Emerging Governance Models in Urban Catholic Elementary Schools

Erik P. Goldschmidt
Mary E. Walsh
Lynch School of Education
Boston College
Crisis in Numbers of Schools

Number of Schools

- Elementary
- Secondary


0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 6,000 7,000 8,000 9,000 10,000 11,000 12,000

Improving the human condition through education
Outline of Presentation

I. Study Design
II. Findings: Governance Models
III. Analysis: Trends of Innovation
IV. Recommendations
I. Overview of the Study Design
Purpose of the Study

To identify the current governance models utilized by urban Catholic elementary schools across the United States.
Methodology

1. Documentation Analysis (N=256)
   - Diocesan strategic plans
   - National reports
   - Academic studies
   - Annual reports
   - News articles

2. Diocesan & School websites (150+)
3. Semi-Structured Interviews (in person & by phone; N=65)

- Superintendents
- Diocesan Officials
- School Administrators
- University Researchers
- Foundations Executives
- Consultants
- Professional Organizations (e.g., NCEA, USCCB)
Distribution of Data Sources

“Improving the human condition through education”
II. Findings: Major Governance Models
NCEA Classification of Governance Models

Elementary/Middle Schools by Types of Governance: 2012-2013

Parish: 70%
Inter-Parish: 12%
Diocesan: 11%
Private: 7%

Source: NCEA Annual Statistic Report (McDonald & Schultz, 2013)
Earlier Governance Models: Individual Schools

- Parish Schools (1782)*
- Private Schools (1606)
- Inter-Parish Schools (~1960s)
- Diocesan Schools (~1960s)

*Established as the standard by Third Plenary Council of Baltimore 1884
Later Governance Models: Multi-School Collaboration

- Private Network Schools
- Consortium Elementary Schools
- P-12 School Systems
- University Partnership Schools
III. Analysis: Trends of Innovation
Innovative Trends in Governance

1. Strategic planning & data-informed practices
2. Collaborating & networking across schools
3. Strengthening capacity of Catholic schools office
4. Wider use of empowered boards
5. Centralizing operations
Innovative Trends in Governance

6. Leveraging economies of scale
7. Deepening relationships w/ philanthropic community
8. Partnering w/ Catholic higher education
9. Utilizing community services
IV. Recommendations for the Future
Recommendations

1. Make the case for Catholic education by articulating the value and worth of Catholic schools in general and urban Catholic schools in particular.

2. Identify unique strengths of Catholic schools – areas not addressed in public education.
3. Revitalize the **focus on excellence** in the core areas of schooling: curriculum and instruction, educational leadership, and “whole child” student support.

4. Provide empirical **evidence for academic excellence** at the local level.
5. Recognize that the parish school model in urban settings is the least viable model for reasons of both governance and finance.

6. Support strategic exploration, selection, and implementation of innovative approaches to governance at local level (carefully consider context).
Recommendations

7. Improve quality of leadership by training and assessing performance of Catholic educ. administrators at all levels: principals, boards, regional supervisors and superintendents.

8. Facilitate collaborative partnerships among schools, other church ministries and non-profit community organizations.
9. Continue to “think outside the box” in exploring ways to improve efficiencies in operations and management.

10. Implement a system of continual quality improvement as part of the strategic planning process.
Acknowledgements

We are grateful to acknowledge that this study was graciously supported through funding and shared research from the Mathile Family Foundation, Dayton, OH.
For more information and/or to request a copy of the full report contact:

Erik P. Goldschmidt, Ph.D., M.Div.
Director, The Church of the 21st Century Center
617-552-0470 / goldscer@bc.edu

Mary E. Walsh, Ph.D.
Daniel Kearns Professor, Lynch School of Education
walshhur@bc.edu