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# Addressing the Needs of Young Children and Families: Early Childhood Education and Services in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities

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## **Cover Page Footnote**

We would like to acknowledge the generous support of this project by Better Way Foundation, as well as thank our national partners, the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) and Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), and our national partners, Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs in the Archdiocese of Washington. We also extend our gratitude to the project's Advisory Panel, which was comprised of experts from The Catholic University of America and Notre Dame. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the contribution of graduate and undergraduate research assistants to the project, particularly Franssy Zablah and Sean Hayes.

## Addressing the Needs of Young Children and Families: Early Childhood Education and Services in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities

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*Nationally, focus is increasing on the developmental experiences of young children (birth to age 8). Twenty four (arch)dioceses in large metropolitan areas participated in a survey identifying the extent and nature of services provided by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs to young children and their families. Six hundred and seventy Catholic schools and 100 Catholic Charities programs completed surveys. Key findings suggest that Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs are engaged in a plethora of early childhood services and educational activities with young children and families. Both entities provide direct education and services to young children, are engaged in supporting families through a variety of initiatives, and have complementary as well as distinctive approaches. Opportunities were identified within Catholic Schools and within Catholic Charities programs. The potential benefits of increasing collaborations between Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs, and with others, were highlighted to comprehensively meet the varied (and, at times, extensive) needs of young children and families.*

Keywords: Catholic schools, Catholic Charities, Early Childhood, Family Services, Collaboration

Nationally, there is increasing focus on the developmental experiences of young children and the services that their families receive. The provision of early childhood care and education services for children between birth and 8 years of age continues to expand in the United States as a result of three primary forces. First, most parents are engaged in the work force during the early years of their children's lives. With approximately 80% of preschoolers in non-parental care (Jacobson Chernoff, Flanagan, McPhee, & Park, 2007), early childhood care and education services are needed for the majority of young American children. Second, scientific studies increasingly demonstrate the positive influence that high quality early childhood services have on children's developmental trajectories, particularly for children from disadvan-

tagged communities (e.g., Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011). Third, a wide range of funding entities, from the federal and state governments to philanthropic foundations, have committed billions of dollars toward the implementation and maintenance of early childhood services in response to familial needs and empirical evidence of the positive contributions of early care and education (White House, 2014).

The national expansion of early childhood services is mirrored in the Catholic sector among Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs. Among Catholic schools, the provision of early care and education within Catholic schools has been found to grow at a striking rate in some locales. In a study conducted with 11 (arch)dioceses, preschool enrollment increased by 20% over just a five year period (Frabutt & Waldron, 2013). At the national level, there are now more children enrolled in preschool than in any other grade (K-12) in Catholic schools (McDonald & Schultz, 2015). The extent of early childhood services provided by Catholic schools may be even more extensive since some also serve infants and toddlers, though the quantity is unknown.

Catholic Charities (CCUSA) programs are also engaged with young children and their families, with a strong focus on serving vulnerable, impoverished communities. Early childhood services by Catholic Charities programs include direct care initiatives such as child care programs and early preventive intervention programs (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start), as well as services supporting the well-being of the whole family (e.g., parent education, housing, and services for disabilities, nutrition, physical health, and mental health; CCUSA, 2013a). For example, 56 Catholic Charities agencies provide early childhood care and education services to nearly 60,000 young children each year, while 75 agencies provide fatherhood and marriage services to approximately 35,000 individuals (CCUSA, 2013b).

As illustrated by the statistics, Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs provide early childhood care and education services to many children and families across the nation. Currently lacking is a detailed understanding of the nature of these services, particularly for urban communities with high levels of familial poverty. Not only do these young children and families face multiple challenges that too often result in adverse long-term sequelae, the opportunities for positive outcomes when engaged in early preventive, comprehensive services are promising (e.g., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010; Vogel, Xue, Moiduddin, Kisker, &

Carlson, 2010). Moreover, disadvantaged and disenfranchised communities may particularly benefit from the Catholic sector (Hallinan & Kubitschek, 2010; Litton, Martin, Higareda, & Mendoza, 2010). In light of such findings, remarkably little is known about the provision of early care and education services by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs serving urban, impoverished communities.

In addition, there is a dearth of research on how Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs collaborate with each other and with community resources to integrate services across different sectors to enhance systems for supporting young children and their families in need. Collaboration endeavors in the public sphere have been shown to have the potential to yield positive effects (e.g., Daka-Mulwanda, Thornburg, Filbert & Klein, 1995; Nolan, Cartmel, & Macfarlane, 2012; O'Brien et al, 2009; Purcal, Muir, Patulny, Thomson, & Flaxman, 2011; Sanders, 2001). Collaborative partnerships between Catholic schools and universities have been developed to strengthen pedagogical practices for ethnically and linguistically diverse children, as well as those with learning differences (Borrero, 2010; Henk, Maney, Baxter, & Montejano, 2013; Montejano, 2010; Scanlan & Zehrbach, 2010; Shriberg et al., 2012; Whipp & Scanlan, 2009). However, no known study has examined the coordination and integration of early childhood services between Catholic schools and Catholic Charities, nor their funding and staffing needs.

The present study aimed to build the knowledge base about the provision of early childhood services within and across Catholic settings, with a focus on large metropolitan areas with high familial poverty and Catholic populaces. Principal research questions included:

1. What funds support early childhood services and education in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs?
2. Who are the young children and how are they served in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs?
3. Who are the families of young children and how are they served in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs?
4. Who are the staff serving young children and families in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs?
5. Which are the community partners of Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs?

## Methods

### Participants and Sampling

Urban metropolitan areas across the country were invited to participate in the national survey. Selection criteria included large urban size (population of at least 250,000), familial poverty rates that met or exceeded the national federal rate (at least 11.7%), and substantive Catholic representation (either among top 25 largest Catholic dioceses or top 25 largest Catholic school systems). Twenty-eight dioceses and archdioceses in large urban metropolitan areas were identified. Subsequently, each of the (arch)bishops was contacted to inform him of the project's intention to survey the Catholic schools and the Catholic Charities programs in his (arch)diocese. One (arch)diocese declined participation.

Catholic school superintendents and Catholic Charities directors of each of the remaining twenty-seven (arch)dioceses were invited to participate. Of these, superintendents and/or Catholic Charities directors of 24 (arch)dioceses participated. These included Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Fresno, Galveston-Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Louisville, Miami, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, and Washington, DC.

Once superintendents and/or Catholic Charities directors agreed to participate, they were asked to provide lists of Catholic schools and/or Catholic Charities programs that served children birth to age 8. The principals in 1446 schools and coordinators from 104 Catholic Charities programs were invited to contribute to the project. The participation rates were acceptable for an online national survey: 46% for Catholic schools (n=670) and 96% for Catholic Charities programs (n=100).

### Procedures

**National partners.** The study was conducted in full partnership with national partners, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA). NCEA and CCUSA were engaged in the identification of sampling criteria and research questions, survey question review, participant outreach, data interpretation, and dissemination to constituents.

**Survey construction, data collection, and data cleaning.** Draft survey questions were additionally reviewed by advising experts, as well as princi-

pals and Catholic Charities staff from (arch)dioceses not participating in the project. Once finalized, the surveys were administered through Vovici, an on-line platform. National data collection began in October 2013 and concluded in February 2014. Thus, the results presented in this report reflect the early childhood services being provided during this time frame. After surveys were submitted by principals and Catholic Charities staff, they were examined for potential errors and completeness.

**Analyses.** Descriptive analyses were conducted in SPSS and Excel. In the interest of space, results for Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs are often presented concurrently in a table. However, direct comparative analyses were not conducted and are cautioned against since Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs have distinct missions and, thus, aims and activities. Specifically, Catholic schools focus the “evangelizing, catechizing, and teaching” while Catholic Charities’ mission is to “provide service to people in need, to advocate for justice in social structures, and to call the entire church and other people of good will to do the same” (NCEA, 2013; CCUSA, 2015).

### **Limitations**

Understanding the limitations to the national survey provides a framework for interpreting the following results. First, the survey focused on large metropolitan locales with high concentrations of Catholicism and families in poverty. The provision of early childhood education and services by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs may differ in areas of the nation that are more rural, more affluent, and less Catholic in nature. Second, the results do not describe the nature of early childhood services by Catholic entities beyond Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs, other private or non-profit organizations, or the public sector. Third, as participation in the survey was voluntary, participation gaps were evidenced at various levels. In some (arch)dioceses, the Catholic schools participated while the Catholic Charities programs elected not to (or vice versa). Fourth, the listings of Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs provided by superintendents and directors in each (arch)diocese may not have been comprehensive, although the lists were verified to the extent possible. One locale elected to provide a listing of representative schools, rather than a full list. Finally, about half of Catholic schools invited to participate did so. Thus, the results did not represent the entirety of all early childhood services provided by Catholic Schools.

## Results

### What Funds Support Early Childhood Services and Education in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities programs?

Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs draw from an array of funding sources to support early childhood services and education (see Table 1). Catholic schools participating in the national survey reported predominantly using the following funding mechanisms to fund early childhood education: tuition, parish funding/church support, and fundraisers. Catholic Charities programs described using a wide range of early childhood financial resources to support the extensive services that Catholic Charities programs provide to young children and families (including behavioral health, medical care, and direct early childhood education).

Table 1

#### *Early Childhood Funding Sources*

Funding Source	% Receiving Funding	
	Catholic Schools (n= 670)	Catholic Charities Programs (n= 100)
Direct Fees/Tuition	98	77
Parish funding/Church support	64	18
(Arch)Diocese funding	30	55
County/City funding (for student services)	10	77
State funding (for student services)	33	86
Federal educational funding	22	18
Head Start and/or Early Head Start grants	1	36
Child Care Bureau grants	2	9
Foundation Support/Grants	21	82
Charitable Donations	41	82
Fundraisers	66	55
Investment Income	5	32
In-Kind Donation	16	59
Third Party Payments	—	36
United Way Support	—	82



### Who Are the Young Children and How are They Served in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities programs?

**Types of early childhood education and number of young children served in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs served a wide age range of young children (see Table 2). Nearly all Catholic schools (97%) participating in the national survey provided kindergarten through 3rd grade in their early education offerings. Further, most Catholic schools reported the provision of early childhood services to preschool-aged children. Indeed, 64% of schools taught 3-year-olds and 86% of schools taught 4-year-olds. In contrast, few Catholic schools (less than 10%) reported early childhood services for infants and toddlers.

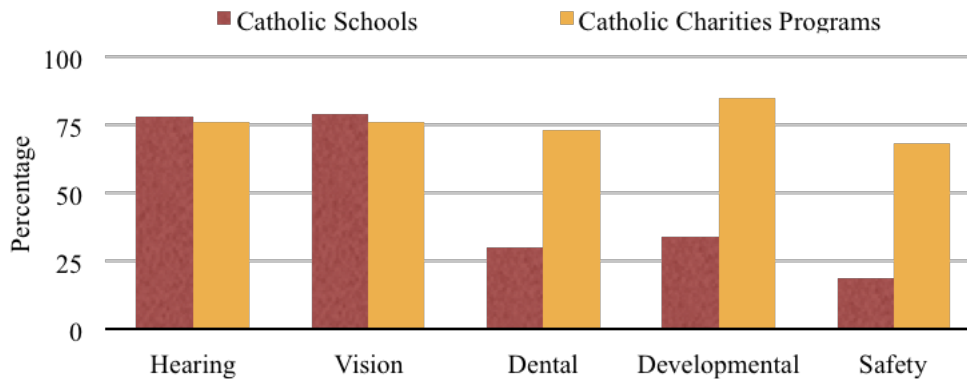
Catholic Charities programs that provided direct service to young children served a different age configuration. Approximately half described early childhood care and education services for infants and toddlers (43% and 57%, respectively). An even greater proportion (approximately 80%) served the preschool/pre-kindergarten population. For older children in kindergarten through 3rd grade, early childhood services by Catholic Charities programs were relatively less prevalent (22%).

Table 2

*Young Children Served by Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs*

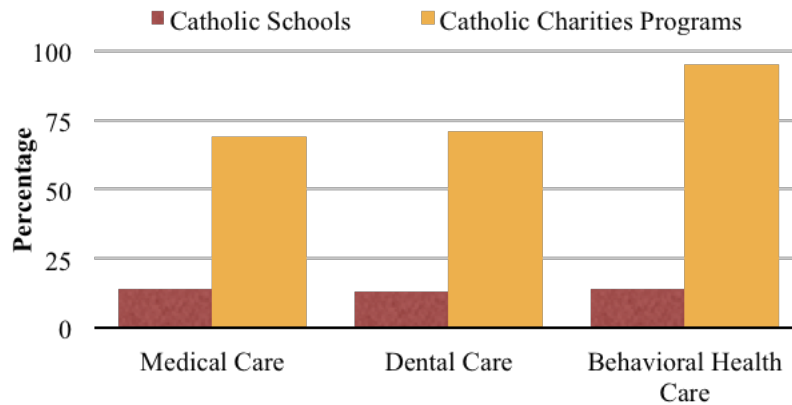
	Infant care	Toddler care	3-year-olds	4 year-olds	K	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade
<b>Catholic Schools</b>								
% of schools	2	6	64	86	98	97	97	97
Total children served	128	858	7,335	15,029	20,318	19,947	19,458	19,218
Average per School	12	22	17	26	31	31	30	29
<b>Catholic Charities Programs</b>								
% of CC programs	43	57	81	79	29	22	22	22
Total children served	491	981	2065	2506	240	200	282	402
Average per program	20	30	44	54	14	15	22	31

**Screening and care services for young children provided in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** Similar levels of vision and hearing screenings were reported by Catholic schools and by Catholic Charities that provide direct care to young children (see Figure 1). Indeed, the majority of schools and programs (approximately three-quarters) reported such screenings. These were delivered either directly by Catholic schools or Catholic Charities programs, or through coordinated efforts with community partners. In addition, approximately 20-35% of Catholic schools reported that their students received dental, developmental, and safety screenings, while about 75% of Catholic Charities programs did.



*Figure 1.* Percentage of schools or programs reporting the provision of screening services. Percentage calculated based on Catholic Charities programs which reported providing direct early childhood care or education services (N=58).

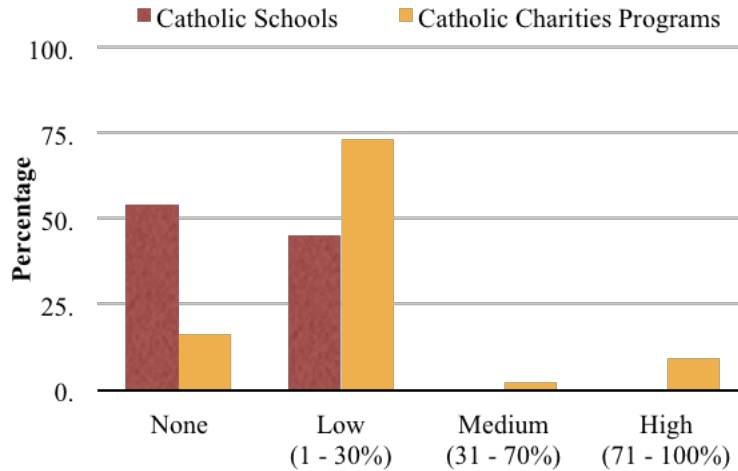
Health and dental care services were provided in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs (about 15% and 70%, respectively; see Figure 2). Further, 14% of Catholic schools provided behavioral health care services to its young children, in comparison to 95% of Catholic Charities programs. The differences in screening and care services reflect distinctive programming offered by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs in the community.



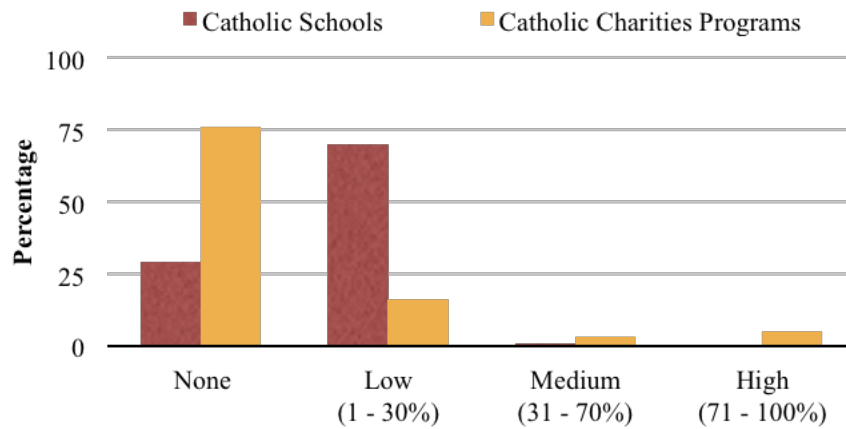
*Figure 2.* Percentage of schools or programs reporting the provision of care services. Percentage calculated based on Catholic Charities programs which reported providing direct early childhood care or education services (N=58).

**Number of young children with special needs and types of services provided in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** Differences were also noted in the special needs populations served by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs. Slightly more than half of Catholic schools reported the presence of special needs among their infant, toddler, and preschool-aged students, compared to 84% of Catholic Charities programs. Approximately 45% of Catholic schools and nearly 75% of Catholic Charities programs reported serving low percentages (1-30%) of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children with special needs. See Figure 3.

Interestingly, an opposite picture emerged at the K-3rd grades. The majority of Catholic schools (71%) served K-3rd grade children with special needs while 24% of Catholic Charities programs reported serving any K-3 children with special needs. These findings are striking since the identification of children with special needs usually increases over time. Few Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported high concentrations (over 70%) of K-3 children with special needs. See Figure 4.



*Figure 3.* Proportions of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with special needs. Percentage calculated based on Catholic Charities programs which reported providing direct early childhood care or education services (N=58).



*Figure 4.* Proportions of children K – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with special needs. Percentage calculated based on Catholic Charities programs which reported providing direct early childhood care or education services (N=58).

As presented in Table 3, a greater proportion of Catholic schools than Catholic Charities programs described the provision of speech and language services (69% vs. 40%), specialized instruction (40% vs. 23%), and accommodations (63% vs. 14%). A lower percentage of Catholic schools (13%) reported providing behavioral health services to young children with special needs than Catholic Charities programs (39%). Overall, both Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs with direct child services reported congruent levels of occupational therapy (about 20%), physical therapy (about 10%), and use of assistive technology (about 10%) for its children with special needs.

Table 3

*Special Needs Service Rates in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs*

Services	% Schools	% CC Programs
Speech/language	69	40
Behavioral health	13	39
Occupational therapy	20	22
Physical therapy	8	13
Specialized instruction	40	23
Accommodations	63	14
Assistive technology	9	6
Other	1	9

### Racial/Ethnic Composition of Young Children Served in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs

**Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers.** As presented in Table 4, many participating Catholic schools reported serving racial/ethnic-minority infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers. About one-half of Catholic schools reported enrollment levels between 1-30% of the young children identified as Hispanic, Asian-American, African-American, and multi-racial/multi-ethnic. Approximately 10% and 20% of Catholic schools reported substantive levels of African-American and Hispanic enrollment, respectively.

In turn, Catholic Charities programs served higher proportions of young racial/ethnic minority children (see Table 4). For example, nearly half of Catholic Charities programs reported medium to high participation rates

(over 30%) of Hispanic and African-American infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. About one-third of Catholic Charities programs reported serving lower levels of Hispanic, Asian-American, African-American, Caucasian, and multiracial/multi-ethnic infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

**Racial/ethnic characteristics of children K – 3.** The racial and ethnic distribution of children in kindergarten through third grade was similar to that of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, as most Catholic Schools were comprised of Caucasian children. Approximately 25% of Catholic schools served a sizeable percentage (over 30%) of Hispanic students in K-3, while about 10% of Catholic schools served a medium to high percentage of African-American K-3 students.

Catholic Charities programs providing services to children in grades K-3 reported a range of racial-ethnic characteristics. Approximately 20% of Catholic Charities programs served medium to high percentages of African American children in K-3, while about 10% of Catholic Charities programs reported serving medium to high percentages of Hispanic children in K-3.

Table 4

Rates of Service in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs, by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers					
	% Schools			% CC Programs		
	None	Low	Med./High	None	Low	Med./High
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	94	6	0	81	19	0
Asian	42	56	3	60	40	0
Black/African American	38	53	10	14	36	50
Hispanic	31	47	22	16	32	52
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	86	14	0	85	15	0
White	15	21	64	42	40	19
Two or more races/ ethnicities	41	58	1	52	41	7

Table 4 (cont.)

Race/Ethnicity	K-3					
	% Schools			% CC Programs		
	None	Low	Med./ High	None	Low	Med./ High
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	88	12	0	97	3	0
Asian	24	73	3	90	10	0
Black/African American	17	72	11	68	12	20
Hispanic	11	63	25	68	18	13
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	76	24	1	100	0	0
White	6	25	69	76	10	15
Two or more races/ ethnicities	20	78	2	80	20	0

Note. Not all Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs answered questions pertaining to racial and ethnic composition. Low = 1-30% of students served; Med./High 31-100% of students served.

### Who are the Families of Young Children and how are they Served in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs?

**Characteristics of the families of young children served in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** Overall, Catholic schools reported fewer percentages of young families who were impoverished, single parents, immigrants/refugees, and limited English speakers than Catholic Charities programs. (See Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8). However, it is important to note that most Catholic schools reported the presence of families with these characteristics. For example, approximately 85% of Catholic schools served families in poverty and 93% of Catholic schools provided financial aid to needy families. Immigrant/refugee families and families who were developing their English proficiency skills were also enrolled in the vast majority of Catholic schools (70% and 77%, respectively.) Finally, single parent families (who are more likely to experience financial difficulties) were present in nearly every Catholic schools (99%). Such demographic findings are consistent with the dedication of the Catholic Church to serve those in poverty.

When considering each familial characteristic in turn, the relative percentages served by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities are striking. Sixty one percent of Catholic schools report that 1-30% of enrolled families are in poverty, while 3% of Catholic Charities programs report similar prevalence. Comparatively, 13% of Catholic schools report high concentrations of poverty (more than 70%) among matriculated families. Most Catholic Charities programs (81%) serve a high proportion of impoverished families. See Figure 5.

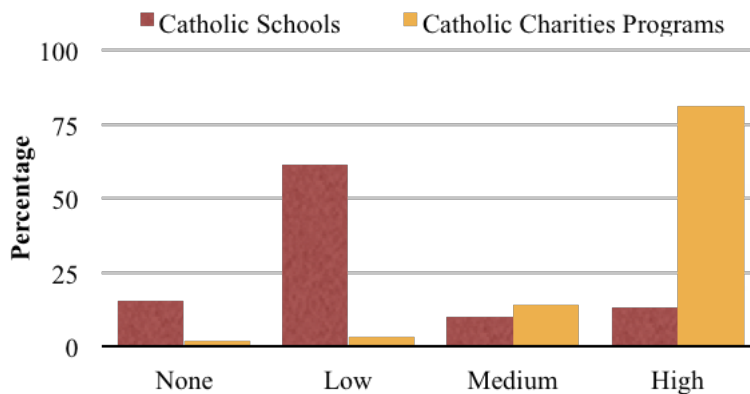


Figure 5. Families in poverty served.

Variability was noted in reports by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs regarding immigrant/refugee families. Six percent of Catholic schools and 20% of Catholic Charities programs report serving high levels (over 70%) of immigrant and refugee families. Ten percent of Catholic schools and 24% of Catholic Charities programs indicated serving medium levels of this community (31-70%). About half of Catholic schools and one-third of Catholic Charities programs report that 1-30% of the families they serve are immigrants or refugees. See Figure 6.

Most Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported serving families with developing English proficiency skills. Overall, about half of the Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported low prevalence levels (1-30%). However, 6% of Catholic schools and 20% of Catholic Charities programs reported primarily serving families with beginning English skills. See Figure 7.

The overwhelming majority of Catholic schools (99%) and Catholic Charities programs (98%) reported serving some single-parent families. Most Catholic schools (79%) reported low levels of single-parent families, while



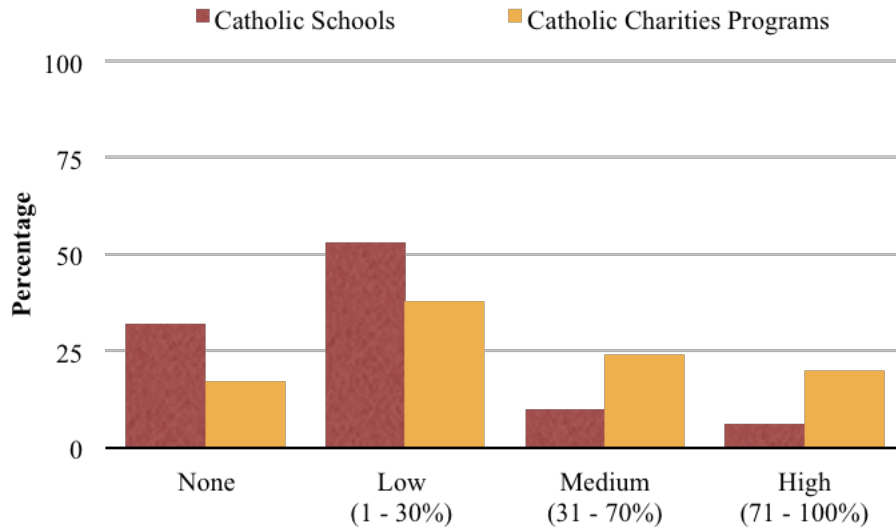


Figure 6. Immigrant/refugee families served

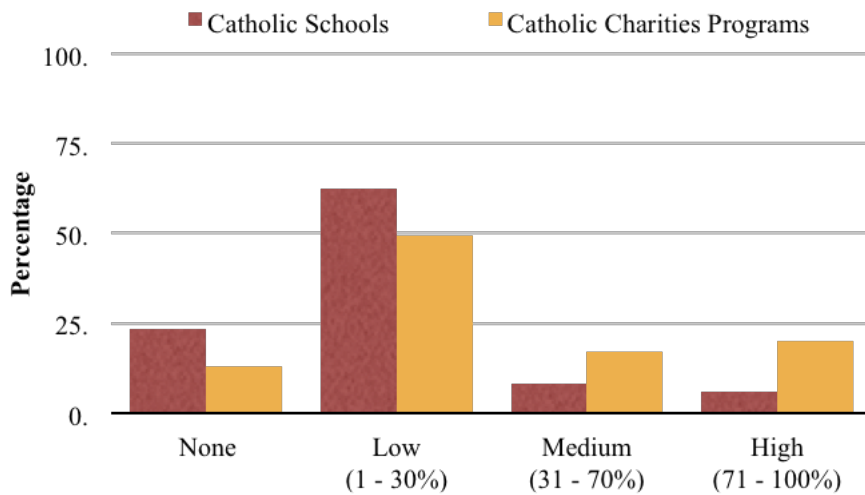


Figure 7. Families with minimal English skills served.

22% of Catholic Charities programs reported similar low rates. High percentages of single-parent families were only reported by 5% of Catholic schools, while 45% of Catholic Charities programs serve high concentrations of single-parent families. See Figure 8.

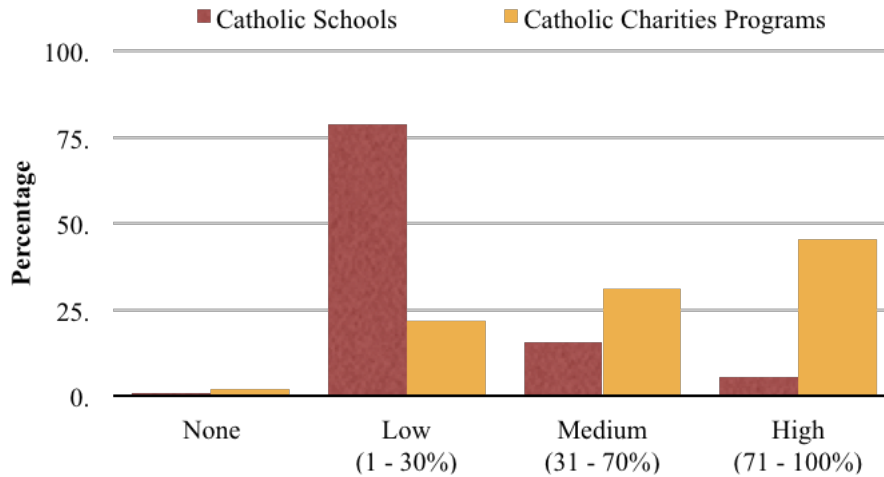


Figure 8. Single-parent families served

The vast majority of both Catholic schools (85%) and Catholic Charities programs (86%) reported serving some Spanish-speaking families (see Table 5). Other forms of linguistic diversity were also evidenced. Approximately one-eighth to one-fourth of Catholic schools reported serving some families who spoke Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, French, Italian, and Korean. The presence of African and Arabic languages was particularly noted by Catholic Charities programs. See Table 6.

Table 5

Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs Reporting Use by Families of Top Languages Spoken in the US After English

Language	% Schools	% CC Programs
Spanish	85	86
Chinese	27	12
French	17	11
Tagalog	17	1
Vietnamese	24	6
German	7	0
Korean	12	3
Russian	9	3
Italian	15	2

*Table 6*

Percentages of Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs Reporting Use of Additional Languages Spoken by Families

Language	% Schools	% CC Programs
African languages	5	15
Arabic	3	14
Creole languages	3	9
Indian Subcontinent	4	8
Other Southeast/East Asian	2	8
Portuguese	4	7
Polish	17	2
Other Eastern European	2	0
Other	3	4

**Services provided to the families of young children served in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** Both Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported providing services to meet the needs of its young families, either directly or through a collaborative effort with a community partner.

Specifically, 16% of Catholic schools participating in the national survey described the provision of parenting programs or classes, 11% were involved in parent engagement activities, and 8% provided familial supports and preservation activities. Catholic Charities programs were engaged in parenting and family support activities at levels ranging from 62% to 81% for the various activities. See Table 7.

*Table 7*

Parental Support Services Provided by Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs (Directly or through a Collaborative Effort With a Community Partner)

Parental Support Service	% Schools	% CC Programs
Parenting programs/classes	16	81
Parental engagement	11	79
Pregnancy support	3	70
Family support & preservation	8	81
Family violence prevention/intervention	6	72
Father involvement programs	4	62
Strengthening marriage programs	7	48

Approximately 1-9% of Catholic schools reported the provision of family health care, social support, and adult education services to families with young children, either at the school or through a community partnership (see Table 8). Consistent with the nature of the services offered by Catholic Charities programs, the vast majority offered a host of services to families with young children. Indeed, 90% of Catholic Charities programs reported providing behavioral/mental health, 90% percent reported food provision and 85% provided clothing. About half of Catholic Charities programs reported the provision of job training, basic literacy classes, and English classes.

*Table 8*

Family Health Services, Social Services, and Adult Education Services Provided in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs

Service	% Schools	% CC Programs
Family Health Services		
Medical	3	55
Dental	3	55
Behavioral/mental health	4	90
Prenatal care	1	55
Case management	3	63
Drug/alcohol intervention	2	57
Social Services Supports		
Food (WIC, SNAP)	9	90
Transportation	8	72
Prescriptions	3	62
Clothing	7	85
Housing	3	75
Legal	4	65
Immigration/refugee services	3	72
Foster care services	2	69
Respite care services	2	56
Adult Education Services		
Basic literacy	2	55
High school completion/GED	2	55
ESOL	3	50
Technology skills	2	47
Job Training/placement	1	56

### Who are the Staff Serving Young Children and Families in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs?

Degrees and licenses/certifications held by teaching staff who serve young children in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs. Most Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs with direct care services reported the presence of staff members with college-level educational levels (Associate, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees). Likely due to differing accrediting needs, Catholic schools were more likely to report staff with BA and MA degrees than Catholic Charities programs (93% vs. 53% and 81% vs. 34%, respectively). See Figure 9.

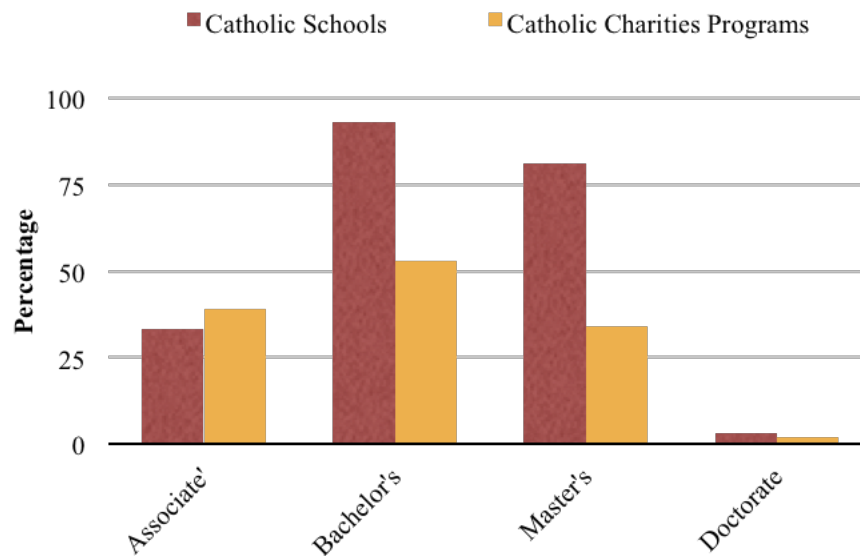


Figure 9. Rates of Various Degrees Held by Teaching Staff Note. Percentage calculated based on Catholic Charities programs which reported providing direct early childhood care or education services (N=58).

As may be expected, differences were also noted in licensing, credentialing, and certifications (see Table 9). Over 80% of Catholic schools reported having teaching staff with early childhood and/or elementary licenses. Furthermore, approximately one third or more of schools reported teaching staff with reading and/or special education certifications. Conversely, two-thirds of Catholic Charities reported having teaching staff with early childhood licenses.

About one-third of Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs had staff who had obtained the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for teachers of young children. Finally, few Catholic schools and no Catholic Charities programs reported staff with specialized training in English as a Second Language (ESL).

*Table 9*

Staff Licenses, Certifications, and Credentials in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs

License, Certification, Credential	% Schools	% CC Programs
Administrative Service	5	3
Early Childhood	82	40
Elementary	89	14
Reading	43	1
Special Education	31	11
English as a Second Language (ESL)	4	0
Child Development Associate (CDA)	36	30

**Availability and need of different staff positions in Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** The national survey also examined the extent to which various professional non-teaching positions were staffed at Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs, as well as the degree to which such positions were needed if not presently available. Approximately half of participating Catholic schools had counselors and nurses/health consultants, and about one-third of Catholic schools had speech-language pathologists (either full- or part-time). Modest percentages of Catholic Charities programs reported having nurses/health consultants or social workers (17% and 14%, respectively), while fewer reported the presence of other non-teaching professional staff. Many Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs described a need for mental health, physical health, and speech/language professionals to work with young children and families. The two entities also reported a slightly lower need for occupational and physical therapists. See Table 10.

Table 10

## Staffing in Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs

Position	% Schools		% CC Programs	
	Existing	Needed	Existing	Needed
Nurse, Health Consultant	48	25	17	23
Health/Clinic Aide	10	20	2	16
Speech/Language Pathologist	35	33	3	21
Physical Therapist	2	14	3	21
Occupational Therapist	6	23	2	14
Counselor	54	30	4	20
Psychologist (school, clinical, etc.)	18	29	4	16
Social Worker	8	22	14	23
Agency Security/Resource Officer	8	13	2	15

Note. Existing = position filled by full or part time staff member. Needed = position not yet existing, but reported as needed.

### Which are the Community Partners of Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs?

In order to deepen understanding about early childhood community partnerships, the national survey included questions about Catholic schools' and Catholic Charities programs' collaborations with one another, with parishes, and with universities.

**Collaborations between Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** A sizable proportion of Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs (approximately 1 in 4; 26%) reported collaborating with each other in early childhood service provision. A follow-up question on the survey asked respondents to describe the nature of these collaborations. As presented in Table 11, Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported a variety of collaborations, including shared facility use, consultations, education/training, and service projects.

Table 11

Reported Collaborations between Catholic Schools and Catholic Charities Programs

Collaboration Type	% Schools	% CC Programs
Professional Services Coordination	4	6
Education/Training	7	5
Consultation	7	5
Professional Services	4	5
Support Services	2	4
Facilities	1	2

**Parish collaborations with Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** Higher levels of collaborations with parishes were described. The overwhelming majority of Catholic schools (92%) reported collaborating with parishes. This likely reflects that many Catholic schools are co-located with and sponsored by local parishes. In turn, Catholic Charities programs reported lower levels of parish collaborations when all areas of collaboration were combined (60%). As presented in Table 12, their collaborations with parishes were largely comprised of facility use, followed by support services, professional service coordination, and education/training.

Table 12

Reported Collaborations with Parishes

Collaboration Type	% Schools	% CC Programs
Professional Services Coordination	18	10
Education/Training	34	10
Consultation	24	8
Professional Services	7	4
Support Services	37	14
Facilities	67	24

**University collaborations with Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs.** Finally, universities were found to be equivalently engaged with Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs. Fifty percent of Catholic schools and 57% of Catholic Charities programs reported collaborating with universities combining all facets of collaboration. The highest proportion of



Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported university collaborations centered on education/training (45% and 37%, respectively; see Table 13).

*Table 13*

Reported Collaborations with Universities

Collaboration Type	% Schools	% CC Programs
Professional Services Coordination	15	11
Education/Training	45	37
Consultation	17	7
Professional Services	4	12
Support Services	1	2
Facilities	3	2

## Discussion

### Strengths Identified by Surveys

The findings from the national survey were indicative of a strong commitment to early childhood development by Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs located in large metropolitan locales with high concentrations of Catholicism and families in poverty. Both entities provided direct education and services to young children, with greatest overlap in serving preschool populations. Further, most Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs provided vision and hearing screening services, and many reported the availability of speech-language therapy to young children with special needs. Such an array of early childhood services is noteworthy and consistent with recommended practice (e.g., American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2008; Wang et al., 2011).

The survey additionally revealed that numerous Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs were strengthening the well-being of families through a variety of endeavors, such as the provision of parenting classes and parent engagement initiatives. Moreover, the vast majority of Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs were engaged with disadvantaged communities, including families in poverty and immigrant/refugee families. Outreach to impoverished and ethnocultural communities is not only con-

sistent with Catholic social teachings, it has become increasingly imperative given the high rate of children in poverty (1 in 5) and the burgeoning diversity of the US population (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011). In order to most effectively serve these communities, culturally- and linguistically- responsive teaching and family engagement efforts have been proposed for the Catholic sector and the population at large (e.g., Barrueco, Smith, & Stephens, 2015; Dallavis, 2014; Notre Dame Task Force, 2009; Scanlan & Zehrbach 2010).

The survey also found that Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs have complementary as well as distinctive approaches to addressing the needs and education of young children and families that are consistent with their respective missions. Catholic schools largely focused on pedagogical endeavors with young children, offering preschool and pre-kindergarten programs along with kindergarten through third grades. Also, most Catholic schools reported educating children with special needs between kindergarten through third grade, and many schools reported providing accommodations and specialized instruction. In turn, Catholic Charities programs delivered an array of health and support services to young children and families. The majority of Catholic Charities programs provided social service supports, such as improving young families' access to food, housing, and transportation. Furthermore, many Catholic Charities programs addressed the needs of adults in the families of young children through behavioral/mental health services, case management, pregnancy support, job training, and additional services. In recent years, greater attention has been brought to programs that integrate the two approaches used by Catholic school and Catholic Charities programs. By concurrently targeting both child and familial functioning, "two-generation" models comprehensively address the needs of the whole family, rather than children or parents in isolation (e.g., Chase-Lansdale & Jeanne Brooks-Gunn; 2014; Glied & Oellerich, 2014).

Importantly, many Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported collaborating together, with local parishes, and with universities to meet the varied needs of young children and families. The nature of these collaborations ranged from shared facility use, consultations, education/training, and service projects. Collaborative efforts have the potential to leverage resources from separate entities to efficiently and effectively provide comprehensive services to children and families (e.g., Daka-Mulwanda et al., 1995; Purcal et al., 2011).

Finally, Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported having a well-educated staff from a variety of educational experiences to support

young children and families. Both entities reported having staff members with Child Development Associate (CDAs) degrees, Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, and Early Childhood credentials. The educational preparation of teachers to work with young children has been linked with developmental outcomes, along with the quality of teacher-child interactions and instruction (e.g., Mashburn et al., 2008). In addition to the teaching staff, numerous Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported having nurse/health consultants, speech/language pathologists, and counselors. Such staffing is essential given the high prevalence of child health and linguistic concerns nationally and in the Catholic sector (e.g., ASHSA, 2008; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2002).

### **Opportunities for Development Identified by Surveys**

Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs may have growth opportunities for strengthening their provision of early childhood services and their partnerships. For example, given the linguistic composition of young children and families served by both Catholic schools and Catholic Charities, these entities may benefit from having more staff with specialized training in English as a Second Language (ESL). Additionally, Catholic schools may consider extending their early childhood education and services to serve more infants and toddlers. This may strengthen enrollment in the preschool and then elementary grades, provide schools with the opportunity to engage in the earliest developmental and spiritual formation of its students, as well as meet the needs of the whole family (particularly for those families with both younger and older children). Catholic schools could collaborate with Catholic Charities programs in offering early childhood programs, with potential federal funding from Head Start, Early Head Start, as well as state or local initiatives. Diversifying funding sources may be particularly advantageous for Catholic schools, which predominately rely on tuition, parish funding/church support, and fundraisers. The feasibility of adding early childhood services in Catholic schools may be dependent on logistical considerations, such as building layouts and local childcare regulations. Similarly, Catholic Charities programs may be able to build on their extensive experience serving young children between infancy and the preschool years by including more direct services for children in kindergarten through third grade. Such expansion of early childhood services by the Catholic sector would mirror trends evidenced at the national and state levels (White House, 2014).

Interestingly, the national survey data were suggestive of a potential need to improve identification and service of young children with special needs in both Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs. Less than half of Catholic schools reported serving any infants, toddlers, or preschoolers with special needs. Similarly, Catholic Charities programs identified few K-3 children with special needs. These stand in contrast to the national estimates of special needs among children at the two age groups, as well as estimates from studies of the prevalence of special needs among elementary and school-aged children enrolled in Catholic schools (Durow, 2007; USCCB, 2002). As Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs may each have its strengths in special needs identification and service across early childhood, the two entities may profit from consulting and collaborating with each other in this domain, as well as advocating for and collaborating with public services. A plethora of approaches have been used in the Catholic sector to serve elementary school children with special needs, although there is less research focused on early childhood special needs services (Boyle, 2010; Carlson, 2014; Crowley & Wall, 2007; Durow, 2007; Long, Brown, & Nagy-Rado, 2007; Scanlan, 2009).

In addition, collaborations could be developed between Catholic schools and Catholic Charities to strengthen the provision of services to young families. In the survey, approximately one-quarter of Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs reported collaborating with each other in early childhood. Further, half of Catholic schools and half of Catholic Charities programs reported collaborations with universities. Partnerships could be fostered across the three entities to support the delivery of comprehensive early childhood services for young children and families.

An area that may particularly benefit from collaborative initiatives across Catholic schools, Catholic Charities, and universities is health and mental health service provision. Both Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs described a need for staff positions in nursing/health aide as well as in behavioral health (e.g., psychologist, counselor, social worker). There may be opportunities for developing shared staff positions in these areas across Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs. Partnerships could also be developed with local universities that have professional training programs in nursing, health, and/or mental health. For example, university trainees could be closely supervised by faculty to provide services in the Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs. The provision of such direct services to children and families can complement typical university partnerships focused

on the professional development of teachers and staff (Cook & Durow, 2008; Dallavis & Johnstone, 2009; Davies & Kennedy, 2009; Henk, Maney, Baxter, & Montejano, 2013).

### Summary and Next Steps

The national survey provided an overall understanding of the extent and nature of early childhood services in large metropolitan locales with higher concentrations of Catholicism and families in poverty. Indeed, Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs are engaged in a plethora of complementary activities with young children and families, though these are not frequently conducted in coordination with one another. In order to understand how successful partnerships could be developed between Catholic schools and Catholic Charities, a follow-up qualitative study was conducted subsequent to this survey. Staff members from Catholic schools and Catholic Charities programs who are engaged in exemplar collaborations were interviewed to identify how such partnerships are created, how they are sustained, and how together they can comprehensively support the development of young children and families. A forthcoming article will highlight the collaborative approaches that are already underway in three cities across the nation to comprehensively support young children and families.

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