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6-1-1999

## Introduction

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### Recommended Citation

Travis, M. P. (1999). Introduction. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 2 (4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.0204102013>

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## INTRODUCTION

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The week that we assembled the articles for this issue's focus on finance of Catholic schools, the National Catholic Educational Association published a new manual, *Business Management in the Catholic Schools* by Joan Correia, OP. This valuable handbook concludes with an important observation:

The call to stewardship is an important challenge for Catholic schools. The work of the business office, although often behind the scenes, facilitates the school's ability to meet this challenge. Business managers should realize the value of their contribution in carrying out the mission of the school. They are called to approach financial matters in a Gospel context, remembering that they are about God's work, mundane as it may appear. It is this focus that enables business managers to be a part of the goal of all Catholic education, "to teach as Jesus did." (1999, p. 49)

Each author in the focus section is aware of the need to approach the financial aspects of the Catholic school in a Gospel context. In fact, the two scholars have demonstrated the need to make an explicit and visible connection between financial planning and the core reason for the existence of Catholic schools: the evangelical formation of their students.

Theodore J. Wallace demonstrates the urgent need to refocus on our distinctive Catholic identity if Catholic schools are not to be replaced by charter schools. Charter schools often do what Catholic schools claim to do, yet are tuition free. The students we are most eager to reach—the very poor—are those who are unaccustomed to paying tuitions or fees. To strengthen his case for the need seriously to consider publicly funded vouchers, Wallace cites the work of Peterson and Hassel, *Learning from School Choice*, reviewed in this issue.

Richard Burke argues that while financial planning is essential, it is inappropriate when used with a view toward determining future directions of the school. His Catholic School Planning Model flows from the philosophy and mission statement of the school.

In light of the current emphasis on the Catholic identity of the Church's schools, it is important that financial concerns be viewed in the context of the question of identity. The schools' financial aspects are intricately woven into the fibers of the materials which constitute the responses to the two important questions of the day, "Whom do we serve?" and "How do we serve?"

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