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During the past decade, Catholic leaders have been exploring options to revitalize the faltering Catholic school system especially in urban centers. One route being explored by dioceses and religious orders is opening what have been called "religious charter schools." Though not technically religious schools, they integrate many of the same values and pedagogical approaches as found in faith-based schools. In this article, the authors examined three Chicago public charter schools that are modeled on the successful San Miguel Schools, which are run by the Christian Brothers and are located in impoverished urban areas. After interviewing 40 participants, observing 20 classrooms, and reviewing archival documents, the authors described the challenges faced, tensions experienced, and lessons learned while transferring a Lasallian (Christian Brother) educational model into the public sector.

Keywords

Catalyst Schools, religious charter schools, Lasallian schools, urban charter schools

Since the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued its statement in 2005 entitled *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, Catholic leaders have explored options to revitalize the faltering Catholic school system, especially in urban centers. The trend in Catholic school enrollment continues to be undeniable. From 2000–2013, 26% of Catholic schools were either closed or consolidated with other schools. The current number of students enrolled in Catholic schools has dropped to approximately 2 million, following a peak enrollment of 5.2 million students in the 1960s. The schools most affected by the enrollment decline are elementary schools, which will affect middle and high schools enrollments in the future. Within urban dioceses, the decline is even starker. Since 2000, elementary school enrollment in 12 urban schools

districts has declined by 38%, in contrast to a 25% reduction in student enrollment nationally (National Catholic Education Association [NCEA], 2013).

In addition to facing consolidations and closures, Catholic leaders have sought other options for reviving their schools. For instance, they have developed marketing and fundraising programs (Concoran, Christianson, Blaschko, & Suydam, 2007; Goldsmith & Walsh, 2011) and innovative approaches to governance and finance (Goldsmith & Walsh, 2011). Numerous researchers and Catholic leaders have advocated for aggressively pursuing state and federal funding, tuition tax relief, and school choice options (Goldsmith & Walsh, 2011; Nuzzi, Frabutt, & Holter, 2008). Networks of schools run by religious orders such as Nativity Miguel and Christo Rey show promise for invigorating urban education, as do collaborations with colleges and universities such as Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education program and Boston College's Adopt an Urban School initiative (Hamilton, 2008). Some schools have transitioned to multi-age classrooms to help with enrollment issues while yielding the benefits of multi-age groupings (Concoran et al., 2007; Proehl, Douglas, Elias, Johnson, & Westsmith, 2013).

Other Catholic schools, dioceses, and religious orders have opened what have been called "religious charter schools" (Cooper & Randall, 2008; Weinberg, 2009). Typically, religious educational leaders take a leading role in developing the charter school based on religious values. This was the case with the seven inner-city charter schools in Washington, DC (Smarick, 2009) and the eight urban charter schools in Miami (Brinson, 2010). In other instances, based on the effectiveness of a religious school or network of schools, the public school superintendent approaches school leaders, inviting them to replicate their educational model within the public school system. This was the case with the Catalyst Schools in Chicago (Goldsmith & Walsh, 2011). Given the success of the Catholic San Miguel Schools in the most impoverished neighborhoods in Chicago, the CEO of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) asked the Christian Brother leaders to consider opening a charter school in the city.

In this article, the researchers discuss the lessons learned and challenges faced when the Christian Brothers, in fact, did open the Catalyst Schools as public charter schools in Chicago. We also discuss the implications of the research and offer suggestions for others interested in starting religious charter schools.

Literature Review

Religious Charter Schools

As a key component of the education reform movement, charter schools were first begun in 1992 to offer educational options for parents and their children, especially in urban areas where the greatest educational challenges exist (Bailey & Cooper, 2009). Since then, there has been a rapid increase of charter schools opening in the United States, particularly in low-income neighborhoods due, in part, to failing public schools. There were approximately 6,000 charter schools, educating 2.3 million students during the 2012–2013 school year, an increase of 80% since 2009 (Center for Research on Education Outcomes [CREDO], 2013). Even with the rapid growth of charter schools, however, they only comprise 4% of the total U.S. public school population, still a minority of public school students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Charter schools are independent public schools that receive public funding to implement alternative approaches to schooling, generally tailored to the needs of the communities they serve. They have greater autonomy than public schools, but also higher expectations for accountability. For example, if they do not achieve the results outlined in their contractual agreement, they can be closed down—as many public charter schools have been (Weinburg, 2009). Charter schools were "meant to be a vehicle for creating public schools that are freer to innovate … to create schools without traditional bureaucracy and [to] test whether their educational output meaningfully improves" (Weinburg cited in Bailey & Cooper, 2009, p. 275).

A relative newcomer to the public charter school constellation is what has variously been called the religious charter school (Weinberg, 2009) or faith-inspired charter school (Goldsmith & Walsh, 2011). Though not technically religious schools, they typically integrate many of the values and pedagogical approaches found in faith-based schools, are often housed in former religious schools, and offer wraparound religious educational programming. Religious charter schools generally have a social and/or cultural orientation that infuses the school's mission, curriculum, and extracurricular activities (Bailey & Cooper, 2009). The most salient difference between parochial and religious charter schools is the absence of religious instruction taught to the students. There are prominent charter schools in the United States that serve Muslims, Jews, Christians, Greek Orthodox, Hmong, and other groups (Bailey & Cooper, 2009).

Weinberg (2009), an expert on religious charter schools, has outlined what they can and cannot do, given the legal mandates to separate church and state. For instance, religious charter schools cannot teach religion from a particular religious perspective; require religious affiliation for staff hiring or student admissions; or affiliate with a denomination. Charter schools, on the other hand, can accommodate a student's religious beliefs, provide a space for students to pray, require religion courses in the curriculum, and teach about the relationship between religion and morality—if no particular religion is sanctioned. Further, the schools can arrange their schedules to accommodate voluntary afternoon religious instruction. Similarly, charter schools can close for religious holidays or serve religiously required food as an accommodation to students. Finally, though in general, public charter schools cannot permit religious icons, they can rent space or purchase a building with religious icons in view (Weinberg, 2009).

Catholic Schools and Religious Charter School Movement

For many years, the Catholic school system within the United States was considered the preeminent educational institution, particularly for poor and marginalized students that live in low-income, inner-city urban areas (Horning, 2013). According to Ladner (2007), Catholic schools have traditionally outperformed public schools and are considered the highest-performing schools for students living in U.S. inner cities. Catholic schools manifested in the Catholic ethos are particularly well suited to educate inner-city students. The Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) explained that ethos:

> defines and displays the core beliefs of the school and is closely linked to its value system. This ethos should be reflected in the school's mission statement, which is the beacon for all school activities. It is the school's way of "being in the world." (CIE, n.d.)

The Catholic Institute of Education has identified 13 features that define Catholic schools, such as embracing the value of inclusivity, being concerned with social justice and the well being of the entire community, maintaining clear standards of behavior, treating everyone with dignity, and so on. These are the characteristics, in part, that have made Catholic schools so successful with previously marginalized students. The full list of features includes:

- Everyone is welcome. No one is excluded.
- It has a strong value system based on Gospel values with Christ as the center of the school.
- It is a faith community that fosters positive relationships among learners, teachers, and parents.
- The religious atmosphere fosters formation of the whole child. Worship and prayer are integral and central to school life.
- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and must treat others the same.
- The Catholic school resists individualism. It is concerned about justice and the well being of the whole community—we are our sisters and brothers keepers.
- The best is expected from learners because teachers believe in them.
- Clear standards of behavior from all community members are defined and expected.
- A sense of social responsibility based on Gospel values is fostered.
- The school should provide a broad curriculum that is meaningful to students and relevant to their community.
- School leaders should develop positive student and staff morale and give priority to people.
- Collaborative decision-making is encouraged, and the gifts of each individual is recognized.
- Parental involvement and collaboration is vital for a true community to develop.

Though historically successful, over the past decades, Catholic schools have experienced a growing crisis, causing thousands of school closures due—among other factors—to declining enrollments, the reduction in faculty and staff who are members of the clergy or religious (and, therefore, paid at a reduced rate), and Catholics exiting to the suburbs. This has put the Catholic school system's long-standing goal of educating economically disadvantaged students in inner-city schools in peril (Brinig & Garnett, 2009). In many instances, urban charter schools have filled the void. In an extensive study of charter school data in 27 states, researchers found that 54% of charter school students lived in poverty, and approximately one-half of all charter schools were in urban areas. Charter school enrollment has increased in the past five years with Black and Hispanic students and students living in poverty. These

are precisely the students who achieve better outcomes in charter schools (CREDO, 2013).

In the face of increased school closures and consolidations, Catholic leaders and researchers have sought options to reverse this trend. As one such possibility, Goldsmith and Walsh (2011) identified faith-inspired public charter schools as one of nine governing models to sustain urban Catholic elementary schools, noting, "There is a growing trend to develop charter schools that utilize some characteristics of faith-based schools" (p. 25). Faith-inspired charter schools, according to Goldsmith and Walsh (2011), replicate many aspects of Catholic schools such as having highly structured environments, offering values-based instruction, and emphasizing academic achievement. They, like other authors, have emphasized that although the schools can be situated in religious buildings and can offer optional religious instruction after hours, they cannot specifically require that students engage in religious practices during the school day.

Horning (2013), in his synthesis of Catholic education and religious charter school literature, has suggested that religious charter schools may be a viable option when none other than closing a Catholic school exists. He noted that the reasons for starting charter schools are quite similar to those for starting religious schools, namely, to achieve a specific mission or purpose, to attain autonomy, and to focus on parent and community involvement. Obviously one of the greatest benefits of converting Catholic schools into public charters is educating urban students and hiring staff members that were formerly in Catholic schools. Other benefits may accrue as well, such as struggling urban parishes can receive much-needed income by leasing former Catholic school buildings to charter schools. Catholic parishes may also create new access to the urban poor by offering before- or after-school religious programming to students enrolled in charter schools. However, Horning (2013) has also pointed out numerous complications of shifting from Catholic to religious charter schools, with the two most pressing concerns being increased competition for the remaining Catholic schools and the loss of religious identity.

Even though religious charter schools are quite controversial within the Catholic community, many dioceses are turning to them when other choices are limited. One of the earliest and most prominent cases occurred in Washington, DC, where numerous inner-city Catholic schools were failing due to drastic declines in student enrollment, failing test scores, persistent financial troubles, deteriorating facilities, and fatigued donors (Smarick, 2009). After

exploring various options, in 2008, the Archdiocese reluctantly converted seven inner-city schools to public charter schools. Smarick (2009) identified many of the challenges involved, including the extraordinary amount of work required to complete the necessary paperwork, create political allies, and obtain funding for the upfront costs associated with the conversions. Though the conversions created some "local firestorms," the new public charter schools received an influx of money for their operations, and remaining Catholic schools in the Archdiocese appear to be more sustainable.

The Archdiocese of Miami faced similar challenges as its counterpart in Washington, DC, culminating with the announcement in 2008 that the Archdiocese could neither provide subsidies to maintain the schools in the poorest neighborhoods nor subsidize the parishes in other ways (Brinson, 2010). Subsequently, seven Catholic schools were closed and replaced by eight public charter schools. The shift enabled the poorer parishes to earn income by renting their buildings to the charter schools; in fact, the pastors involved believe the action saved their parishes. Additionally, the charter schools offered an educational alternative to the public schools in Miami, which "are often academically failing or unsafe" (Brinson, 2010, p. 3). The researcher concluded, however, that with the loss of the Catholic schools, church leaders must find alternative ways to meet the religious education needs of the parishes' children.

Although Catholic schools are now being converted to religious charter schools, in other instances, representatives from the public school system are approaching religious school leaders, inviting them to open public charter schools. This was the case with the Catalyst Schools in Chicago (Goldsmith & Walsh, 2011; Meyer, 2011), the focus for this article, and with the Cornerstone Schools in Detroit. Similar to the situation with the Catalyst Schools, the City of Detroit asked the Cornerstone School, a private nonsectarian, Christ-centered school started by lay Catholics serving the poor, to expand its educational offerings by opening two public charter schools. The charter schools, which opened in 2009, essentially offer the same rigorous curriculum and integrated character education as their precursor but without the "explicit religious references" (Goldsmith & Walsh, 2011, p. 26).

Other dioceses and archdioceses are also exploring options to convert their failing inner-city schools into faith-inspired public charter schools. This approach to dealing with declining enrollments, however, is not without controversy. In her article entitled "Converting Catholic Schools to Charters Draws Scrutiny," Prothero (2014) discussed some of the reasons that Catho-

lic leaders are against this growing trend. For example, Sister Carol Cimino, Buffalo's Superintendent of Catholic schools, lamented, "It's not good news for Catholic schools. Charters try to be Catholic school-like: uniforms, local control, a lot of parental involvement, a little more rigor in their curriculum." She went on to emphasize, "They take on the veneer of a Catholic education: What's lost is the ability to tell a child to respect others because we are all created by God."

To answer the numerous questions about religious public charters, Horning (2013) suggested that additional research on religious charter schools is needed. He pointed out that though conceptual models of religious charter schools are discussed in the literature, there are no

> scholarly field-based case studies on the religious charter schools . . . Ground-level research on charter schools that accommodate religious groups and share characteristics with Catholic schools is needed in order to illustrate what these conceptual schools are like in practice. (p. 382)

Conceptual Framework

In 1972, Larry Greiner wrote his classic article for the *Harvard Business Review*, entitled "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow," which he revised and republished in 1998. Greiner (1998) focused on for-profit businesses, but his overall message can be applied to public and nonprofit organizations as well. He proposed that as organizations age and grow, they have distinct stages, characterized by different needs, management styles, and cultures. Greiner (1998) suggested that, in each stage, organizations begin with a period of evolution and growth, but over time, a crisis emerges, and a stage of revolution ensues, prompted by problems created during the evolutionary period. For example, during the first stage (creativity), there is great excitement and commitment to a shared purpose, but minimal attention is given to ongoing management activities. Therein lies the problem or the crisis, according to Greiner (1998), that thrusts the organization into the second phase, known as direction, a time of increased structure and hierarchy.

Greiner (1998) identified five stages of growth, concluding that an organization's success depends on how well it manages the crisis and moves onto the next phase of growth. Researchers and scholars have challenged Greiner's (1998) theory over the years and, in fact, he revised his original theory, not-

ing, for example, that the transitions between the stages are not as smooth as he once proposed, and few organizations make it through all five stages. But Greiner (1998) maintained that whereas there is disagreement about different aspects of his theory, "everyone agrees that each [stage] contains its own structure, systems, and leadership" (p. 8). Moreover, the overall premise that organizations must evolve by responding to crises created in a preceding stage still holds true.

Research Methodology

With the cooperation of the Catalyst School leaders, this qualitative study examined the challenges faced and lessons learned when moving the Lasallian approach of education into the public sector. Faced with declining Catholic school enrollments and underperforming public schools, Catalyst Schools, according to two of the founders, offer an innovative approach to "infusing the public schools with the ethos of the Catholic educational system" (Fehrenbach & Siderewicz, 2012). To explore whether this aim has been accomplished, the study was guided by two research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced and lessons learned, according to Catalyst administrators, teachers, and staff, when moving the Lasallian approach of education into the public sector?
2. To what extent is it possible to transfer the Catholic ethos into a public school setting?

The researchers for this study are affiliated with an Educational Leadership program at a Lasallian college in the San Francisco Bay Area. Though we have a firm understanding of the Lasallian mission, none of us had visited the Catalyst Schools or knew any of the administrators, staff, or teachers. We did not consider ourselves experts on public charter schools or in the recent trend to transition private Catholic schools into public charter schools. Rather, we were more knowledgeable about educational leadership—specifically what the leadership needs are when an organization with a well-developed culture is merged with a culture with a dissimilar set of priorities and values. When we began the study, we came with more questions than answers, wanting to learn what the organizational members said to help answer the two research questions as well as to absorb what we could about the Catalyst culture from our observations and review of relevant documents.

For this study, we collected three main sources of data from employee interviews, school and classroom observations, and published documents including student performance data. After receiving approval from our College

Institutional Review Board, we made two trips to Chicago and interviewed 40 Catalyst participants including all three Catalyst founders, two board members, senior staff working in the central office, all school principals, staff members and teachers in all three schools, and community partners. We interviewed both new and seasoned employees, an equal number of men and women, and a similar number of Black and White participants along with several Latina staff members. We created an interview protocol with 15 open-ended questions such as: What is your understanding of the history of the Catalyst Schools? In your own words, what is the mission of the Catalyst Schools? Thinking back to the first year: What challenges were encountered in starting the schools? The interviews were audiotaped, and subsequent to our interviews, we kept journals about our observations and our own feelings during the interviews.

Additionally, we observed 20 classes in all three schools, beginning our observations at 7:30 a.m., when the principal (or designee) greeted each child before instruction began at 8 a.m., and we leisurely walked through each school, noting the artifacts, interactions, and facilities that could help us understand the culture. We observed 20 classrooms, ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade, and kept journals about our observations. We also reviewed numerous internal documents before and during our visit to Chicago. These materials offered a touching point to determine if our observations and the interviews were aligned with the espoused mission, values, and philosophy of the Catalyst Schools. Though we found differences among the three different schools, we chose to focus on the schools' similarities, thus creating a case study approach that focused on the three schools together as one.

To analyze the data, we began with the interview transcripts, which totaled over 225 single-spaced pages and worked individually to identify codes, which are "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). We next compared our individual codes and consolidated them into larger categories. During a third and final step in our transcript analysis process, we further condensed the categories into six themes that represented patterns found across the three researchers. During this consolidation process, we also discussed our findings from our observations and our review of internal documents. We concluded the analysis by identifying six themes: mission is key; leadership: the companion to mission; the paradox of structure; balance is key; the specter of CPS; partnerships are critical; and hope for the children.

The Catalyst Schools

The Catalyst Schools are based on the San Miguel schools, which are tuition-free Catholic schools, inspired by the Lasallian (or Christian Brother) mission offered in low-income neighborhoods within the United States. Based on the principles first developed by De LaSalle over 300 years ago, the Lasallian schools carry forward the Lasallian tradition, which is a call "by God to the educational service of the poor." These small San Miguel schools—primarily middle schools—staffed by Christian Brothers, Lasallian Volunteers, and a few lay staff serve students from all faiths and religions.

When first queried by the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools about replicating the San Miguel Schools as a charter school, the Christian Brothers were emphatically against the proposal, stating, "We are closely aligned with our Catholic tradition . . . We would have to compromise who we are and what we do" ("Catalyst: Bringing the Lasallian Charism", 2012, p. 21). However, after receiving repeated requests from CPS leaders over a period of three years, and recognizing that they could not develop additional tuition-free schools in Chicago, the Brothers relented. Building on the San Miguel model, the Catalyst Schools' goal has been to transfer the Lasallian ethos into the public school setting by instituting a values-based educational prototype (Meyer, 2011).

Catalyst began in 2006 with a single school and 60 students in a former CPS elementary school. Now, eight years later, with three campuses that serve students from kindergarten through high school, the Catalyst Network is educating 1,600 students in the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago. The three Catalyst campuses are located in areas of great poverty and high crime, and, on average, 95% of the students come from families living in poverty. In the two K–8 schools, 100% of the students are Black, whereas in the third K–12 school, 50% is Black and 50% is Hispanic. As with other public charter schools, all CPS students are eligible to attend the Catalyst Schools, and lotteries are used to select students in cases of oversubscription. Given the transience of the communities in which the Catalyst Schools operate, there is often a high level of student turnover, but given the Lasallian mission, suspensions and dismissals are infrequently used and only as a last resort.

Though the three schools are doing well now, the path has not been without serious challenges. For example, when the first Catalyst School opened in a former CPS building, the community members were outwardly hostile to the newcomers. There was considerable distrust of the Catalyst leaders and

staff, with community members believing—among other things—that this was a first step in gentrifying the community, thereby driving out long-term residents. There were also numerous errors made during the early days of Catalyst. For instance, a new suburban administrator who was an experienced Lasallian educator could not relate to the students, parents, and community members, and conflicts emerged that have taken years to resolve. The staffing model was a problem as well. Borrowing from the San Miguel model, the first Catalyst School had two teachers and an aid in each classroom, but this became prohibitively expensive and often ended up with conflicts over leadership. Additionally, given the leaders' expertise as middle school educators, they decided to begin with the fourth and fifth grades, and then add grades at both ends until they achieved a fully functioning K–8 school. This failed decision led to problems with enrollment, testing, and other schools pawning off their disciplinary problems on the new Catalyst Schools.

Educational Programming

The Catalyst students have a longer school day and a longer school year than the typical public school student in Chicago. While there is a strong emphasis on building relationships with the students, there is an equally strong focus on discipline. As with the San Miguel Schools, there are explicit rules and structure, which are strictly enforced, and teachers practice numerous methods of classroom management to maintain order in the classrooms. The schools strongly emphasize academic results, and there is extensive testing and data collection—more than what is mandated by CPS. Since 2008, Catalyst has embraced the Northwest Evaluation (NWEA) assessments to determine the growth and achievement levels of the same cohort of students from fall to spring, and from one year to the next. NWEA provides multiple data points to understand student growth and performance including the percentage of students reaching their individual growth target and the percentage of students within a given classroom or school reaching the target. The Chicago Public Schools have moved in the direction of using NWEA assessments as well.

In the area of math, third- to eighth-grade students in two of the three schools fall into the category of high growth (over 60% growth) and exceed the national average of 61% growth. (See Table 1 for the 2012–2013 math scores by school.) Because Catalyst Maria is not yet at its full complement of students, the test results are for third to fifth grade only.

Table 1

Percentage of 3rd– 8th Grade Students Meeting/Exceeding Individual Fall to Spring Math Goal on the NWEA (2012-2013)

School	%
Catalyst Howland	55
Catalyst Circle Rock	67
Catalyst Maria (3rd–5th)	72
National Average	61

In the area of reading, the scores are lower than in math; the third- to eighth-grade students in all three schools fall into the category of average growth (40–60%), though students in two of the schools exceeded the national average of growth (57%). (See Table 2 for the 2012–2013 reading scores by school.) Again, the test results at Catalyst Maria are only for third- to fifth-grade students.

Table 2

Percentage of 3rd– 8th Grade Students Meeting/Exceeding Individual Fall to Spring Reading Goal on the NWEA (2012-2013)

School	%
Catalyst Howland	51
Catalyst Circle Rock	59
Catalyst Maria (3rd–5th)	60
National Average	57

Catalyst students in the eighth grade and beyond also take the EX-PLORE exam, which identifies academic strengths and weaknesses in four areas important for success in college and the workplace: English, math, reading, and science. It is administered in the fall and spring and captures growth during the academic year. The national average rate of growth is 1.0. For the 2012–2013 academic year, eighth-grade students in both K–8 schools surpassed the national average: Catalyst Howland at 2.1 and Catalyst Circle Rock at 1.8. Catalyst Maria administered the EXPLORE exam to ninth-grade students, and their average growth was 3.21 (http://www.catalyst-schools.org). Given the academic and personal challenges that the Catalyst

students face, the standardized test results point to the *student growth* that is occurring in the schools, though both Catalyst Howland and Catalyst Circle Rock students are below average, according to CPS standards, in the area of *student attainment* (http://www.cps.edu).

Even though two of the Catalyst Schools only serve K–8 students, all three schools promote themselves as college preparatory institutions. Each Catalyst School has a graduate support program that serves students through high school and beyond. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the students graduating from the two K–8 schools are currently in high school and are on target to graduate on time. The vast majority is enrolled in schools with track records of college placement (G. Hannon, personal communication, April 16, 2013). This high percentage of students projected to graduate stands in contrast to the 63% graduation rate for all CPS students (CPS, 2013) and the starker 39% graduation rate for Chicago Black males in 2011 (Schott Foundation, 2012).

The emphasis on results and rigor is tempered by the focus on educating the whole child. In the classrooms, class values and norms are posted, and Six Pillars of Character posters are prominent on the walls. In addition, through collaborations with community partners, the schools have thriving arts-based programs, which include ballroom dance, Chicago Children's Choir, ballet, orchestra, and cooking, among other activities—all aimed at helping to touch students not just through academics, but through the arts as well.

Similar to the San Miguel Schools, parents are expected to participate in parent-teacher conferences and, on average, 87% of parents in the three schools participated during the past year (http://www.catalystschools.org). Each school has a social worker to help with family issues and challenges, and the schools have relationships with numerous social service agencies to provide ancillary services. Additionally, two of the schools are co-located with religious organizations that provide after-school services and programs for the students and families.

Findings

After carefully assessing the results from our interviews, observations, and review of internal documents, we identified six themes, as described below.

Mission is Key

The Catalyst promotional materials prominently state: "We believe that every child possesses inherent value and potential, regardless of background,

educational level, or life circumstances." This statement is aligned with the Lasallian mission of providing educational service to the poor, reflecting the Christian Brothers' commitment "to bring creative and generous responses to the world of the poor today, through fidelity to our founding charism" (De La Salle Brothers, n.d.). Catalyst's full mission statement, which is quite secular in its presentation, provides specific details about how the schools provide these educational services. After completing our interviews, it was evident that all interviewees believed in the overarching mission—some passionately so—of educating the poor, and they knew the basic elements of the Catalyst educational approach. When asked to describe the mission *in their own words*, however, we received a wide array of responses, such as fostering the students' potential, developing catalysts for change, or helping shape the students' character. For example, one individual stated, "Catalyst stands for potential." She went on to say: "We take them as they come and we see value and potential in them and we push to help them go as far as they can." The founders, board members, and some staff members, on the other hand, spoke about the mission in more faith-inspired language. For example, the Catalyst CEO and a former Christian Brother emphasized, "The mission really is to empower our young people entrusted to our care with a sense of reverence and a sense of respect and a sense of academic drive to really take charge of [their] own destiny."

Although the participants understood and related to the published mission statement, one-half of those interviewed had little or no knowledge of how the Lasallian tradition inspired the schools' birth. Most knew that the Catalyst Schools were modeled on the San Miguel Schools and the Christian Brothers were the founders of Catalyst Schools, but they lacked a deep understanding of what it means to be faith-inspired. There were also a few individuals who believed that faith-inspired values were overshadowed by the focus on standardized tests results. For example, one individual who was passionate about the Catalyst mission but was rather demoralized, maintained:

> When you open a public charter school by dreamers or faith-based organizations, the [founding values] are going to get marginalized, given the system from which the funds come. If you want the funds, you have to incorporate their rules and that can be very challenging for someone who wants to incorporate values.

Those who best understood the faith-inspired nature of the schools were the founders and the senior leaders: the small number of individuals who had previously worked in the San Miguel schools, and those with deep faith. For example, one interviewee replied, "I don't think you can have a faith-inspired school without having faith . . . I know that most people in this building who are in charge somehow and someway are affiliated with the church." Another person indicated, "We put into practice the values that always go along with faith traditions . . . hope, values of character." Regardless of perspective, however, many participants reported that the founders had failed to ground the mission in a faith tradition and to use the faith-inspired mission as the basis for decision-making. Another one of the founders who shared this perception lamented:

> There was a paranoia from the start—a fear that we were going to end up in court on this…that there would be all types of challenges from either the teachers union or the ACLU, but in the end, I think those were just fears. We have not heard a whiff of a challenge.

Although it was clear that the employees in the Catalyst Schools believed that they were engaged in meaningful—even transformational—work, many also believed that the schools could be more effective and truer to the founding mission by tapping into the Lasallian heritage more intentionally. Another founder and a Christian Brother spoke to where they currently stood regarding the Lasallian mission. He indicated:

> The Lasallian charism needs to be pulsating through our schools. We need to ask ourselves: Does everyone know where these values come from and how they were founded? What is the inspiration and from where does it come? The honest answer is that some do and some don't.

Leadership: The Companion to Mission

The founders of the Catalyst Schools who were former or current Christian Brothers took a bold step—indeed an act of leadership—to open the public charter schools in Chicago. Guided by their understanding of the Lasallian charism, they challenged the very centerpiece of Lasallian schools, namely, that the Brothers' schools were Christian schools. Though they did not know how to replicate the San Miguel model in the public sector, they

brought their vast experience in educating the poor. One respondent empha-sized that the Christian Brothers brought great value to the Catalyst Schools in spite of their inexperience with public charters. He affirmed:

> A lot of times you have charter schools opening with leaders with no experience in the education world. I think [the founders] had one up by having knowledge about how the educational system works and what is needed to be successful.

While the founders initiated the Catalyst Schools and crafted the educa-tional model, the work of leadership is equally important—if not more so—at the school level. As reflected in the interviews and archival documents, however, when early principals were hired, some impactful errors were made. For example, some early school leaders, though knowledgeable about Lasal-lian education, were ill equipped to deal with the poverty and violence in the community, the underprepared students, and the CPS demands. Others were ideally suited to help bring structure and discipline to the schools, but their style of leadership was incompatible with the Catalyst values, which empha-size community and relationships. The frequent changes in school leaders—another consequence of the hiring practices—also created challenges for the teachers, staff, and students alike. As one interviewee pointed out, once you got accustomed to the leadership style of a given principal, that person would leave, and the process started over again.

At the time this research was conducted, there was more stability among the leaders, greater clarity about the type of leaders needed, and better sys-tems in place to hire them. By promoting individuals from within who are fa-miliar with the community and steeped in the schools' values, some previous hiring decisions have been rectified. Even so, the question remains of how the Catalyst leaders will ensure that the schools are, in fact, faith-inspired? For most participants, the answer lies in the leaders' values and ways of interact-ing with staff and students. For instance, participants discussed the signifi-cance of having leaders who are grounded in respect, love, and service, while others emphasized the importance of the leaders' nurturance and support. For example, one employee spoke quite passionately about the support he received from the leaders. He explained, "These [leaders] are genuine people. . . . They act like your happiness is their happiness. As a whole, I am a better person for working here."

Others spoke about the value of the Summer Institute that is offered each August for two to three weeks. During the Institute, the teachers and staff members are provided with Lasallian formation activities every day; Lasallian reflections are also sent out regularly during the year. Materials adapted from De LaSalle's writing and the Character Counts program are distributed to staff and teachers, focusing on the virtues of a teacher, the conduct of schools, the philosophy of discipline, and the Six Pillars of Character.

Having the leaders model Lasallian values and educating the employees about the Lasallian heritage are two strategies for reinforcing the schools' faith-inspired roots. One of the respondents, who had previously worked in a faith-based school and recognized the close relationship between the leader's role and the mission, offered additional advice to the leaders:

> Build relationships with your staff members, build that community, and really have them be able to articulate the mission and vision so that they know it, live it and breathe it so that everybody else sees that they live it and breathe it. So that they all feel they're part of this mission and vision.

The Paradox of Structure

Larry Greiner first wrote his classic article for the *Harvard Business Review* in 1972, entitled "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow." While conducting our research with the Catalyst Schools, Greiner's theoretical model kept coming to mind even though he wrote his article for businesses. Below, we apply Greiner's theory—specifically the first two stages—to the Catalyst Schools.

During the first phase (creativity), the founders and early organizational members were involved in creating the first school, and most of the physical and mental energies were consumed with getting it off the ground. The members were driven by a shared purpose and passion, and staff members felt more like a family than work colleagues. Communication was frequent and informal, long hours of dedicated work were the norm, but *little attention was given to developing management systems.* This inattention to management activities created a crisis, however, that drove the organization into the second stage, known as direction.

During this second stage, because more staff members were added, there was a need to clarify the organization's identity, and more structure was needed to alleviate the early problems that occurred when there were few

policies, systems, or protocols. In this phase, communication became more formal, and what was originally decided through discussion and informed by shared values was often determined by rules and regulations. The second crisis period—according to the theory and the data from our research—formed when the organization became *increasingly centralized and bureaucratic*. When this happened, the original members often longed for a time when everything was more informal with fewer rules and regulations.

From our conversations and observations, it appears that Catalyst has moved beyond the creativity stage, is currently in the direction phase, and appears to be at a critical juncture—yet to be resolved—in its development. For example, employees were mixed in how they viewed the role of structure in the organization. Tension existed between those wishing the schools were more relationship- and values-based versus those preferring protocols and standardized systems. Nowhere was this tension more evident than in the way that student discipline was viewed and implemented in the schools. For example, all participants we interviewed recognized that order and discipline is necessary in a Catalyst school. Where the tension arises, however, is in *how* and *for what* students are disciplined. Some interviewees thought that discipline should stem from values, culture, or positive reinforcement; others believed that discipline is best handled through codes of conduct that apply to all students.

Those most familiar with De LaSalle's principles of discipline, as reflected in the orientation materials we reviewed, emphasized the relationship while administering discipline at Catalyst. Given this approach, discipline is an opportunity to teach the student about values, is never administered in anger or frustration, and is always individualized based on "the age, the character, the temperament and the dispositions of the child we are about to correct and also to those of his or her parents" (Fehrenbach, 2010, p. 10). Departing from the Lasallian approach, some pointed to the need to tighten up discipline practices. To deal with a more troubled student population, some participants praised the new standardized Code of Conduct, stating that students are now aware of the consequence for every action they take. One newly hired employee proudly discussed in great detail the new code of conduct, concluding, "The [students] know that everywhere they go, they are being held accountable for their actions. From K–8, there is the same accountability as far as behavior is concerned."

At this point in Catalyst's history, organizational members are left with the dilemma of how much structure and standardization is needed to main-

tain a safe environment for students and staff. Or, viewed from an alternate perspective, the question arises as to how the Catalyst schools can integrate the founding Lasallian values with the organizational need for structure? In thinking about this balance, one interviewee suggested, "Because of financial resources, you always have issues around size and scale. . . . As you get larger, the human touch can be more challenging. You have to make sure you have great principles and are really in touch with the staff." A school social worker offered a suggestion for reconciling the tension between values and structure. Using the example of the Code of Conduct, she proposed, "If I was going to start a [faith-inspired] school, it would be important to take time to look deeply at where and how your values are [integrated] in the Code of Conduct and how you're going to uphold them." She went on to emphasize that values should be the center point of the Code of Conduct.

The Need for Balance

Throughout the interviews, the participants—no matter in what role—discussed the challenges of working with the community, the parents, and the students. Some spoke poignantly about the children's lives and the amount of violence, sex, and drugs they have seen at such an early age. Others pointed to the extreme poverty in the communities and the toll that poverty takes on its residents and on those who work in these communities. For example, one of the academic administrators expressed a sentiment shared by others as well, "What you see everyday and what you have to interact with everyday is like being on the frontlines of war, but you don't get a break . . . There is extreme poverty, extreme issues in the community, extreme violence." He proceeded by discussing the toll this type of work takes on one's spirit, "I think it wears on your ability to cope—you become desensitized to it."

Several teachers discussed their personal struggles of teaching at Catalyst, especially given their relative inexperience and lack of mentoring, especially in the initial years. One confided about her initial challenge, "I have to say it was my ignorance. I'm young and I'm from the suburbs and I'm coming here . . . and it's difficult." Another teacher also discussed her insecurities about teaching at a Catalyst School. In addition to being new and never having interacted with urban students before, she asserted, "I also think trying to learn how to teach students at such a range of levels [is difficult] . . . so if you have a sixth grade student who can't read, what do you do?"

In spite of the challenges, however, many were powerfully drawn to their work at Catalyst. When asked what their greatest surprise has been since

working at Catalyst, many offered comments such as the following: "What constantly amazes me is the incredible dedication of the people who work in this world of education—young and old alike . . . their love for the children. Truly the magnanimity of their hearts is just profound and inspirational." Similarly, another individual affirmed, "I [am in] awe of the dedication of the staff. It is incredible. The teachers and the principal are just so dedicated."

Some spoke about being called by their work at the Catalyst Schools. An administrator emphasized, "[The staff] are being called by something greater that connects them to their work. We describe it as 'This is not a job but it is a vocation.' We are in search of people who see this as their life's vocation." One teacher used similar language as he described his commitment to his work, "Br. Mike said it once, 'This isn't a job or a career; it's a vocation' and that resonated with me."

There are rewards that accrue from the work as well. One teacher who was representative of other teachers exclaimed, "Wow, I actually made a difference . . . when you see that your most problematic student is actually doing really well academically, it becomes a reminder that . . . you really made a differ-ence." The direction of influence, however, does not just have to go from a teacher to student; it can go in the other direction as well. For example, one participant raved, "I look at how excited I am to see a child transform and it inspires me . . . those children have helped change my life . . . I can actually say the children have been change agents in my life."

It is evident that working at the Catalyst Schools is both exhausting and draining *and* inspiring and invigorating. The challenge is how to balance the level of support and nurturance that is needed so that employee burnout does not take hold. We could surmise that *the higher the level of stress, the greater the need for renewal,* and yet ironically, in stressful environments, there is often limited time to commit to employee rejuvenation.

There are no simple answers to help the staff, especially the teachers, find balance in their work life, but there are some methods for rejuvenating them, for example: offering more mission formation activities, institutionalizing more rituals that build relationships, hosting regular retreats, and training teachers and staff to more intentionally integrate Lasallian pedagogy were four strategies identified by Catalyst interviewees. The CEO indicated that Catalyst needs more rituals that bring the community members together—meaningful rites and customs to forge stronger relationships among the administrators, staff, and teachers. One long-term employee reinforced the importance of paying attention to relationships. When asked to give advice

to a group that wanted to start a faith-inspired charter school, she suggested having "Retreats. They work. Retreats really work." She later explained how a presenter came to a retreat and taught the teachers how to hold peace circles. She stated, "That was the year that I started building relationships with people that I had worked with for three years."

In addition, participants underscored the importance of improving teacher salaries and providing long-term contracts, especially for seasoned teachers. All of these options require an investment of time and money, but so do hiring, orienting, and training new employees when capable staff and teachers leave because "This is a 24-hour, 365 day a year job. There is no way I can leave here and say that work is over now . . . Work is always on my mind."

The Specter of CPS

When asked about the gains and losses of opening public charter schools, there was unanimous agreement that Catalyst Schools provide high quality education to large numbers of poor students. Even with the gains, however, many indicated that the decision to do so came with a considerable price. The costs include the pressure of high stakes testing, heavy compliance requirements, challenges with budgeting and finances, and most importantly, the perceived negative impact of the CPS culture on the Catalyst culture.

Regarding high stakes testing, it was pointed out that while Catholic schools in general focus on high levels of academic achievement, the focus on results is greater in public charter schools. Others emphasized how scrutinized public charter schools are; they are constantly compared to other charters and public schools. Some participants underscored how the focus on testing creates stress for Catalyst administrators, teachers, and staff. As described by one administrator, "The [high stakes testing] affects people—there is more anxiety around performance . . . [which] instills anxiety in people and that doesn't always translate into better results or better performance." From our own observations, it is evident that testing is prominent in the schools. For examples, the results that are measured and highlighted on the website, school walls, and written correspondence largely relate to academic achievement, often determined by standardized tests. Though most recognized the need to collect data and promote student achievements, many were disconcerted by the amount and type of testing conducted. Moreover, they pointed out that other values, such as those based on the Lasallian charism and the Six Pillars of Character, were not assessed.

The accountability culture also manifested in the amount of compliance-related paperwork required at Catalyst. For those previously working in Catholic schools, the sheer volume of paperwork is daunting. Most administrators joined Catalyst because of its compelling mission and were not prepared for the bureaucratic aspects of the job, which require extensive knowledge about the public school system and time to complete the reporting requirements. These same administrators have also been burdened with the financial aspects of the job. Several talked about the sheer madness of preparing a budget when receiving revenue information at the last minute. Additionally, the Catalyst Schools now receive less money per student than when Catalyst first began. These facts create pressure to increase school enrollments, therefore placing additional stress on the staff and teachers. One teacher summed up the financial challenges of working with CPS quite succinctly: "The lack of funds for a charter [is a problem] . . . teachers work longer, harder, and are paid less."

Of all the topics related to CPS, its influence on the Catalyst School culture was the most emotionally charged issue, creating considerable tension within the schools. Strain increased when the pressure from CPS for accountability, standardization, and high stakes testing collided with the idealistic aims of the Catalyst founders and staff. One former San Miguel leader expressed the views of many:

> While tests scores have always been important in Catholic schools, it's not the starting point. The starting point is the formation of a human. It is a different starting point [than public schools] . . . It is a philosophy of education that starts with the human heart, the formation of a good human and not necessarily with test [scores].

From his point of view, the Catalyst Schools placed too much emphasis on testing and not enough on helping to form the student as a good human.

Given the pressures by CPS, there was a sense of the danger that the schools could incrementally become like other Chicago public schools. Some discerning interviewees believed that Catalyst had already moved too far in that direction. For instance, one individual stated, "We have been too ready to adopt the culture of public schools because of the relationship with CPS, the compliance issues, standardized testing, and how that is used to judge schools." Further, one of the founders described the "tension of keeping [the Catalyst Schools] faith-inspired as the founders move on or the mission

people are not at the core." He pointed out, "There is extreme pressure on the charter schools to perform and incredible demands of time and energy are placed on our principals and leaders."

The pressure on the charter schools stems in part from what is known as the "institutional environment." In a study conducted with 11 district-run public, Catholic, and charter schools in Chicago, researchers determined that "the institutional environment—especially government regulations and its press for standardization and accountability—has permeated all schools' efforts" (Dorner, Spillane, & Pustejovsky, 2011, p. 81). This consequence bore out even though the mission, goals, and values of the Catholic and charter schools are distinct from the public schools, and they are not held to the same restrictions as the district-run public schools. In effect, the accountability culture that was borne by the No Child Left Behind Act has clearly taken hold in the Catalyst Schools.

Partnerships

In recent years, CPS has closed numerous neighborhood schools that were considered failing; the majority were located in Chicago's most impoverished and violent communities. New schools have emerged, and Catalyst was one of the charters that began its life under these circumstances. Catalyst, like many public charters, had the difficult task of establishing itself in untrusting communities and working with a student body that had been grossly underserved and undereducated. In the face of these challenges, many participants emphasized the need for and importance of forging partnerships to help create successful schools—most specifically with community members, faith-based institutions, and arts organizations.

One of the founders explained that when they naively began their first school in what had been a CPS school, "We had no clue what we were in for. We really didn't understand this community very well." He said that they had to move very quickly and were not able to make connections in the community first. Without community understanding and no one to advocate for Catalyst Schools, the first few years were more difficult than they needed to be. Some interviewees pointed out that if community alliances had been forged, then the problems would have been more manageable, and many lessons learned the hard way could have been avoided. As one teacher recommended, "Align yourself with a beacon in the neighborhood and things will go much smoother."

In addition to creating strong community ties within the school's neighborhood, many interviewees spoke explicitly about the value of affiliating with faith-based community partners. By doing so, they can reap the benefits of religious charter schools (Cooper & Randall, 2008; Weinberg, 2009); namely, being housed in former religious schools that offer wraparound religious educational programming and other support services. This was especially evident in the third Catalyst campus that is housed in a former Catholic high school. Several interviewees indicated that when they walked into the school, it seemed much like the Catholic high schools they once attended.

When one enters any of the Catalyst schools, the benefits of the third type of partnership stand out immediately. Murals of famous Blacks and Latinos cover the halls, flyers highlighting the next dance competition are on display, and YouTube videos of the latest poetry slam are all outcomes of partnerships with arts organizations funded by corporate donors. The balance of high academic standards and a full array of enrichment activities, which are supported through partnerships, can have a huge impact on young peoples' lives. In addition to learning new skills, children of all ages can gain confidence and a sense of achievement by participating in and excelling in extracurricular activities such as the arts.

Hope for the Children

While the interviewees made recommendations to improve the Catalyst Schools, there was universal agreement about one point: the Catalyst Schools provide hope for the children and communities in Chicago's poor neighborhoods. The level of urgency surrounding the need to help the children was palpable for the individuals we interviewed. For example, one young teacher declared, "Our mission is so much greater because literally I feel like our work can be the difference between the life and death of some students." She went on to accentuate, "It's too important to be taken lightly or to trivialize by saying, 'Our goal is to get kids in college.' No, we need to change the world." Echoing the emphasis on social change, a long-term member of the community and Catalyst employee powerfully expressed the importance and reach of hope:

> Starting the school here [offers] a sense of hope and I say that for the black community, now we have a place that provides a great education. When the Christian Brothers embraced Austin, I don't even think that

> they saw this coming . . . how this school is transforming this commu-
> nity . . . Right here on this corner there is sacredness for this community.

Though hope itself is invisible, it can be inferred from the schools' culture and the practices embedded throughout the Catalyst schools. The school policies and practices are designed to reinforce the belief that these children have potential. For example, the children are referred to as "scholars" instead of students; Catalyst staff members want to know where the students are going after they leave, and the students are welcomed back like family members into the Catalyst community. One participant emphasized another important feature at Catalyst. She indicated that the focus on rigor and results is not to "get rid of the bottom percentile. [The staff] are trying to achieve this by getting the bottom percentile up to snuff."

Numerous teachers discussed how the Catalyst approach of support and challenge has paid dividends in terms of improved test scores. One teacher exclaimed:

> When I look at the data, I'm like "Oh my God" . . . based on what they were walking in with and some of the deficits, to see where they are now when I look at their test data, it really surprised me.

It is not only the teachers who have seen the Catalyst students change. Many staff members in nonteaching roles also spoke about how surprised they have been by the growth. One replied, "To see them learn and grow and develop from year-to-year . . . to hear the amazing stories of the ones that have gone on to be successful and to see their accomplishments . . . that has been awesome."

A nurturing and caring culture does not spontaneously develop. Rather, the mission shapes it, as do the values that the founders and leaders espouse, and the ongoing professional development. In describing one of the basic tenets of the private Lasallian schools, one of the founders helped explain why it is so important to have schools such as Catalyst in Chicago's poorest neighborhoods:

> The one way we [make young people feel loved] is to welcome all students to the table—nobody excluded—everyone is invited . . . our schools are the visible presence of Jesus Christ in our world today . . . what is it that Jesus did—he healed, he brought people together, he rejected nobody.

It is likely that the foundation for hope in the Lasallian schools is love. When asked about the Catalyst school culture, one teacher explained that the schools "are calm and a safe place for the students—there are engaged students and engaged teachers. When outsiders go to the schools, they say 'Oh my God; it is incredible. The environment and culture are filled with love.'" She later stated, "Those of us who are around just take this for credit, but this is noticeable to the outsiders."

Discussion

At the inception of this research, we were interested in identifying the lessons learned as the Catalyst founders implemented the Lasallian-inspired schools in the public sector. The Catalyst leaders, on the other hand, wanted us to explore the extent to which the Catholic ethos had been transferred into these public charter schools. Below, we offer our insights about these questions based on our interviews, observations, and review of archival materials.

Challenges Faced and Lessons Learned

Even as the schools had made great strides in implementing faith-inspired charter schools, considerable tension existed within the Catalyst community, reflecting the two cultures involved in this educational innovation. Another source of tension stemmed from the challenges of working in under-resourced schools in poor, violent-prone neighborhoods in urban areas. Different strategies are needed to help the organizational leaders and members reconcile each of these tensions within their schools.

Two cultures collide. Referring back to Greiner's (1998) theory, the Lasallian culture was most manifest during the first stage of creativity, when the faith-inspired schools were being conceived and implemented. In contrast, the CPS culture became more prominent during the direction phase, when systems and policies have been honed. Though the Catalyst organization is clearly within Greiner's second stage of development, many organizational members long to recapture the founding spirit even while adhering to public school mandates. When asked to describe the Catalyst Schools, the participants often used terms such as mission driven, values based, family/community oriented, focusing on the whole child's development, serving the poor, and creating catalysts for change. The participants generally spoke with pride and excitement about what the schools have become and accomplished.

On the other hand, when discussing CPS, they often spoke as if the Catalyst Schools were not part of the public school system, describing "them" (CPS) as too focused on accountability, standardization, high stakes testing, and regulations. Though the interviewees recognized the benefit of reaching more students by being a public charter school, most spoke with disdain about the high price the schools have had to pay. It is evident that the two cultures continue to clash—though many suggest that the CPS culture exhibited in the direction phase is "leading the way."

If we are to believe Greiner (1998), however, in order for the schools to be successful, the organizational leaders and members need to move to a third stage of development, prompted by the crisis created in the direction stage: being overly structured, standardized, and secularized. Perhaps the third stage of development for the Catalyst Schools could be to focus anew on the Lasallian mission and values while using the mission and values to refine the systems and policies that emerged during the direction stage; this third stage could be called centering. Without intentional and ongoing attention paid to the founding mission of these schools, they could evolve into schools that look very similar to district-run public schools.

As was evident from our research, given the fears of crossing the government-church divide, the early leaders did not clearly develop and articulate a *bold faith-inspired mission*. Ideally, the mission would have been integrated into all aspects of organizational life, including professional development, decision-making processes, discipline policies and practices, allocation of resources, and the like. Consequently, they failed to create and communicate a *courageous faith-inspired vision* to provide direction for how to develop and grow the Catalyst Schools.

Given the bureaucratic culture of public school districts, Catalyst needs to have symbolic leaders to support the schools' transition to a third stage of development. A symbolic leader believes that the essential task of management is to provide vision and inspiration (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A good leader is a visionary who uses symbols, tells stories, shares metaphors, creates rituals, and frames experiences in ways that give people hope and meaning. Sharing stories, for example, about how the Catalyst Schools were begun and tales of early Catalyst icons and heroes can help members forge an identity and relationship to the Catalyst Schools. In addition, teaching about Christian Brothers and lay partners who, like them, are reinventing the Lasallian charism could foster connections for Catalyst employees and students as they realize they are part of an international network of educators, following De La Salle's principles.

To maintain a mission-based, faith-inspired focus, it will also be critical to recruit and hire staff, especially principals and academic leaders, who actively adopt the mission and values *as their own*. Charter schools have more leeway in their hiring practices than district-run public schools, and by invoking the charter rights around hiring, attention can be paid to actively recruiting staff and teachers who have worked in faith-based schools in urban settings. Additionally, though the Catalyst culture—just like CPS—supports high levels of academic achievement, there are other educational components in the schools such as the arts, character development, and good citizenship. Given what many Catalyst staff perceived as an overemphasis on standardized testing, school leaders could identify multiple measures of assessment to reinforce that the faith-inspired values are just as important as academic achievement.

Finally, many participants pointed out benefits of partnering with faith-based, well-established institutions. The look and feel of charter schools held in former religious schools is tangibly different from those held in former public schools. Additionally, the challenge of recruiting students and staff is easier when partnering with respected religious institutions, and the religious partner can provide faith instruction and other social services.

Extreme poverty takes its toll. Many Catalyst employees discussed the enormous stress of their work, given the untrusting communities, underprepared students, community poverty and violence and, in many cases, troubled parents with whom they must interact. Just driving to work through neighborhoods overrun by gangs, replete with boarded-up homes and businesses, is a daily confrontation for many teachers and staff. To help minimize this strain, special attention must be given to partnering with community members and tending to staff and teacher needs.

For example, with urban charter schools, it is vitally important to understand and connect with the community in which the schools operate. Such alliances are important not only for increasing the acceptance of charter schools by community leaders and members, but also to build a community of support for the schools themselves. In effect, leaders in faith-inspired charter schools need to become skilled political leaders, learning how to build coalitions, allies, and networks within the community. Relatedly, it is important to develop successful strategies for engendering parental support—even though, as noted by many participants, this is a challenging endeavor.

Further, given the demands of working in urban schools, retaining and rejuvenating staff members must be an organizational priority. In essence, staff

and teachers need to feel supported and cared for by leaders and coworkers as well as be inspired by their work. Mission formation programs, staff rituals, and regular retreats are a few of the options to help minimize burnout and support organizational members in recentering themselves in the Lasallian mission. Although each of these activities takes time and resources, so do recruiting and hiring new employees and dealing with disillusioned staff members.

Finally, in light of the extreme student needs, the way Chicago Public Schools distribute funds to charter schools, and Catalyst's emphasis on holistic programming—including the arts— there must be an aggressive fundraising strategy and creative partnerships to offset the financial gap between the funds Catalyst receives and the funds it needs. By having more financial resources, some of the pressures on the staff—especially the social workers and teachers—could possibly be alleviated.

Transferring the Catholic ethos into the public sector. The Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) has identified 13 features believed to be distinctive of Catholic schools, such as everyone is welcome; no one is excluded; the school has a strong value system based on the Gospel; it is a community that fosters positive relationships among learners, teachers, and parents; and so on (CIE, n.d.). There are clearly many similarities between Catalyst Schools and this list of defining characteristics for Catholic schools. For example, Catalyst employees are very committed to the mission of educating the poor and, in one of the founder's words, of "welcoming all students to the table excluding no one." There is a shared value that all students have potential; and, at Catalyst schools, there is a safe and structured environment with clearly defined standards so students can focus and excel in their studies. The staff and teachers recognize the value of providing a broad curriculum or holistic education that focuses on academics, values, good citizenship, and the arts. In fact, if the wording on the list were slightly altered, each of the items (with one exception) applies to the Catalyst Schools. The noticeable exception is "the religious atmosphere fosters the formation of the whole child. Worship and prayer are integral and central to school life."

In Catalyst schools, development of the whole child is focused on character development by instilling values such as fostering trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. As discussed in an article entitled "Catalyst: Bringing the Lasallian Charism to Public Schools" (Fehrenbach, & Siderewicz, 2012), these values can be seen as biblical values, but "they are also commonly held human and social values and offer a pub-

lic school a vehicle for helping parents and guardians shape the character of their child without an appeal to denominational religion or a specific faith tradition (De LaSalle Today, 2012, p. 22).

Clearly, attention has paid to transferring the Catholic ethos in general, and specifically the Lasallian mission into the Catalyst Schools. They are directly modeled on the successful San Miguel Schools, parochial schools located in impoverished communities. Many of De LaSalle's writings have been translated, so they are relevant and meaningful for a public school and transmitted to the staff and teachers through the Summer Institute and other venues.

Choosing to partner with two Christian institutions—especially the former Catholic girls high school—has helped make this transfer of the Catholic ethos more seamless at Circle Rock and Maria schools.

Though the schools have made remarkable strides in "infusing the public schools with the ethos of the Catholic educational system" (Fehrenbach & Siderewicz, 2012), the specter of the public school culture is ever-present, looming over the schools, demanding increasingly high standardized test scores. This primary focus on testing ultimately undermines some of the most cherished Catholic educational goals, most especially the focus on the child's spiritual development. To date, the schools have not identified how to both increase the students' academic achievement as measured by standardized testing and focus on the students' spiritual development, a key component of the Catholic ethos.

Conclusion

The Catalyst leaders recognized the challenge of blending the values embedded within two different organizational cultures. Catalyst's CEO conceded, "The Catalyst Schools are a learning community and we have a long path of learning ahead of us to know . . . how to put our faith-based mission at the center of what we do." In effect, Catalyst leaders recognized the need for a revolution—as described by Greiner—so the organization can evolve into a new stage of development, *centered* on the mission and *sustained* by its mission-based systems, policies, and procedures. To that end, since receiving our research report, the Catalyst leaders have created a Mission Committee; addressed and responded to the gaps identified in the study; and are using the research to help them identify how they approach the future and possible expansion (M. Fehrenbach, personal communication, April 3, 2014).

Though work still remains, in the final analysis, the Catalyst School leaders and organizational members are engaged in meaningful work and can be assured that they have a long path behind them of significant accomplishment and achievement, touching the lives of many children in Chicago's poorest neighborhoods— "right here on this corner [where] there is a sacredness for this community."

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