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Editors' Comments

Joseph M. O'Keefe

Lorraine Ozar

Michael James

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

Catholic schools need to be Catholic.

Anyone familiar with Catholic schools knows that the composition of the teaching staff has changed drastically in the last 50 years. In 1960, over 90% of the teaching staff in Catholic schools were religious. Today, almost 96% of the teaching staff is lay and fewer than 5% are religious (McDonald, 2008). In this issue of the journal, two articles (Tidd and Proehl & Suzuki) address the issue of lay teachers carrying on the charism of the religious communities that sponsor their respective schools. These two articles discuss professional development programs that foster the spirit of Saint Jean Baptiste de LaSalle among teachers in schools sponsored by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. One finds similar programs in schools sponsored by a wide variety of religious communities. These articles add to a growing body of literature about fostering charism when members of sponsoring communities are few or, in an increasing number of cases, no longer present at all.

Catholic schools need to be schools.

Catholic schools not only need to be Catholic, they need to be schools, schools that are characterized by academic excellence. The third article in this issue (Kuchey, Morrison, & Geer) addresses a crucial area for improvement in all sectors of public and private schools: science, math, and technology. International comparative studies raise concerns about math and science skills of students in the United States. Domestic studies point to a growing achievement gap in math and science on the basis of socioeconomic status and race. Other studies describe the mediocre qualifications of many math and science teachers. Professional development is an important ingredient in efforts to confront these challenges.

The results of professional development need to be measured to ensure that students are receiving an excellent education. An article by Leanne Kallemeyn describes some of the assessment and evaluation practices in public and Catholic schools. She outlines implications for Catholic schools and presents assessment and evaluation practices that do not rely solely on standardized test scores. This article continues the conversation on accountability and assessment raised in the last issue's focus section.

We are very grateful that Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, J.D., Ph.D., a renowned leader in legal issues that pertain to Catholic schools, has provided our focus section for this issue. In her article, Sister Shaughnessy provides an important overview of recent court decisions and fundamental principles that should guide Catholic school administrators in making policies and decisions

that are legally sound. Provision for special education is an important dimension of the rights and responsibilities of students and schools. Sister Shaughnessy solicited an article that examines the legal and moral issues related to the inclusion of students whose learning capabilities and learning styles differ from the mainstream (Scanlan).

Three books are reviewed in this issue of the journal. Two reviews are presented of *A Place of Honour: Reaching Out to Students at Risk in Ontario Catholic Schools*, a resource guide about efforts in Ontario, Canada, to serve students at risk. The second is a review of Jonothan Kozol's latest book, *The Shame of the Nation*, an exploration of the way schools should respond to an increasingly diverse student population. The third review is of *Social Studies for Social Justice: Teaching Strategies for the Elementary Classroom*, a book presenting a secular approach to providing a socially just classroom that, when implemented in Catholic schools, can prepare students to live out the Catholic mandate to create a more just society.

McDonald, D. (2008). *United States Catholic elementary and secondary schools 2007-2008: The annual statistical report on schools, enrollment, and staffing*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association.

Joseph M. O'Keefe, S.J., Lorraine Ozar, & Michael James, *Co-Editors*