



PATHWAYS TO FAITH

Unlocking Access to Christ through Springfield's Catholic Schools



APRIL 12, 2019

PATHWAYS TO FAITH COMMISSION

Contents

Introduction 2

Problem Statement..... 4

Pathways Vision 7

Evangelizing Mission 8

 Evangelizing Mission (Pathways Vision and Explanations) 8

 Evangelizing Mission (Pathways Recommendations) 10

 Evangelizing Mission (Immediate Actions) 11

Excellent in All Ways 12

 Excellent in all Ways (Pathways Vision and Explanations)..... 12

 Excellent in all Ways (Pathways Recommendations) 14

 Excellent in All Ways (Immediate Actions) 15

Accessible to Everyone 16

 Accessible to Everyone (Pathways Vision and Explanations) 16

 Accessible to Everyone (Pathways Recommendations) 18

 Accessible to Everyone (Immediate Needs) 19

Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable..... 20

 Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable (Pathways Vision and Explanations)..... 20

 Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable (Pathways Recommendations)..... 22

 Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable (Immediate Actions) 23

Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community 24

 Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community (Pathways Vision and Explanations)..... 24

 Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community (Pathways Recommendations) 28

 Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community (Immediate Actions): 29

Conclusion..... 30

Pathways to Faith:

Unlocking Access to Christ through Springfield's Catholic Schools

Introduction

The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Springfield have provided a high-quality Catholic education for more than 150 years to the families and parishes of Western Massachusetts. Men and women have worked and continue to work tirelessly to ensure that our schools provide the overall formation that will help the students in our care to reach their fullest potential. Generations of priests, religious sisters and brothers, and laymen and laywomen have given their lives to the vocation of teaching and serving in these schools. Our graduates have gone on to be leaders in our community, in our nation, in our world, and in our Church. We are so grateful for the countless men and women who have supported, given their life to, and ministered to our Catholic schools. It is because of them that our schools have transformed the lives of so many children and families.

Catholic schools are an extension of the Catholic Church in her ministry of education. The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Springfield have a responsibility to share in this mission. The USCCB document *To Teach as Jesus Did* (1971) emphasizes that this mission is three-fold; namely, to proclaim the Gospel, build community, and to serve our brothers and sisters. From this document and others regarding the mission of Catholic education, some clarity comes to the purpose of our schools.

The mission of Catholic education is the formation of the whole human person which creates a synthesis between faith, culture, and life that is firmly rooted in the evangelizing mission of the Church¹.

A Catholic education is truly a gift, and as stewards of this gift, we have the responsibility to ensure that generations of students in the future will also have the opportunity to benefit from a Catholic education in our Diocese. It is now time to examine ways to make this a possibility in the future. What will we do to ensure that students will continue to benefit from the life-transforming potential which exists in the Catholic schools? How can we support our schools to provide the leaders and missionary disciples our Church and society needs?

In March 2018, Bishop Rozanski asked community and business leaders, the leadership of our schools and our parishes, religious and lay to form a study commission. The title "Pathways to Faith" became the title connected to, "the notion that a new system would be created that would provide an exciting and motivating 'pathway' for parents and children to choose a way to grow, learn, and enhance their faith."² This Commission was given the mandate to 1) Understand and evaluate the existing system and schools within the Diocese (Diocesan Schools Office, Pre-Schools, Elementary Schools, High Schools and Role/Relationship with all parishes); 2) Review past plans (Meitler and Blue Ribbon Commission) to understand what they suggest and what we should try again; 3) Evaluate models from other dioceses to

¹ Baillargeon, 2018

² Appendix B: Pathways Research Report, 2019

see what can be learned and applied from them; 4) Give a report that includes best practices and concrete recommendations. In addition, a three-person study team was employed to research and present information to the Pathways Commission needed to complete their mandate.

Through the Spring of 2018 we discussed the demographics of the Diocese³; the demographics of the Schools⁴; the demographics of the region⁵; the Financial Status of the Diocesan Schools⁶; and the past Reports.⁷ In the gathering of information and discussions the challenges our diocese and the Catholic schools are facing became clearer.

The Study Commission provided various reports on what other dioceses were attempting⁸. They also attempted to conduct a comprehensive review of the Catholic elementary schools. They visited each school, toured the facility and met with principals, pastors, school board members, parents and others to gain a clearer picture of the school and get a holistic picture of education including curriculum, culture, and financial health. An extensive survey of parents, parishioners and faculty/staff was conducted⁹. In some cases, there were difficulties in getting clear answers and pertinent information. Their results of each visit were sent to the principal of the school for review before being included in their final report¹⁰. Despite numerous requests by the Pathways Commission a report on the High Schools was not provided.

Over the summer the Diocese hired a new Superintendent of Catholic Schools. He was given all the research generated up to that point and invited to participate in the Pathways Commission. Through the fall, discussion and research continued with monthly meetings culminating in the presentation of the study team's report in December.

In January the Pathways of Faith Commission restarted its deliberations with the push towards producing a final report. Five areas of focus were chosen: Catholicity & Academic Excellence, Demographics, Finances, Governance and Marketing. Sub-Committees met extensively and developed reports that were presented and discussed at a day-long retreat. Four additional meetings continued the conversation and led to the creation of this report.

Catholic educational research has set the stage for successful Catholic schools. The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (2012) gives the following characteristics of Catholic schools: Centered in the Person of Jesus Christ, Contributing to the Evangelizing Mission of the Church, Distinguished by Excellence, Committed to Educating the Whole

³ Pathways of Faith Research Report Appendix 7

⁴ Pathways of Faith Research Report Appendix 6

⁵ Appendix C: Discerning the Future for the Pioneer Valley Region 2000-2030; Appendix D: Berkshire County Public Schools Enrollment Projections Version 2018)

⁶ Appendix E: The Roman Catholic Schools Source and Use of Funds from FY2003-FY2018; Appendix F: Student Financial Aid Granted Comparative Data All Years 1995-2017; Appendix G: The Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield Financial Statements FY 2017 & 2016, The Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield Education Expenditures from FY'02-FY'18, The Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, Inc. Notes to Financial Statements

⁷ Appendix H, Meitler Report; Appendix I: Blue Ribbon Commission

⁸ Pathways of Faith Research Report Appendices 3 & 4

⁹ Pathways of Faith Research Report Appendix 5

¹⁰ Pathways of Faith Research Report

Child, Steeped in a Catholic Worldview, Sustained by Gospel Witness, Shaped by Communion and Community, Accessible to All Students, and Established by the Expressed Authority of the Bishop. These characteristics help define the unique character of Catholic schools. It is in light of these characteristics that the Pathways to Faith Commission makes recommendations specifically for the Diocese of Springfield. The following document, then, is a compilation of the Pathways research, the recommendations from the five major areas, and National research regarding Catholic educational effectiveness.

It is important to situate the Pathways Commission within the evangelizing work of our Diocese. Our own diocese is not that much different from others around the nation, trying to handle declining school and parish enrollment, a lower number of weddings and baptisms, and an increased disaffiliation of young Catholics from the Church. We believe that through our efforts to stay connected to our evangelizing mission, be excellent in all aspects of school life, be accessible to all who desire a Catholic education, be good stewards of our resources, and engage and empower stakeholders around the mission, our schools will be light to others who are trying to find solutions to the same problems.

Problem Statement

The Research Team and the Pathways Commission as a whole identified several areas of focus to better understand comprehensively the challenges which face our Catholic schools and are situated at the national and the local levels. These challenges fall in the following areas: importance of mission, academic competition, access, financial potential, and the need to clearly define governance in our diocese and in our schools.

Mission: The mission of the Church, and, as an extension, the Catholic schools, faces new challenges. With a decrease in professed religious leading and teaching in our schools, the very Catholic identity we took for granted is more difficult to maintain. When this is juxtaposed against national statistics regarding disaffiliation of Catholics from the Church, the necessity to provide better evangelization through our schools becomes clear. Eighty-one percent of Catholics who have left the Catholic Church said they made their decision before the age of 18. Research states that the majority left because they don't believe in the Church's teachings or organized religion, or they think the Church's teachings are "nonsensical."¹¹ To curb this trend, intentionality in advancing the evangelizing nature and mission of Catholic schools cannot be underestimated. The longer a child is in Catholic school and the more frequently they participate in the Sacraments, the less likely they will leave.¹²

Competition: The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Springfield compete with some of the best public schools in the country. They are also in direct competition with the increasing number of charter schools that provide a safe learning environment with a specified education at no cost to the parents. We see the impact of these efforts at three specific choice ages. The first is a full-day free Kindergarten, the other is at the junior high school level, and the last is at the high school level. There is a significant percentage of students lost from our preschool programs to kindergarten programs which could be due to many factors including accessibility of free public kindergartens among others. At the junior high

¹¹ McCarthy & Vitek, 2018

¹² Ibid.

level, school choice, sports, peer pressure, and socialization factors may play a part in a declining student population. At the high school level, lack of accessibility, cost, value and limitations in our educational options play a significant role in decreases. Each of these critical junctures needs to be researched more deeply to understand and plan to address these negative trends. In addition, our curriculum is based on the public school's frameworks, which are not designed with the characteristics and resources of our schools in mind. This potentially places our schools at a resource deficit in trying to meet the curricular frameworks adopted by our schools. Also, while hiring teachers who have been trained in public education can be beneficial, if their faith formation is not equal to their professional development, they struggle in highlighting the unique characteristics of a truly Catholic education. Because of the above factors, our schools struggle with communicating what is essentially different about an education based in the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Principles of Catholic Social Justice. It is the responsibility of the Catholic schools of the Diocese to tell a compelling story that differentiates them from the public schools. Our programs should be designed to far exceed the public school standards with respect to the complete human formation of our students.

Access: With over 170,000 school aged children in our diocese, there are plenty of families who can benefit from a Catholic education. Fifty thousand school aged children live in Hampshire and Franklin Counties where we currently do not provide a Catholic school option. Children four years and younger make up 25% of this population, but we do not consistently provide Catholic daycares and preschools. The fastest growing population of children are Latinos. They represent 24% of the population of our Diocese, and in certain cities like Holyoke (85%) comprise the vast majority of the population; however, only 9% of our students are Latinos and less than 2% of our faculty or staff members are Latinos. There are many other underserved cultural populations in our Diocese that need the pastoral care a Catholic school can provide for them.

Finances: Access to our schools is also compounded by a lack of a stewardship mentality of the Diocese of Springfield along with an inequitable distribution of money to the schools. While our current model of funding Catholic education is potentially unsustainable, our current execution of the model we are using is not working. In virtually all of our schools, we are asking families who make the median income in their areas to pay unreasonable percentage of their net income to send just one child to our schools. Catholic schools have always been vital in creating educational opportunities for the underprivileged and continue to be instrumental in determining how best to educate all children.¹³ By reason of their evangelizing mission, Catholic schools should be available to all people who desire a Catholic school education for their children.¹⁴ By not providing access to all Catholic families who desire a Catholic education, as well as the economically underprivileged, our Catholic schools are falling short in fully completing this mission. Even with financial assistance, this in essence has priced out large families, middle-class families, lower middle-class families, and the poor from considering a Catholic education as an option for their children. We acknowledge in this report that access for everyone is an aspirational recommendation; however, without a mechanism in place which includes a high-level financial team thoroughly examining costs, resources, and fiscal potential, progress toward better meeting this lofty goal is not possible.

¹³ Cattaro, 2002; Hunt & Walch, 2010

¹⁴ Gravissimum Educationis, 6; Code of Canon Law, Canons 793; USCCB 2005, Introduction

Access is not the only area of concern with respect to financing and funding the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Springfield. Most of our schools are currently running deficits, without addressing the need to upgrade infrastructures, keep current in technology, and maintain aging facilities. With an inability to look at the Profit and Loss Statements for all schools, it is difficult to analyze the system financially. A lack of uniformity in the categorization of revenues and expenses as well a lack of adequate and accurate reporting makes it difficult to appropriately and equitably allocate Diocesan resources to support the schools. The dual assessment of certain parishes creates a disincentive for parishes to encourage their families to seek a Catholic education. In addition, parishes that run schools not only subsidize, but also contribute to cover direct and indirect operating and capital expenditures of the school at varied percentages in relation to their incomes. The full cost of the Diocesan support for education is not calculated, and even without these costs included, negative balances have been reported for most years without clear explanation of how these deficits have been covered. We also deal with questions regarding the adequate compensation of our teachers and school leadership, which on average is far less than the public schools can pay and, in certain areas, less than a livable wage. In sum, our income, which is based on tuition which is only affordable to the upper middle-class, compounded by a seemingly inequitable, loosely managed, and unclear financial system provides a significant concern to the financial viability of the schools and school system.

Governance: A well-designed governance structure provides stability to the entire system. With the challenges facing our Catholic schools, including staffing, and demographic changes, and funding challenges, they need to be governed in ways that are far different than when a large number of professed religious staffed and led our virtually-free Catholic schools. Currently, the vast majority of our schools have school boards who function with very little, if any, authority. According to the research team, due to the strictly advisory nature of most of our boards, there is a lack of investment and involvement on those boards, and many board members and principals feel their board structure is ineffective. In some cases, even our schools with well-functioning boards are being stymied by ineffective school-based and parish-based leadership. There is little clarity to the relationship of the Superintendent of Schools, the Diocesan School Board, Diocesan Schools, and Parish Schools within the Diocese of Springfield as a whole. This lack of clarity has provided a lack of engagement from the boards and difficulty in recruiting qualified board members. Also, in order to fully advance the mission of the Catholic schools, the priests of the Diocese of Springfield must be invested in the future success of these schools. Without this investment, providing access for those who desire a Catholic education in their deaneries and parishes may not be tenable. Finally, it is important to understand where the Catholic schools fit into the overall model of the diocese. This level of clarity will assist in working together toward advancing the cause of the Catholic schools as a Diocesan entity.

Pathways Vision

The previous statements bring light to the myriad challenges facing the Diocese of Springfield with respect to offering a high-quality Catholic education for generations to come. The Diocese, however, is not alone in facing and problem-solving through these challenges. As a people of faith, we believe in God's help and assistance in solving many challenges and hope that, by focusing on five distinct areas, we can start to solve some of these challenges, and reorient our schools toward a path of vitality.

The five areas that define our vision moving forward are as follows:

- Catholic schools must participate in the **evangelizing mission** of the Church.
- Catholic schools must be **excellent** academically, and **in all aspects** of school life.
- Catholic schools must be **accessible to everyone** who desires a Catholic education.
- Catholic schools must be **good stewards** of their resources and **financially sustainable**.
- Catholic schools must be **governed** in a manner that **engages** and **empowers people** and places accountability at the right level.

By placing emphasis in these five areas, it is the belief of this Commission that a sustainable Catholic education in the Diocese of Springfield will bring more vitality to the Catholic Church, and will continue well into the future. This will, in turn, provide increased access to a truly transformative education for more and more students and families who will benefit from our schools.

Evangelizing Mission

“By reason of its educational activity, Catholic schools participate directly and in a privileged way in the evangelizing mission of the Church. As an ecclesial entity where faith, culture, and life are brought into harmony, the Catholic school should be a place of real and specified pastoral ministry in communion with the local Bishop. The environment in Catholic schools should express the signs of Catholic culture, physically, and visibly.”¹⁵

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Responds to | Keeping Catholics affiliated with the Catholic Church; Increasing zeal for the faith; ensuring that future generations continue the tradition of Catholic education in the life of the Church |
| By | Answering Christ’s commission to evangelize; Connecting schools to the mission of the Church |
| Resources/Personnel Needs | Priests as Chaplains; Formal Catechetical Program; Updated Curriculum; Catholic Identity Review Process |

Evangelizing Mission (Pathways Vision and Explanations)

- **Possess strong Catholic identities which support missionary discipleship in all aspects of school life.**
- **Encourage teachers to share the Joy of the Gospel in their words and lives.**
- **Provide formation for school leaders in understanding and living the mission.**

Catholic identity: While the Catholic school is like any other school in its complexity, there is one essential difference: it is rooted in, inspired by, and vitally strengthened by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The activity of a Catholic school is, above all else, an activity that shares in the evangelizing mission of the Church.¹⁶ Catholic schools must also pay particular attention to their physical environments, sharing the sacramentality of the Catholic faith through images, symbols, icons, and other traditional objects of devotion.¹⁷ Catholic schools are one of the best instruments of evangelization; preparing children to answer the universal call to holiness and pursue a saintly life.¹⁸ Due to this, the Catholic faith must be intentionally infused into all aspects of school life. This cannot stand alone, but must direct the aims of the school to a deepening of relationship with Jesus Christ, and a zeal to bring this message to the world.

Vocation vs. profession: Students listen to their teachers because of the witness they provide for them.¹⁹ This is true in their subject matter, and also in the practice of their faith. By stressing the importance of vocation and helping our teachers into personal relationships with Christ, they will exude the love of their faith in ways that will inspire their students to do the same.

¹⁵ Appendix J: Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012

¹⁶ Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988

¹⁷ Miller, 2006

¹⁸ Denver, 2018

¹⁹ St. Pope Paul VI, 1965

School leaders as mission-driven leaders: Formation for the principals is essential for them to make decisions around the mission of Catholic education and the mission of their school that flows from this mission. School leaders need support in successfully articulating the mission, making decisions around the mission, and supporting a faith community connected to this mission.²⁰ We must realize that the principal also is a role model for the school's Catholic identity. School administrators, too, need to be formed as missionary disciples ready to bring the evangelizing mission of the Church into all aspects of school life.²¹ Special care must also be placed in creating a capacity for leadership succession connected to mission in our schools.

²⁰ Baillargeon, 2018

²¹ Denver, 2012

Evangelizing Mission (Pathways Recommendations)

Create a comprehensive faith formation program for all stakeholders in Catholic schools that includes:

- **Daily prayer, access to liturgical celebrations at least weekly, and Sacramental experiences at least monthly,**
- **Resources to teach the Catholic faith that are high quality and connected to the USCCB guidelines for Catechesis in the faith,**
- **Faith formation for teachers as catechists,**
- **Faith formation for administrators in understanding the importance of making decisions connected to the mission of Catholic education,**
- **Retreat opportunities for students, teachers, families, and principals,**
- **Faith formation programs to support parents as the primary educators,**
- **Access to everyone in the school community to direct pastoral support from a priest, religious, or qualified lay minister,**
- **Formal communication to all stakeholders regarding the benefits of a Catholic education,**
- **Partnership at the Diocesan (Office of Religious Education) and local levels (Parish Religious Education regarding faith formation, especially in the years of Sacramental preparation.**

Develop standards and a review process for Catholic identity in schools that includes:

- **Guidelines for tangible manifestations for Catholic identity in schools,**
- **Guidelines for service as it flows from the heart of Christ,**
- **A formal set of catechist certification guidelines for all teachers, religion teachers, and school leaders.**

Develop a curriculum that supports education in the Catholic intellectual tradition.

- **Adopt an overall curricular framework with times set aside for religious instruction, liturgical prayer, and service in learning,**
- **Adopt standards for the integration of Catholicism throughout the curriculum,**
- **Adopt a virtue curriculum for the preschools, elementary schools, and high schools.**

Provide increased pastoral presence to the students of the Catholic schools.

- **Increase opportunities for pastoral presence at the parish-school level, and in other schools of the Diocese of Springfield,**
- **Integrate priests more formally into the spiritual life of the young people in Catholic schools.**

Evangelizing Mission (Immediate Actions)

It is imperative that there are few immediate actions to ensure the recommendations are accomplished are put in place.

- **It is very important that the pastors of schools and priests of the Diocese of Springfield are brought into the process of revitalizing our Catholic schools. A meeting with them, therefore, is necessary within the first six months to discuss the role they play and plan for the changes which flow forth from this report.**
- **An Associate Superintendent of Catholic Schools should be hired to help in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the recommendations.**

Excellent in All Ways

“Church documents, history, and practices, supported by Canon Law, establish that first and foremost a Catholic school is characterized by excellence. Consistent with the defining characteristics, Catholic schools should implement on-going processes and structures and gather evidence to ensure excellence in every aspect of its programs, life, and activities.”²²

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Responds to: | A need to be rigorous in our academic programs; Living our unique mission; a necessity to promote Catholic school effectiveness |
| By: | Developing unique intellectual tradition; Providing support and development |
| Resources/Personnel Needs: | Associate Superintendent (instruction); Increased Professional Development Funds; Updated Curriculum; Seed Money; Improved Assessment Protocols; Partnership with Higher Education, specifically Notre Dame, Boston College, Providence College, Thomas Aquinas, and Our Lady of the Elms |

Excellent in all Ways (Pathways Vision and Explanations)

- **Develop and support a curriculum framework, which includes access to the fine arts, technology, that exceeds the public school standards and is connected to the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Social Justice Teachings of the Catholic Church.**
- **Form authentically Catholic school leaders and teachers.**
- **Create processes and structures to ensure excellence in every aspect of schools’ programs, life, and activities.**

Curriculum framework: In order to be excellent, Catholic schools must provide a rigorous academic program which integrates faith, culture and life. They must also provide opportunities outside the classroom for faith formation, service, and opportunities for adult faith formation.²³ “The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils.”²⁴ Through Catholic education, students encounter God’s transforming love and truth. With Jesus as its foundation, Catholic education integrally forms all aspects of students’ physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual development, teaching them responsibility and the right use of freedom and preparing them to fulfill God’s calling in this world so as to attain the eternal kingdom in the next.²⁵

Formation and preparation: How principals respond to the complexity of the challenges presented to them in their positions has a direct impact on the confidence the community has regarding the school and a direct relationship on the school’s viability. Recruiting, preparing, and retaining qualified leaders

²² Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ St. John Paul II, 1979

²⁵ Cardinal Newman Society, 2019

for all Catholic schools is a challenge.²⁶ Developing and communicating the mission, as well as making all decisions through the lens of this mission are the most critical priorities of a Catholic school principal. In order to accomplish this, our current and future leaders must be formed and prepared in light of this mission.²⁷

Processes and structures: From school-based leadership to diocesan oversight, it is essential that processes are in place to ensure that each school has a strong academic program, an environment that is most conducive to learning, and a robust faith community with a clear Catholic identity.²⁸ Schools that provide ongoing professional development, updated curriculum materials, technology and facilities have strong indicators of operational vitality. Without these in place, even an academically rigorous school with a strong Catholic identity will not survive.²⁹

²⁶ Defiore, Convey & Schuttloffel, 2009

²⁷ Baillargeon, 2018

²⁸ Defiore, Convey & Schuttloffel, 2009

²⁹ Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012

Excellent in all Ways (Pathways Recommendations)

Create a comprehensive professional development program for Catholic schools that:

- **Includes focused professional development for specific subject areas, special needs populations, diverse populations, and unique institutional charism,**
- **Provides targeted professional development for school leaders in instructional, managerial, and spiritual leadership,**
- **Grants access to high-level opportunities from college and university partners,**
- **Is a tool to recruit and retain mission connected teachers at the schools,**
- **Encourages and supports future leaders in the schools to advance in a leadership pipeline,**
- **Is funded creatively by the work of the Catholic Schools Office to maximize use of pooled funds and new funding sources.**

Develop standards and a review process for institutional effectiveness that includes:

- **An Associate Superintendent of Schools to assist in providing support to the development of programs and the evaluation of programs,**
- **Professional standards for all positions at the school including licensure of teachers/principals**
- **Maintenance of appropriate institutional accreditation,**
- **Effective and timely assessment of student progress and program effectiveness,**
- **Guidelines for enrollment management efforts geared toward recruiting and retaining students at each grade change especially at kindergarten, middle school, and high school,**
- **Appropriate policy development to support and protect schools,**
- **Personnel guidelines to ensure the appropriate ratio of teachers, administrators, and support staff to provide a high quality education,**
- **Centralization, when necessary, of resources and programs to increase school-based and diocesan efficiency.**

Develop a common 21st century curricular framework used by all schools that exceeds the public school standards and is steeped in the Catholic intellectual tradition.

- **Adopt a curriculum that is strong in developing critical thinking and the humanities including reading, writing, and rhetoric,**
- **Adopt curriculum standards in STEM that provide a solid foundation and allow schools to focus in areas that best suit their charism and resources,**
- **Ensure the availability of music and visual arts for all students,**
- **Ensure access to updated technology in each of the schools with a focus on building skills and ethical use,**
- **Develop pre-K and early childhood standards that provide the necessary foundations skills for success in the K-8 classrooms,**
- **Develop processes and resources to support students with Special Needs including: Special Education, Title 1, Occupational Therapy, Guidance, Mental Health, ESL and others.**

Expand the range of students we are capable of serving in our Catholic schools by exploring the following models:

- Non-traditional schools with specified programs,
- Catholic schools with traditional and 21st century vocational tracks,
- Classical schools.

Excellent in All Ways (Immediate Actions)

Three immediate actions are necessary to begin the process of ensuring excellence in all aspects of school life.

- **The principals and pastors should be gathered together to talk about what is being proposed as well as the benefits of pooled funding and shared resources before the start of the next school year.**
- **An Associate Superintendent is needed to support the Superintendent in providing direction, oversight, and evaluation of the programs which flow out of this category.**
- **Targeted professional development must be developed further and implemented consistently to meet specific school needs.**

Accessible to Everyone

“By reason of their evangelizing mission, Catholic schools should be available to all people who desire a Catholic education for their children. Catholic schools in concert with the Catholic community should do everything in their power to manage available resources and seek innovative options to ensure that Catholic school is geographically, programmatically, physically, and financially accessible.”³⁰

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Responds to | Providing access geographically, fiscally, and across the age spectrum; Helping schools better reflect fully local demography |
| By | Meeting families’ needs; Filling the void left by closures and consolidations |
| Resources/Personnel Needs | Additional financial assistance; Professional Development Funds for Cultural Training and Leadership; Director of Development; Pastoral Buy-In for Building Schools; Translator and Local Key-Communicators |

Accessible to Everyone (Pathways Vision and Explanations)

- **Better serve and reflect in students and staffs the cultural diversity of our regions.**
- **Find ways to engage Latino communities, and other underserved ethnic populations in the life of the schools.**
- **Increase access for middle-income and low-income families.**
- **Increase geographic reach to all regions of the Diocese.**

Engage the Latino and other underserved communities: Latinos are the fastest growing school age population in the nation and in the Diocese of Springfield. One in five Latinos currently disaffiliates from the Catholic Church each year; however, those who attend Catholic schools are less likely to leave the faith. Catholic schools offer a point of entry for the families back to the Church for this community.³¹ By informing and attracting Latinos to our schools, developing leaders to understand this community’s needs, opening schools where they can access them, and understanding how they enhance our schools from a benefit relationship, it is possible to provide greater access to our schools from this critical population.³² Lessons learned from the work done with the Latino communities can and should be applied to all of the communities represented in our Diocese.

Being culturally aware and responsive: Catholic schools who have diversity on their staffs are more likely to be more successful in student outcomes with respect to participation, development of self-esteem, decreases in racism, in addition to an improvement in test scores. Students also have mentors in their teachers, principals, and other community leaders to help them aspire to higher aims.³³ There is a real need for us to be willing to walk with, talk with, and enter into meaningful relationships with all of

³⁰ Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012

³¹ Denver, 2012

³² Notre Dame, 2009

³³ Ospino & Weitzel-O’Neill, 2018

those who are currently in our schools, and the demographic communities surrounding our schools. Our schools will thrive if they are better embodying the community in which they are situated.

Increase access for middle-income and low-income families: Tuition in the Catholic schools is more than ten percent of the median income of families in all but one of our schools. Increasingly, it seems in the Diocese of Springfield that middle-income and low-income families cannot support the continually rising tuition costs of the schools. This fits in with the national trend. “Most families of modest or low income need financial assistance to enable them to exercise their right to select the best school for their children”³⁴ While the Meitler Report (2000) did not address the enrollment risks connected to the rising costs of education in our own schools, national research on the sustainability of the tuition and the dangers of potential elitism because of the rising cost of Catholic schools was already in place.”³⁵ This trend has continued as Notre Dame reported, “So as tuition rises to keep up with the cost-to-educate, low-income and working-class parents find themselves increasingly unable to pay tuition costs, and fewer children are enrolled in Catholic schools. At the same time, schools struggle to find revenue to cover the difference between what families can contribute and what it costs to educate, leading to increasing school debt in many places. Evidence suggests that the tuition-driven parochial school is not sustainable over time in low-income and working-class communities.”³⁶ While their focus was in engaging the Latino population, the research still suggests a need to create alternate funding models for the future.

Build where there is a need: The Code of Canon Law states the following: “If schools which offer an education imbued with a Christian spirit are not available, it is for the diocesan bishop to take care that they are established.”³⁷ It also makes clear that other types of schools should be made available to families including professional, technical, and special education schools.³⁸ In addition, Catholic schools would be more attractive to families to the extent that they meet the needs of working class families by providing daycare and transportation.³⁹ In accomplishing this, a Catholic education should be made accessible geographically in any way possible to all areas of the Diocese.

³⁴ NCEA, 2019

³⁵ Guerra, 2000; Greene & O’Keefe, 2001

³⁶ Notre Dame, 2009

³⁷ Canon 802.1

³⁸ Canon 802.2

³⁹ Notre Dame, 2009

Accessible to Everyone (Pathways Recommendations)

Develop an understanding and respond to the diverse needs of our community by:

- Partnering with pastors of parishes serving diverse populations, Catholic higher education, and the civic community in engaging and supporting families under-represented in our schools
- Conducting information gathering and community building events to understand and respond to accessibility challenges for local demographics,
- Providing cultural training to everyone in Catholic schools as well as pastors regarding the needs of the underserved populations around our schools,
- Adapting hiring practices to better reflect local demographics,
- Creating a pipeline of and provide support to mission-minded professionals who want to work for the changing demography of our schools,
- Communicating in manners that are effective in transmitting the goals and mission of our schools to various communities,
- Increasing the diversity of the leadership of our school system by actively and intentionally recruiting diverse communities to apply to our schools as staff members, teachers, administrators, and board members.

Ensure a Catholic education is available to all students and in all regions of the Diocese.

- Build preschools in parishes with a large percentage of young families,
- Open daycares and preschools in areas of limited access and/or a high percentage of underprivileged families,
- Better utilize transportation to our current and future schools,
- Develop and provide a sustainable model of education for grades PK-12 Franklin County,
- Develop and provide a sustainable model of education for families in Hampshire County,
- Open an academy school that serves college-prep bound, traditional high school, and vocational students in Hampden or Hampshire Counties.

Research ways to increase affordability for all who desire a Catholic education for their children by:

- Prioritizing populations likely to be open to the opportunity and/or in need to start filling the seats,
- Communicating financial assistance programs more aggressively,
- Designing a funding model that starts with affordability,
- Placing significant efforts and resources into development, increasing endowments for tuition assistance, grant writing, corporate partnerships, and tax-credit legislation,
- Communicating the importance of stewardship and support of Catholic education with all Catholics in the Diocese of Springfield,
- Providing direct support to principals in terms of soliciting funding and development to cover gaps.

Accessible to Everyone (Immediate Needs)

There are four areas to focus on immediately that will lay the groundwork for successfully increasing access over the long-term, but at the same time increase enrollment for the upcoming school year.

- **It is critical to engage with the priests and parish communities that are serving underrepresented populations in our school immediately to reach those families who desire a Catholic education right now but do not believe it is accessible to them.**
- **At the school and Diocesan level, communicating what we have for financial assistance opportunities will help dispel the misconception that schools are not willing to work with families of need.**
- **The populations that most likely would be open to the opportunities afforded to their family by accessing a Catholic education at a discounted cost need to be identified, prioritized, and provided information regarding access to the schools.**
- **Conversations in Franklin County regarding opening a Catholic school should begin which coincide with the opening of St. Thomas Aquinas College.**

Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable

“Catholic school must adopt and maintain standards for operational vitality...and define the norms and expectations for fundamental procedures to support and ensure viability and sustainability. When a school does not maintain standards for operational vitality, the continuation of academic excellence is in grave jeopardy. Over time, even an academically rigorous school with strong Catholic identity will not survive without operational vitality.”⁴⁰

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Responds to: | Adequacy and accuracy of financial reporting; Opportunity to incentivize parishes in their support of Catholic schools; Need to calculate the full cost for education in the diocese; Methods for the equitable and just distribution of resources in accordance with the Catholic Social Justice Principles |
| By: | Coordinating financial management and oversight; Creating a viable business model; Utilizing best practices in financing, funding, development; Sharing resources; Developing a strategic reserve; Aggressively seeking alternate models and sources of support |
| Resources/Personnel Needs: | Catholic Schools Office Finance Officer; Entrepreneurial Board Members at the Diocesan and local school level; Local Marketing Directors assisted and supported by the Catholic Schools Office; Increased Collection of Education Assessment |

Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable (Pathways Vision and Explanations)

- **Improve financial management of our schools.**
- **Increase an understanding of stewardship to support the schools.**
- **Increase financial accessibility of our schools.**

Financial management: According to the National Benchmarks excellent Catholic schools provide, “a feasible three to five-year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets as a result of a collaborative process.” In the benchmarks, operational vitality flows through this standard and includes, agreed-upon levels of financial assessment, clearly defined revenue sources, delineation of key target costs, statements of expenditures including the cost per child, benchmarked compensation and benefits, as well as other financial plans. Catholic schools need to have, “strong financial management demonstrated by the ability to record, report, and analyze data in a way that facilitates decision-making.”⁴¹ In order to distribute funding equitably, the diocese must have consistent and reliable financial and enrollment data from the schools as well as the expenses of the Catholic Schools Office. Annual budgets, viability standards, diocesan-wide budgets, and strategic reserves are all designed to provide transparent information into the fiscal potential of the diocese, and ensure sustainability of the

⁴⁰ Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012

⁴¹ Appendix K: Pathways to Faith Commission: Focus on Finances 1/28/18

schools. Once cost to educate is generated in a consistent manner, capital campaigns along with alternate sources of funding can more easily be accomplished.

Stewardship: By removing the irregularities of how much or little parishes with and without schools provide for Catholic education, support from all parishes for Catholic education more successfully follows the guidelines of the USCCB and the Church with respect to support of Catholic Schools.⁴² “The burden of supporting our Catholic schools can no longer be placed exclusively on the individual parishes that have schools and on parents who pay tuition. This will require all Catholics, including those in parishes without schools to focus on the spirituality of stewardship. The future of Catholic school education depends on the entire Catholic community”.⁴³ Catholic education must be seen as a responsibility of all of the faithful of the Diocese of Springfield. Care should be taken to not disincentivize parishes from supporting Catholic education in the diocese. In revising the Education Assessment, parishes and the Catholic faithful are included in being better stewards of their resources and of Catholic education as a whole. It should not be forgotten that donors of all faith traditions know the value of a Catholic education, and with new approaches to funding, governing, organizing, and staffing Catholic schools, they, as well, are helping them move from financially sustainable to truly vital.⁴⁴

Engage families with access in mind: Developing financial access to our schools begins with determining what is affordable for our families. “By reason of their evangelizing mission, Catholic schools should be available to all people who desire a Catholic school education for their children. Catholic schools in concert with the Catholic community should do everything in their power to manage available resources and seek innovative options to ensure that Catholic school education is geographically, programmatically, physically, and financially available.”⁴⁵ Shifting away from the current model, which starts at a point too high for the majority of families in our Diocese and never actually reaches cost to educate, will be challenging, but a necessary step in achieving financial sustainability. Dioceses that have made decisions flowing from the actual cost to educate a student in a unified manner have made recommendations which have advanced their school’s vitality (Diocese of Denver, Diocese of Arlington, Diocese of Rockland, Archdiocese of Atlanta), as well as have been positioned to assist schools struggling financially (Diocese of Providence, Diocese of Bridgeport). When looking at the cost to educate, careful consideration must be placed in the investment necessary for schools to function outside of a poverty mindset. Successful Catholic schools make investments in human capital, technology, competitive programs, professional development, and recruitment efforts.⁴⁶

⁴² Defiore, Convey & Schuttloffel, 2009

⁴³ USCCB, 2005

⁴⁴ Philanthropy Roundtable, 2015

⁴⁵ Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012

⁴⁶ Archdiocese of New York, 2016

Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable (Pathways Recommendations)

Improve our overall financial management of our Catholic schools and Catholic school system by:

- **Hiring a School Financial Manager to coordinate financial management for all schools, implement common financial systems, charts of accounts, and other strategies,**
- **Hiring a Director of Development for the Diocese of Springfield for all facets of development as well as consultative in nature for the Catholic schools,**
- **Examining seriously the overall fiscal potential available to keep Catholic education funded in the future,**
- **Preparing a Diocesan Catholic Schools budget that includes the Diocesan Schools Office personnel and costs, financial aid awarded, teacher and staff benefits, strategic reserve, direct grants awarded to schools,**
- **Preparing a Diocesan Schools budget that aggregates all school budgets and reflects the costs associated with the Diocesan Catholic Schools Office and other financial matters,**
- **Pooling expenses and increase purchasing power by sharing services,**
- **Establishing financial viability standards, processes for multi-year budgeting, and protocols for financial oversight,**
- **Ensuring that consistent and transparent reporting is available at the Diocesan level and the local school levels (e.g. annual public reports, monthly reports to respective boards, etc.)**

Increase stewardship to support the essential ministry of Catholic education in the Diocese by:

- **Revising the Education Assessment to incentivize parishes to support their young people to attend a Catholic school and provide each deanery flexibility to support Catholic educational initiatives,**
- **Creating a strategic reserve to be able to fund initiatives that promote Catholic education and allows the Superintendent to seed other initiatives in the Diocese,**
- **Communicating clearly and consistently that Catholic education is a critical ministry to the overall health of the Diocese of Springfield,**
- **Finding ways to create a salary and benefits structure for teachers that is competitive and reflects justice and equity in pay,**
- **Distributing the Educational Assessment more equitably,**
- **Conducting a capital campaign to support all schools, especially to raise financial aid to help defray the full cost of education for economically disadvantaged families.**

Design a discounted tuition model to make Catholic education financially accessible to all families.

- **Increase financial assistance to create an immediate infusion of money to support increasing access for prioritized populations of students,**
- **Extend tuition assistance to dependents of teachers,**
- **Provide tuition assistance to dependents of all Diocesan employees,**
- **Provide a tuition reduction for parish-sponsored students and clearly delineate what it takes to be sponsored,**

- Calculate the true per-student cost of attending a school,
- Develop a system to determine affordability for families that takes into account net income and expenses through FACTS or another need-based calculator,
- Research various tuition models and calculate overall income potential and deltas compared to cost-to-educate of the models for possible implementation,
- Design a new “tuition” model for Catholic education which takes into account affordability and cost-to-educate, creatively funding the gap between the two.

Good Stewards/Financially Sustainable (Immediate Actions)

Three immediate actions are necessary to accomplish the above stated goals:

- **A Financial Manager who works for the Catholic Schools Office should be hired who has the responsibility to coordinate the financial management of all Catholic schools, develop acceptable standards, and budgetary processes.**
- **A Development Director should be hired by the Diocese of Springfield who also assists with the efforts of the Catholic schools providing access to revenues and resources that currently are going unrealized.**
- **Financial resources designated for Catholic schools from the Education Assessment and Annual Catholic Appeal need to be identified for redirection and reallocation on a more equitable basis to provide more financial aid, more equitable strategic reserve, and the hiring of Diocesan Schools Office personnel suggested in this report.**

Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community

“Catholic school governance and leadership can be seen as a ministry that promotes and protects the responsibilities and rights of the school community. Governance and leadership based on the principles and practices of excellence are essential to insuring the Catholic identity, academic excellence, and operational vitality of the school.”⁴⁷

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Responds to: | Increasing engagement of all stakeholders; Providing clarity to the governance structure; Need for stability and transparency |
| By: | Bringing clarity; Empowering leaders and the community |
| Resources/Personnel Needs: | |

Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community (Pathways Vision and Explanations)

- **Engage and empower stakeholders within the school and parish community.**
- **Implement new school models with school boards that maintain limited jurisdiction to support the work of Catholic education, and provide stability in the moments of pastoral or school-based leadership change.**
- **Restructure the Catholic Schools Office to better meet the needs of the Catholic school system.**
- **Create structures and processes designed to define and communicate the value of a Catholic education.**

Engaging and empowering stakeholders within the school and parish community: The life of our Catholic School has been made possible because of the involvement and sacrifice of countless people through the years. Continuing to engage our parishioners, parents, teachers, clergy, communities is essential to the ongoing vitality and future viability of our schools. This engagement necessitates real empowerment. Structuring and sustaining this engagement and empowerment by necessity will be a dynamic process. This is not done in a vacuum but as part of a larger region/deanery and as part of the diocesan church.

School boards of limited jurisdiction within three school models: Because of the natural connection which should exist between a parish and its parish school, it has the potential to provide the greatest operational vitality in its overall connection to the evangelizing mission of Catholic education. Because of economy of scale and other circumstances, not all schools can function under the parish school model; nevertheless, each school should be governed in a way that is as close as possible to this paradigm. Where there is not a natural pastor over a school, every effort must be made to develop two-tier leadership at these newly designed Regional or Diocesan schools to ensure Catholic identity by the priests of the Diocese of Springfield. By delegating some of the operational authority to local leadership,

⁴⁷ Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012

it will free the pastors and priests to place greater focus on the parish community and faith formation.⁴⁸ It will also help schools continually thrive during the potential transition of pastoral or educational leadership.

There are three types of boards permitted to work for the Church; namely, advisory, consultative, or limited jurisdiction.⁴⁹ We recommend the boards for any school in the Diocese of Springfield be constituted with limited jurisdictions with the Bishop delegating authority to the board over at least finances, strategic planning, and policy recommendations. The pastor of parish schools and the pastoral boards in regional schools consult with the Superintendent and the school board regarding the hiring, firing, and evaluation of the principal. Each board will have an established membership committee to recruit members to best serve the needs of the specific board. Membership for the boards should include people willing to give time, talent, and treasure in the areas of limited jurisdiction. They should be diverse and represent various occupations and talents; alumni/parents of alums; leaders within the civic, business and professional communities; and pastors of the Diocese of Springfield. Parents should not constitute more than 25 percent of the appointed membership of any board, and members of other faith communities shall not constitute more than 20 percent of the appointed membership of any board.

All schools of the Diocese will then be governed consistently in one of these three models⁵⁰:

- **Parish school:** Elementary schools should be encouraged to use this model as long as they can be financially sustainable. Rubrics should be designed to assist in determining school vitality with clear targets for enrollment, finances, and programmatic excellence. The pastor of the parish, as the Bishop's delegate, is over the Catholic identity and mission-effectiveness of the school. He also is responsible to be present regularly to the school community and provide pastoral care and Sacramental access for the school. The school board and the superintendent participate in the hiring, firing, and evaluation of the principal in consultation with the pastor. The principal, who is over all day-to-day operations of the school is a non-voting ex-officio member of the school board. The Superintendent is responsible to fill an ex-officio seat on the board. The School Board is one of limited jurisdiction with the pastor delegating authority to the board over specific areas (e.g. finances, strategic planning, policy recommendations). While it is a school board for the parish school it is highly recommended that invitations to membership be extended to neighboring pastors or their delegate. It is critical that parishes with a school have pastors who desire a strong connection with their Catholic school as they determine with great degree the vitality of parish schools.
- **Regional school:** This model is a possibility for parishes who wish to consolidate their resources to support a school or a system of schools on one or more campuses for their children. This model works a lot like the parish school model with each parish formally part of the school providing assistance to the operations of the school. Rubrics should be designed to assist in determining school vitality with clear targets for enrollment, finances, and programmatic excellence. The pastors from the cluster of parishes who are supporting the school are members of a Pastoral Board that serves as the Bishop's delegate over the Catholic identity and mission-effectiveness of the school. This Pastoral Board members are also responsible to ensure regular pastoral presence and care as well as provide Sacramental access for the school. The Bishop will delegate one of the pastors to be a member of the school board. The school board and the

⁴⁸ Dallas, 2013; Bridgeport, 2017

⁴⁹ NCEA, 2009

⁵⁰ Appendix M.2: Governance structures

superintendent participate in the hiring, firing, and evaluation of the principal in consultation with the Pastoral Board. The principal, who is over all day-to-day operations of the school is a non-voting ex-officio member of the school board. The Superintendent is responsible to fill an ex-officio seat on the board. The School Board is one of limited jurisdiction with the Bishop delegating authority to the board over specific areas (e.g. finances, strategic planning, policy recommendations). One additional responsibility of the board will be facilities, seeing that the school is not connected to a single parish.

- **Diocesan school:** In this model, the school is an extension of the mission of the Diocese of Springfield, and not necessarily any one parish or group of parishes. This model should be considered for high schools, special needs schools, or schools with other specific purposes. Like the regional school, there is not built-in pastoral care. This should be provided with a full-time chaplain who has ultimate authority over the school's manifestations of Catholic identity and mission-effectiveness, and reports directly to the Bishop. The chaplain also is also responsible to ensure regular pastoral presence and care as well as provide Sacramental access for the school. The Bishop as the sole owner of the school delegates the decision-making powers to a school board that makes all operational decisions for the school in concert with the Bishop's delegate, a voting member of the board, who provides guidance to the Catholic ethos of the school. The Superintendent of Schools is a member of the school board to ensure they remain cognizant of the direction of the entire Catholic school system. The Board hires and evaluates the leadership team, which is created to best serve the need that comes forth from the mission of the school.

Bishop's Commission for Catholic School Education (Reconstitute the present Diocesan Catholic School Board)⁵¹: Clearly written bylaws, clarity of authority and function, accountability of membership to stakeholders, definite terms of office, regularly scheduled meetings, professional development for board members, and having meaningful roles in consequential work are indicators of successful boards.⁵² At the diocesan level, a board with limited jurisdiction that serves as the Bishop's Commission for Catholic School Education will be more effective than the current advisory model in assisting, guiding, and planning for the long-term viability of Catholic schools. The Diocesan School Board will be the overseeing body to implement any recommendations that come out of the Pathways of Faith Commission. Like the school boards, the Bishop's Commission for Catholic School Education will have an established membership committee to recruit members to best serve the needs of the specific board. Membership for the boards should include people willing to give time, talent, and treasure in the areas of limited jurisdiction. They should be diverse and represent various occupations and talents; alumni/parents of alums; leaders within the civic, business and professional communities; and pastors of the Diocese of Springfield. Parents should not constitute more than 25 percent of the appointed membership of any board, and members of other faith communities shall not constitute more than 20 percent of the appointed membership of any board.

Diocesan Schools Office: The Diocesan Schools Office must be responsive to the current educational needs of the Diocese and each of the Catholic schools within the system. It also must have a vision for the future. Due to the scope of the work, the Diocesan Schools Office will need to add personnel. The Pathways Commission sees at least three positions Assistant Superintendent, Financial Manager, Development/Marketing. Diligence must be done to ensure that high quality applicants can apply and be compensated in a manner that will provide enthusiasm and consistency. Curriculum development, strategic planning, financial oversight and marketing support are all priorities. Even where positions are

⁵¹ Appendix M.1: Governance Structures

⁵² NCEA, 2009

not necessary, it is imperative that the Schools Office is made aware of, and in all cases participates in, decisions which may have an effect on a Catholic school. It needs to be clarified how the Diocesan Schools fit into the mission of the diocese. As one diocese, existing and future overall diocesan structures can be creatively utilized to share resources. The Superintendent will have the responsibility to create and maintain a budget with sufficient resources to accomplish initiatives which will benefit the individual schools and the system as a whole.

Improved marketing: Marketing and messaging hold many parts of this report together. Through good marketing efforts, the mission can be better shared and improper perceptions regarding programs, accessibility, and finances can be clarified systematically. On an individual basis, schools need to market their own unique charisms to support healthy enrollments and distinguish themselves from other options. Schools must systematically approach recruiting and retaining students and families.⁵³ On a Diocesan level, good targeted messaging can support the centralized engagement and development efforts which are critical to support the schools. An ongoing process of defining and communicating the value of Catholic education which gathers accomplishments, gathers data, manages information for all stake-holders, and provides a 21st century approach in communication should be a marker of an excellent Catholic school.⁵⁴

Governance and communications: Good governance includes the communication to the appropriate stakeholders and transparency as a system. Intentionality in communications is an important element in sustaining a successful system. Effective communication builds and maintains relationships, facilitates innovations, helps to build an effective team, contributes to the health of the organization, and ensures transparency among other benefits.⁵⁵ It also ensures that those working in the system are valued. The Catholic Schools Office operates in the larger system of the Diocese of Springfield. In order to most effectively communicate, the right people have to be part of the discussions that directly or indirectly affect the schools. Structured liaisons need to be in places to assist the schools locally as well assist the Catholic school's office when important decision are being made. The superintendent of schools should be included in discussions regarding schools (buildings, finances, priest placement, etc.) When communication is effective, the system can be more vibrant.

⁵³ Denver, 2012

⁵⁴ Dallas, 2014

⁵⁵ Australian Institute of Business, 2014

Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community (Pathways Recommendations)

Empower pastors and priests of the Diocese of Springfield to exercise their roles as Spiritual Leaders to the students in our schools by:

- **Listening to the needs and experiences of the pastors, clergy, and the parishes they serve so as to incorporate their advice in providing solutions for our schools,**
- **Providing access to high quality professional development intended to assist pastors in understanding and managing a Catholic school,**
- **Encouraging them to recruit and collaborate with mission-minded laity to entrepreneurially look at solving the challenges in their schools,**
- **Providing buy-in and oversight of the Catholic identity and mission-effectiveness of the Catholic schools,**
- **Providing a network and support to assist pastors in opening schools that will serve their families in a model that is less financially straining than a traditional parish school,**
- **Providing research and direct experience regarding the benefits of a Catholic education.**

Empower school boards to make decisions by:

- **Redefining the role of leadership at the Diocesan level through the establishment of the Bishop's Commission for Education,**
- **Providing each board with limited jurisdiction that operates under proper Canonical guidelines,**
- **Providing professional development to school boards regarding board effectiveness, Catholic identity, and mission effectiveness, limited jurisdiction,**
- **Encouraging entrepreneurial thought in resolving many challenges facing their school.**

Communicate more effectively the mission of the Catholic schools in Springfield by:

- **Emphasizing the need for all parishes to work with neighboring schools for purposes of marketing, admissions, and retention,**
- **Ensuring that all Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese employ directly or have access to a Marketing Director who works specifically for their school,**
- **Expanding the relationship with Catholic Communications Corp. to create innovative and effective communications for the Catholic school system and individual schools,**
- **Translating materials into languages which reflect the local demographics of each school,**
- **Engaging key communicators in providing access to the message of Catholic schools,**
- **Providing centralized support for the marketing efforts of the individual schools.**

Clarify the organizational chart, roles, and job responsibilities of all those who work for Catholic Education within the framework of the Diocese of Springfield by:

- **Creating job descriptions, expectations, and standards for the Superintendent,**
- **Creating job descriptions, expectations, and standards for Catholic Schools Office Personnel,**
- **Developing bylaws, expectations, and training for the Bishop's Commission for Education,**

- Developing standards for parish priests who have Catholic schools,
- Creating an organizational chart which clearly defines the role of Catholic schools within the context of the Diocese as a whole.

Improve institutional communication internally and externally, bringing greater transparency to the entire Catholic school system by:

- Ensuring that offices in the diocese, including in the bishop's office, are communicating with the Catholic Schools Office in all matters which directly or indirectly impact the schools (e.g. Clergy commission, seminary formation, buildings, etc.),
- Identifying liaisons to work with the schools and school boards to communicate policies and provide support at the local level,
- Reviewing how Diocesan Communication Office, and all offices are communicating with one another and especially with respect to Catholic schools,
- Increasing regular communication channels to provide more clarity and transparency into the decisions made regarding Catholic schools,
- Encouraging each school to increase transparency regarding financials, policies, and practices with stakeholders.

Governance: Engaging and Empowering Stakeholders and the Community (Immediate Actions):

It is imperative that there are few immediate actions to ensure the recommendations are accomplished are put in place.

- In order to move forward, it is important that every school in the Diocese, including the high schools, function within one of the three models. The Bishop should set up a process to ensure that the schools are functioning in a model which best serves their community. This process could include making evaluation with the appropriate stakeholders (priests of the Deanery, Diocesan Schools Office) and the appropriate modifications to fit within one of the models. Organization and developmental support will be needed to support schools who desire to change models or for future schools who are opening.
- The Bishop's Commission for Catholic School Education needs to be created and populated to provide the capacity necessary to create the strategic plans which will ensure successful completion of the Pathways to Faith recommendations.
- The organizational chart for the Catholic Schools needs to be developed and publicized
- Education for school boards regarding limited jurisdiction, the different models, and the nature of a school board needs to be provided to all schools.

Conclusion

As referenced in the introduction of the report, Catholic education has been and continues to be a vital ministry of the Diocese of Springfield. For more than 150 years, our Catholic schools have been staffed by extraordinary men and women who have provided a solid education for young people connected to a love of learning and a life of virtue. Over the past 20 years, two major initiatives were undertaken to realize concrete ways to support this ministry. The recommendations from these past efforts⁵⁶, as well as the commitment of those in the schools provided some short-term relief from the challenges facing the schools as a whole. Unfortunately, because of many factors, the plans which came out of these initiatives fell short in providing the system-wide support necessary to ensure the success of Catholic education into the future. The hope from the Pathways Commission is to disrupt business as usual and provide recommendations, steeped in best practices, which will ensure the availability of a Catholic education to the families of the Diocese of Springfield well into the future. Knowing our schools are vital ministries, we aspire with this report to make them more financially sustainable, excellent in all ways, accessible, and governed in a manner that invites more and more people to understand and advance the critical mission of the schools.

In order to get to that point, we first must tackle some immediate needs. It is critical that the necessary support staff is put in place to assist the Superintendent in accomplishing the tasks. A Financial Manager and Associate Superintendent will provide the support necessary to ensure that the schools and the system are meeting the standards necessary to truly maintain institutional vitality.⁵⁷ An immediate infusion of money, through more equitable distribution of the resources of the Diocese directed for Catholic education, will provide much needed financial assistance at a greater percentage for all of the schools to better accomplish the accessibility recommendations. Identifying families who currently desire a Catholic education is an important first-step to filling our seats in better accomplishing our mission. Meetings with the key stakeholders, especially the priests of the Diocese of Springfield, will empower the leadership of our parishes to better understand and support the critical mission which flows out of our schools. Providing the Catholic Schools Office a “green light” to move in the direction of accomplishing these recommendations, the freedom to make decisions which impact the schools, and a seat at the table when decisions are made which may impact the schools cannot be understated. Finally, empowering the boards by redefining how they function will inject enthusiasm and a greater entrepreneurial spirit into the life of the schools and Catholic school system.

A special mention needs to be made here regarding Our Lady of the Elms College. Since its very foundation in 1928 it has formed teachers who have served the educative needs of our communities including our own Catholic schools, and It has been at the heart of preparing educators to work in preschools through high schools in our region. The relationship with Our Lady of the Elms can be of great support to the initiatives and plans which this report suggests. The faculty from Our lady of the Elms has already been instrumental in their support of our schools, and in the development of this plan. In the future, they can continue to be a support and ally to many of the schools for teacher preparation, administration, professional development for all stakeholders, board development, and in many other areas. We are blessed to have this natural resource in our backyard, and we are uniquely positioned to

⁵⁶ Meitler Report, 2001; Blue Ribbon Commission, 2006

⁵⁷ Hobbie, 2009

create a K-16 Catholic school partnership and mentality, which can also serve as best practice for other areas of the country.

While in many ways this report attempts to be comprehensive, there are many challenges that face our schools which we may not have identified. Further research is needed to better understand the sentiments of families not in our schools, the concerns of the priests of the Diocese of Springfield with regard to Catholic education, and even the overall financial potential in our area to support schools. There are also unforeseen challenges which may arise that we cannot anticipate. The recommendations to engage and empower an increasing number of people who are working to find solutions for our schools can bring about the much needed shared leadership to adapt to those challenges when they come.

There cannot be an ‘ultimate goal’ of this report as it is like lighting the first torch on the pathway to successful Catholic education in our Diocese. As we walk along, more research will be needed. A better mission statement that includes what we believe about our schools and the way they fit into the evangelizing work of our Diocese will need to be created. Strategic plans for the schools and the school system must be developed. If these are not completed in conjunction with the strategic priorities of the Diocese of Springfield, the recommendations will be much more difficult to accomplish. We currently envision giving this report to Bishop Rozanski. If he concurs, we believe that facilitating listening sessions and conversations with the principals, school boards, and pastors will provide us feedback regarding how the recommendations presented above are understood by these critical stakeholders, including potential concerns which may arise. This process was collaborative in nature, and we would like to maintain a collaborative spirit in the manner that the plans are rolled out to the larger community.

Finally, we believe that the recommendations in this report will bring about concrete changes in the short-term to inject more life into our schools. We also believe that the recommendations from the report will point the Catholic schools toward a path where individually and as a system, they better accomplish the mission of Catholic education given us by the Church, and provide increased access to a high quality Catholic education for our families for generations to come. While our hope is to provide a Catholic education for everyone who desires one, we believe our ability to attain this aspirational goal can only be accomplished if we start on the “Pathway” set forth in this report.

With gratitude and hope,

Pathways Commission Members

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Fr. Brian McGrath | Co-Chairperson | Michael McDonough |
| Linda Rex | Co-Chairperson | Sr. Maxyne Schneider, SSJ |
| Harry E. Dumay, Ph.D. | | Jim Stankiewicz |
| Larry Eagan | | Virginia Webb |
| Rich Labrie | | |

Catholic Schools Office

Daniel R. Baillargeon, Ph.D. Superintendent of Schools