.

When Daniel started school at MAS, he was extremely challenging from his first day as he walked in at six feet, two inches in height, a slender athletic build, with dark skin, dark hair, and a mischievous grin. The girls adored him, and he knew it, as he was both loud and obnoxious. Coupling these attributes with his anger from his parents' divorce and the abandonment that he felt from his father who was no longer in the picture, Daniel was just about impossible for the teachers. I watched for two weeks, which was our typical acclimation period for transfers (since we had received so many transfers, we had figured out that it took about two weeks maximum for students to adapt) and there was still no improvement. He was rude and disrespectful to the teachers, to the students, and even to the parents at the school. He avoided me at all costs, but I am sure he would have tried to be rude to me as well. And then a miracle happened—basketball season.

Daniel was an avid fan of the Lakers and passionate about the game of basketball. He talked about it to his friends, and brought it up in class with the teachers, as he shouted his devotion to the Lakers basketball team. This news made it is way to me, as Daniel was still relatively impossible to deal with due to his disrespect to all. So I went out at recess time and walked up to him. He was shocked that I was not using my stern voice with him as I called his name and asked him to come over. He ran over to me, looking awkward since he had not completely grown into his body. I told him that I had heard that he loved basketball and that happened to be something we had in common. I proceeded to tell him that I had a deal for him. I had been hearing horrible reports about him from teachers, students, and parents, and I thought I had a solution, or a challenge for him. I told him that I would play him one-on-one in front of the entire school, and if I won, he had to respect his teachers, his classmates, the parents, me, and

most importantly himself, because most of all, he was disrespecting himself by acting that way. And if he won, he could continue what he was doing and I would leave him alone, as he would graduate from MAS without being kicked out. He looked at me when I was finished speaking, with a sly grin, as he shook his head and agreed. He said he did not want to give me anytime to practice, even though that would not help because I was a girl, and we could play the next day.

The next day at lunch recess, all of the students surrounded the basketball courts. Some chanted my name as I walked up, and some chanted Daniel's. I sat on the bench in my basketball shorts and MAS t-shirt, as I put on my basketball shoes as Daniel was warming up. He was showing off for the crowd. I walked over, took the ball, bounced it twice with two hands to check the air pressure, and passed it back to him. He looked at me stunned and asked if I was going to "warm up" as he laughed and proceeded to tell me what "warm up" meant. I told him no, and to shoot for "outs" (who would take the ball first). He made the basket as the students cheered and some booed, as it was his ball.

His first time with the ball, he danced around with the ball, again showing off for the crowd, and dribbling high—going between the legs and around the back. I simply waited, standing straight up and down, as he was to make his first move. He dribbled hard right as I reached out and stole the ball from him mid dribble, drove to the basket and I scored. I was ahead 1-0, in a game to first to 10.

In my head, I was playing a game to help save a boy from himself. To show him what the difference was between disrespect and respect, a concept I learned on playing fields myself growing up. Daniel and I had a similar story—we both came from broken homes; both used sports as an outlet; both had some anger built up; and both pretended to be something we were

not. Although we were from different worlds, this kid had a piece of me, and that could have been me without the guidance and support of my grandma, mom, the rest of my family, and friends who steered me in the right direction. Daniel was lost, and he needed someone to show him the way. This game was my shot at helping him.

We proceeded through the game with the chants of our student body cheering us on, as I humiliated Daniel 10-0, refusing to let him score one point. Although he was bigger than me, he did not have my agility or speed, and had not done any research on my athletic past from the newspapers.

He walked up to me at the end of the game, and said that was all luck, and he would have won, but he was taking it easy on me. I still had the ball in my hands as I looked at him sternly, and told him, "double or nothing"—meaning: let's play again. He shot the ball again for "outs," and made it, so it was his ball again. His first time with the ball, he was not as conceited as he was before—there were no tricks, no fancy dribbling, just a raw approach. He pulled up and shot the ball and made his first basket, as he jumped up and down as some of the students cheered. He took the ball again, since he had made the basket, and was ahead 1-0. He tried to dribble past me again, this time passing me as he went to shoot a lay-up, which I blocked as everyone cheered. It was my ball, and again, my chance to help this kid.

I beat him 10-1. As Daniel lost, he walked over to me and shook my hand. He was upset, but was trying to keep from crying as he lost in front of the entire school. I told him about my past athletic experiences, as we walked off the court, and I told him that I could work with him so that he could better his game. He had to uphold his end of the bargain though.

Although Daniel was not perfect after that game, he was much better and would adjust himself, if I gave him the stern look. I had earned his respect in his world, and in turn, I taught him he had to respect others whether they were in that world or not. Respect and disrespect are concepts that drove our community, both our school community and greater community. Our students were accustomed to disrespect, that we needed to show them what respect was. Many of the issues stemmed from home, which we tried to compensate for by having a multitude of activities for our students to stay with us at MAS until late in the night if they wanted to join everything. I wanted them to have the least amount of time home so that we could work with them, and they could have a safe place to call "home" if they were lacking that in their families.

Encountering family issues. One of the major challenges I had to deal with as a new, first time principal was the students' family issues such as divorce, abuse, lack of communication, inappropriate communication, separation, and child endangerment, to name a few. These issues did not just stay at the students' homes; the students brought these issues everywhere that they went, especially to our school. It affected how the students thought, and how they behaved, as we could see the sense of inadequacy that the students emitted. One such student was Steven.

One lunch recess, I walked outside and saw all of the students playing except for Steven—he was seated alone on the side of the building, trying to bend his body so he could be in the shade. My main requirement for recess time was that all students played because many were dealing with an obesity problem, as many of our students were grossly overweight. This playtime was for them to move around, sweat, and workout in a way that was fun and entertaining.

I walked over to Steven and sat down next to him on the floor. He was not his normal happy-go-lucky self, and I could see that he was fighting back some emotions as he bit his lips. He was in the fourth grade, and one of the sweetest kids that we had in the school—he was always willing to help and get involved when called upon. He was wearing his blue polo shirt, with dark stains marking the dark fabric, as the yellow logo had a tint of gray across it from the dirt. His shorts were slightly frayed at the bottom, as he wore his black vans and white socks, and his legs were crossed "criss-cross apple sauce." His black hair was spiked up, with white flakes from too much gel, or not enough bathing, as he stared forward blankly, refusing to meet my eyes.

"Hey Steven, what's going on?" I asked him. He just sat and stared ahead, biting his lips harder. "You know I am here for you, right?" I said, as he turned his head and looked straight at me. His brown eyes were full of anger, and I could see so much pain, as his tears began to fall from his face.

I stood up, brushed off my pants, and reached down my hand to help him up. "Let's go to my office and talk." I told him, as he reached his hand up and grabbed mine for support as he rose. I walked ahead of him as he followed me into my office, where he sat down in the chair facing my desk, and he slammed his fists into his lap.

I looked at this boy, who looked young for his age and was relatively plump. He had been at MAS for two years, yet I never heard of any outbursts from him at anytime, so I was incredibly worried. "Do you want to talk?" I asked, as his tears fell from his cheeks into his lap. "My mom wants it to be a secret," he told me, as I began to fear for the worst. As an educator, I knew my role as a mandated reporter for child abuse, as I sat back and listened closely. He

proceeded to tell me that his father had fled the country to Mexico, and his parents are getting a divorce.

In the community, divorce was looked down upon as people frequently hid their relationship status as pregnancies and children would appear from women—usually with the family not knowing from whom. This practice was acceptable, but divorce was not, so many women did not get married at all. Some women had long time boyfriends, who were exactly like husbands, while others went from one relationship to the next.

He told me that his dad had an affair with his baby-sitter, who was only 13 years old and had gotten her pregnant. So instead of staying in this country where he would have been arrested, he told Steven's mom what had happened, which resulted in a huge screaming match at their home, which woke up Steven and his little sister. Steven went out of his room to find his mom slapping his dad in the face, as his dad turned, walked out of the front door, and slammed the door behind him. Steven asked his mom what had happened, since she was crying, and she told him the story—he would now be the man of the house, which he did not know how to do as a 4th grader, and his dad would never be coming back because he fled the country with the young girl.

As Steven spoke, I watched the rage in his body, and the sharpness in his words. I was not sure how to respond, as I sat there and just listened. Here was a boy who was not only abandoned by his father, but was violated, and embarrassed. I listened to him, and told him that he, and his family would be okay. His dad was gone and that was terrible, but he was learning at a young age what to do as an adult, and what not to do. I asked him for permission to talk to his mom about the issue, to which he agreed. I could see the relief when he looked at me, that

someone had taken the time to listen to him, as he told me his feelings, and what was going on in his life. I gave him some more tissue, and sent him back to class when he was okay.

After he closed the door behind him, I picked up the phone to call the Department of Child and Family Services. I had made a number of child abuse calls in my short time at MAS, but I wanted to verify whether this was a reportable case or not. They informed me that it was not, as I made arrangements to meet with his mother, and provide referrals for counseling.

As a new principal, family issues were something that I dealt with frequently. Looking at my own experiences: as a child born out of wedlock with a strained relationship with my own father; as a child who dealt with verbal abuse, drug addiction, and alcohol abuse in my own family; and as a child not having much money since my mom was so young when she raised me. I could relate with our students, even Steven to some degree, as I looked at our experiences from two different worlds as linking us—we had to deal with trauma, and in growing up, I learned how to cope, and thrive despite what I had witnessed and experienced in my past. This was a skill set that I wanted to provide to our students, including Steven, as I structured and restructured our school to resemble what I envisioned to be helpful for students with traumatic experiences. I continually thought "out of the box," worked diligently with our staff, and worked to make sure every child had an opportunity to thrive. As I wrote on June 2, 2012, in my personal blog:

> In the world, fear is a theme that seems to drive some young and some old, especially in impoverished areas. This fear can be restrictive and force people to stay "inside of a box" of "shoulds," instead of seeking and encountering the "coulds." Education, love and prayer are the keys to breaking down this barrier of fear, and also allows for the

impossible to become possible. At [MAS], these three themes are at our focus and allows us to move at a rate that is seldom seen. Leading by example, our faculty and staff, demonstrate that we can do what we set our minds to and the world does not have to harden hearts. We truly care about our students, and use education as a springboard to affect lives and change. Every one of us as adults has someone that was our role model growing up, or someone who woke up our heart (usually a teacher or a coach) and we only hope to "pay it forward" and be this for our students. For us, education is not solely about academics or what grade one receives, but how each student has progressed spiritually, emotionally, and academically. It is seen as a success by us to take a student from whatever level that they are at and to take them to a higher level (whatever that may be); some students take baby steps and others take leaps and bounds, but each of these is still seen as a success. By affecting one life, we are in turn affecting hundreds of thousands because that one will touch many others in their lifetime.

For me, many people ask me "Why do what you do and give so much time to [MAS]." The simple answer is that I do it because I believe in what we are doing at the school and am passionate about it. This is something that some people do not understand, but as far as I am concerned, it's a calling or a vocation. Once someone finds a passion it feels as though your heart is lit on fire and you have superhuman strength. No longer do time or pay matter, but what matters is that you are doing what you feel you should be doing with integrity. A dear friend of mine, and my mentor, Pete Cassidy (it's still hard for me to not just call him Mr. Cassidy) taught me what this meant when I was in high school. Yes, he was an English teacher but being in his class, you could feel the

> love and devotion that he had to each and every one of his students. He did teach us a lot about his subject, but he definitely taught us more about life than anything else. As he said to me not too long ago, "When I look back on my life and am asked what my one accomplishment has been, I would say that I tried to be an encouragement to my students." He did not say to make a million dollars, drive a nice car, have a nice house, or even to have an amazing job, but he simply said that he tried to be an encouragement to his students. This is what a true educator is and this is the passion that should drive us all.
>
> This week has left us gasping for air as we are beginning to conclude the school year. Even still, the greatest lesson that we have learned this week has been the importance of breaking down the barrier of fear. Once the fear has subsided, true miracles can happen as people rise to the occasion, just as Mr. Cassidy did. We hope and pray at [MAS] that our students will continue to rise to the occasion and un-harden hearts. (Marasco, 2012)

As the new principal of a traumatized school, I quickly learned that each and every student at MAS had a story, from Juan's account of gang violence and the death of his friend, to Christina's shooting encounter and the aftermath she had to deal with, to Daniel's issues with disrespect, to Steven's family problems that surfaced from his father's betrayal, and many other stories. Trauma and gang life were everyday realities for the MAS students, and entering this unfamiliar environment, or an environment that I could not fathom for that matter, I had to use the skill sets that I had, and experiences from my own past to help make sense, and help our students.

As a transformational leader, I had to respect and try to understand our students' cultures and their funds of knowledge, including the traumas that many of them brought with them through the school doors. The sheer diversity in experiences and life situations that I witnessed that first year made me realize, I needed to make MAS a "safe zone" first and foremost for the students, otherwise true learning was impossible according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1987). Martin (2012) made clear that diversity is not an excuse to let go of our bottom line as educators striving to form future generations, but as the leader, this diversity became additional information that I was able to decipher to further our mission of shaping our students for the future. I could not forget what the students were bringing with them, just as I could not forget what I was bringing with me as a leader; these funds of knowledge were not seen as hindrances, but experiences that could further empower us to succeed. As was stated earlier, all children deserve second chances, and at MAS, that is what my vision was as a leader.

Waking to the present, the buzzer rang loud again, as I looked up at the black scoreboard with the red lights. The home team, the blue team, had won. The little boy who froze when it was his turn to throw the ball in ran over to his teammates as they all jumped in the air and cheered. Both teams lined up and shook hands as they walked through the line one at a time. The parents and fans all got up from the stands and began to walk over to their team's benches, as the little boy in blue ran over to a woman and jumped into her arms. From the appearance, I was assuming that it was his mother, since they had similar features, and she looked about that age. The little boy ran back over to his teammates as the coach talked. Despite what I had witnessed earlier, the little boy was still completely unfazed by his previous mistake as his team had won, and he had the support of his teammates, his coaches, and most importantly, his mom.

It's true that kids make mistakes, but the important thing is that they move on, and learn from them as this boy had done. Sometimes it takes baby-steps, sometimes it takes leaps and bounds, but continuing to move forward is critical.

Pastor Influence

Instead of moving forward in time, my memory takes hold on another past experience. I remember sitting in the pew with my white dress, white gloves, and white heels, which contrasted with my tan skin and dark hair, I was extremely nervous. My younger sister, Lea, sat next to me on my right, also dressed all in white, with my mom on my left with our youngest sister, Alina, in her arms.

My grandma taught me, ever since I could remember, about God, and when I was about 4 years old, I remember lying on her bed at night, as we asked Jesus to enter my heart for the first time. My grandma was the religious one in our family, and she used to teach me about the Gospels, would read the bible to me everyday, and we would watch cartoon's that depicted the stories that she had read to me. She loved to talk about Jesus, and would sing as loud as she could in the car to her gospel music. She was a protestant, as was my mom, although my mom never went to church, and my grandma did not pressure my family to participate in religion—instead, she would just speak about God and Jesus. I was never baptized as a child, and I grew up never going to church, especially since I played softball across the country every weekend, but I still always considered myself a religious person. My sacred space, my church, was the park, and as I would be on the field in between plays, I would speak to God, and pray for everyone I knew—I would talk to Him like a friend.

My first encounter with Catholicism was in 6th grade, when I began St. Finbar School in Burbank, as I transferred in from a public school. I always respected the priests and nuns, and was fascinated by their chosen lifestyles. Although I was not a Catholic, I also respected the faith, and loved learning about it, even as I attended a Catholic high school. When I was 18, preparing to graduate and go to college on a softball scholarship, I decided to become a Catholic. My mom figured, my two little sisters and me could do it at the same time, resulting in a deeper family bond. When the decision was made, even though my grandma was not a Catholic and was a Protestant, she respected my choice, because she said I was doing it for the right reasons and I loved the traditions of the Church. She certainly had her questions about the faith, but was always respectful.

The pew was hard, and the sun was beginning to shine through the stained glass across from us in the Church. The priest, who looked like he was 100 years old, was the only person my mom could find that would do a baptism on such short notice, since I wanted to have it done before I went away to school. The church was in a poor, Latino area in Los Angeles, and he did not require any classes since I had gone to Catholic school for so long—instead, he simply charged us more. He walked down the aisle, welcomed us, and began our baptism mass.

Although my husband had worked for Father Albert for quite some time, MAS was my first experience of working with a priest. Since we were an Archdiocesan school, I knew that I did not report to him as my husband did to Father Albert, but I knew the school should be a ministry of the greater parish community. I had heard some terrible things about the priest that I was called to work with, but I refused to let that get to me as I began my work.

Lee's past experiences with the pastor. Although I began my leadership journey my first year with the best of intentions for working with the pastor, despite what I had heard, Lee was not as hopeful. Four years later, she shared this fact during our interview. Sitting in the chair across from me, I could see that Lee was beginning to get tired after her long interview. When I ask her about Father Don, the parish pastor for MAS, and my initial relationship, her wild eyes grew even wilder, as she stated:

> You had every intention of working with him, you really did. He gave you a little space out in the convent for you to set up your little offices while school was closing down to gather stuff. You and Don got off to a good start in the beginning—in July.

Me: What do you think happened?

Lee: Uh, with him? Well, there is two things with Don: one, was the abuse of the auditorium that you objected to, and you just did not like dirty needles, and diapers, and broken glass, in, or on the school yard. And the other was the severance of finances. There was still a school piece. Now, it was Archdiocesan owned, although he never told anyone, and his own community did not know that it had become under the Archdiocese.

So I mean, some of it was fiscal, but most of it was the control of the gym, and the redecorating, and you had ordered redecorating. You had gotten people gung-ho on-board to: repaint the school, to do this, to do that;\, and somehow they fenced across the garden of a statue. Basically they were making changes to the property

when it was his property and they were not asking him and they were not even telling him.

You painted the school whatever color you wanted. You gardened. And he had the gardner go after you with a machete because he had told him that it was your fault that he could not cut the lawn… You know, you got all these people to do all these things, and you were just gung-ho, and you were having it happen the next day! And I am sitting there thinking, holy shit, I knew, I mean I knew, you see, that's the other piece. I knew Don. I was not an uninterested bystander.

Me: So you knew him?

Lee: I knew him.

Me: For how many years?

Lee: I became principal because of him; I was not going to work for him. I quit—he was the pastor; he had taken over the pastorship of the school that I worked for, and he told me that he did not want stupid kids on his schoolyard, and so, I resigned. And that tainted and colored my attitudes toward him, and I tried as much as I could not to share that.

Me: And you did not. You let me go in with an open-mind as far as him [Silence]. And you could have forewarned me a little bit [Laughs hard]

Lee: You wouldn't have listened. You wouldn't have believed it anyway. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

The reality was Lee knew Father Don from the past, which she tried to not share with me, as I entered MAS with a positive attitude that I could make the difference for him. I struggled and battled, but decided the fight was not worth it since I did not report to him as my boss. Instead, I looked at it as a new opportunity, a great opportunity to pick a priest who I loved and respected, and I could treat him like I would a pastor at my school. That way, I would get the "pastoral" support, while approaching it in a positive way. I knew, even beginning my leadership journey that the standard parish school was the preferred governance model for Catholic schools. According to McDonald (2005), 77% of all Catholic elementary schools are parish schools, where the principal reports to the pastor. In this model, the school is a ministry of the parish, and as a young leader, this is what I knew that I needed—I needed to be able to view my work as a ministry of the parish, and work with a priest to achieve our goals. The priest that I selected for this task was none other than Father Albert.

Father Albert, my chosen "pastor." During our interview, I remember sitting in Father Albert's office. I looked at him, nervous to ask this question and recount our first year "working" together. So I blurted out:

> Okay, um, Lee Moran spoke at great length about the pastor issues that were going on at MAS at the time. But, the other reason that I wanted to interview you was that I met with you monthly, and talked with you about the school, kind of like what a typical pastor/principal would do. … How did you see me evolve as a leader during that time, or how did I change, if I changed at all?

Father Albert: Right. I think your beginning approach was going with a normal model where there is that cooperation between the parish and the school. And,

obviously that is the optimum way, that is the optimum situation, is to have you know, both leaders of the parish and the school working together. But, when you realized that was not the case, I think the adjustment that you made, which was "okay, I am not, I cannot let this become an obstacle, I have to find a way around it." And I think that's where you exercised your leadership and that you were not afraid to go to other people outside the school and the archdiocese to ask their help in how to overcome that obstacle and to find ways to do it. Rather than saying, "well, that's the way it is, and I can't do anything." And I think that's the great gift that you brought.

You had the courage, and the vision, and the belief, and the hope, that "we can get around this, you know, if he's not going to support me, that's not going to, I am not going to allow that to be the end of the school." So, I saw a change in you, and you know, you being a Catholic, and wanting to be respectful of the priests, and the pastor; and how, trying to juggle all of these things together, and yet, keep focused on your vision which was to make that a successful school, or the best school that you can have for those kids. Did I answer your question?

Me: You answered my question very well. Not having that support, I got that support from you, whether you realized it or not. But, having those meetings with you really, really helped me out a lot, and I thank you for that. (Bahhuth, January 25, 2014)

Early in my principalship, I realized the value of having a mentor. Lee was a mentor, but Father Albert was a godsend to me my first year, since he filled the role of pastor that I so desperately needed. We encountered many trials and tribulations, but he helped me to overcome them.

Year's End

In June of my first year, due to our enrollment success and innovative approach, I received a phone call at the end of the year—it was Christina Hoag from the Associated Press who wanted to do a piece on our school in context with the state of Catholic schools across the country. She wanted to come by the school the next day and take photos of our students and the school, which I agreed to, and she did.

A couple weeks later, the article was released and was picked up by almost every news outlet across the country. It was a great article, where Christina did exactly as she set out to do as she wrote about our school and the context of Catholic schools across the country (See Appendix G for full article). She wrote:

> LOS ANGELES (AP) — After 97 years, [MAS] was closing — enrollment had dwindled to just 35 children last year at what was once one of the West Coast's biggest Catholic schools.
>
> But with a new principal who knocked on doors, offered X Box video game consoles to kids who brought in a friend, and recruited families who lost their bid in a charter school lottery, the East Los Angeles school stayed open —132 pupils are registered for this fall.

Call it educational evangelism. Roman Catholic schools are seeing years of marketing efforts starting to pay off in spite of tough competition from charter schools and the lingering effects of a devastating recession.

After seeing years of relentless enrollment decline, several key dioceses across the nation saw students trickle back to their schools over the past year. They say it comes down to a cultural change in Catholic education that has taken a while to implement but is finally taking root.

"If we want to continue to survive, we have to think like a business," said Domenico Pilato, who heads the Archdiocese of Los Angeles' school marketing project.

Nationally, Catholic school enrollment is still waning — closing 167 schools and losing 34,000 pupils over the past year. But educators say the number of schools with waiting lists increased by 171 and 34 schools opened.

The archdioceses of Los Angeles, Boston and Chicago, which have all employed aggressive marketing programs, have seen student upticks, offering hope the exodus can be turned around on a larger scale.

In Los Angeles, where enrollment had plummeted by more than 2,000 students a year for the past decade, elementary enrollment increased by 300 students last year. In Boston, the decline slowed to a 20-year low of 1 percent. Chicago, the nation's largest diocesan school system, saw city elementary enrollment increase by 8 percent. […]

"Catholic schools are beginning to market and promote themselves," said Shane Martin, dean of education at Loyola Marymount University. "It's really about getting the word out about this option. People don't know much about it."

> Schools realized the need to start marketing more aggressively some years ago, but it's been a slow shift in a conservative environment that historically never had to advertise itself. […]
>
> "This is the first year we have not closed a school," said Kevin Baxter, Archodiocese of Los Angeles elementary superintendent. "People are seeing the value." […]
>
> At [MAS] in East Los Angeles, which back in the 1940s schooled 1,000 pupils, Principal Cori Marasco's latest hook to reel in more pre K-8 students is turning an auditorium into an indoor basketball court, paid for by foundation donations. It's part of her plan to make the school a community center in the impoverished, gang-plagued neighborhood.
>
> "The park is known for drive-by shootings so kids don't have a place to go," she said. "They can come here — and enroll in school, too." (Hoag, 2012)

Looking back on that first year, there were many "ups" and "downs," good times, and not so good times. As a leader, I encountered a number of challenges, yet faced them with an audacious attitude and sheer will to succeed, as I grew as a leader through the process. Each lesson I learned through my own experiences, as well as listening to those who were a part of the journey with me, brought me closer to understanding my role as a transformational leader where I inspired others, and held members accountable.

Interviewee's Shared Lessons

In my interview with Dr. Baxter, he spoke about my leadership approach, how I went about my job, and in what ways watching my story unfold impacted him. I remember Dr.

Baxter, who generally likes to joke around, looked at me seriously during the interview concerning my leadership approach. His blue eyes focused hard on me, as though he was thinking to the past, as he began listing the qualities that I possessed as a first time, first year leader at MAS. He stated:

> I think what you brought…there is a couple things that I would say that were really evident: enthusiasm, energy, vision. I think you clearly possessed pretty early on action and a commitment to seeing the school succeed. And you dove in with energy and gusto and said that you were going to invest yourself in the community, learn about it, and try things. I think one of the things that you possessed that you did not even know that you had, and not a lot of people would even know, was you did not have any experience, right? And that can be a liability sometimes, and in some ways that can be an asset, because you did not know what you could not do. When you went out and got like all the technology, you were asking people for stuff, and veteran principals sometimes say, oh well, I can't do that, or I can't do that, and they're never gonna say yes; you kinda have those self doubt questions in your head, I don't think you had any of that, and that really served you well that first year and those first few months where you were trying to scramble just to put things together. I think that first year, you were really bold in that, I still think about this, and you don't speak Spanish, and you are going to the parks engaging the Spanish-speaking moms and their kids with play equipment. This is, creative, but it's bold, and kind of audacious. So I think all of those characteristics really served you well and to be honest with you, it's exactly what [MAS] needed. I don't think a stable principal who had a history and kind of knew, I don't know how that would have

> worked out. [MAS] I do think had underlying assets, you know. It had: a young family population; had kids, you know people were sort of waiting for that school to be there; [they were] waiting for Father [Don] to get out, which [was] a big hindrance. So there were a lot of underlying possibilities there, but I think the way that you approached it kind of brought those possibilities out in a much more dramatic way. (Baxter, January 21, 2014)

As the new, first year principal at MAS, I learned to quickly assess issues and challenges as they appeared; sometimes one issue came right after the other, requiring me to assess and respond, while compassionately leading the group toward our common vision. Leading as a transformational leader, what was in the best interest of the students was my continual focus, as I learned the culture, and the overall potential that the school possessed. Each person who walked the journey with me, including Lee and Father Albert, took different lessons away from the experience, which they shared with me during their interviews. In these interviews, they detailed what they saw in me, along with their own learning through the process, resulting in a deeper understanding and insight for me as I analyzed that first year and disaggregated all of the data. Their accounts, as well as the lessons that they took away from my journey serve to triangulate my own learning lessons from this autoethnography, as well as indicate that I possessed that first year, first time as a principal the actions and attributes of a turnaround principal, which Keval (2012) articulated. I was not only a transformational leader, but I was a turnaround principal as I encountered the traumatized environment of MAS.

Lee's learning lessons. During the interview, sitting with Lee, another woman who had led MAS in the past, I could not help but wonder if she experienced the same trials and

tribulations that I experienced in MAS' environment. She is a White woman, a far cry from the entirely Latino community that surrounded her, yet she was able to lead in such a way that others followed. When speaking about my leadership journey though, she stated:

I knew from the moment that I met you that you were a great leader…

Me: Why?

Lee: Again, there was just the willingness to undertake, and to not be daunted that something was hard. Matter of fact, you thrived on the fact that it was a challenge, and the greater the challenge the more that you ridded yourself in it. [Laughs]

And that was another quality that you had that I never had, and I saw very much in you, because you celebrated all of the little successes. I knew every single person who stuck their head in the door to ask about [MAS] because you told me about it two or three times. … You grew just like Jesus—wisdom, age, and grace.

Me: As a leader, what would you say was my greatest weakness that first year?

Lee: Greatest weakness your first year was, patience! (laughs). You were not willing to give something a chance to work, and so you lost people that you shouldn't have lost had you been a little more patience.

The other thing is that your greatest weakness is that you could not give what you did not have, and you simply did not have teaching experience. Not enough. … You had no teaching experience of teaching young children. For the most part, when you are a high school teacher, you are dealing with students closer to adults then kids. See kids, the first five years of education, the reason

they call it elementary, is learning how to learn, where secondary education, which is a good reason why it starts at seventh grade, is your shift, is what to learn. So you move from the "how to" to "the what" between elementary and [secondary education]. I had heck of a time learning that myself too.

Me: With the kids, what do you think we did well the first year?

Lee: We gathered them. We gathered them, and we made school fun. That's what you did well, you gathered them, and you made school fun!

Me: Why?

Lee: I suspect that is just you, personally. I don't think you have patience for something that is not fun. And, that's what makes a good teacher. Why would you spend a day doing something working with kids that you did not enjoy doing yourself? You even had a whole afternoon that you dedicated to it—fun [Laughs]. I think you even called it fun, you did not mess around with it [Laughs]

Me: Wednesday Funday! So why, I mean, if pastor/principal relationship is so important as far as Catholic school leadership and success of a school, why do you think [MAS] was successful?

Lee: The school was successful for the reasons we know the school is successful. One is that there was still a viable community that needed and wanted a Catholic education. So you have people who want to be here, even though you went out and brought them in out of the parks and under the rocks. You know, marched down streets and sit there and brought people out of…

You know, you certainly marketed it in a most aggressive marketing that I have ever seen. I am surprised you did not go in and rig the lottery of that charter school where you guys were at. I mean, you know, in terms of marketing and what not, we know at the department of Catholic schools, that the number one cause of success at a school is good, I wouldn't even say good, I would say great leadership in the principal's office—the principal is the key piece. You can temporarily bypass the principal if you have good, really good staff under the principal that is covering for the principal, and, or, a good pastor and parish covering for the principal. If you have both of those pieces in place, then you can carry on with a weak principal as long as it's not a bad principal. But if you have those two legs, you can't have one missing or it won't work. Parish, outside, community support, and staff can prop up a good principal, but without one or the other or both, you see, you have to have a great principal.

If you have a great principal, you will soon get a great staff. And if you have a great principal, you will soon get a great community. But the two, if they are already there, they will last two or three years before it will deteriorate back, and it loses it. We know pretty much how long that takes before that happens. It's in the second year that if we don't have a great leader, just an average leader, with just an average staff, and just an average parish, that you will lose it. So, we have a short timeframe from the Department of Catholic schools perspective, to create, empower our leaders to be great leaders—hence the book, *Good to Great*

(Collins, 2011). … I had potential to have a great leader that did not know what they were doing. But I just had to have the right support around the great leader.

Me: Which included?

Lee: Michael, keenly included Michael because you needed somebody who could give you advice completely safe, nobody else had to hear about it—I did not have to hear about it, Kevin did not have to hear about it, your staff did not have to hear about it. And he was really good, and did quite well with that. And so, I watched really closely and listened very hard as I would come in and say well, how's Mike? and blah, blah, blah. The other thing is that I knew that you needed a lot of support. So I, who personally keep distance from all kinds of people, I talked more to you, and with you, and was available to you, more than I have ever been to anybody.

Me: So in observing my first time, first year as principal, what did you learn from it?

Lee: I learned a lot. [Pause] I learned how difficult it is to be part of, but distant from. I learned that here was not going to be a model that we could take and replicate at other schools, because it really was about leadership. I thought it was interesting; I thought the school would go a different direction, but I miss-guessed the direction the school would go. The school rapidly went back to a traditional model: a first grade, a second grade, a third grade, as fast as it could. …

As a leader myself, I just had fun. It was fun to do that. I had to be very careful to not be too motherly, because the one thing that you lacked, I had enough for the both of us

Me: Experience?

Lee: Yes, experience. … Well, remember when you said what was your thing, and I said patience. I learned patience. Because I would tell you not to do something, and you would do it anyways; I had to learn not to say that I told you so, because it was not going to be productive. There were just things that I knew that you had to learn for yourself.

Me: Ya, well I had many of those experiences…

Lee: Ya, but I think that is true of everybody. You have to learn these things yourself, otherwise, we would all come knowing very well how to skin a deer. Because I am sure some of our ancestors knew how to skin a deer. And you know, you can show someone how to skin a deer. But until you skin the damn animal, it's not yours. I don't think that's unusual, I just think that's how all of it is. For me, I was just more connected than I care to be, or that I thought that I cared to be. I was trying to make sure that I did not get too emotionally involved so that I was no longer effective.

Me: From that first year, what did you see in me that you see in yourself?

Lee: [Laughs] You're probably just as disrespectful as I am.

Me: What do you mean by that?

Lee: I don't think you are wowed and neither am I, by people. Or maybe I am less "wowed" than you are, by people who have money, or power. I don't think that you are intimidated by others much, and I have never been intimidated by others;

> I have so mellowed, but I was just as feisty as you as a young teacher. … You have more passion than I do. You are just much more passionate than I am. … I learned to really value listening to my principals. I learned to really value my time that I spent with them as being productive, even though I was not really doing anything other than just being. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

Lee's guidance, support, knowledge, and brash communication style, made me deeply respect her from my first encounter with her at MAS for my candidate interview. Although she said in her interview that she knew I was a great leader from the first time that she met me, I knew from the first time that I met her, I was in front of someone who was a great leader, and who would be a great coach. As a young athlete, I always played for coaches who I respected, and as a young, new principal, I led for a boss and mentor that I respected as well.

Lee and I certainly had our ups and downs that first year, but Lee guided me as she saw something in me that resembled a younger version of herself. We both had a shared experience, since each of our first principal jobs was at MAS, which was a challenging environment that required innovation in differing times. For the entire year, she listened to me each and every day on the phone; she would always listen to my ideas, even as crazy as some of them were, would give her opinion calmly, and she always supported my decisions.

As a coach, Lee simply let me "play the game," while watching and observing from the sidelines. When I would look over to her from the field, she was always right there as she served as a pillar for support, yet she was ready for me to call a "time out" to speak with her, and ask for advice. I had potential from the beginning to be great and she knew that, as she trained and nurtured me to become the leader that I was meant to be.

Father Albert's learning lessons. Through my leadership journey that first year, Father Albert was another pillar of support, as he operated similar to a personal trainer in athletic terms, as he worked with me between innings. He knew about the game, and what was required to play, but had never played the game himself. He was certainly a leader, but a leader of a parish, which was similar, yet different, from leading a Catholic school. During his interview with me, he explained how much he learned from hearing my stories, as he tried to give his best advice to me through that year. It was a challenge for him, yet he saw a lot of similarities that he learned from that could apply to his own leadership journey. He listed out the qualities that he thought I possessed, but were also qualities that all leaders should possess, as he stated:

> I think the first, and most important thing is you know, that passion. It is the leader himself or herself, must believe in the message, must have faith in Jesus Christ. But not just that, in the message of Christ, believe that they have Good news to deliver, and share with others. I think that's the basis for anything that we do is because of that.
>
> As a leader, I think you have to have a vision; you have to know where you want to take this school or the parish or whatever the organization is. And, be a person of prayer, where you realize that what you are trying to do is God's will for you, and for that community, and not that you are trying to do your will [Laughs].
>
> That connection with Christ is important to remember that as long as the leader is doing what he or she feels called by Christ to do, no matter what the outcome is, it is always going to be a success—it might not be a success as we see

it, but it will be successful. I think these are some of the basic things, and obviously the skills: the creativity, the willingness to think outside of the box, and try to find ways, creative ways to make things go. And that to not give up easy, as in your experience you had to deal with different pastors, and you dealt with it every time, and you did not give up, and say that you aren't going to do this anymore. I think, if you look at many famous people, they had many failures before they finally were able to achieve what they wanted to achieve.

So, again, from a faith perspective, there is no such thing as a failure, it is just experiences that we learn from so that we can do better the next time. Things are challenging. You know I think a leader has to be patient and keep kinda focused on their main mission. They have to have a goal or a specific plan that they keep focused on or else it is easy to get distracted in the day-to-day things.

Me: Through that first year and in walking the journey with me, what is it that you learned in actually hearing what was going on and witnessed, if you learned anything?

Father Albert: Well, I guess one thing that I learned in a negative way is if someone else was telling me about some of the same difficulties that you were experiencing with the pastor, I think I would not have believed that. So, in a way to know that such things were possible in a way [Laughs].

Me: Anything is possible.

Father Albert: It was disappointing, but probably if I heard it from someone else, I probably would have just said that they were probably exaggerating and that it

could not be that bad you know. In a positive way, I was, encouraged myself by your perseverance that you wouldn't give up. I think that's a great quality that you have and really helped me, because we all have difficulties and feelings like sometimes we want to give up and not do this anymore. And to see you, that you are still fighting and that you are still finding ways to overcome that. And so, that was something that was helpful to me and that was personal.

But maybe more in a skills level, is your ability to work with the different personnel in the Archdiocese and be able to bring them together to support you, to find the funds that you needed. You know, monetary funds to be able to help out to do the things that you did. I thought that was, you know, something that I was impressed by, and learned from you.

Me: Do you think that's unique? I mean, getting those people to work together in the Archdiocese?

Father Albert: [Laughs hard] It is difficult to get different people because again, they deal with a lot of issues and to get a great many different departments, especially to work together in the situation, and it's not easy, you know.

Me: Through that time, more specifically, what is it in me, because you would mention it before but, what was it in me that you saw in yourself also?

Father Albert: I think your willingness to take on a challenge and to thrive in a challenging situation; your thinking outside of the box and being creative; being organized—having a plan and knowing what you want to accomplish.

Me: After experiencing or seeing what I went through, how would that change you as a pastor being in charge of a principal, if it would change you at all? Would you do anything differently?

Father Albert: I wouldn't, well, do anything differently. But the way it'll change is that if I was dealing with a difficult principal, you have given me hope that we could work together. [Laughs] If Cori could do it, I could do it! [Laughs] So it would give me that determination to not give up, like you did not give up, you know. You had some big things that you had to overcome; but really, not to give up, but to kinda believe in the mission and continue to do it.

Also, I think, another thing that would affect it, or help me, is we need to think outside of the box, and not always can we have the model of the parish and the school where everything is in harmony with the parish. Maybe as we discuss, maybe we need to look at a dozen elementary schools being connected to the parish. So, I think it opens up different ways to look at things. (Bahhuth, January 25, 2014)

Through Father Albert and Lee's accounts and and reflecting on my research related to challenges and responses,, one of the central themes of my journey at MAS was certainly an experience that caused me, as a leader, to look at different ways of doing things. Some things worked and some things did not, but one of the keys to the success was that I refused to give up on the school and the community; they had been left and abandoned, abused, mistreated, and lived extreme life experiences that required a wall of distrust to separate them from anyone who was new and different. Each day I worked hard to break down that barrier, and eventually

received acceptance into the community, and in turn built up the school. There is no such thing as failure as Father Albert mentioned, but each day was a battle (or struggle), where all who were entrusted to me as leader, learned through the process. The vision of our students' smiling faces kept me motivated, and ready to overcome the next challenge, in a world full of challenges, and a battle I was not guaranteed to win. I also learned the importance of reflection on my work and mentoring to keep me focused on what was important.

In this section I have answered the first and second research questions for this study. In the following section, I answer the third and final research question for this study as I analyzed what I learned from this first year, first time leadership experience as I reflected on what I have encountered through this study.

Learning Lessons from this Autoethnography

My journey as a first time, first year principal at MAS was full of the many challenges I recounted; at the time, I assessed, and responded to each challenge as it presented itself, while I quickly moved onto the next challenge in the traumatized environment—sometimes I made a decision that worked, and sometimes I did not, but I was determined understand the new environment I was being called to lead, as I evaluated wants and needs.

The school community and greater East Los Angeles community were weary, tired, and beaten; the community was full of distrust, especially for new leaders, since the community had been promised much over time, with little success, so they were deflated and demoralized. Similar to individuals who experience trauma, when a community experiences significant trauma, it results in a lack of trust on all parts, which leaves the group affected as they build a

"wall" for protection from being hurt again. This was certainly the case I found at MAS, and the case for a majority of our students and families.

As the new first time, first year principal at MAS, I entered the environment similar to one in which a paramedic responds to a call for help. As I drove myself, my only vehicle for assistance, to the scene, I learned as much background information as I could, and prepared myself for what I was going to encounter. Upon entering the scene, I realized the need for triage, the need to determine the degrees of urgency, from the large number of challenges that required my attention, as I moved from one challenge to the next. Sometimes I knew exactly how to respond to the given challenge, while other times, I had to make the best out of the situation by using my skillset to try new things, and be prepared with a back-up plan in case the original plan did not work. Not being from the community, it was easier for me because at first I was emotionally disconnected, and accustomed to making the tough decisions quickly and concisely, while staying focused on our mission and vision for the future. The more time I was in the environment though, the more connected I became, as I moved from an outsider of the environment, to an insider. The community was at first hesitant to trust me, but after they watched me work, over and over again, and as I followed through on my promises, I earned their trust as they began to see me as their leader and follow me. I served as a transformational leader, as I was able to get the community to do the impossible; MAS was viewed as no one's school when I entered, but by the end of that first year, it was the community's school, as it went from barely surviving to thriving.

MAS is not the only traumatized environment and I am not unique as a triage or transformational leader, but my story and the lessons I learned through this autoethnography, I

want to share with leaders who find themselves in similar situations. As a leader and as a woman, challenges are nothing new to me, but in writing this autoethnography, I was presented with one of the most difficult challenges of my life—the art of honest reflection, and having the courage to share my thoughts and stories in a public arena.

The following sections describe the lessons I learned in writing this autoethnography, specifically the art of honest reflection and the leadership characteristics I possess revealed to me through the interview data.

Art of Honest Reflection

While writing this autoethnography, I dug deep into my own recollection and my own heart, as I recounted stories of my students, and stories from my own life, that have shaped who I am as a leader, and identify why I act the way I do. At first, it was extremely difficult, and I did not know where to begin. I told myself that I was not the right person to do this, and that my story had no value to others. I did not want to look at myself, and I did not want to look back—mainly because I was afraid of what I might see. According to Bryant Keith Alexander (2013), autoethnography is "designed to make public the often privatized, if not secularized experience of others" (p. 545), and moving the private thoughts and experiences in my own mind to the public arena was something that scared me. I had always been taught to show my strength, focus on it, and remain confident in appearance, despite what I was feeling on the inside. This exercise, this art of reflection to the public, was contradictory to my own upbringing. To some people it may be self-gratifying to research onself in context with the culture that surrounds them, but in my case, it was the exact opposite, and something I viewed as painstakingly torturous.

After doing research, reading other autoethnographies, and speaking to one of my professors, I realized that there was no moving forward until I looked into the past—I needed to tell my story. As a leader, similar to an athlete, I had to review my own practice, and look honestly at myself, as well as those that were around me, so I could be better, and possibly help others to become better. I practiced the art of honest reflection, breaking down my own "walls" of distrust, as I sat alone, read the transcripts of the interviews I conducted, and listened to my inner voice. In looking at my research questions, it seemed like it was a simple task for me to think about and write on only three questions: What challenges that I faced? How I responded to those challenges? And what I learned through the process? But, it was extremely difficult to think about, let alone write about the intricate details of my journey as a person and as a leader. It was not a simple task, and did not come easily to me, as I struggled to listen in a world humming with distractions.

Finding the right place. I tried reflecting alone in my office at work, only hearing myself recount what I needed to do next in a seemingly endless list of items; I tried reflecting alone in my house, only hearing myself recount all of the chores I needed to do in between the sound of creaking and cracking sounds of the house; I tried reflecting alone in my car as I drove to various places, only to disappear into a world of daydreaming of random thoughts; and then I finally stumbled upon the park. The park has always been a place where I could connect with myself and with God, a place where I felt comfortable and safe despite what else might be happening in my life, and a place where I knew I would be able to complete the task of reflecting openly and honestly. Finding this place, the right place for me to think in peace, was crucial for the reflection process. Some people might find this peace in a church, in their homes, in their

workplace, on a bus, in a car, at the beach, on a boat, or working out, but in my case, it was in the park.

Balance. My first time at the park for this research, I sat down, and focused hard on reflecting and what reflecting really meant. I thought about that first year and all my successes and left feeling great about myself, believing reflection was rather simple. The second trip, I again sat down and focused hard on reflecting and what it really meant. This time, I thought about that first year and all the things that I had done wrong, and left feeling absolutely terrible, yet still believing reflection was rather simple. And then my third time, I recounted my previous two trips to the park in my head, and began to simply look around me. I read some of the transcripts of the interviews that I had conducted, looked at the trees, watched the people interact with one another, stared at the clouds, and realized reflection is about balance. Reflections is not about focusing hard and quickly getting the job done, but sitting back, and letting the thoughts come to mind. I was actually able to listen, and for the first time, understand who I really am as a leader and as a person. It was not a superficial act, barely scrapping the surface, but on the contrary, it was extremely deep and emotional. I have flaws, just like everyone else, but I also have strengths that are unique to me, and served me well as the leader at MAS. Looking in the mirror of honesty as a tool, I was able to hone in on my strengths and weaknesses from the past, learn from them, and move on—letting go of the traumas that I encountered.

From my own experience, an autoethnography is not an easy task, but it fills the void that other types of research sometimes present—it presents the deeply personal (Douglas & Carless, 2013). By presenting the personal, it results in a freedom that enlivens the spirit as it seeks honesty. Through answering my research questions, recounting my own leadership journey at

MAS, as a leader and as a person, I have learned more than I could have imagined. According to Stacy Holman Jones (2005):

> autoenthnography is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation… and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives. (p. 765)

In writing this autoethnography, this was the task I set out on as I set the scene and told my story; I experienced many trials and tribulations, yet I also learned about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that I possess as a triage leader, a transformational leader in a traumatized environment.

The following section describes the leadership characteristics that I discovered I possess and that arose from the interview data's pattern analysis detailed in Chapter 3.

Leadership Characteristics

In reflecting on my own leadership journey and in analyzing the data, there are several leadership characteristics that I possess which defined me as a triage leader and were effective in the traumatized environment of MAS. These characteristics are: authenticity, love, discipline, self-awareness, and knowledge. Each of these characteristics defined me as a leader, as I unconvered through my interview data and my blog posts, but they are also crucial characteristics for any leader who wishes to achieve the goals of Bass' (1985) Transformational Leadership Theory, where the leader is "one who motivates us to do more than we originally expected to do" (p. 20). The individual characteristics of authenticity, love, discipline, self-

awareness, and knowledge are further explored in consideration to the themes and characteristics that were identified by the interviewees.

Authenticity. Of all the leadership characteristics, I found the most significant data and experience on the importance of authenticity, where the leader is one that: the followers can believe in and trust; is someone who is a person of prayer and is faith-filled; and is someone who celebrates the small successes with the community.

Love. The second component of leadership is love that builds on authenticity, as the leader must have an open-heart for all the people and the overall mission. The leader must be creative and think "out of the box," compassionate, and enthusiastic. With love, everything is possible.

Discipline. The third component is discipline, because as a leader moves the group along, there can be many distractions along the way. The leader must be goal-oriented, and not willing to give up. By staying focused, centered, and disciplined, most things can be accomplished with ease after the distractions are hurdled.

Self-Awareness. The fourth component is self-awareness, because as a leader, one must keep conscience of how situations and comments may appear, while keeping a large emphasis on professionalism. It is easy to forget our roles at times, but leaders must stay ever vigilant as issues arise. The leader must be willing to risk and not be afraid to fail. The leader must not even believe in failure, so the group does not sense fear, and can move forward. By staying self-aware, a leader can effectively communicate to all stakeholders, especially parents and teachers, while motivating them to achieve more than they thought was possible.

Knowledge. The final component, knowledge, builds on the other characteristics. By continuing to be a life-long learner, even as a leader, it inspires others to do the same and shows that the leader is not afraid to "not know" something. The leader must: be a visionary with free thoughts; thrive on challenges; be a problem solver; and be smart enough to know and meet the challenges. No one knows everything, but it is in learning that our eyes are opened to lessons taught by all. This is especially true in regards to the lessons learned from the students if the leader keeps her/his eyes open.

As a new first year principal in a new environment, love, discipline, self-awareness, and knowledge were the characteristics that I honed as a transformational leader. It was not about having all of the right answers, or being young and innovative, it was a combination of characteristics that made me the right person for the job at the right time. I am a triage leader, and the characteristics that I possess and possessed early in my career, answer the underlying questions of who I am, and why I approach challenges in the manner that I did and do. I have always sought to aspire, and in turn hope to inspire others in the manner expressed by a transformational.

Only one: Knowledge, skills, or disposition. Knowledge, skills, and disposition are the defining characteristics of a person, where: knowledge refers to a person's education; skills refer to a person's power to do something competently; and disposition refers to a person's natural internal make-up. Each characteristic serves as a leg for a three-legged stool, and as I conducted my literature review for this autoethnography, I organized the literature based on these same characteristics, as I researched and analyzed content area that I needed to know and possess as a Catholic school transformational leader in a traumatized environment. I was the "stool" with my

own "legs," characteristics of knowledge, skills, and disposition that defined me as a transformational leader. Without one of my characteristics, I would not have been the leader I needed to be. According to all of my interviewees, Dr. Baxter, Lee, and Father Albert, if only one characteristic was available to a leader, disposition would be the most important.

During Father Albert's interview, he answered the question best, as he sat across from me, and paused as he looked up to the ceiling in thought. He looked back at me after what felt like hours, as he said:

> I would say disposition, because you can get the knowledge, you can get the skills, but you cannot change their disposition of who they are. Obviously, working with the people, in dealing with the people, is a very essential part of what we do whether it is a school principal or a pastor. You being in a community where you did not speak the language, and so, you did not have some skills; but I think your disposition being caring, being patient, showing them that this was your priority, can really overcome the skills that sometimes a person does not have. (Bahhuth, January 25, 2014)

From my own experience at MAS, I would also agree with Father Albert and the rest of my interviewees—if only one characteristic was possible for a leader, disposition would be the most important, and should be a focus of the hiring process.

When Lee hired me, she analyzed my knowledge, skills, and dispositions. In her interview, she recounted that first year and the characteristics that I possessed, as she stated:

> Yes, you had the dispositions and skills, but you also had a lot of prior knowledge—just not based off of experience. But you had a lot of textbook knowledge too, but not enough. And that was the easiest one to fill in—in the sense that experience is going to

be a great teacher, experience was going to be your great teacher. (Moran, January 15, 2014)

Experience was certainly a great teacher for me, as my journey reflected good moments, bad moments, and God moments. In each of these times, I found I possessed the leadership characteristics that served as guiding lights and frameworks for my own responses. At times, I led by example, while other times I supported students, teachers, staff, or parents as they led the group in a direction that we would like to go—all the while, I sought to inspire the group (Bass, 1985).

The following section describes how leaders, principals specifically, can use the information that I have presented on the lessons I learned from this autoethnography in a practical way for improving their own practice.

Principal Implementation

Leading with a moral and ethical foundation was, and is, very important and natural to me as a leader. I am not afraid to look at any situation, give an honest analysis, and attempt to find a solution. Sometimes "out-of-the-box" methods are needed, but the key is to never let go of the values and essential components for being an effective leader.

Attempting to be a transformational leader was not a simple task and took much work and training, and there are many things I needed to know and do. The process of conducting an autoethnography, allowed me to fully analyze my experiences, challenges, and encounters. It also allowed me to delve deeply into my spirit to assess why I responded, why I did not respond in some cases, and traverse to what I learned. The art of reflection allowed me to grow in grace, maturity, and wisdom at a rate that I did not expect. It left me with a full understanding of

myself, and a thorough belief in myself, and my own aptitude. This process is one that all leaders should experience, especially new principals, so they can reflect, learn, and grow in their leadership abilities. Sometimes it is not easy, and in fact, sometimes there is no torture worse than looking at oneself, but it is an exercise that has amazing results. The three questions I propose that all leaders are required to answer several times during the year are: (1) What challenges did I face? (2) How did I respond to those challenges? and (3) What did I learn from those challenges? By answering these questions, and finding the place where they can reflect, the leaders will be able to find and understand themselves, as well as see God's presence with them during their own journeys—this was certainly my own experience, as validated by this autoethnography.

From my experience in writing this autoethnography and researching Catholic schools, I have several recommendations for future research and several recommendations for leaders, which are detailed in the subsequent section.

Recommendations for Future Research and Leaders

As my professor once stated, "context matters" and context certainly matters in making recommendations for future research and leaders. In this section, I detail my recommendations that arose from my own research and are areas that seemed to be lacking, incomplete, or inconclusive. In no particular order, in the following, I explain ten recommendations in the realms of: Catholic school research; autoethnographic research; Catholic school leadership research; role of pastors; pastor training; training of principals; understanding and accepting diversity; emphasis on community collaboration; mentoring programs; and reflective leadership.

Catholic School Research

Catholic schools in the United States were established in 1783, and were built to be the largest private school system in the world with the highest student enrollment numbers peaking in 1964 (Caruso, 2012). Since 1964, enrollment has steadily declined, as Catholic education is in a "state of dramatic change" (Hallinan, 2000). With this data, the literature I found and presented, and my autoethnography, Catholic schools need to be researched more thoroughly in present times, as well as analyzing the past. As is best stated by Hallinan (2000), "at the crossroads in the life of Catholic education, it is imperative to engage in a reflective evaluation of Catholic schools, to ask honest questions about their future, and to ascertain whether they can continue to be a vital force in American society" (p. 202). Catholic school finance, governance, and other key areas of the schools are not adequately understood or studied, so more research needs to be done in these areas, as well as in the contributions of Catholic education as a whole in order for Catholic education to move forward as a vital force.

Autoethnographic Research

The next recommendation is in the realm of autoethnographic research. In researching autoethnographies, I found definitions such as the "self narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context" (Spry, 2001, p. 710) and it "strives to understand the interaction of individuals not just with others, but with the culture and society in which they live" (Merriam 2002, p. 38). As a novice, the methodology seemed unclear and foreign in scholarly articles, where I could only find a few dissertations written in the style. The methodology needs to be clear, and written in a concise fashion for novices as they embark on their own journeys; I found that writing the autoethnography was exceptionally challenging, because I had to read various

"how-to" guides on the topic (Chang, 2008; Holman et al., 2013) that sometimes contradicted a previous author—the key for me was to find a structure that made sense for my work, remained scholarly in structure, and fit my writing style.

Catholic School Leaders Research

The next recommendation is more research needs to be conducted on Catholic school leaders, as well as other types of school leaders—especially in regard to second year, third year, and fourth year experiences of leaders. With the changing times for Catholic education, the previous roles of Catholic school principals as described as spiritual, educational, and managerial need to be expanded (Schafer, 2004). In reading about and understanding various challenges that other leaders encounter (Keval, 2012; Covey, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2002), it can help inform the practice of the reader's own leadership journey, as new obstacles are encountered. The triage principal, the Catholic version of the "turnaround principal" (Keval, 2012), needs to be further explored as Catholic schools are facing a 67% decline in enrollment in comparison to the 1960's, rising tuition, and an increase in lay employees (DeFiore, 2011).

Role of Pastors

The next recommendation is in the domain of the role of pastors in Catholic schools. Removing the mystery and austere nature of Catholic school governance, 77% of Catholic schools are parochial schools, where the pastor governs the school and the principal reports directly to him (McDonald, 2005). Since the majority of Catholic schools fall under this structure, the role of the pastors needs to be further explored, researched, and more clearly defined in the literature. Pastors could be assigned to a Catholic school arbitrarily (Goldschmidt & Walsh, 2011), or a principal could select their "pastor" representative as I did when I selected

Father Albert since I fell under the diocesan model and lacked a pastor. From my own experience as a principal in my first year, the support of Father Albert was one of the key factors to my success, since I felt empowered as I viewed my work connected to the Catholic Church in the broad sense. This empowerment resulted from what I believed was the role of the pastor for a Catholic school, and my work with him. "Schools can benefit from a parish that is committed to Catholic education, views the school and Catholic education as being central to its mission" (Goldschmidt & Walsh, 2011, p. 15), and the same is true I found for the pastor and principal relationship. This relationship needs to be further explored.

Pastor Training

The next recommendation is in the domain of pastor training from the diocesan level, and builds on the previous recommendation. My recommendation to Catholic leaders is for all pastors in the United States to be trained on the basics of Catholic schools, including their roles within Catholic schools, as well as diocesan school policy, even before they assume their role within their church assignment. Again, 77% of Catholic schools are parochial schools, where the pastor governs the school and the principal reports directly to him (McDonald, 2005), and if they are not adequately trained, this can be an issue as I experienced from the priest at MAS. Going further, seminarians could be trained on Catholic schools and the Catholic schools' role in the United States even before they become priests. There are many aspects to operating a school, and if all priests, meaning all pastors, were trained on these aspects, I believe it would result in an environment conducive for learning, respect, and collaboration between the pastors and the principals.

Training of Principals

The next recommendation is in the realm of training of Catholic school principals. I recommend that Catholic leaders ensure that Catholic school principals are adequately trained before embarking on their leadership journeys. The new Catholic school principals need to fully understand what the requirements are for the position, as well as how to achieve these requirements from a basic level (Schafer, 2004). Specifically, Catholic school principals need to be trained on finance, staffing, enrollment management, marketing, Catholic school history, and various leadership models—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that I identified and categorized from the literature for this study. Most principals were once teachers where curriculum development was a part of their job prior (Ciriello, 1996), but the role of principal requires managerial skills, and an entrepreneurial spirit that may be new to them.

Understanding and Accepting Diversity

The next recommendation is in the realm of Catholic Church and school leaders understanding and accepting of diversity. My recommendation for Catholic school leaders, as well as Church leaders is to fully understand and accept the diversity that surrounds them so that the leader can effectively lead. Every community is different, and as we are called to lead a new community, maybe one different from our own, the leader must take time to understand the community and their various traditions, while respecting their funds of knowledge (Martin, 2012). As a new principal in a new environment, I proved this was possible as I respected the Latino culture and they respected me, even to the point that they accepted me. As a Catholic Church, most types of diversity are accepted and respected, but further investigations need to be conducted on all types of diversity to understand the Church's stance.

Emphasis on Community Collaboration

The next recommendation is in the realm leaders emphasizing community collaboration. My recommendation to leaders is to lead with an emphasis on community collaboration because context matters. A person must have followers in order to be considered a leader, and the most effective approach to leading is involving the community (Bolman & Deal, 2011). Tyrannical leadership is not effective, nor suggested, but in openly and honestly listening to the community's wants and desires, the vision for the leader and group can become clear. Rarely do Catholic school principals work where they live, and even if this was the case, every community and every school is different (Owens & Valesky, 2011, 2015). There is not a "cookie cutter," or a "one-size-fits-all" approach to leading a school as the research indicates, but the leader must be willing to get to know the community members, listen, and even adjust at times to become successful.

Mentoring Programs

The next recommendation is in the domain of mentoring programs for new Catholic school principals. My recommendation for Catholic leaders is to ensure that there are adequate supports for a new principal entering a new school in the form of a mentoring program. The mentoring program can serve both the mentor and the mentee, as I learned from Lee and she learned from me. The mentor can be selected by the principal, or even appointed by the diocese according to the mentor having adequate knowledge in the trials and tribulations that the mentee may experience. This relationship can be beneficial and empowering for a new principal, as well as for the mentor, since both leaders can feel well supported. The program can consist of weekly check-ins, and monthly meetings, where the mentor and the mentee can discuss the happenings

of the school and the mentee's leadership journey. Although this was my experience and was effective, further study is needed.

Reflective Leadership

The next recommendation is in the domain of reflective leadership. After conducting this autoethnography on my leadership journey on my first year and first time as a principal, I highly recommend the practice of reflective leadership for all leaders. The art of reflection is imperative for all leaders where the leader can learn from his or her experiences and encounters, while openly and honestly critiquing their own actions. As I found, the challenge with reflection is finding the right place for the individual, where they are completely comfortable and at peace, and then finding the right time. Leaders can choose to reflect daily for 10 minutes every night, or once a weekly to reflect on the week—anything beyond a week is typically difficult to do since the memories begin to fade. In either case, reflecting at the park is my time to just be.

Conclusion

As I sit on the park bench, under the clear blue skies, listening to the laughs of children playing, I feel a warm breeze that "whooshes" across my face, as I reflect back to my own leadership journey my first year, and first time as a principal. I was a 25-year-old female, inexperienced, not from the tough neighborhood, or from the culture that I was being called to serve, yet I immersed myself in it, and accepted my calling, my vocation, with an open-heart and an open-mind. The knowledge, skills, and disposition that I possessed, including authenticity, love, discipline, self-awareness, and knowledge, some were natural and some I had to learn on the job, each served me well at MAS, which was truly a traumatized environment in the inner-city of Los Angeles.

Experiencing trauma myself as a young child, I knew no matter what I did as a leader, I would need to earn the trust of those I was being called to lead before anything else could happen. Similar to a paramedic arriving on the scene, or a triage leader, I approached MAS with an audacious attitude that all would come out well with hard work, dedication, and prayer, as I triaged the school and the community addressing the major needs first, while moving the community closer to our common vision. Each new challenge I faced, every student that walked through our door, gave me the motivation I needed to continue on my mission, my calling.

Based on the literature and research, the knowledge of the context and climate, the skills of community collaboration, and the disposition of a leader for change were all important to inform my decisions as a leader—the most important of which was my disposition. With the tools that I was blessed with, I faced each challenge, responded to each situation, and learned in the process. All of the experiences, all of the interviews with Lee, Dr. Baxter, and Father Albert, and all of the stories from the students at MAS, have touched me, and allowed me to practice the art of leadership and the art of honest reflection.

In conducting this autoethnography, the weaving of the past and present of my life's leadership journey in combination with the culture and the people that surround me, has made me realize that I do have a story worth sharing, a story that can potentially help others who might find themselves seemingly lost and alone, which is how I felt at times as a leader. Clutching the prayer card that I have carried around all of these years from my teacher in high school, I look down and read the "Footprints" poem:

One night I had a dream...

I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and

Across the sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand;

One belonged to me, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of my life flashed before us,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that many times along the path of my life,

There was only one set of footprints.

I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest

and saddest times in my life.

This really bothered me,

and I questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,

You would walk with me all the way;

But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life,

There is only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why in times when

I needed you the most, you should leave me.

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child.

I love you, and I would never, never leave you during your times

of trial and suffering.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you. (Anonymous)

Looking back up into the clear blue sky, I put the card back into my wallet where it will stay.

Despite where my journey might be, or where it may lead, I am never alone and I am grateful.

APPENDIX A

Superintendent Permission to Use Archdiocese of Los Angeles Name



Cori Marasco <cori.marasco@gmail.com>

LMU

3 messages

Cori Marasco <cori.marasco@gmail.com> Mon, Nov 18, 2013 at 3:51 PM
To: "kcbaxter@la-archdiocese.org" <kcbaxter@la-archdiocese.org>

Dear Dr. Baxter,

To verify, can I use the archdiocese of Los Angeles name for my dissertation? I'm using a pseudonym for the school.

Thank you for your help and continued support.

God Bless,
Cori Marasco

Baxter, Kevin C. <KCBaxter@la-archdiocese.org> Mon, Nov 18, 2013 at 3:59 PM
To: Cori Marasco <cori.marasco@gmail.com>

Yes - that is fine. And I got your text but I won't be at LMU today. Are you going to the Leadership Conference? If so can you bring the proposal?

Thanks,
Kevin

Dr. Kevin Baxter
Superintendent of Elementary Schools
Archdiocese of Los Angeles
3424 Wilshire Blvd., 2nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90010
213-637-7328
Fax: 213-637-6140
www.la-archdiocese.org
Twitter: @kbaxter56

"When the story of Catholic schools is written,
historians will look back on our age and marvel
that against great odds, we changed the ending."
Notre Dame Task Force, 2006

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions Template

1. Describe the school before, during and after my first year as principal.
   1.1. Issues the school was facing
   1.2. Needs of the school and community
   1.3. Relationship with the pastor prior, during and after
2. What qualities and characteristics did you see in me before, during and after my first year as principal?
   2.1. How did you know me and why did you hire/recommend me for this position?
   2.2. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions did I possess and how did they evolve?
   2.3. My behavior and language
   2.4. Frequency in finding others with the same qualities and characteristics
   2.5. What do you recognize as qualities and characteristics of an effective principal in this type of environment as I walked into?
3. As a first year principal, what did you learn from observing my own experiences?
   3.1. What is it in me that you see in yourself?
   3.2. What did you learn that could be utilized for training other first time, first year principals?

APPENDIX C

Lelana Moran's Informed Consent

LELANA

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation 1-15-14

Loyola Marymount University

Rescuing a Traumatized School: My First Year as Principal

1) I hereby authorize Corena Marasco, Doctoral Candidate to include me (my child/ward) in the following research study: Rescuing a Traumatized School: My First Year as Principal

2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to examine the leader at MAS during the 2011-2012 school year, and her first year as principal, where she had to design and implement a new educational model, and build up a school from the brink of closure. This auto-ethnographic study, as told through the leaders voice will also detail the leader's overall experience at a new school site, in a new position, and the experience of constructing and implementing school-wide change with the pressure of potential school closure. She will be analyzing what she did, how she led, what successes she experienced, what mistakes she made, and what she learned as a leader.

This auto-ethnographic research study is designed to answer three research questions:

1. As a new, first time principal at MAS, a Catholic school in danger of closing, what challenges did she experience?
2. As a new leader, how did she respond to the challenges to bring about change at MAS?
3. What did she learn from this first year, first time leadership experience?

I will be interviewed about her experiences as well as about MAS and my leadership knowledge, which will last for approximately 1 hour

3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I know about the school in the study, as well as the first year, first time principal discussed.

4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will be interviewed.

The investigator(s) will ask me a series of questions.

These procedures have been explained to me by Corena Marasco, Doctoral Candidate.

5) I understand that I will be videotaped, audiotaped and/or photographed in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these tapes will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the tapes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

6) I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: my real name will be used as well as my thoughts on the topic.

7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are vast. The insights from a first year, first time principal will help new and veteran principals, as well as serve as a reference for future principals, in dealing with and succeeding in difficult new environments. This personal account and reflective approach will provide leadership strategies for innovative change and may help to inform struggling schools and the leadership within those schools. As a Triage principal, a term which I coined to describe a Catholic school or a private school principal who enters a traumatized environment, this study will help the researcher grow as a leader as she reflects on her own practices and demonstrate the application of theory, which have previously come naturally to her. Certain characteristics that define a Triage principal will emerge and will aid diocesan leadership in recruiting and identifying these types of individuals for principalships in difficult environments. Overall, the researcher hopes to inspire and invigorate the readers to become change agents for the transformation of education within all schools, not only schools in poor, inner city or troubled environments.

9) I understand that Corena Marasco, Doctoral Candidate who can be reached at cmarasco@lion.lmu.edu will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.

10) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.

11) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to (e.g., my future medical care at LMU.)

12) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.

13) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.

14) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.

22) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Hardy, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 258-5465, david.hardy@lmu.edu.

23) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature Liliana A. Moran Date 1/15/2014

Witness [signature] Date 1/15/2014

APPENDIX D

Kevin Baxter's Informed Consent

BAXTER

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation 1-21-14

Loyola Marymount University

Rescuing a Traumatized School: My First Year as Principal

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The investigator(s) will ask me a series of questions.

These procedures have been explained to me by Corena Marasco, Doctoral Candidate.

5) I understand that I will be videotaped, audiotaped and/or photographed in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these tapes will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the tapes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

6) I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: my real name will be used as well as my thoughts on the topic.

7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are vast. The insights from a first year, first time principal will help new and veteran principals, as well as serve as a reference for future principals, in dealing with and succeeding in difficult new environments. This personal account and reflective approach will provide leadership strategies for innovative change and may help to inform struggling schools and the leadership within those schools. As a Triage principal, a term which I coined to describe a Catholic school or a private school principal who enters a traumatized environment, this study will help the researcher grow as a leader as she reflects on her own practices and demonstrate the application of theory, which have previously come naturally to her. Certain characteristics that define a Triage principal will emerge and will aid diocesan leadership in recruiting and identifying these types of individuals for principalships in difficult environments. Overall, the researcher hopes to inspire and invigorate the readers to become change agents for the transformation of education within all schools, not only schools in poor, inner city or troubled environments.

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23) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature _____ Date 1/21/14

Witness _____ Date 1/21/14

APPENDIX E

Father Albert Bahhuth's Informed Consent

ALBERT

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation 1-25-14

Loyola Marymount University

Rescuing a Traumatized School: My First Year as Principal

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7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are vast. The insights from a first year, first time principal will help new and veteran principals, as well as serve as a reference for future principals, in dealing with and succeeding in difficult new environments. This personal account and reflective approach will provide leadership strategies for innovative change and may help to inform struggling schools and the leadership within those schools. As a Triage principal, a term which I coined to describe a Catholic school or a private school principal who enters a traumatized environment, this study will help the researcher grow as a leader as she reflects on her own practices and demonstrate the application of theory, which have previously come naturally to her. Certain characteristics that define a Triage principal will emerge and will aid diocesan leadership in recruiting and identifying these types of individuals for principalships in difficult environments. Overall, the researcher hopes to inspire and invigorate the readers to become change agents for the transformation of education within all schools, not only schools in poor, inner city or troubled environments.

9) I understand that Corena Marasco, Doctoral Candidate who can be reached at cmarasco@lion.lmu.edu will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.

10) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.

11) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to (e.g., my future medical care at LMU.)

12) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.

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23) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature _____ Date 1/25/14

Witness _____ Date 1/25/14

APPENDIX F

Archival Student Semi-Structured Questionnaire Template

Dear Students,

In order to better assist you, below, please list the top 5 things that you would like to see changed at your school. Money does not matter.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

APPENDIX G

Newspaper Article (Hoag, 2012): Catholic Schools See Marketing Aid Enrollment

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After 97 years, [MAS] was closing— enrollment had dwindled to just 35 children last year at what was once one of the West Coast's biggest Catholic schools.

But with a new principal who knocked on doors, offered X Box video game consoles to kids who brought in a friend, and recruited families who lost their bid in a charter school lottery, the East Los Angeles school stayed open — 132 pupils are registered for this fall.

Call it educational evangelism. Roman Catholic schools are seeing years of marketing efforts starting to pay off in spite of tough competition from charter schools and the lingering effects of a devastating recession.

After seeing years of relentless enrollment decline, several key dioceses across the nation saw students trickle back to their schools over the past year. They say it comes down to a cultural change in Catholic education that has taken a while to implement but is finally taking root.

"If we want to continue to survive, we have to think like a business," said Domenico Pilato, who heads the Archdiocese of Los Angeles' school marketing project.

Nationally, Catholic school enrollment is still waning — closing 167 schools and losing 34,000 pupils over the past year. But educators say the number of schools with waiting lists increased by 171 and 34 schools opened.

The archdioceses of Los Angeles, Boston and Chicago, which have all employed aggressive marketing programs, have seen student upticks, offering hope the exodus can be turned around on a larger scale.

In Los Angeles, where enrollment had plummeted by more than 2,000 students a year for the past decade, elementary enrollment increased by 300 students last year. In Boston, the decline slowed to a 20-year low of 1 percent. Chicago, the nation's largest diocesan school system, saw city elementary enrollment increase by 8 percent.

Smaller dioceses also report gains. In Lafayette, Ind., where two schools closed in 2009, 300 new kids enrolled and plans are afoot to open an elementary school. Bridgeport, Conn., reported a five percent enrollment jump.

"Catholic schools are beginning to market and promote themselves," said Shane Martin, dean of education at Loyola Marymount University. "It's really about getting the word out about this option. People don't know much about it."

Schools realized the need to start marketing more aggressively some years ago, but it's been a slow shift in a conservative environment that historically never had to advertise itself.

In Los Angeles, some high school principals reluctant to take on marketing duties had to be replaced, said Monsignor Sabato Pilato, superintendent of high schools, who is Domenico's brother.

"Something different had to happen," the monsignor said.

Margaret Dames, superintendent of Bridgeport's Catholic schools, said she went through a personal learning curve. "I was not used to marketing," she said. "We're getting better at it."

It's a far cry from the 1960s when Catholic families flocked to parochial schools staffed mainly by priests and nuns, who earned a pittance and were renowned for wielding rulers to rap knuckles and check skirt length. Catholic school enrollment hit a high of 5.2 million in 13,000 schools during that decade.

These days, enrollment stands around 2 million in 6,800 schools that cost more to run. With religious vocations attracting few entrants, lay teachers staff 97 percent of classrooms and schools must cope with payroll, pensions and health insurance.

In more recent years, charter schools, which are autonomous publicly funded schools, have also siphoned off students in urban neighborhoods where Catholic schools once catered to European immigrants and then carved out a niche with minority pupils. Some charters even adopt uniforms resembling parochial plaids.

The rise of charters, in turn, has caused public schools to get more competitive with specialties such as magnets, small learning communities, performing arts and language programs.

"Charter schools have affected traditional public schools and private schools, particularly Catholic schools," Martin said. "There is more competition and choice than ever before."

Sister Mary Paul McCaughey, schools superintendent of the Archdiocese of Chicago, pointed to charters' main advantage over her schools: "The attraction is clearly the freebie."

Catholic school tuition averages $3,700 for elementary grades, and $8,100 for secondary, although many students receive financial aid and fees only pay for about 75 percent of costs. The tab is rounded out by the church and donations.

But Catholic educators say their philosophy of coupling solid academics with moral values yields superior results: 99 percent of students graduate and 85 percent go to college, according to the National Catholic Educational Association. The challenge has been touting those accomplishments in a tradition that values humility.

"Catholic schools have been reluctant to tell their story. It seems like boasting," said Karen Ristau, association president. "We're not particularly boasters."

That's changing. Schools have formed volunteer marketing committees, with some like Chicago and Bridgeport paying $2,500 stipends to parents who take on formal duties.

Los Angeles has one of the more sophisticated programs, which Pilato launched at the behest of his brother, who became alarmed when secondary enrollment sagged by 750 students in 2008.

Domenico Pilato, who had worked in city government outreach projects, organized each archdiocese high school to appoint a parent volunteer team to develop a marketing plan and taught them how to do it.

Now, those schools are required to employ a fulltime marketing director, employees undergo training in everything from social media to customer service, and the initiative has expanded to elementary schools.

Schools sponsor socials with preschool directors, real estate agents, and Spanish-speaking parents, and partner with youth organizations like the Boys & Girls Club and Little Leagues to host events. Kids in catechism classes get a spring break camp at a Catholic school, while parents who bring babies for baptism get a flood of information.

To compete academically, schools offer new programs with iPads, Mandarin Chinese and even a film and media school in Hollywood, as well as a 200-day school year. Most public schools have 180 days.

"This is the first year we have not closed a school," said Kevin Baxter, Archodiocese of Los Angeles elementary superintendent. "People are seeing the value."

Still, schools in other places are struggling. In San Diego, where two schools have closed in as many years, Our Lady's School hovers on the brink. The school has 273 pre K-8 students, but most are low-income and cannot pay full tuition.

School President Noel Bishop tried coupons on the back of supermarket receipts. A teacher wore a sandwich-board to advertise an open house. The Virgin of Guadalupe was even incorporated in the school logo to appeal to Mexican-Americans. But the efforts, plus donations and a diocese emergency loan, have not closed the gap.

"We're trying to be forward thinking but we've seen a lot of families lose their jobs," he said.

At [MAS] in East Los Angeles, which back in the 1940s schooled 1,000 pupils, Principal Cori Marasco's latest hook to reel in more pre K-8 students is turning an auditorium into an indoor basketball court, paid for by foundation donations. It's part of her plan to make the school a community center in the impoverished, gang-plagued neighborhood.

"The park is known for drive-by shootings so kids don't have a place to go," she said. "They can come here — and enroll in school, too." (Hoag, 2012)

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