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Volume 11 | Issue 1

Article 1

9-1-2007

Editors' Comments

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Recommended Citation

Nuzzi, R. J., & Hunt, T. C. (2007). Editors' Comments. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 11 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.1101012013>

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

With most schools and universities back in session, fall provides an opportunity for growth and renewal. There is something life-giving and sustaining in the traditional academic calendar. Though many familiar patterns and schedules repeat themselves, there is newness and crispness in evidence this time of year. Although many of our students are returning to us, they are changed somehow, different, older, and maybe even wiser. There is a renewed sense of possibility in the classroom, that fleeting, energetic wonder that feels it can accomplish all things. There is new life in this learning, new grace in this moment.

In youth, it is difficult to appreciate the dynamic flow of the calendar. With the passing of years, however, it becomes clearer. The cyclical nature of school—the excitement of September, the low energy of May and June—are best understood as our participation in the Paschal Mystery. Each fall we rise anew, a resurrection of sorts, to claim the miracle of learning and new life. We die many deaths throughout the year, only to arrive at exhaustion at the year's end. Perhaps that is what draws and holds many people of faith to education: teaching is a unique way of dying and rising with Christ each school year. If this is an accurate description of your ministry, you will understand the chronologically displaced but theologically precise greeting that follows. Happy Easter! Enjoy these days and classes of new beginnings and new life.

Catholic Education is itself in the midst of growth and change. Recently, our governing board passed a motion approving a new home for our editorial offices, beginning in July 2008. Following our policy of rotating editorial responsibilities among member institutions, Boston College has been selected as the new home for the journal. More information on this move will be provided in subsequent issues and in a direct mailing to subscribers. Transition efforts will begin in January 2008, so that we can continue to provide our readers a timely, thoughtful, and scholarly publication that advances the overall educational mission of the Church.

This issue delves deeply into two major challenges facing K-12 Catholic schools, one an internal, human resource issue, the second a public policy question. The lead, focus article and several responses to it address the pastor-principal relationship in a Catholic school. Fraught with every manner of difficulty—canonical, psychological, social, and fiscal—the quality of that relationship is vital to the success of a school and to the spiritual health of a parish community. The role of the pastor in the ongoing renewal of Catholic schools has been somewhat overlooked in recent research. This article is a good beginning at a conversation, one we hope that pastors and principals

can read together and discuss for the benefit of the entire parish community.

School choice and charter schools are the topics for the focus section, with two articles reviewing three programs in Washington, DC, Arizona, and Michigan. We remain enthusiastic about the potential of such programs to provide a high quality education to more students each year, and the success chronicled throughout the focus section goes a long way to helping grow these programs. Because Catholic schools remain the largest single choice of parents given some tax-supported options for the education of their children, Catholic school leaders and parents should be well-informed about the structure of school choice legislation, early results emanating from schools receiving choice students, and the changes in evidence back in the sending schools. While it is true that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) have never been able to arrive at a comprehensive, national strategic policy statement for school choice in Catholic education, the scholarly consensus grows along with public demand that choice programs are the wave of the future.

Charter schools are a different matter entirely. Advocates for charters will find Matthew Ladner's article in this issue both instructive and challenging. Ladner argues persuasively that it is possible for an individual state to sustain both choice and charter schools. It takes some effort and planning, but it is possible. Absent the efforts and legislation Ladner describes, charter schools are the most serious threat to Catholic schools in the inner-city environment and stand to help hasten the departure of Catholic schools from the urban core, as families choose the free charter school over the tuition-charging Catholic school. If Catholic educational leaders are serious about the religious purpose of Catholic schools and see growth in holiness and encountering Christ at the heart of a Catholic education, it makes little sense to support charter schools where such religious formation is not allowed. In this narrower sense, school choice options appear much more desirable, as do tax credit programs, than charter schools.

Know of our support and solicitude for you and your ministry as this new academic year begins. We look forward with you to the joys and hopes, the challenges and pains, the successes and smiles of the year ahead.

Ronald J. Nuzzi, Thomas C. Hunt, Editors