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A SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS CHALLENGES THE NEW JOURNAL AND THE CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

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I welcome the launching of a new research journal, *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*. At a time in the history of Catholic schools when the public eye is upon us, when our successes and contributions are being lauded, and when national research studies have proven student academic success in our schools, it is an appropriate time for a journal focused specifically on the theory and practice of Catholic education. It is time that a journal reflect upon Catholic schools from the specific perspective of their unique mission and Gospel roots. It is time that research be done which specifically explicates the theory, mission, practice, and results of the Catholic school. Too often it is presumed that Catholic schools are duplicate copies of public schools with religious education added. I am convinced that the research will show that the unique identity and culture of the Catholic school influences the short-term and long-term results of the educational process in those schools. Not enough research has been done to help us understand the educational contribution of the Catholic school to society or to the Church: past, present, and future. I am convinced that research will help prove the amazing contribution that Catholic schools have made and do make to the transformation of society and, therefore, to the building of the Kingdom of God.

PAST RESEARCH THAT HAS IMPACTED THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

During the past 30 years significant educational research has been conducted, research which has impacted the way in which Catholic schools operate. Most Catholic schools have changed and been influenced for the better due

to the findings of these studies. As I reflect upon this research, I categorize it into three areas:

1. Schooling: the Teaching/Learning Process
2. Organizational Theory and Practice/Leadership Theory
3. Catholic Identity: *The Mission and Call of the Catholic School*

SCHOOLING: THE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS

Much interrelated and progressing research has influenced the way Catholic schools look today. The complicated scientific brain research of Sylwester (1994, 1995) and Caine and Caine (1990, 1994) has influenced educators' understanding of the complexity and variety of modes of learning. The significant research on multiple intelligences of Feuerstein (Feuerstein & Hoffman, 1975; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman, & Miller, 1980), Gardner (1993), and Sternberg (1990a, 1990b) has caused educators to find varieties of ways to deliver information and to encourage students to process information and demonstrate their understanding of information. Previous work with learning styles and research regarding thinking skills have also influenced the broadening of the approach to teaching in most schools and classrooms.

From these understandings of multiple modes of learning have come understandings of the need for multiple and authentic assessments of what students are actually learning. Emphasis is now placed on measuring accurately and in a timely fashion what students have learned. Multiple and timely assessments provide opportunity for student reflection upon what has been learned and how (metacognition) and moral judgments about what has been learned and its implications. The work of Wiggins (1989) and Worthen (1993) has certainly clarified the need for multiple, authentic assessments of student progress.

With a deeper understanding of the complexity and variety of learning modes, coupled with an understanding of varieties of assessment possibilities, as well as the increasing complexity of knowledge, there is a reawakening of the call for interdisciplinary or integrated curriculum. Education has always been about making connections. Such a need seems more crucial than ever as information explodes and change escalates. And so schools are adopting block scheduling, team teaching, and integrated curricula. Many of us who have been educators for several decades worked with such educational models in the 1960's and 1970's (IGE, team teaching, and interdisciplinary units). I am convinced that we wore out due to the challenges of complex record keeping; the need for wide range, rapid research; and the time demands of team meetings. There is much more hope for such integrated approaches to learning today due to the assistance of technology. The research of Aschbacher and Herman (1989), Jacobs (1989), and Lake (1994) calls educators to pursue once again an integrated, connected approach to

teaching and learning.

There is a significant body of research which supports the advantages of cooperative learning. Theory and research evidence have been produced from psychologists, sociologists, and educators. Cooperative learning research asserts that more is learned and accomplished in a cooperative learning process than in an individual learning setting. The whole is greater than the total of its parts. Researchers such as Deutsch (1949), Lewin (1947), Johnson and Johnson (1994), Kagan (1989), and Slavin (1995) have done extensive research on models and outcomes of cooperative learning. Organizational theorists speak to the effectiveness of the learning organization in which all are learning together and on teams. And yet schools struggle with cooperative learning modes. The ingrained competitive nature of our society seems to interfere with the implementation of cooperative strategies. It seems that the Catholic school, which stands for cooperation and community, should be the model of cooperative learning and its positive effects. Perhaps this is an area of research to be pursued from the context of the unique identity and call of the Catholic school.

All of this important educational research has affected the process of teaching and learning in the Catholic school. I would challenge the Catholic research community to take a look at some of these educational theories and practices and their results specifically on Catholic schools. How has the unique identity and culture of the Catholic school impacted the implementation of the findings on effective teaching and learning practice?

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY/ PRACTICE: LEADERSHIP THEORY

Much that has been written about organizations and their leadership has affected the Catholic school. Greenleaf's work on servant leadership (1977) provided a reflective tool for many principals. Senge's understanding of organizations as learning organizations (1990) has challenged Catholic school principals to reflect upon models of leadership, and the inclusion of teachers in problem solving, decision making, and teaming. Again, it would seem that specific research focused on how Catholic schools implement some of the major theories of leadership, organizational change, organizational learning, and the culture of organizations could be helpful. How do the theological roots of the Catholic school, particularly its sense of mission as a community, influence its organizational effectiveness? What about our strong belief that parents are the primary educators of their children, that schools are partners with their parents, and that boards share in a collaborative leadership model? It seems Catholic schools as organizations have much to teach other schools and other organizations. The research needs to be done and shared.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY/ THE MISSION AND CALL OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

We are at the crossroads of our understanding of the Catholic school. Catholic schools were founded in this country to "protect the faith" and to "mainstream children into society." In certain areas the Catholic schools continue to do just those things, especially for new immigrant populations. But in many other communities Catholic schools are recognized for providing academic excellence in a value-based, religiously rooted setting. There are bodies of research which speak to the effects of the Catholic schools on the religious values of students. Greeley and Rossi (1966); Greeley, McCourt, and McCready (1976); and Benson and Guerra (1985) have done research which speaks to long-term effects of the Catholic school on the belief systems of graduates; their connection to Church; their sense of God, life, service, commitment, etc.

As the Church and society change, as peoples' attitudes toward parishes shift, and as societal values challenge parents and their children, we need more in-depth research to show the effects of the Catholic school on families—their faith, their life priorities, and their actions.

WHAT RESEARCH NEEDS TO BE DONE

Having reviewed significant bodies of research that have affected schools as schools, schools as organizations, and schools as rooted in the Catholic Church and its mission, I now propose some of the areas of research that are critical to the development of Catholic education.

First, I would challenge researchers to conduct thorough research on the *implementation of many of the current educational theories (multiple intelligences, multiple assessment, cooperative learning, integrated curriculum)* in Catholic schools. I speculate that the organization and culture of the Catholic school impacts the implementation and success of many of these theories and practices. I would include in this call more specific research connecting Catholic schools to the effective schools research. Again, the Catholic school mission, philosophy, and organization have directly influenced the effectiveness of the Catholic school. Another very important aspect of research needed about schools and schooling has to do with technology. We need to know how technology is being used in Catholic schools and how it could be used. There are also significant values issues connected to the use of technology in our schools.

Second, I would suggest that Catholic schools be specifically studied in relationship to many of the current organizational and leadership theories. It seems to me that many Catholic schools are living examples of organizational learning and problem solving, teaming, delegated authority, collabora-

tion, and shared governance, ideals that so many other organizations are striving to achieve. Such research would confirm what is working in Catholic school organizations and provide models for other schools.

Third, I would suggest that the most important research must focus specifically on the Catholic schools as Catholic schools. There is so much more we need to know and understand about who we are, what we are doing, and what we need to do to move the Catholic schools into the future. We need a much better database indicating who chooses Catholic schools, where they come from, and where they go. What motivates parents to choose a Catholic school education? We need more follow-up data regarding graduates and dropouts from Catholic schools. What do they do? What motivates them? What do they believe? Are they affiliated with the Church? Do they practice the social teachings of the Church? Are they working to transform society?

We need more data about our principals and teachers. Why are they in Catholic schools? Why do they stay? Or leave? Where did they come from? What are their credentials? How well are they prepared as educational professionals? Do they understand the mission and ministry of the Catholic school? How have they been prepared for their work and ministry? We need to know the same information about Catholic school superintendents. From such a database so much more could be researched and learned about the uniqueness of the Catholic school and the effectiveness of its work and ministry.

So much more research could be done regarding the unique identity of the Catholic school. We need to understand more about what makes a school Catholic. What are the criteria and qualities, both quantitative and qualitative? What are the results of a schooling model which integrates the spiritual, faith dimension of the student into all that is taught? What are the long-term effects of schooling within a Christian community, a setting where prayer and worship are integral to the school experience? What are the effects of the Catholic school on long-term student attitudes, sense of affiliation, and sense of responsibility for others?

We need more research on the effects of teaching the social justice principles of the Church. How well are these principles being taught and practiced in Catholic schools? What are the long-term effects on the attitudes and practices of graduates? What needs to be changed within the practice of the schools? What are the attitudes of Catholic school graduates toward racial and ethnic issues, poverty and social justice issues, and dignity of life issues? Are Catholic schools making a difference?

We need to know and understand more about how principals and teachers are being prepared and formed for their roles as educational ministers. What programs are in place? What catechetical preparation approaches are being used for principals and teachers? Is the most up-to-date catechetical research being implemented in Catholic schools? Are principals and teachers

being formed in their faith? We need to understand more about the effects of parental involvement in the Catholic school. We say that parents are the primary educators and that they are partners with the school. What do these statements mean and how are they practiced in real school settings? Are there observable effects of such parental involvement in the school? Are parents affected by such partnerships? Are children changed due to parental involvement and partnership? Are parents of Catholic school students affiliated with the Church? More or less? Why?

We need to understand the effects of changing governance models on the Catholic school. What are the effects of lay boards? Interparochial schools? Independent boards and schools? What sponsorship models are working? Not working? What are we learning from the new models being tried? What components must be present in order to have a successful governance model? What components should be avoided? There is so much to be learned from good research about present and evolving practices.

I am convinced that Catholic schools are needed in today's world more than they have ever been. Parents and children are seeking out schools which support their values; which provide communities of faith and support for children; which provide quality education and prepare young people to be responsible, caring, faith-filled citizens and leaders for tomorrow. The challenges of quality education continue to change. We must understand those challenges and move Catholic schools into the 21st century as schools of excellence. We must have good research.

The demands of leadership and organization for the school of tomorrow are great. Leaders must be adaptable and able to problem solve with their constituents. Each organization must be a learning organization. We must have good research to help us understand what components make Catholic schools effective schools. What types of leaders are needed? How should they be developed and formed?

Catholic schools are a mission and ministry of the Church. They are places of evangelization and catechesis. Principals and teachers must be prepared to understand that identity and role. Good research will help all Catholic school educators understand effective models of teacher preparation and formation.

Furthermore, we must reflect upon the Catholic identity of the Catholic school, reflect upon best practices of Catholic schooling, and share those best practices with others.

I welcome the journal *Catholic Education* to the Catholic educational professional community. I challenge its leadership to seek out quality research and to report that research well. This journal has the potential to make a significant contribution to the future of quality Catholic schools for the 21st century. Welcome!

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