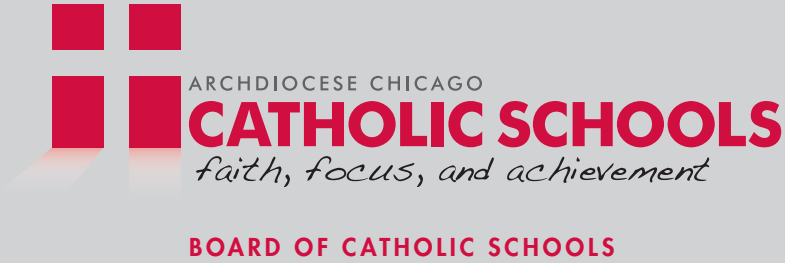
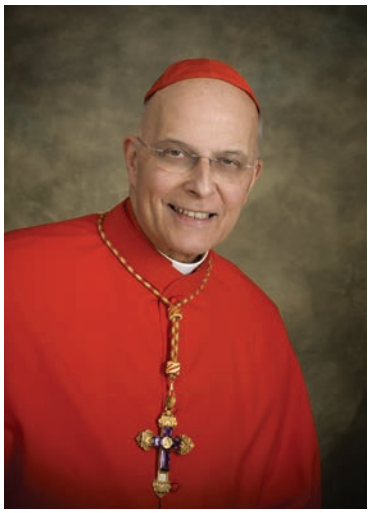
Archdiocese of Chicago Board of Catholic Schools

Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools

2013 – 2016

ARCHDIOCESE OF
CHICAGO


ARCHDIOCESE CHICAGO
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
faith, focus, and achievement
BOARD OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



The mission of the Church in every generation is to introduce the world to its Savior. Introducing people to Jesus Christ leads people to discuss not only who Jesus is but also to discover who they are in relation to him. Made in God's image and likeness, saved by Christ, emboldened by the Holy Spirit, men and women are to use their minds to discover the truth and their wills to seek the good. Most of all, they are to train their hearts to love God and all those whom He loves. Directing people on this quest has led the Church in every age to conduct Catholic schools.

The Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago are centers of learning in a community of love. They are excellent educational institutions, as the following plan makes clear; but the most important lesson any of us learns is that God loves us. Secure in that love, students are free to raise any questions and develop their talents and capacities in an integrated way.

Our schools are intellectually free. Students may ask about God, about their own destiny, about why they are alive. In public and other government-sponsored schools, students are not free to raise these and other questions that are basic to human happiness. These are the questions that we wrestled with many decades ago when I was a student in a Catholic school in Chicago; they are the questions students wrestle with today. Our society works better and lives with more integrity because of the blessing that Catholic schools are for so many in our community.

I am proud of our schools and grateful to those responsible for running them and to those who support them. I am especially grateful to the Archdiocesan School Board who, with the cooperation of the Archdiocesan Superintendent of Schools, Sr. M. Paul McCaughey, O.P., worked long and hard on this strategic plan. It took effort to research and write; it will take more effort to implement. But the determination for the task is strong. I am confident that this plan will be successfully brought to completion in our schools, with the help of God's grace, by all those who have contributed to it.

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago

Archdiocese of Chicago Board of Catholic Schools

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INTRODUCTION

The Catholic school system of the Archdiocese of Chicago educates 86,502 elementary and high school students in 255 schools in Cook and Lake counties and is overseen by the Office of Catholic Schools (OCS).[1] Catholic schools give these young people a firm foundation for life by providing them with both strong academics and the fundamentals of their faith. Pastors, principals, and teachers are free to create a God-centered environment in the schools that demonstrates faith in action. Catholic schools, as Cardinal Francis George recently explained, also provide "a safe place for people to learn because of what we believe about love and respect." Catholic schools also perform a profoundly important civic function by grounding students, both Catholic and those from other faith traditions, in the virtues that produce responsible members of society. By forming future adults who respect themselves and others, the Catholic schools provide an invaluable service to the community as a whole.

Catholic schools also offer strong academic preparation across the board, including in neighborhoods where public schools are underperforming. High school graduation rates in urban areas are dramatically higher for students in Catholic schools.[2] Recently, a blue-ribbon task force identified inadequate public education as such a grave problem that it presents a national security crisis.[3] Keeping Catholic schools available to children, therefore, has become a civic and moral imperative.

In the Chicago Archdiocese the overall report card is excellent with regard to student outcomes. Test scores and graduation rates are high throughout the system. Dedicated principals and teachers produce these results at a cost per student that is considerably below that of the public schools.[4] Moreover, educating these children in Catholic schools instead of public schools saves Cook and Lake counties an estimated $1.15 billion annually.[5] However, today's environment presents many challenges for Catholic schools compared to the past. Creating a vibrant school today requires a broader and deeper set of skills than some principals, trained in a different era, are prepared for. In the past, parent demand was virtually "automatic" because of stronger religious practice, greater parental experience with Catholic schools and fewer school options from which to choose. Today, a successful school requires strong marketing efforts, particularly since many parents are not familiar with Catholic schools themselves. (Parents are less likely to have attended Catholic schools as children; many Latinos are from cultures where only the very wealthy attended Catholic schools). In the past, academic requirements were simpler, and focused on the three Rs. Today, schools need to demonstrate the ability to teach 21st century skills such as technology and foreign languages, and to assist with unique learning needs. In the past, when schools were staffed primarily by dedicated and low cost teachers who were members of religious orders, tuition could be charged at a rate that many could afford. Today, a flat tuition rate sufficient to cover costs puts some schools out of range

for many. Today's schools need much more sophisticated tuition strategies, such as variable rate tuition and flexible financial aid policies, as well as more emphasis on local fund-raising and advancement.

Overall, today's financial picture presents significant challenges. Traditionally, the parish-based elementary school relied on tuition and parish subsidies—typically up to 20% of the school budget—to cover the cost of educating students. However, the financial stresses from declining enrollment and increased expenses have made many schools more dependent on limited Archdiocesan subsidies. This trend is unsustainable. Consequently, five schools have been closed effective July 1, 2013. Action may have to be taken on other schools in the next few years.

"[Catholic Schools] remain an essential resource for the new evangelization, and the significant contribution that they make to American society as a whole ought to be better appreciated and more generously supported."

– Pope Benedict XVI

However, the Archdiocesan School Board has conducted an in-depth study of the financial condition of all elementary schools in the system and believes that a substantial number of schools should be able to overcome much of their financial difficulty. The Board study suggests several reasons for hope for these schools. First, the large majority of schools are not "structurally disadvantaged"—i.e., adequate numbers of children live in their communities and the school buildings generally are not in an unsatisfactory condition. Second, many success stories exist, even in lower-income communities, where implementation of best practices in leadership recruitment, marketing, tuition-setting and financial aid, and fiscal management have led to financial turnaround. Third, we know that there is currently a low implementation rate of these best practices at the local level, based on principal self-reporting. Local principals may often lack the broader set of skills required to create a flourishing school today such as enrollment, marketing and financial expertise, community relations, and fundraising experience.

Having identified these opportunities for improvement, the Board feels that it and the Archdiocese have a moral obligation to assist struggling schools to achieve them. Moreover, there are other grounds for optimism about the future of the Chicago Catholic school system. The dynamic growth in the Hispanic population in the Archdiocese means that the Catholic school-age population is on the rise. The Archdiocese and OCS are working to better serve the Hispanic population and inform Latino families about the advantages to their children of choosing Catholic schools. The Board also believes that there is untapped potential financial support for Catholic schools. For example, the Big Shoulders Fund, which has been an enormous help in supporting inner-city Catholic schools, has raised nearly $250 million from Chicagoans of all faiths and backgrounds since its founding in 1986. Recent surveys conducted by the Archdiocese show significant receptivity to a major fundraising effort to benefit the schools. The Board therefore recommends that the Archdiocese undertake an aggressive funding campaign among its parishioners, with the essential support of its pastors, and also

among the broader civic community to secure the future of the Catholic school system.

The Board also is committed to persuading Chicago and Illinois elected officials to enact legislation to allow families to choose Catholic schools with the help of vouchers or tax credits for individuals and corporations that support scholarship programs. Many other states have already recognized the immense public service provided by Catholic schools and have created a variety of vehicles for supporting school choice. These legislative solutions have allowed Catholic and other non-government schools to remain viable options for parents and their children and consequently benefit the entire civic community. Nationwide, the school choice movement provides hope that sometime in the future Illinois families may be empowered by publicly funded vouchers or tax credits that would enable them to choose Catholic schools. School choice funding would help build enrollment and enhance the long-term viability of the Catholic school system, an indispensable civic institution.

This Plan addresses six core goals for the Catholic school system: Catholicity, Academics, Leadership, Operations, OCS Reorganization, and Funding. The Board is confident that focused, proactive attention to all six areas will not only avert the dire consequences to schoolchildren that will result if the current financial crisis is left unaddressed, but also will increase the number of students benefitting from an excellent Catholic education. The Plan's action steps to achieve the six goals include measures to (1) insure the continuing strength of the schools' Catholic identity; (2) make sure that academics stay strong and in pace with the highest norms; and (3) find, foster and reward excellent principals and teachers. Implementation of the plan also requires (4) an immediate hands-on assistance program, which has already begun to stabilize struggling schools by helping them institute best practices. (5) In addition, the OCS management structure will be reorganized and staffed to make sure these efforts are effective. (6) Finally, the Plan proposes a substantial fundraising campaign to create a sufficient endowment going forward. In the next few months the School Board will also produce a more detailed list of specific tasks tied to a timeline to implement the Plan.

The Board believes that targeted funding and strategic use of both old and new infrastructure will help ensure our overall goal: to provide a great Catholic education to every child who wants to enter our school doors.

Overall strategic goal

To increase Catholic school enrollment and provide every student desiring Catholic education with excellent academics and strong faith formation in an economically sustainable way.

I. CATHOLICITY

Goal: to fully form the minds and hearts of Catholic children in their faith, promote family engagement and practice of the faith, and instill virtues essential to responsible participation in society in all students regardless of their religious backgrounds.

The primary purpose of Catholic education is to nurture in Catholic children a love and understanding of their faith. Moreover, every child in a Catholic school is taught the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance that will form his or her good character. In Catholic schools, the entire school day is infused with the Gospel message; community in Christ, service to others and participation in sacraments can be emphasized freely.

Recognizing the need for strong faith formation, the Archdiocese of Chicago was among the first in the United States to revamp and standardize the curriculum for religious instruction in both its elementary and secondary schools, based on a framework provided by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. All of the administrators and 91% of the teachers in our schools are Catholic. Non-Catholic students, who make up nearly twenty percent of the school population, also benefit greatly from a school experience that models the elements of a virtuous life. Habits of responsibility and concern for others that are essential to a good society are instilled in all students regardless of their religious backgrounds.

"… the Christian vision, presented in its breadth and integrity, proves immensely appealing to the imagination, idealism and aspirations of the young, who have a right to encounter the faith in all its beauty, its intellectual richness and its radical demands."

– Pope Benedict XVI

Implementation of the new religion curriculum is in progress. Teacher and principal certification in the new curriculum is a rigorous process that requires significant time and money. Although all principals are practicing Catholics, some teachers are either not Catholic or are non-practicing. Principals should work to insure that the faculty understands the importance of

modeling Catholic virtues in day to day life. Finally, some schools need to devote more attention to visible signs of Catholic culture and devotional practices during the school day.

One advantage of this new emphasis will be consistently strong grade-appropriate instruction in the tenets of Catholic theology that children can bring home with them. Parents whose children attend the Catholic schools sometimes need to rekindle their own appreciation of the faith so that the family can reinforce the importance of worship and service to others. Significant numbers of parents rely on the Catholic schools for communication of Christian values, academic excellence, and safety, but do not regularly attend Mass themselves. Many pastors would like to encourage non-practicing school families to become a more integral part of the parish as a whole.

Conversely, some schools need more engagement and participation in the school from the pastor. Better integration of school families into the parish and between the pastor and the school community will reinforce the message of the importance of Catholic virtues to all students.

ACTION ITEMS

1. **Enhance the religion curriculum to foster students' faith formation and grounding in Catholic virtues.** The new Archdiocesan religion curriculum will be fully implemented and assessed in all schools. Liturgical practices and Catholic culture will be reinforced throughout the school day.

2. **Ensure strong faith formation for teachers.** All religion teachers will be certified in the new Archdiocesan religion curriculum, and every school will have a certified director or coordinator of religious education to oversee the religion program. A critical mass of every school's teaching staff will be made up of practicing Catholics who can model the faith in daily life.

3. **Engage in outreach to school families.** Each school, with the help of OCS, will identify ways to better engage school parents who are Catholic to understand the new religion curriculum, the importance of the sacraments, and the need to reinforce the faith in the family's home life. At the same time, each parish and school will identify ways to strengthen their interconnection, including ensuring that the pastor is actively involved in the faith life of school families.

See Appendix for more detail on Action Items

II. ACADEMICS

Goal: to enable every student to achieve his or her full academic potential in a high-performing school.

Catholic schools nationwide achieve excellent academic results and have a special ability to help the children of the poor. The Archdiocese of Chicago schools exemplify this mission. Our schools have increasingly provided early childhood readiness programs in reading, math and science. Throughout the system there is an intense and growing focus on basic skills in the early grades that are foundational for all future learning. Archdiocesan school children consistently score 20 to 30 percentile points higher than the national norms on the Terra Nova standardized achievement test. See Exhibit 1. Although government schools use different tests to measure proficiency, a reconciliation of test scores shows that Catholic schools in Chicago consistently outperform Chicago public schools and at least match the performance of suburban public schools.[6]

Significantly, within individual Chicago neighborhoods the Catholic school outperforms all other local school options 55% of the time, and all but one (usually a private school) an additional 27% of the time. See Exhibit 2. As a system, the Catholic schools of the Chicago Archdiocese boast more Blue Ribbon Schools[7] than any other

"In every aspect of their education, students need to be encouraged to articulate a harmony of faith and reason capable of guiding a life-long pursuit of knowledge and virtue."

– Pope Benedict XVI

ACTION ITEMS

4. **Enhance the core curriculum.** At a minimum, all schools will align their curricula with the new national Common Core standards, including rigorous middle and high school curriculum models. All schools will fully implement a data-driven model to increase student achievement by tracking and publishing student data. Schools will also provide high-quality early childhood programs to ensure a strong foundation for every child, with a special focus on literacy in the primary grades. Finally, schools will participate in partnerships with Catholic and other universities to keep pace with new developments in optimal curriculum design.

5. **Extend and enhance academic services to meet student and community needs.** Every school will train teachers to understand students' unique learning needs and position the school to obtain state support for special needs. Where feasible, schools will create or expand programs to accommodate students with different learning styles. Schools will also explore options such as extended day, summer school, or year round school to maximize the use of school time to support student achievement.

See Appendix for more detail on Action Items

system in the nation. Pockets of academic concern in some individual schools remain, however, and concentrated efforts have begun to track performance in these schools and raise test scores. Efforts to serve students with varying learning styles and ability are also underway at many schools and should be encouraged and expanded. Schools are beginning to consider optimizing the school day and year schedules to better fit the needs of the local community they serve.

Finally, today's students will live and work in a global society. The system thus needs to keep pace with advances in innovation and technology without losing the Catholic person-centered approach and discipline that have set our schools apart.

Exhibit 1
CHICAGOLAND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS DEMONSTRATE STRONG ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OVERALL

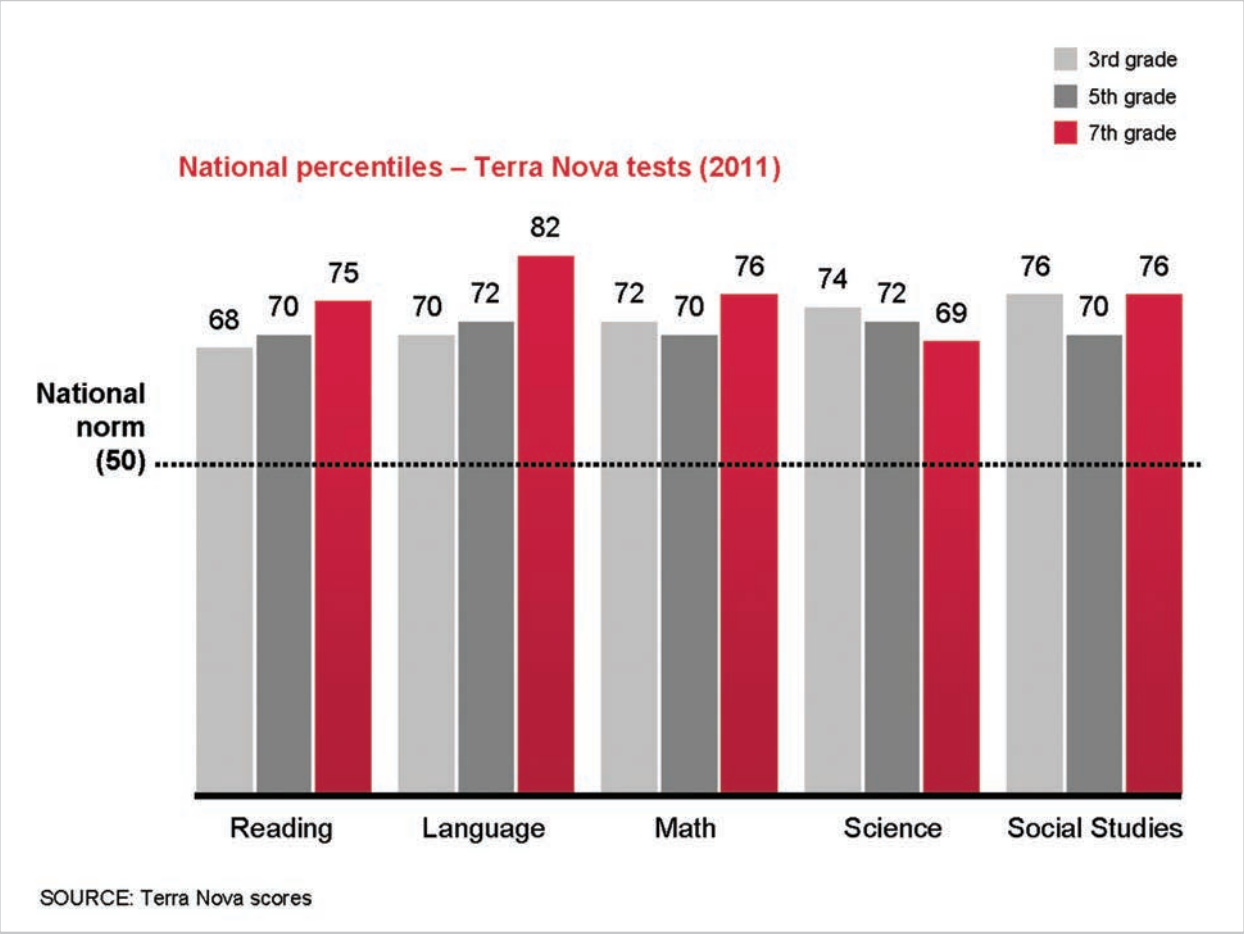
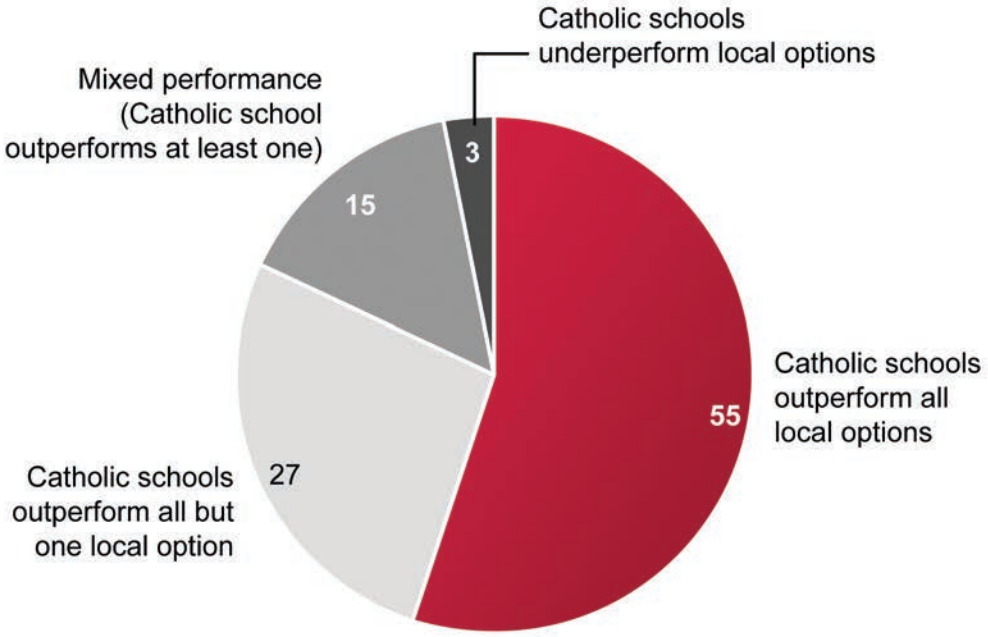


Exhibit 2

CITY OF CHICAGO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OUTPERFORM LOCAL OPTIONS

Distribution of Chicago Catholic schools on academic performance compared to local options*



* Based on direct comparison of Catholic school 2011 EXPLORE test scores to at least three local schools in the city of Chicago (same zip code and basic geographic location; includes charters). Direct comparisons not available in suburbs.

SOURCE: 2011 EXPLORE test score data

III. LEADERSHIP

Goal: to attract and retain excellent principals and excellent teachers for all schools.

Principals. Research has shown school leadership to be the single most important factor in the success of a school[8]. Principals in the Archdiocese of Chicago must effectively fill many roles: religious and secular educational leaders, managers, marketers, counselors to families and staff, and fiscal officers. OCS has recently concentrated on evaluating principal performance and making changes where necessary, in cooperation with the pastor. OCS has also been significantly upgrading programs to train new principals and offer ongoing coaching and development. The number of truly superior principals in the system is large and growing. Although comparatively low compensation for principals compared to government-funded schools is an ongoing obstacle to recruiting, dedication to the ideals of Catholic education helps overcome the pay differential in many cases. Many principals go above and beyond required professional development courses and have eagerly participated in programs at Loyola University Chicago, DePaul University, Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, Dominican University, St. Xavier University, and other universities outside the Chicago area. Continuing to find, train and retain excellent principals is the linchpin of the future vitality of the system.

However, leadership in education also implies, indeed requires, more than the isolated work of principals. The complexity of the work of schools, as in the field of medicine, requires the collective knowledge and experience of specialists in the numerous and varied dimensions of the work of education. Schools should also be structured to enable collaborative team work and distributed leadership to dramatically and continuously improve the quality of teaching[9].

"... the distinctive contribution of Catholic education [is] ... inspired by an intellectual charity which knows that leading others to truth is ultimately an act of love."

– Pope Benedict XVI

While the system needs to recruit the strongest candidates at the teacher and school leader level, it also should explore ways to redefine the functions of educators to enable them to exercise greater leadership roles that support the exchange of useful ideas, practices, and principles within and across the system.

Teachers. Teachers in the Archdiocese of Chicago schools are dedicated and often heroic in their service to children and their families. They are by definition motivated in large part by the mission of the Catholic schools since their compensation is less than they could earn in public schools. Their academic professionalism is matched by their care for each child as a whole person. All elementary school teachers are required to participate in rigorous ongoing professional development. Increasing numbers of young, motivated teachers have joined

THE "FANTASEA" BEGIN
God dag
Thank you!
Matthew Jennings

our schools through programs such as the Alliance for Catholic Education (University of Notre Dame), Loyola University Chicago's LU-CHOICE and the Inner City Teaching Corps. However, the level of teacher compensation remains a problem. Excellent teachers sometimes have to leave the system for public schools because they cannot afford to stay. Although matching public school salaries is beyond the financial ability of the system, rewarding great teachers with merit pay increases may encourage them to stay. Excellent teachers are sometimes also lost when layoffs are necessary and less effective teachers sometimes receive retention preference because of their relative seniority in the system. Teachers who excel should be given preference over more senior but less accomplished teachers when decisions about layoffs are made.

ACTION ITEMS

6. **Systematically recruit superior principals.** OCS will establish a leadership center to conduct nationwide searches to aggressively recruit and train outstanding principal candidates. The Superintendent will formally approve all new principals before they are placed on the payroll.

7. **Enhance training and professional development for principals and teachers.** OCS will coordinate and encourage training and development opportunities for principals and teachers that include strategies for teaching both core curriculum and 21st century skills. In particular, partnerships with local colleges and universities will continue to be developed to ensure state of the art training. OCS will also provide focused training to promising principal candidates to develop the range of skills necessary for effective leadership.

8. **Design merit-based evaluation and compensation systems for principals and teachers.** The evaluation process for principals will be upgraded and centralized in OCS and will measure their broad range of responsibilities and their performance against contractually defined benchmarks. A compensation plan for principals will allow for bonuses and incentives that reward outstanding performance. For teachers, the compensation plan will also allow for financial rewards for measurably effective teaching. Retention policies for teachers will reward merit rather than strict seniority.

See Appendix for more detail on Action Items

IV. OPERATIONS

Goal: to create an economically sustainable system by (1) working with struggling schools to implement best practices proven to keep schools open and financially viable and by (2) making optimal use of infrastructure.

The School Board and OCS have conducted an unprecedented economic analysis of all the schools in the system to produce a more accurate understanding of their financial health and sustainability. The Board has concluded that there are significant steps that can and should be taken to use best financial and management practices to turn around schools that are struggling financially. The Board believes it has a moral obligation to use these new insights to try to save schools that otherwise might fail. In addition, there is encouraging data that shows that enrollment trends appear to have bottomed out and significant enrollment growth is possible so that more children may benefit from a Catholic school education.

Operating Priorities. The Board and OCS have classified all 215 Archdiocesan elementary schools into several categories based on their enrollment levels, income demographics, and need for financial support. Specific operating strategies have been developed for each category based on the needs and opportunities of those schools. See Exhibit 3.

The most critical category of schools related to the long-term financial stability of the school system is "Enrollment Turnarounds." Consuming more than 65% of all Archdiocesan elementary school funding, these 75 schools do not have the minimally efficient scale of 225 students required to achieve more stable school economics. Solving the enrollment problems of these schools would go a long way toward stabilizing the finances of the Archdiocesan school system and would help keep the option of Catholic education available throughout the city. As discussed in the Introduction, we believe there is a strong basis for hope for many of these schools, despite negative national trends in Catholic school enrollment. The majority of the Enrollment Turnarounds are located within the City of Chicago and offer proven advantages in academics, character-building and discipline compared to other alternatives. A number of actions can be taken to improve these schools (described in more detail in the summary of the FAST program below), including local leadership and program changes, better marketing and outreach, particularly to the Latino, African American, and immigrant communities, and better tuition pricing and tuition management.

Another group of 18 schools are "Mission" schools — schools currently achieving high enrollment but still requiring financial support because of the lower- and middle-income communities in which they are located. While there are some opportunities to improve the financial management of these schools, Mission schools will never realistically be self-sufficient and will always require external funding to remain viable.

Twenty schools are "Financial Turnaround" schools, i.e., schools that have reasonable enrollment in wealthy enough communities that they should be self-sufficient. Some of these schools should benefit from the Archdiocesan Parish Transformation Program, currently underway, which helps parishes renew their missions and stabilize their finances. Finally, 102 schools are "Monitor and Act" schools not currently requiring any Archdiocesan support. These schools will need to be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that they continue to remain vibrant and financially stable.

FAST Program. An aggressive new program has already begun to address the Enrollment Turnarounds and other schools whose dependence on Archdiocesan grants cannot be sustained. Under the FAST initiative ("Financial Advancement with Strategic Teamwork"), OCS is taking very proactive steps to assist 90 schools in taking the actions they need to achieve better financial stability. Heavily focused on improving enrollment, the FAST initiative has four core elements:

- More aggressive leadership changes when current leadership has demonstrated an inability to offer a vital school program
- Significant local hands-on help in the areas of marketing and finance to help schools take the appropriate actions to market their school, set tuition, manage financial aid processes, and ensure tuition collection
- New OCS finance and HR-related policies to help enforce successful implementation (e.g., required superintendent approval of principal hiring; required approval of tuition rates; required outsourcing of tuition collection; required sharing of financial information)
- More aggressive tracking, management and accountability for school-level implementation.

The FAST program is beginning to show some promising early results. Overall, the School Board believes that more hands-on management of these schools through these initiatives, and implementation of known best practices, can help improve these schools significantly.

Nevertheless, the Board recognizes that some schools may be difficult to stabilize. OCS and Big Shoulders Fund are working together to improve the operations of some of these schools. Specific criteria have been developed to evaluate the improvement of schools and to require closures as necessary on a timely basis when the criteria are not met. (See Appendix, pgs. 33-34)

AIM Program and Other Governance Models. In addition to the FAST program, some changes in management and governance models may be needed for certain schools. Concurrent with the FAST program, OCS created, in 2010, a pilot program called **Archdiocesan Initiative Model** (AIM), under which OCS, with the consent of the pastors, took over full operating authority over 21 schools that are dependent on Archdiocesan grants. In the AIM program, the parish retains pastoral authority over the spiritual life of the school, but OCS puts in place financial and management best practices designed to make the school more economically viable. Continued experience with the AIM schools will help clarify best practices that can be used throughout the

system. AIM will likely be the governance model best able to improve schools in some situations (e.g., where the pastor and/or broader parish is inadequately invested in the school). In addition, the seven high schools under the operating jurisdiction of OCS primarily serve high-poverty, high-risk students and make a provable difference in their neighborhoods, but are struggling financially. A new governing model involving lay board leadership may be the best option for future management of these schools. The lay boards would also be responsible for the financial viability of the high schools. This model has already been successfully implemented in one high school. *See Appendix for more detail about high schools.*

Physical Infrastructure. Finally, a comprehensive analysis of the physical infrastructure of the school system is underway with the help of School Board members with engineering and construction expertise. The Archdiocesan school system has a proud history, opening schools and buildings in Cook and Lake counties as populations have moved and changed over more than a century. Often the school was the first parish building and most were very substantial and solidly constructed. Even in today's tight financial times, new schools continue to open in areas such as the South Loop, Old Town, and the near north side of Chicago in response to new demand. This dynamic response to shifting population patterns has slowed, however, and some areas that have substantial Catholic populations are underserved (e.g., Latino neighborhoods such as Pilsen/Little Village and some developing suburbs). At the same time, population shifts have left some schools with costly buildings but without enough prospective students to realistically support them. In addition to changing demographic needs, many parishes have not adequately funded depreciation on school buildings, which have consequently deteriorated and are in need of substantial repair. Initial estimates suggest capital expenditures of $20 to $50 million may be required to undertake necessary repairs.

OCS will identify where capital expenditures are necessary for the health and safety of the children and staff and will create realistic estimates of the funding needed to properly budget for ongoing maintenance. OCS will also outline how buildings will be used, improved, constructed or given up, depending on local circumstances, so that the maximum number of children can be served. Finally, all funds for capital repairs will be managed separately, and spending guidelines will be developed (e.g., limits on capital repairs until demonstration of stable operations) to ensure that funds are used effectively.

Exhibit 3

STRATEGIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS VARY BASED ON STARTING POINT

Financial postion	Enrollment: <225 students	Enrollment: >225 students
Aid schools* lower-income areas (<$50,000)	**Enrollment Turnaround** 75 schools • Program/leadership improvements • Pricing and marketing • Fiscal management (tuition, staffing) • Scholarship endowment FY12 AOC aid: $14.7MM	**Mission** 18 schools • Scholarship endowment • Fiscal management FY12 AOC aid: $4.2MM
Aid schools* higher-income areas (>$50,000)		**Financial Turnaround** 20 schools • Right pricing • Fiscal management FY12 AOC aid: $2.4MM
Self-sufficient schools	**Monitor and Act** 102 schools** Monitor and stabilize	

*Schools requiring financial assistance from the Archdiocese.
**Of these, approximately half (52) ran a financial deficit in FY2012, requiring support from parish savings.
SOURCE: Archdiocesan analysis

Enrollment turnaround example — St. John Streamwood

Background: Traditional one-class-per-grade school, annually challenged by local public school options. Enrollment fell 28 students in FY10, leaving the school depending heavily on parish subsidy and loans at a time the parish itself was challenged.

Actions: With lead of new pastor, school focused on strengthening its programs and perceived value for families, developed a long-range strategic plan for the school focused on enrollment, and revamped budget with the help of a strong business manager.

- New principal leadership
- Refocus of curriculum on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, especially ecology and stewardship of the earth
- Strong marketing to increase awareness and enhance reputation (revised publications, outreach to parishes without schools, participation in community events)
- Engaged school board in strategic planning, marketing, scholarship funding

Impact: Student enrollment increased from 188 in FY2010 to 272 in FY2013. Archdiocesan aid decreased from $200,000 to $0.

Financial turnaround example — St. Turibius

Background: School running significant deficits. Principal made decisions without any visibility into school financials. School financials integrated in parish financials and managed by parish business manager.

Actions: School became AIM school in FY2011. Principal aware of financials and now accountable. Key actions:

- Tuition management system to improve collections
- New spending guidelines to limit expenses (e.g., vendor bidding, principal spend approvals)
- New fundraising efforts (e.g., grant-writing, fundraisers, annual appeal to alumni)
- Right-staffing (e.g., limits on teacher aides, more efficient scheduling of special programs)

Impact: Archdiocesan aid decreased from $360,000 in FY2010 to $55,000 in FY2012, despite entry of new charter competition.

ACTION ITEMS

9. **Fully implement the FAST program.** OCS will require all schools receiving Archdiocesan grants to comply with the FAST protocols and will facilitate that compliance. These protocols include hiring stronger principals and strengthening programs where necessary, designating a marketing staff member to increase enrollment, setting realistic tuition rates and instituting variable rates, and instituting financial best practices. OCS will set concrete benchmarks to assess schools' compliance with FAST over time and make case by case decisions about the future of schools that do not comply. OCS will also move from a grant model of assistance to these schools to a need-based scholarship model.

10. **Continue the AIM program of centralized OCS management of certain schools.** OCS will continue the AIM pilot program under which OCS has assumed direct operating authority over certain schools. While pastors and Vicars may continue to voluntarily request AIM status, some FAST schools will be encouraged or required to move to the AIM program if they fall behind on compliance with FAST protocols.

11. **Transition high schools to newly formed Associations of the Christian Faithful.** OCS will also encourage the creation of lay boards to take over governing authority and financial responsibility for the seven high schools currently under OCS jurisdiction.

12. **Create a long-term budget and investment plan for pragmatic use of physical infrastructure.** OCS will help schools identify immediate health and safety issues in school buildings so that they can be addressed. OCS will estimate the deferred and ongoing maintenance and capital repair needs of school buildings and make realistic recommendations about the best use of buildings going forward.

See Appendix for more detail on Action Items

V. OCS REORGANIZATION

Goal: to ensure that OCS is organized and staffed to effectively implement this strategic plan and to partner successfully with the Big Shoulders Fund.

Implementation of this Plan will require reorganization of the management structure of OCS and the addition of some new highly qualified personnel. Under the current structure, the Superintendent acts as both Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer for the system. She is assisted by six Assistant Superintendents who act as consultants for the schools in six designated geographical areas (the Vicariates).[10] A large number of other management staff with specialized areas of responsibility also report to the Superintendent. This organizational structure was workable when most schools were fully supported by tuition and parish contributions and when schools required less support in areas such as marketing and finance. However, the hands-on management that OCS must provide to successfully turn around the FAST schools and implement the other recommendations of this Plan can only occur if OCS is reorganized and strengthened.

The School Board recommends a new OCS structure whose organization will mirror the major goals of this Plan. These changes are needed for two primary reasons. First, the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer roles can no longer be adequately filled by one person, and the FAST schools will need the directed attention of a senior manager. Secondly, schools will require much more local hands-on support and guidance. The OCS field leaders with responsibility for FAST schools must not act as mere consultants but must have authority to require that the schools follow FAST protocols. When exercising that authority these managers must also be accountable, along with the schools themselves, for the results. The new OCS organization must also reflect the need for specialized support resources in marketing and finance.

The new organization plan will insert four senior management positions that report directly to the Superintendent. See Exhibit 4. The areas of responsibility for these four senior managers will reflect the priorities of the Plan. One senior manager will be responsible for Catholic Identity initiatives. Another senior manager will focus solely on Academics. A third senior manager will oversee finance for OCS. The fourth senior manager will act as Chief Operating Officer (COO) with direct authority over the performance of both FAST and non-FAST schools. The COO will supervise Regional Directors who each have responsibility for the performance of a certain number of schools assigned according to geography but also by the kinds of attention the schools need. Regional Directors will also work within the existing Vicariate structures. In addition, the COO will oversee marketing and finance personnel who will work closely with the Regional Directors to support school efforts in marketing, tuition management and budgeting and tracking. In particular, each FAST school will work

with a targeted team consisting of a Regional Director, a marketing person, a financial advisor and other OCS specialists, to ensure hands-on timely implementation of the FAST protocols. See Exhibit 5.

Regional Directors should be energetic, proactive representatives of OCS who have both credibility as educators and good business skills. The OCS management team should encourage sharing and promotion of best practices within OCS itself and in all schools in the system.

Additional hiring will be required to fill out the new organizational chart; some of the funds generated by the planned funding campaign will cover the cost of these new highly qualified personnel.

Big Shoulders Fund. The Big Shoulders Fund, which helps support many children in the poorest of our schools, has been a unique treasure and partner for 25 years. Without the contribution of Big Shoulders to the Archdiocese's inner city schools, thousands of inner city children would not have received a Catholic school education, graduated from high school and matriculated to college. The reorganized OCS will work closely with Big Shoulders to address all issues that affect the schools that they help to sustain and coordinate strategies to ensure the long-term viability of those schools.

ACTION ITEMS

13. **Establish senior leadership support for the superintendent.** OCS will implement the new organization chart by appointing four highly qualified Senior Managers whose responsibilities track the priorities of this plan (Catholic Identity, Academics, Operations and Finance). OCS will hire additional highly qualified personnel as necessary to fill these positions.

14. **Upgrade field leadership and support.** OCS will appoint highly qualified Regional Directors, who have both education and business skills, with responsibility for the success of an assigned group of schools. OCS will create targeted teams for each FAST school consisting of the assigned Regional Director, a marketing advisor, and a financial advisor, and will hire additional highly qualified personnel as necessary to fill these positions.

15. **Continue and further develop the partnership between OCS and the Big Shoulders Fund.** OCS will plan cooperatively with the Big Shoulders Fund for strategies to ensure the long-term viability of the schools supported by the Fund.

Exhibit 4
OCS ORGANIZATION CHART (SIMPLIFIED)

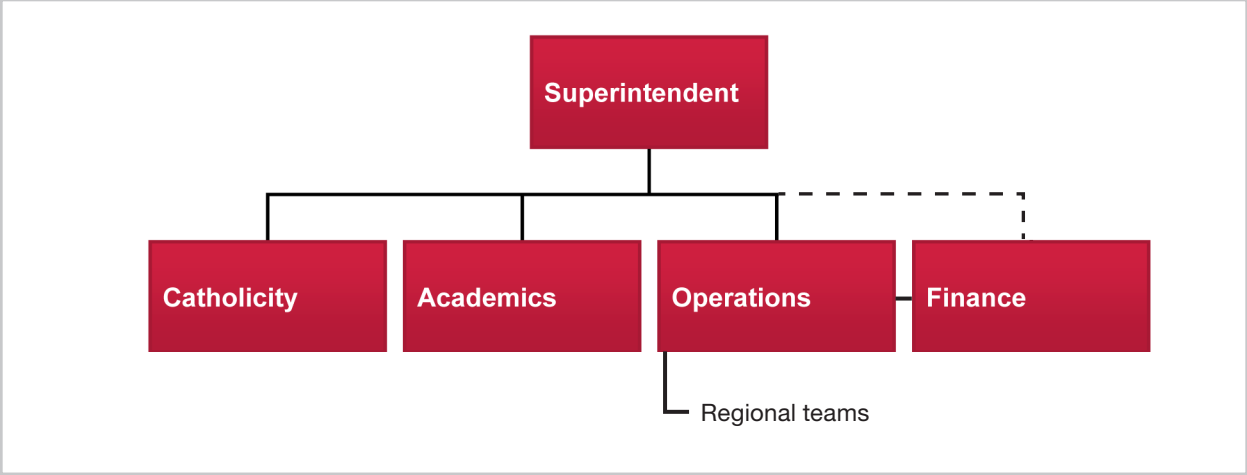
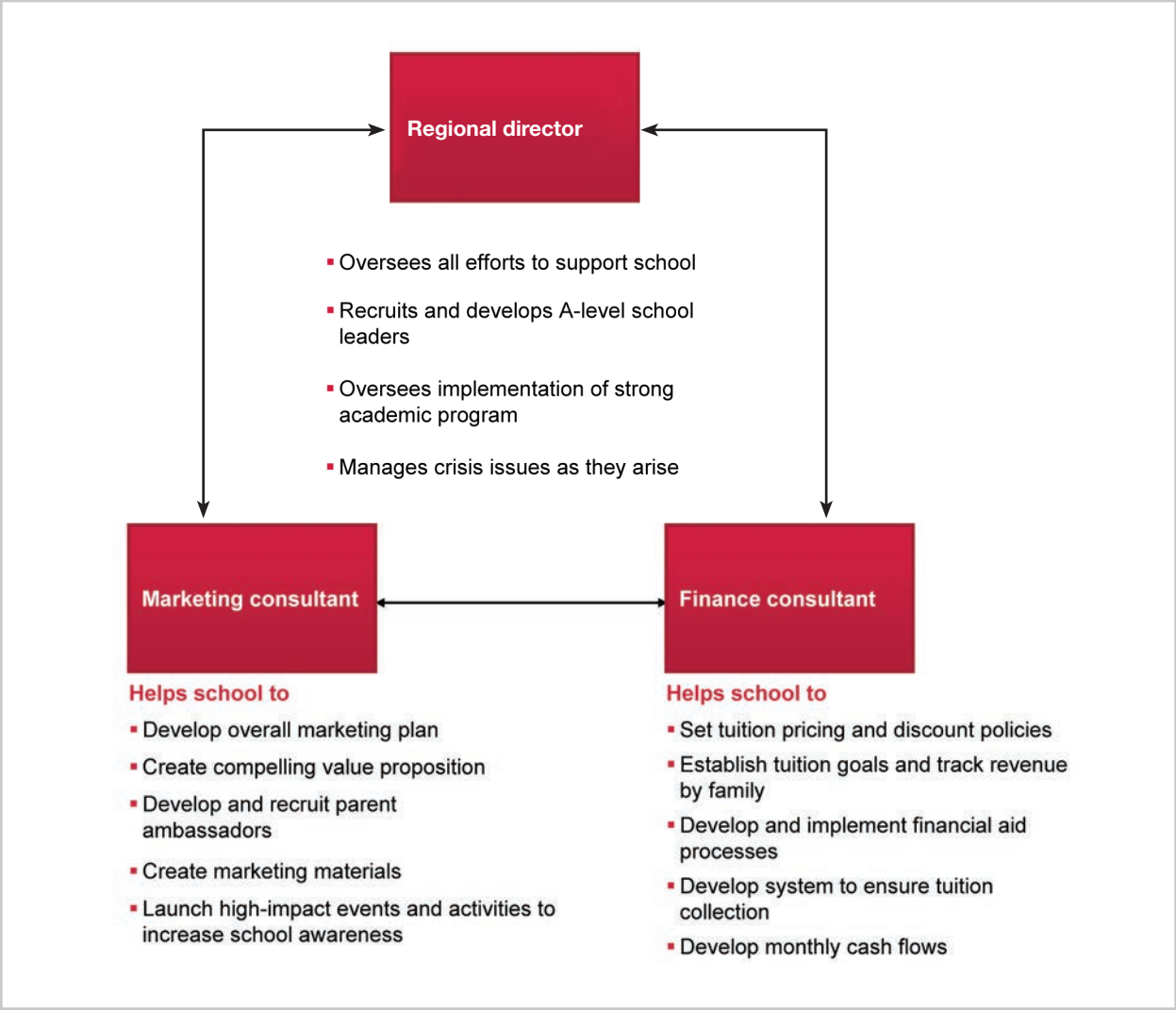


Exhibit 5
LOCAL FIELD TEAMS: KEY ROLES TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS



VI. FUNDING

Goals: (1) to conduct a campaign to raise sufficient funds to sustain the system and (2) to promote public policies that make public funds available to Catholic school families for tuition support.

As described in Section 4 of this Plan, constructive steps can be taken to improve the financial health of some schools in crisis. Targeted marketing can increase enrollment in some; right–pricing of tuition will help with affordability in others. Better implementation of best practices in management and accounting will increase efficiency. Most importantly, a continuing emphasis on hiring and retaining superior principals will provide the leadership necessary to implement all these internal improvements. However, these measures will not in themselves solve the financial problems of the system. Higher school operating costs because of the decline of religious orders combined with the inability of families in many neighborhoods to afford full tuition creates an inevitable shortfall in many schools. The attached chart shows the FY2011 funding gap of approximately $17 million that remains after the Archdiocesan and Big Shoulders annual support for the schools is accounted for. This gap is expected to grow to $20 million annually by FY2018. See Exhibits 6 and 7.

The School Board has identified three areas where substantial investment is needed for a financially healthy system. The first is a **scholarship fund** that would provide assistance to students whose families cannot fully afford school tuition, thus providing the schools with sufficient tuition levels to meet operating costs. This segregated fund would be allocated to students based on need and would be administered transparently by OCS. Second, **investment in personnel and some programs** is necessary to make sure that the goals of this Plan are fully implemented. Third, a **capital fund** should be created to assist schools with deferred and ongoing maintenance and strategic capital improvements. Creation of these three funds would result in an endowment to support the schools going forward and obviate the need for unaffordable year by year Archdiocesan emergency grants. The Board recommends that a major fundraising campaign among major donors, parishes, and the broader civic community should be undertaken to finance this effort.

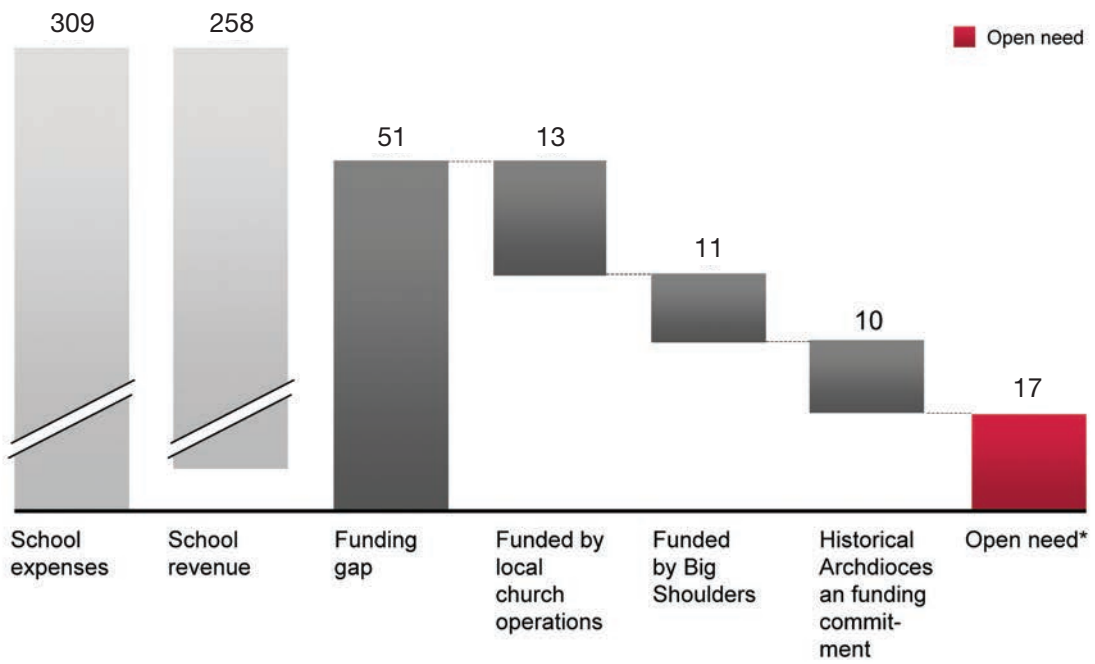
The Board and OCS are also actively engaged in efforts to pass legislation and promote public policies that would make funds from taxes available to children in Catholic schools. Catholic schools serve the common good. They provide a high quality education, at a lower cost per student, to students who would otherwise be enrolled in the public schools. In Cook and Lake counties a total of 86,502 students are enrolled in Catholic schools. Based on current average cost per student in the public system this saves taxpayers an estimated $1.15 billion annually. Catholic school families make the financial sacrifice to pay tuition when they could receive a government school education for free. Many families wish they had that option but cannot afford it. The growing school choice movement in the United States recognizes that more competition might result in higher quality programs in the public schools themselves and

that trapping poor children in sub-par public schools is inequitable. Legislation giving students private school vouchers or scholarships funded by tax credits has been passed in several states.

> ***"Important efforts are also being made to preserve the great patrimony of America's Catholic elementary and high schools, which have been so deeply impacted by changing demographics and increased costs, while at the same time ensuring that the education they provide remains within the reach of all families, whatever their financial status."***
>
> *– Pope Benedict XVI*

In Illinois, a pilot voucher program for children in the worst Chicago public schools came very close to passage in 2011, and school choice advocates continue to work in Springfield to promote legislation that would empower students to choose their schools. Publicly supported vouchers or scholarships would make a dramatic difference to Catholic schools whose finances are strained. The income would allow schools to improve programs and compensation for staff while continuing to provide a superior education at a lower cost than the public schools. Many legislators in Illinois and community leaders in Chicago are supportive of school choice and are open to models for cooperation, such as public/private partnerships and co-location of schools.

Exhibit 6
CURRENT ESTIMATED SCHOOL FUNDING BREAKDOWN — FY2012



* Currently funded by the Archdiocese ($13 million) and local parish saving (estimated $4 million) but unsustainable over the long-term.
SOURCE: Archdiocesan parish financials

Exhibit 7
PROJECTED SCHOOL SYSTEM FINANCING — 5 YEAR OUTLOOK

Annual open need	$17MM
Estimated future additional annual need	$3MM
Total future annual need	**$20MM**
Internal improvement opportunity:	
■ Enrollment: elementary schools	$4MM
■ Fiscal discipline: elementary schools	$4MM
■ New governance model: high schools	$2MM
Subtotal	**$10MM**
Net remaining annual need (to be funded through scholarship endowment and future fundraising)	**$10MM**

SOURCE: Archdiocesan analysis

ACTION ITEMS

16. **Conduct an aggressive fundraising campaign to cover projected deficits.** A high-profile fundraising campaign will be conducted among major donors, parishes, and the broader civic community. An endowment for needs-based scholarships will be created from campaign proceeds to assist families with tuition. This fund will be segregated and administered transparently by OCS, which will also change its direct funding model from a grant-based program to a needs based scholarship program. Other proceeds of the campaign will be used for additional OCS personnel to implement this Plan and for prudently identified capital repairs and improvements.

17. **Continue to promote legislative action and public policies that would make public financial support available to Catholic school families.** The School Board and OCS will continue to mobilize support for school choice legislation in Illinois (e.g., a statewide scholarship program funded by corporate and individual tax credits, a voucher or credit program for families earning less than $50,000 a year).

18. **Foster more equitable support for schools across the Archdiocesan system.** OCS will urge the consideration of new ways to shape policies within the Archdiocese so that new sources of funds to support the schools are identified within the parish system that reflect the benefits of Catholic education to the entire Church.

See Appendix for more detail on Action Items

ENDNOTES

1. The bulk of this Strategic Plan addresses priorities for the elementary schools.

2. See Derek Neal, "The Effects of Catholic Secondary School Learning on Educational Achievement", *Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Part 1 (Jan. 1997).

3. See Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force Report No. 68, U.S. Education Reform and National Security (March 2012).

4. Average cost per child in Archdiocese of Chicago grade schools is $4,665. Average cost per child in Cook and Lake County public schools ranges between $12,155 and $13,078.

5. Based on public school costs in 2010-2011, webprod1.isbe.net/ilearn.

6. See EXPLORE/ACT Reports, American College Testing October/ August 2011; TERRA NOVA System Report May 2011.

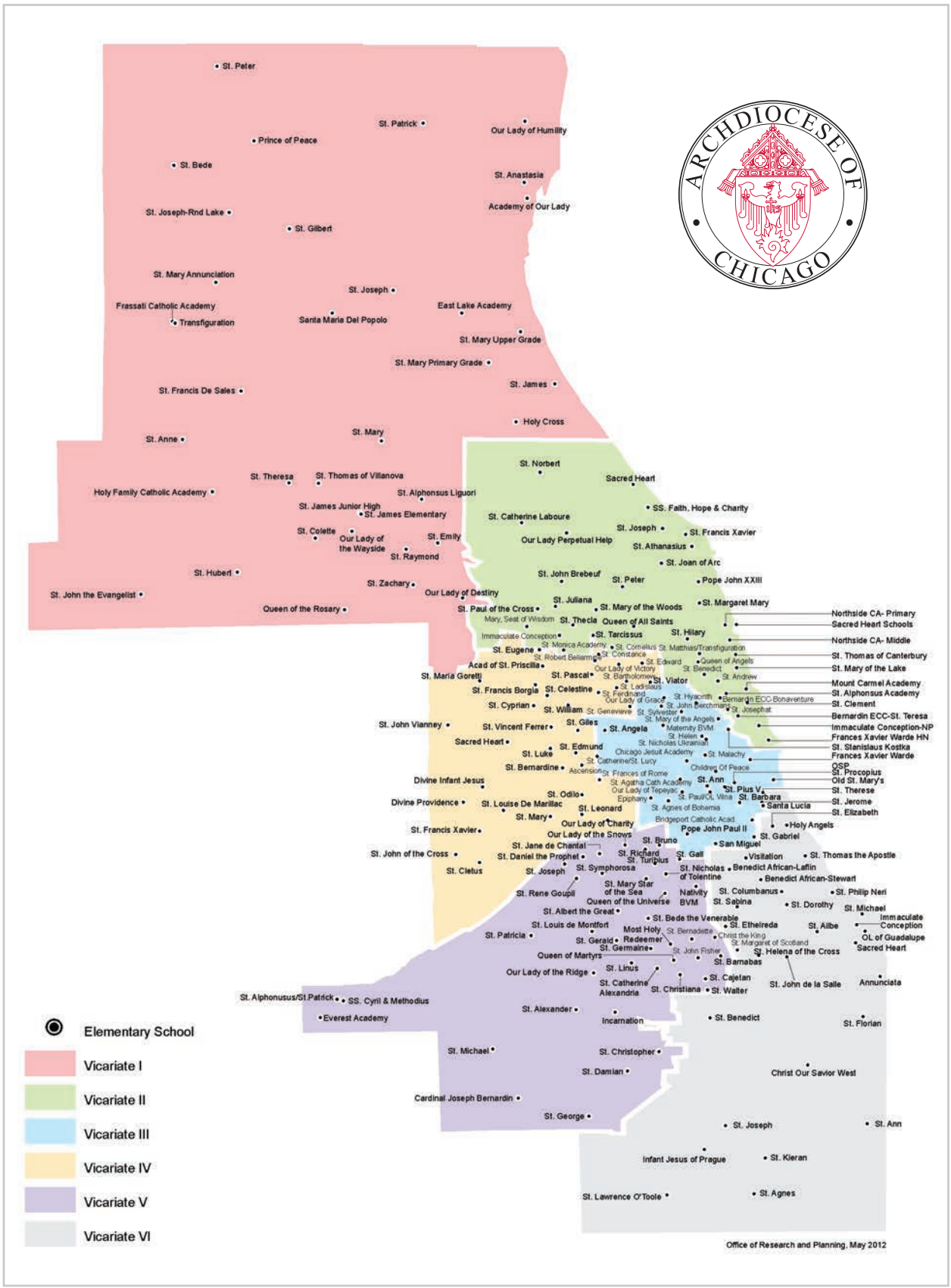
7. Blue Ribbon Schools is a U.S. Department of Education program that recognizes a school as "excellent" based on test scores above the 90th percentile (and/or exceptional performance in a high poverty area), community engagement, and multiple opportunities for student achievement as validated by a detailed application and independent team visit.

8. See New Leaders Project, www.newleaders.org/principaleffectiveness.

9. Spillane, J.P. (2006). *Distributed leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Spillane, J., Parise, L.M. & Sherer, J.Z. (2010). Organizational routines as coupling mechanisms: Policy, school administration, and the technical core. *American Educational Research Journal*.

10. Vicariates are geographic divisions within the Archdiocese and each is supervised by a designated bishop, the "Vicar."

Archdiocese of Chicago Elementary Schools 2012-13



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APPENDIX

I. CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Action Item 1. To implement the religion curriculum in all schools:
http://schools.archchicago.org/Academics/Curriculum/Religion

- **a.** Provide onsite training by OCS staff (as of May 2012, one third complete).
- **b.** Implement and fund common assessment tool, adopted from NCEA national tool, to identify schools needing more assistance with Catholic practice.
- **c.** Design liturgical and devotional practices to be built into both assessment and a calendar coordinated with pastor.

Action Item 2. To ensure strong faith formation of teachers:

- **a.** Fund all current Catholic teachers of religion in elementary schools to complete the four "pillars" courses as defined by St. Mary of the Lake University.
- **b.** Require all teachers of religion in secondary level to possess theology degree and/or requisite certification through a Catholic University.
- **c.** Name the CRE/DRE (qualified Catholic Ed leaders) at each site.
- **d.** Give precedence in hiring to Catholic certified teachers.

Action Item 3. To engage in outreach to Catholic families:

- **a.** Participate actively in the AOC Strategic Plan for faith renewal of parishes, especially those in sacramental life and adult faith formation.
- **b.** Work with pastors in the framework of the open-ended Pastors' Handbook (May 2012) to creatively and concretely link pastors to the school. Download the Handbook at: http://bit.ly/PastorHandbook

II. ACADEMICS

Action Item 4. To adopt the core curriculum:

- **a.** Align to Common Core and national standards through use of site-based teams and expert resources (www.catholicschoolstandards.org).
- **b.** Assess progress, purchasing a student information system to track progress across school demographics and at the individual student level. (e.g., PowerSchool)
- **c.** Partner with universities to implement core, strengthen STEM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Math), differentiate instruction, and implement blended learning (online) models.
- **d.** Adopt Advanced Ed district-wide accreditation for continuous improvement (www.advanc-ed.org).

Action Item 5. To meet student and community needs:

- **a.** Complete teacher training in RtI (Response to Intervention) in every school to better identify and serve students with special needs.
- **b.** Initiate legal and political action if IDEA and other appropriate Title monies do not "follow the child."
- **c.** Poll parents at each school site to ensure that the school day/year meets community needs
- **d.** Strengthen use of technology to expand both content and delivering instruction:
  - **i.** Explore virtual schools.
  - **ii.** Find online options for a robust curriculum at every site, including foreign languages
  - **iii.** Implement 21st Century Models (www.p21.org).

III. LEADERSHIP

Action Items 6, 7, 8

A. Create conditions that will enable all schools in the Archdiocese to achieve excellent results for all children with new ways of utilizing leadership both within schools as well as across the system:

1. Leadership is an essential driver of change in a continuously improving educational system, but leadership in education implies, indeed requires, more than the isolated work of principals. The complexity of the work of schools, as in the field of medicine, requires the collective knowledge and experience of specialists in the numerous and varied dimensions of the work of education.
2. While traditionally schools have been arranged as two-tiered systems of work (i.e., teaching and administration), the new and more complex demands of instruction and an ever-expanding range of knowledge and skills required of all our students make it urgent that schools and systems be restructured to enable the collaborative team work and distributed leadership required to dramatically and continuously improve the quality of teaching.

B. Sustain high quality improvement and superior performance by organizing the workplace so to enable educators to function as professional, not industrial, workers. The creation of school structures that enable teachers to exercise leadership roles alongside school principals is the lynchpin that will help schools to retain high quality educators, both teachers and school leaders.

C. Address this new definition of leadership and strengthen its base across our schools in a deliberate way to support the increase of intellectual resources needed to sustain continuous improvement.

1. Addressing and developing new concepts of leadership, the research indicates, will result in consistency, stability, coherence, and greater knowledge and depth within and across schools.
2. While the system needs to recruit the strongest candidates at the teacher and school leader level, we also need to work on redefining the functions of educators in serious ways that enable them to exercise greater leadership roles that support the exchange of useful ideas, practices and principles within and across the system.

D. Implement intentional measures to both develop and evaluate teachers (**www.uncommonschools.org/bio/1017/paul-bambrick-santoyo**).

References drawn from:

Moore Johnson, S., Papay, J.P. (2009). Redesigning teacher pay: A system for the next generation of educators. EPI Series on Alternative Teacher Compensation Systems.

Moore Johnson, S. et al. (2007). Finders and keepers: Helping new teachers survive and thrive in our schools. Jossey-Bass.

Spillane, J., Parise, L.M., & Sherer, J.Z. (2010). Organizational routines as coupling mechanisms: Policy, school administration, and the technical core. *American Educational Research Journal.*

Spillane, J.P. (2006). *Distributed leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tucker, M. (2011). Standing on the shoulders of giants. National Center on Education and the Economy.

IV. OPERATIONS

Action Item 9

A. Requirements for FAST Schools:

1. OCS must be given access to all school data through RightNetworks, a centrally hosted financial software system.
2. OCS approval required for tuition setting.
3. Schools must use the Tuition Tracker system and must outsource tuition collection and/or enroll in an accounting service center at OCS direction.
4. Schools must meet regularly with OCS to discuss appropriate tuition levels and proposed financial aid on a family-by-family basis.
5. OCS approval required for all principal hiring and firing.
6. Schools must designate a staff person to engage in aggressive marketing efforts in the local community. This designated staff person will work in close cooperation with OCS marketing personnel.
7. Principals will be held accountable for financial results as part of their performance evaluation.
8. OCS will implement a phased grant process tied to compliance with school-specific benchmarks and will transition to a scholarship-based aid model.
9. Schools must report monthly on current enrollment, marketing efforts, scholarship usage, tuition management, and implementation of financial recommendations.
10. FAST staff will review monthly data and meet with pastors, principals and vicars if concerns arise about particular schools.

B. FAST Triggers for immediate action:

1. **Fiscal**
   - **a.** Payroll requests beyond grant amount
   - **b.** 2 months of unpaid Arch bills
   - **c.** 5% uncollected tuition
   - **d.** Failure to share financial information with principal
   - **e.** Call from vendor about unpaid bills
   - **f.** Unprepared for budget meetings
   - **g.** Tuition Tracker not updated and/or aid process not followed
   - **h.** Tuition and aid not balanced
2. **Enrollment/Marketing**
   - **a.** Failure to meet enrollment goals
   - **b.** Failure to implement Parent Ambassador or other marketing strategies
   - **c.** Undefined Value Proposition (i.e., why should parents and donors invest?)
   - **d.** Closing office completely in July
   - **e.** Schools without a Spanish translator or translated materials in Hispanic neighborhoods
   - **f.** Failure to begin re-registering students at the end of January
3. **Leadership**
   - **a.** Significant percentage of students below 50th percentile
   - **b.** Failure to observe and evaluate teachers
   - **c.** Unauthorized hiring and inability to handle contracts
   - **d.** Not implementing PowerSchool and Parent Emergency System
   - **e.** Failure to review financial statements
   - **f.** Office for the Protection of Children and Youth audit sent late
   - **g.** Lack of a qualified board

C. FAST Accountability:

1. Each school will be given school-specific enrollment targets and other benchmarks at the beginning of each school year.

   Schools failing to meet the targets or benchmarks will be subject to an immediate on-site financial review (http://ocs.archchicago.org/SchoolVitality/FAST.aspx).

2. Leadership changes may be implemented during the year if, despite resources, action plans are not being implemented.

3. Criteria for reconfiguration or closure — one or more of the following:

   – Total AOC investment more than $300,000

   – Total enrollment less than 225

   – Total aid per student greater than $1000

HIGH SCHOOLS

Action Item 11

A. While many of the recommendations of the AOC Strategic Plan may be appropriate for adoption by Catholic high schools, the plan deliberately limited its scope to the Catholic elementary schools which provide 79% of the high schools' current student population.

Over 25,000 young people attend Catholic High Schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago at 39 sites, half of which are co-educational and the remainder single-sex. The average cost of education is about $12,800, but the tuition charged to families is often much less. About 31% of revenue is drawn from local advancement efforts and investment income, often restricted for financial aid. Leadership at most high schools reflect a model drawn from the experience of universities in both leadership structure (CEO/COO to allow for advancement efforts) and differentiated tuition. About half of all students receive some type of aid.

B. With the tremendous parental investment (both the AOC and Big Shoulders combine to less than 1% of the total high schools' revenue), the demand for achievement and strong competitive programs is strong. The average composite ACT score hovers at about 23, with all students testing. The rich tradition of the high schools in service, athletics, fine arts, and leadership development rival private schools across the county. Link to Catholic High School web sites through **http://schools.archchicago.org**.

C. Even those schools with established excellence, however, face tremendous challenges in ongoing funding and enrollment. To look at the differentiation among high schools, it is helpful to understand the complexities of governance, notably sponsorship and the role of the AOC with several of the most challenged schools.

D. OCS has oversight responsibility for seven high schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago:

1. St. Benedict High School has always remained linked to its parish; Notre Dame for Girls became a parish school in 2009-2012 when the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur asked the AOC to assume sponsorship at St. Ferdinand Parish.

2. The five other AOC schools are in high poverty and/or immigrant communities in which they make an invaluable difference to students, but have significant financial problems. These schools were formerly sponsored by religious communities or parishes: Leo High School (AOC with staffing from Christian Brothers), Seton Academy (Daughters of Charity), St. Francis De Sales (School Sisters of Mary Immaculate), St. Gregory (Parish), and Our Lady of Tepeyac (formerly St. Casimir).

E. The current level of Archdiocesan support given to six of the seven schools cannot be sustained going forward.

1. An alternative governance model for these schools is recommended by the School Board. This model has been successful at Notre Dame College Prep, formerly sponsored by the Congregation of the Holy Cross. A canonically-recognized group of lay people, called an Association of the Christian Faithful (ACF), was created with the approval of the Cardinal. This group appointed a civil Board to take over full operating responsibility for the high school and has successfully stabilized its programs and finances. Similarly, concerned and faithful lay people should be organized in one or more ACFs to assume responsibility for the high schools that are unstable and attempt to keep them viable for their communities.
2. If the AOC retains responsibility for these five high schools, consolidations or closures may be the only realistic options.

F. The vast majority of high schools (thirty-two) are sponsored by religious orders:

1. Decisions around these schools do require protocol with regard to Catholicity and canon/civil law, but they are essentially self-governing mission/corporations for whom the AOC does not have legal or fiduciary responsibility.
2. OCS provides both services and makes restricted policies around these schools (e.g., the theology program, recruitment).

G. The strategic plan, except for the ACF recommendation for the seven schools of oversight, does not focus on high schools. However,

1. High school or elementary school articulation is essential to both academic excellence and growth as a Catholic "system".
2. Ongoing conversations between Catholic High Schools and Elementary Schools to ensure strong enrollment from Catholic eighth grade graduates.
3. OCS is committed to engaging the high schools in other ways supporting excellence, e.g., professional development, title funds, political advocacy, technology, legal resources.

VI. FUNDING

Action Item 16

a. Scholarship and aid are expected to be pivotal to long-range stability of the schools.

b. OCS administration of relatively small gifts has had impact over the past three years.

c. Tools like the "Tuition Tracker" have been piloted by OCS and already show grassroots improvement using a combination of funded scholarships and careful discounting.

Action Item 17. Recent research supports an opportunity for State-based scholarships or vouchers (www.capenet.org).

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