

PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

The Strategic Plan for the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of New York

October 2010



ARCHDIOCESE
of
NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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October 2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

Every time we baptize a baby, part of the sacred rite reminds parents they are the first teachers of their children in our faith. And on that joyous baptismal day, the entire congregation smiles, applauds and agrees to help these parents. It is my happy duty as a bishop to make sure that the parents and teachers who will share our faith with the next generation have the support they need.

The most powerful and reliable resource I can offer is Catholic education, so central to developing the faith and morals of our children. There is no more effective way to form the whole person – intellectually, morally and communally – than to infuse a rigorous academic program with the timeless message of Jesus Christ, and deliver it in a safe, respectful atmosphere. Catholic education promotes lifelong commitment to faith, prayer and virtue, a high sense of social justice, greater numbers of religious vocations and an embrace of a way of life based on responsible stewardship.

That is what the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York have been doing for more than 200 years. We have done a splendid job educating children from many backgrounds, giving them the tools and confidence to succeed. And our schools are here to stay! But Catholic education today is undeniably challenged by forces none of us envisioned when we were sitting at little wooden desks lined up in the parochial schools of our youth.

Nonetheless, the Catholic schools of the archdiocese fully intend to fulfill their mission into the future. Evangelization through good teaching is essential to Catholic life. Last year, there were more than 83,000 students in 276 Catholic schools throughout the ten counties of our archdiocese. These children are counting on us – and so are all who recognize that Catholic education is an inclusive, uplifting and transformative path to becoming a responsible, faithful, virtuous adult in contemporary society.

Pathways to Excellence is a daring yet practical strategic plan designed to ensure an academically excellent and fully enrolled Catholic school system, poised for growth and longevity. It is the product of an exhaustive process of candid assessment, extensive research and thoughtful discussion among our education professionals and other individuals and groups who have a stake in the success of our efforts. I am grateful for their time and conscientious attention.

Yet, *Pathways to Excellence* is but the first step in a longer process to make sure that we faithfully heed the final mandate of Jesus, "Go teach!" It is an initial three-year plan that describes key objectives and recommends immediate strategies to guarantee the future of the Catholic schools of the archdiocese.

Pathways to Excellence has my whole-hearted endorsement and I am eager to see it implemented throughout our archdiocese. I anticipate and support the efforts of the Office of the Superintendent of Schools to regularly review and revise this plan to respond to the changing needs of our schools and the families they serve.

Catholic education has a profound and permanent effect on those who are blessed to experience it. While we can only imagine the future lives of the babies we christen, we must make sure that we can promise them the unparalleled experience found only in the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York. *Pathways to Excellence* is a bold plan to help us keep that promise.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain,

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Timothy M. Dolan" with a small cross symbol to the left.

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York





Executive Summary

“The mission of the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York is to ensure our schools are Christ-centered, academically excellent and welcoming communities that teach students to be life-long learners and leaders energized by fidelity to Christ, His Church and one another.”

History

The Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York have enjoyed a long and successful history that predates even the public schools in Manhattan. For more than 200 years, they have helped millions of children from diverse backgrounds grow and develop into confident young adults who are thoughtful, responsible and productive members of both the Church and society. The schools have also provided unparalleled opportunities for generations of immigrants to escape poverty, become part of the American mainstream and be competitive in the marketplace.

The benefits of Catholic education extend well beyond the students and reverberate throughout the parish, the diocese and the universal Church. Catholic school graduates emerge as lifelong practitioners of their faith who are academically and spiritually prepared to take leadership roles in the Church and the community. They become good citizens, deeply committed to social justice, the care of the poor and the planet, proud to volunteer their time and talent for others. In fact, independent research suggests that the influence of Catholic values and the fostering of Catholic faith and morals are the most important keys to success for the young people educated in inner-city Catholic schools.





Context

Throughout two centuries, the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York have maintained a steadfast dedication to educational excellence and Catholic culture rooted in faith, service and personal responsibility.

Now, these same schools are facing a new set of challenges common to many parochial schools across the nation. In recent decades, they have experienced a system-wide decline in student enrollment caused by a number of factors including changing community demographics, strained economic conditions and the aggressive secularization of American society. They have also been impacted by a decrease in the number of religious personnel whose selfless apostolate traditionally enabled the schools to flourish.

The challenges are daunting, but they cannot diminish the unwavering commitment of the Archdiocese of New York to strengthen and promote Catholic education. As the proud sponsor of one of the largest and most diverse Catholic school systems in the United States, the archdiocese revels in its ability to transmit faith and values to all students, welcome the immigrant and the disadvantaged and offer the hope for success that lies in a comprehensive education.

Today, the schools of the Archdiocese of New York are at a junction and this document is the map posted at the crossroads. *Pathways to Excellence* is a three-year strategic plan to help the elementary schools of the archdiocese fulfill their critical mission. It reflects careful study and candid assessment of the school system's strengths and areas for potential improvement. It also outlines critical objectives and realistic strategies to ensure the long-term success of a healthy system of fully enrolled schools grounded in the Catholic faith. In short, it is the beginning of a longer-term process for ensuring the future of the archdiocese's elementary schools.

Pathways to Excellence addresses current challenges and offers a cohesive vision for a school system that spans the ten counties of the Archdiocese of New York. Last year, more than 83,000 students were enrolled in 276 Catholic elementary and

secondary schools located in the boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island and the seven counties north and west of New York City: Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, Dutchess and Ulster. The Office of the Superintendent of Schools provides unity to this geographic diversity through direct management of the archdiocesan schools and general supervision of the parish schools. It also serves as a resource for private Catholic schools located in the archdiocese.

To serve the students throughout the archdiocese, *Pathways to Excellence* embraces present challenges as an opportunity for change and renewal. It envisions current and upcoming leaders who will provide the bold, creative and energetic direction that will sustain the mission of Catholic education for generations to come. *Pathways to Excellence* reaffirms that the support of Catholic education is a communal, ecclesial duty that extends beyond the parents of schoolchildren and the parishes where schools are located.





Executive Summary



Creating Pathways to Excellence

Thoughtful planning is essential to a strong future for the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York.

Pathways to Excellence is the fruit of an extensive strategic planning process begun in early 2009 to assist all of the archdiocesan and parish elementary schools. Similar planning projects were already underway for the archdiocesan and parish high schools. The effort was initiated by Dr. Timothy McNiff, Superintendent of Schools, under the direction of Edward Cardinal Egan, then-Archbishop of New York, and embraced by Archbishop Timothy Dolan when he succeeded Cardinal Egan in April 2009.

With the help of individual school communities and a professional consultant, subcommittees were established to address key areas for evaluation: Catholic Identity, Academics, Leadership, Finances and Facilities, Governance, and Enrollment Strategies and Communications. Each subcommittee, comprised of diverse leaders and experts, was asked to identify opportunities for improvement in its respective area. In addition, an advisory committee helped guide the subcommittees and provided critical feedback

throughout the planning process. The subcommittees called on a wide range of individuals and institutions, including Catholic dioceses and universities across the nation. They used research developed by an outside market research firm, which conducted a series of archdiocesan-wide surveys and interviews with stakeholders, including pastors, principals, teachers and parents. Also, in recognition of the critical importance of providing a well-maintained learning environment for students, a consulting firm was retained to assess existing school facilities and identify the immediate and future repair and maintenance needs of the school system.

The subcommittees identified broad areas of focus and helped develop *Pathways to Excellence*, a compendium of practical recommendations to guide the schools of the archdiocese through the next three years. In addition, the document incorporates the feedback of Archbishop Dolan, senior staff and the many others engaged in the planning effort.



Key Objectives and Recommendations

Pathways to Excellence is an optimistic and sustainable approach to Catholic elementary education in the archdiocese. It charts a three-year course to ensure the excellence and longevity of the Catholic schools of New York. It identifies specific objectives and recommends key strategies to implement them. They are outlined here and described in greater detail in the following pages.

Catholic Identity is the heart and hallmark of the schools of the Archdiocese of New York. It is essential that the adults who are entrusted with sharing the faith tradition and guiding the moral development of students are themselves well-formed in the faith. They must be confident models of how it can be lived in the 21st century, so that each school community is enlivened by the Gospel message.

The strategic plan calls for developing and strengthening the Catholic identity of every school by supporting the faith formation and religious practice of teachers, parents and students. It supports a preeminent position for religious instruction and promotes the incorporation of spiritual and charitable works into curricular and co-curricular planning.

Building on an existing foundation of superb **Leadership**, the strategic plan provides tools to identify, cultivate and retain exceptional principals and teachers and promote a professional atmosphere that both rewards excellence and supports a cohesive group of educators. It strengthens recruiting, training, mentorship and evaluation tools.

Pathways to Excellence encourages active, collaborative participation by parents, teachers, principals, pastors and members of the community to sustain creative and energetic leadership for exceptional schools.

Academics, a traditional strength of Catholic schools, are a beacon for parents seeking an outstanding education for their children.

Pathways to Excellence enriches and expands already rigorous, standards-based academic programs by focusing on curriculum and instruction, accountability and professional development for teachers. It encourages the creation of learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom experience, including robust enrichment and co-curricular programs, and expanded resources for

preschoolers and students with special learning needs. *Pathways to Excellence* recommends the increased use of data analysis to guide decisions on curriculum, instruction and professional development.

The strategic plan calls for the careful evaluation of traditional models of school **Governance and Finance** in light of current realities. It encourages new models that respect the archdiocese's commitment to provide a Catholic education to every child who seeks it, and anticipates that each parish will support a Catholic school, even if it is not located on the parish campus.

While the archdiocese will continue to support schools in areas of critical need, there will be a significant reduction in the total amount of financial subsidies from both parishes and the archdiocese itself. The closing or consolidation of struggling schools will enhance the strength of all remaining schools in the system, as will sound school-level business and management practices. Ultimately, increased funds will be available for tuition assistance.

Regional education boards will be formed to tap the collective wisdom and experience of all stakeholders and oversee the likely growth in the number of regional schools throughout the archdiocese.

Until recent decades, Catholic schools enjoyed healthy **Enrollments** and accomplished **Communications** by word-of-mouth. Classrooms were full and the abundance of successful graduates was a living advertisement for the value of a Catholic education. Today, however, aggressive marketing is essential to increase enrollment and keep Catholic schools accessible and affordable.

Pathways to Excellence establishes an integrated and multi-pronged communications strategy to tout the benefits of Catholic schools, using new and traditional media. It aims to attract prospective families and remind the wider community of the universal value of Catholic education.

The Archdiocese of New York is committed to Catholic education and *Pathways to Excellence* maps the route to achieve a fully enrolled system of dynamic, sustainable faith-filled schools. Planning and implementation are ongoing and this document represents the beginning of a significant revitalization effort that will continue into the next decade.



Catholic Identity

Catholic identity is the primary distinguishing feature of the schools of the archdiocese. It sets them apart from all other educational options available to families and transforms an outstanding academic experience into one where each student is prepared to become a virtuous, productive and compassionate citizen.

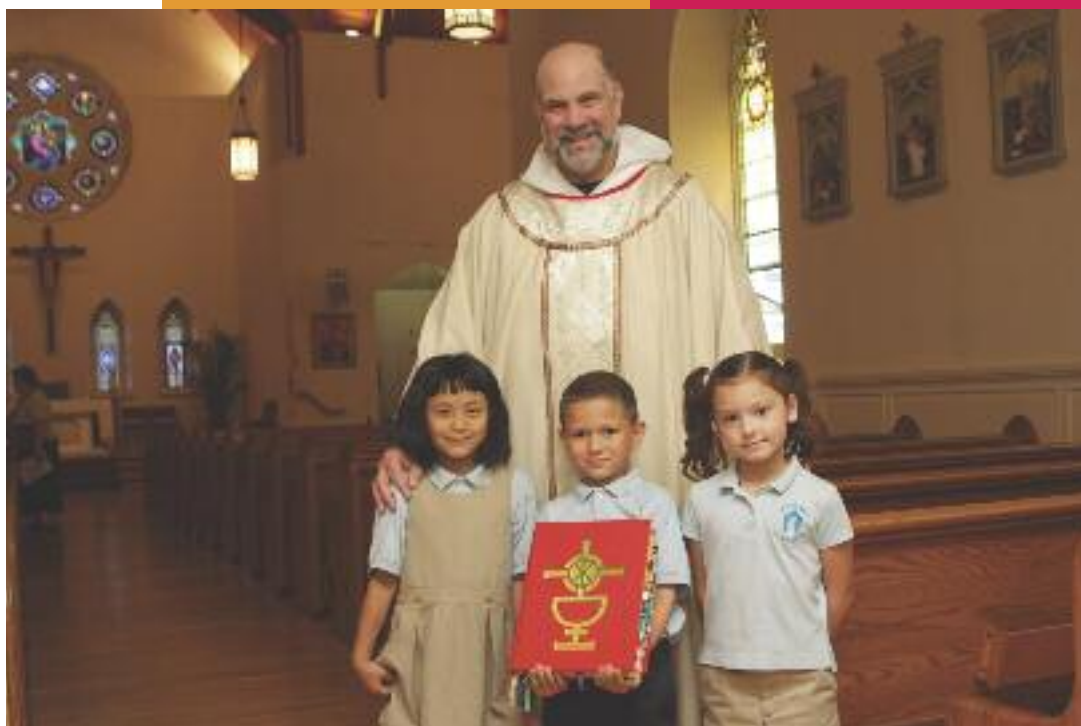
Catholic education forms each child intellectually, morally, spiritually and physically in a way that reflects the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This attention to the whole person - body, mind and soul - is the Catholic identity that permeates every experience in the Catholic schools of the archdiocese.

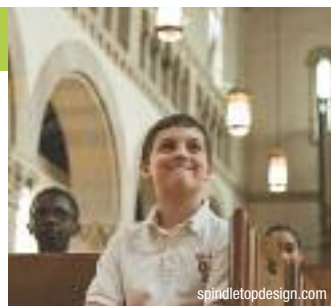
For generations, religious sisters and brothers upheld the Catholic identity of the schools by their generous presence. Millions of Catholic school students absorbed the faith and shared values through academic lessons and modeled behavior, which reinforced the religious identity established at home. Catholic schools graduated well-educated young

adults who were formed in their faith and equipped to take leadership roles in the Church and the world.

Today, the Catholic schools of the archdiocese continue to cultivate and sustain a strong and distinctively Catholic identity that respects the human dignity of each individual. In a world where children are bombarded by cultural noise and mixed messages, Catholic schools are safe environments where timeless Gospel teachings can infuse every subject, co-curricular program and personal interaction.

While parents are the primary models for their children's education and behavior, Catholic schools provide a consistent understanding and interpretation of shared faith and values. The partnership between educators and families benefits each child and enhances the total educational experience. This strategic plan recognizes that all of the adults in the school community have a responsibility to be well-educated in the faith and comfortable in their roles as models for its practice.





Objectives and Strategies

1. Because every adult is a potential role model for students, all school leaders will be properly grounded in the essentials of the Catholic faith and demonstrate a consistent lived understanding of Catholic identity.
 - i. Create educational programs for all adults in the school community to ensure Catholic identity is firmly established, fostered and sustained.
 - ii. Provide catechists with professional development and educational tools to enhance their teaching.
 - iii. Assist pastors and principals in monitoring teacher compliance with catechist formation certification requirements, and regularly evaluate the impact of improved compliance on archdiocesan religion exam scores.
 - iv. Establish annual retreat programs for principals and teachers as an opportunity to develop their personal spirituality to its full potential.
2. Religious instruction is central to the Catholic school experience. To uphold the Catholic identity of the schools, religious instruction will be approached with the same academic rigor and expectations as other core subjects and incorporate opportunities for students to develop genuine spiritual maturity.
 - i. Design an assessment tool for religious instruction to identify schools in need of support and develop an intervention program to assist them.
 - ii. Incorporate significant feast days and reception of the sacraments into each school's calendar. Familiarize the entire school community with the religious education curriculum to support instruction and provide consistency within and among schools.
 - iii. Lead students in prayer at appropriate times throughout the day and align classroom instruction with Sunday worship and the liturgical calendar.
 - iv. Involve parents in the sacramental life formation of students.
 - v. Incorporate Catholic social teaching into lessons and provide frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding through practice within and beyond the school community.
 - vi. Offer opportunities for students to consider the vocations to which God calls them, including religious vocations.
3. The most effective ministries are those that are understood, valued and supported by the parish community. The ministry of Catholic education will be shared with the parish community so that all members appreciate their role in the education of children.
 - i. Actively involve the pastor, principal and other ministerial leaders in plans to improve Catholic education and formation programs.
 - ii. Encourage charitable, respectful interactions in the school, family and parish communities by instituting programs that respect the dignity of all people and promote Christian values.





Leadership



Exceptional leadership is the distinctive hallmark of successful schools. While many schools in New York boast of the credentials of their administrators, the Catholic schools of the archdiocese are unique in claiming canonized saints as founders and inspiration. Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, the first American saint, taught at Transfiguration School in Lower Manhattan, and Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, the patroness of Catholic education, was born in New York City and received into the Catholic Church at Saint Peter's in Manhattan. Their tenacious dedication to Catholic education in the 19th century helped it gain acceptance in American society. Today, the schools of the archdiocese reflect their commitment and build on the traditions of excellence established by generations of such outstanding religious and lay educators.

In the 21st century, the Catholic Church and its schools rely more heavily on the laity than at any time in their history. The future success of the schools relies on a harmonious collaboration among all the stakeholders in Catholic education. Priests, principals, teachers, parents, the Office of the Superintendent and other concerned religious and lay people are allies in ensuring the vitality of Catholic school communities.

The strategic plan recognizes the fundamental contributions of each of these constituent groups and calls on them to work together to channel their energy and creativity to ensure the continued success of a storied school system.



Objectives and Strategies

Recruitment and Evaluation

1. Every pastor seeking a new principal will have access to a sufficient number of high-caliber candidates.
 - i. Engage in targeted and aggressive recruiting to increase the number of qualified applicants for each available principal position.
 - ii. Improve the principal compensation package to attract more applicants and retain excellent principals.
 - iii. Strengthen the screening process at the Office of the Superintendent to ensure that only the best-qualified principal candidates are interviewed locally.
 - iv. Educate pastors about critical areas of principal competency and engage them more meaningfully in the principal selection process.
 - v. Explore the feasibility of providing incentives for "master" principals to transfer into high-need schools.
 2. The evaluation process for principals will create and support a culture of high-performers.
 - i. Align the principal evaluation process with high performance standards, and incorporate procedures to identify areas for support and development.
 - ii. Cultivate a system that allows for the celebration and reward of high-performing principals.
 - iii. Restructure the role of district superintendents to monitor and maintain high principal quality.
2. The Office of the Superintendent will implement systems to ensure its effectiveness in supporting principals in their role as instructional leaders.
 - i. Partner with outside service providers to ensure administrative support is well-aligned, effective and consistently practiced.
 - ii. Increase the number of qualified teacher applicants and create a centralized database of teacher applications for principals.
 - iii. Improve the teacher evaluation process and design a rubric to help principals identify and cultivate effective teaching.
 - iv. Provide additional resources and tools for principals to supervise instruction. Formalize supervision protocols, curriculum pacing guides and elements of instructional programs.

Collaboration

1. Pastors, priests, principals, faculty and the Office of the Superintendent will work together to support Catholic education and ensure the success of each school.
 - i. Improve communication between the Office of the Superintendent and pastors on school matters, and empower all priests to promote and actively support Catholic education.
 - ii. Introduce school leaders to educational concepts such as "professional learning communities" to aid them in fostering school-wide collaboration.
 2. Schools will seek the active support and involvement of parents through organized parent programs.
 - i. Survey parents to determine the effectiveness of existing parent programs and institute a parent committee at every school to explore opportunities for increased parent involvement.
 - ii. Host annual parent association meetings in every district to provide parents an opportunity to meet with the superintendent of schools.
 - iii. Ensure that parents have strong relationships with teachers and school leadership and are supported in their role as educational advocates and mentors for their children.
1. All principals will have access to ongoing training programs, conferences and retreat opportunities that are relevant, challenging and revitalizing.
 - i. Centralize the professional development programs for principals in the Office of the Superintendent to align offerings with clearly defined leadership goals.
 - ii. Develop a program that recognizes and affirms the leadership of experienced principals and addresses their specific needs.
 - iii. Ensure support of first- and second-year principals through ongoing monitoring, coaching and professional development.
 - iv. Evaluate the first-year pilot of the Curran Principal Academy for aspiring Catholic school principals and make improvements where necessary.

Support and Professional Development



Academics



The academic strength of Catholic schools is unassailable and recent independent research confirms that when learning in a Catholic school is done in an environment replete with moral values and the practice of faith, test scores and student achievement are positively impacted.

The Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York are at the forefront in providing superior academics to children from diverse backgrounds. Student performance and graduate achievement are testaments to the successful development of a system-wide culture where academic excellence is expected, supported, attained and celebrated.

The wisdom of keeping this unwavering focus on the critical importance of academics is proven by objective assessments year after year. Students in the schools of the archdiocese

continue to meet or exceed state and national proficiency standards on standardized tests. In addition, 99% of Catholic high school seniors graduate and more than 96% of them choose to continue their education in a post-secondary setting.

Building on a strong foundation of traditionally high standards, the strategic plan underscores the importance of curriculum and instruction and ensures that teachers and administrators receive critical support and professional development to encourage innovation and creativity. It promotes the use of technology to optimize student achievement and supports educators as they create and sustain a rich academic environment that helps every child develop confidence and a love of learning.

Curriculum and Instruction

A strong and developmentally appropriate curriculum is fundamental to academic excellence. It is important for every school to ensure that its curriculum includes programs that integrate relevant, challenging and standards-based learning activities. To that end, New York State standards will serve as the basis for more rigorous and complex learning as schools continue to inspire the creativity and intellectual curiosity of each student. In addition, the schools will continue to integrate technology into curriculum and teaching to incorporate current pedagogical approaches, enhance learning and strengthen educational programs.

Objectives and Strategies



1. The Office of the Superintendent will support comprehensive educational programs at every school that integrate relevant, rigorous and standards-based learning for all students. New strategies and approaches to curriculum content and delivery will allow schools to access and incorporate the most up-to-date and research-based practices.
 - i. Reconfigure and expand the archdiocesan curriculum committee to involve and engage teachers in regular curriculum development to ensure that educational programs are suitable and challenging for all students.
 - ii. Make current research-based curriculum guides available to teachers. Clearly define the scope and sequence of educational programs for every grade level, presenting them in a consistent, user-friendly format for each subject area.
 - iii. Encourage a robust fine arts program at every school and a foreign-language component in the core curriculum.
 - iv. Replicate and implement innovative science programs from other successful districts that integrate mathematics and technology.
2. The Office of the Superintendent will study ways to integrate academic subject areas with technology applications and explore creative ways to optimize student achievement.
 - i. Develop and disseminate resources for teachers, aligned with the goals of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), to share methods and strategies that integrate technology into the teaching of key concepts and skills.
 - ii. Study best practices for school-level technology use and explore possible partnerships with technology companies and venture funds to encourage such use.
 - iii. Assess the impact of non-traditional scheduling on schools where such scheduling is now used, and determine its feasibility and appropriateness in other schools.
3. All new and existing early childhood programs will provide a child-centered learning environment, use a developmentally appropriate curriculum and be staffed by qualified early childhood educators and catechists of the Good Shepherd.
 - i. Establish an archdiocesan early childhood teaching and learning center to ensure all early childhood programs have access to necessary resources and professional development.
 - ii. Enhance the staffing and support for such programs at the Office of the Superintendent.
 - iii. Increase the number of early childhood programs in the archdiocese, including the number of universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) programs.
4. The school system will better accommodate students with special learning needs and ensure that all students are supported and encouraged to reach their maximum potential.
 - i. Establish a full-time director for special education position in the Office of the Superintendent.
 - ii. Enhance the current tracking system for students with diagnosed special learning needs and use available data to monitor their progress.
 - iii. Develop guidelines and resource centers to assist principals and teachers to identify and address students with special learning needs.
5. The Office of the Superintendent will expand and regularly evaluate the co-curricular programs offered at schools to make sure that they reflect students' interests and support their well-rounded development.
 - i. Collaborate with Catholic and other organizations to expand existing co-curricular programs and develop opportunities for new programs.
 - ii. Explore possible enrichment opportunities that can be offered beyond the traditional school day and during the summer.



Academics

Accountability and Professional Development for Teachers

Effective teachers are critical to student achievement and all teachers will have access to professional development opportunities that are ongoing and differentiated. Such opportunities will provide support for the excellent teachers already in the schools and also attract new ones.

In addition, because maintaining a high level of external and internal accountability is critical to the health of the school system, school leaders and the Office of the Superintendent will adopt an ongoing continuous improvement process to guide curriculum, instruction and professional development enhancements to improve student performance and fulfill the mission of Catholic education.

Objectives and Strategies

1. Teachers will have access to ongoing professional development opportunities, especially those that directly support classroom instruction and optimize student learning.
 - i. Provide targeted and diverse opportunities for innovative, site-based staff development, using a content-area coaching model.
 - ii. Conduct annual summer symposiums throughout each district to maximize professional development opportunities for teachers outside the regular school year.
 - iii. Centralize the new teacher orientation program and revitalize its mission to facilitate growth of early career teachers, improve performance and increase retention.
 - iv. Partner with local colleges and Catholic universities to provide certificate and degree programs to teachers.





2. All schools will employ data analysis and a continuous improvement process to guide curriculum, instruction and professional development decisions.
 - i. Create a two-stage, multi-level data-assessment protocol to guide system-wide analysis of student assessment data. Train school faculties and administrators to generate and implement school-wide action plans to address student needs, and institutionalize this continuous improvement process.
 - ii. Ensure more targeted supervision of schools identified as “high-need schools” during the continuous improvement process.
3. All schools will strive for external recognition of excellence and seek widespread collaboration in creating plans to increase student achievement.
 - i. Require all schools to attain additional accreditation and encourage schools to seek recognition under the U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Schools Program.
 - ii. Require all schools to involve broad-based community participation in the development of academic improvement plans that are regularly reviewed and updated.



“Teachers will have access to ongoing professional development opportunities, especially those that directly support classroom instruction and optimize student learning.”



Governance and Finance

The archdiocese is committed to taking the necessary steps to ensure that high-quality Catholic education continues to be an outstanding, viable and sought-after option for current and future New Yorkers.

Traditionally, Catholic culture revolved around a neighborhood parish, with a parochial school as its foundation. Schools were logically administered and financed at the parish level. They were filled with students whose parents entrusted the academic and moral development of their children to the religious who staffed the schools. While the number of the religious staffing schools has declined, the parochial school model still thrives in certain areas and remains the best solution for Catholic education in those communities.

Nevertheless, Catholic education has been challenged in recent decades with issues of governance and finance. The models developed since the early 19th century to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding Catholic school population must now be reconfigured to reflect 21st century realities. Judicious assessment, shared leadership, long-term planning and bold reconfiguration will balance responsible stewardship with successful fulfillment of the primary mission of the schools.

The initiatives described in this three-year strategic plan reflect the vision of the archbishop and respond to his educational priorities. Specifically, every child will have access to a Catholic education and every parish will support a Catholic school in the archdiocese, even if the school is

not located within the parish boundary. Lay people, who have assumed greater responsibility throughout the Church, will be called upon to assist with school governance at the local and regional levels. The archdiocese will pursue additional resources to invest in the schools, but they will be prudently distributed to ensure their greatest impact. The process of assessing the viability of schools and determining which will continue as strong educational beacons into the future will be thorough and inclusive. And while the archdiocese will continue to support schools in areas of critical need, the financial commitment will be reduced from its current unsustainable level.

This new governance and finance strategy includes both reconfiguration and regionalization. The archdiocese will engage in several significant studies to determine which schools are viable in the long-term and how a new regionalization structure can utilize available resources to strengthen the entire system and guarantee the existence of excellent Catholic education in New York.

Procedurally, an initial study will identify schools that are not sustainable or require a disproportionate amount of archdiocesan financial support to remain open. Some of these schools will be recommended for closure or merger. A second study will determine a regionalization structure for the remaining schools, in which all pastors in the region, along with lay leaders, will have considerable responsibility and authority.

Throughout this process, which is intended to strengthen the entire system and guarantee its future, there will be widespread communication and consultation with all stakeholders. The Office of the Superintendent will collaborate with pastors, principals, teachers, parents and community representatives to improve the schools and ensure their long-term viability. In addition, reinvestment in the system will be critical to ensuring the success and growth of strong Catholic schools.

“Every child will have access to a Catholic education and every parish will support a Catholic school in the archdiocese.”



Objectives and Strategies

1. A reconfiguration steering committee, comprised of pastors, principals and lay representatives, will assess the viability of individual schools and recommend immediate steps to reduce archdiocesan and parish subsidies.
 - i. Examine each school holistically, considering factors such as academic success, enrollment trends, financial health and facility conditions.
 - ii. Identify at-risk schools and engage these school communities in a collaborative process of creating and reviewing alternative proposals to closure or merger.
 - iii. Recommend schools to close or merge for the 2011-12 school year and provide suitable alternative Catholic school options to affected families.
 - iv. Ensure that receiving schools take all necessary steps to welcome affected students and successfully transition them into their school communities.
2. A regionalization steering committee, comprised of vicars and pastors familiar with local school communities and their challenges, will work with selected lay leaders and the Office of the Superintendent to create and implement sustainable governance models to strengthen Catholic schools throughout the archdiocese.
 - i. Designate education regions, which will encompass all parishes in a defined geographic area.
 - ii. Establish and define roles and responsibilities of regional education boards, which will create viable governance models for Catholic schools throughout the archdiocese.
 - iii. Develop a process by which regional education boards will work with the Office of the Superintendent and the Archdiocese of New York Office of Finance to determine the appropriate funding mechanism for the schools in their designated region.
3. By securing additional funding and reinvesting current resources, the Office of the Superintendent will strengthen the system through increased tuition assistance, academic program enhancements and facilities improvements.
 - i. Establish a new education fund with the proceeds from the sale and/or lease of selected properties.
 - ii. Increase fundraising through established successful programs including, but not limited to, the Catholic Alumni Partnership.
 - iii. Pursue additional state and federal funding and support legislative initiatives to maximize short- and long-term revenue streams.
 - iv. Seek external grants to fund *Pathways to Excellence* initiatives related to Catholic Identity, Academics, Leadership and Marketing.
4. The Office of the Superintendent, working with regional education boards, will provide proactive and strategic oversight of school finances.
 - i. Dedicate additional staff and resources at the Office of the Superintendent to strengthen local financial practices, explore cost efficiencies and provide financial administration seminars for pastors and principals.
 - ii. Refine the current budget process, including tuition-setting practices, to ensure the creation of timely and accurate budgets.
 - iii. Develop and institute a three-year operating and capital budgeting plan for every school.
 - iv. Enhance the information management systems at the Office of the Superintendent to ensure the accuracy and availability of school data for effective school administration.



Enrollment Strategies and Communications

The Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York have a powerful and compelling story to tell. For more than 200 years, they have helped millions of children grow in their faith and develop into confident young adults who are thoughtful, responsible, productive members of both the Church and society. Their populations reflect the rich ethnic, religious and economic diversity of the ten New York counties they serve.

Future enrollment depends on preserving this tradition of excellence, while broadening and improving the schools' communications efforts. Catholic schools have been passive about sharing their amazing story. They have relied on tradition and word of mouth to fill their seats, assuming that families outside the school or parish appreciated the remarkable value of a Catholic education. However, given available school alternatives and the growing importance of traditional and digital marketing and media exposure to student recruitment, this modest approach has undoubtedly contributed to the decline in enrollment over the past

decade. As a result, the Catholic school system has gradually relinquished its cherished role as the primary educational choice for New York Catholic families.

The Catholic schools of the archdiocese are committed to reversing this trend and reestablishing a dynamic system of fully enrolled schools. Under the three-year strategic plan, the Office of the Superintendent will develop an integrated outreach effort that promotes the achievements of the schools and their graduates. It will include more effective communications to attract new families, enhance the experience of current families and convey the unique and lasting value of a Catholic education to the wider community. New strategies will focus on engaging supporters, keeping alumni connected and raising the profile of the schools with leaders and members of the community. With greater visibility, there will be more opportunities to enhance public perception of the schools as strong, viable, accessible and affordable sources for an outstanding, values-centered education.





Objectives and Strategies

1. The Office of the Superintendent will provide clear leadership in marketing to ensure an integrated and consistent outreach effort.
 - i. Establish an experienced marketing department in the Office of the Superintendent to oversee marketing efforts throughout the system.
 - ii. Develop a recognizable brand and implement an integrated marketing campaign for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York.
 - iii. Develop specific communications guidelines for schools. Provide school leaders with tools and training to use effective marketing and consistent, high-quality communications to cultivate strong relationships with current and prospective families.
 - iv. Improve the Office of the Superintendent's website to support system-wide and school-level marketing efforts.
 - v. Enable all interested schools to participate in the newly established Catholic Alumni Partnership (CAP), and ensure its effective management by the Office of the Superintendent.
2. A coordinated marketing team, managed by the Office of the Superintendent, will support the recruitment and retention needs of the schools.
 - i. Develop a new student recruitment website and campaign specifically designed to support schools' recruitment efforts.
 - ii. Ensure that schools fully utilize available technology, including the websites, to support enrollment efforts and collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent.
 - iii. Form a strategic field marketing team to provide on-site training and marketing support to schools with troubled enrollments.
 - iv. Establish targeted recruitment programs such as the Catholic School Advantage Campaign with the Notre Dame Task Force on the Participation of Latino Children and Families in Catholic Schools.
3. The Office of the Superintendent will strive to educate the wider community about the true value of a Catholic education in the Archdiocese of New York.
 - i. Develop a media plan with the help of media professionals to communicate the successes of the school system both internally and externally.
 - ii. Establish parent ambassadors at every school to actively promote the schools in their communities.
 - iii. Maintain and enhance collaboration with the New York State Catholic Conference to promote legislative initiatives that will benefit Catholic schools.
4. The Office of the Superintendent and school communities will utilize census demographic information to inform marketing decisions and enable strategic marketing and growth.
 - i. Collate and analyze current demographic information to enable effective forecasting of enrollment and help identify potential markets.





Progress to Date

In his familiar straightforward style, Archbishop Dolan told his priests, "We can't do business as usual and take our schools for granted. We've been offering quality Catholic education for centuries and we're not about to buckle now!"

In that spirit, *Pathways to Excellence* rejects "business as usual" and introduces bold initiatives that build on the strong foundation of the Catholic schools. The recommendations offer creative new approaches to ensure a healthy system of fully enrolled schools positioned for long-term success. Rather than wait for a formal launch of the three-year plan, the Office of the Superintendent began to implement many of its key objectives, even as *Pathways to Excellence* was being developed and reviewed. The result is that significant progress has already been made in each area of the plan, as described below.

Catholic Identity

Faith is learned through teaching, but absorbed through practice and the example of adult role models, both at home and in school. To ensure that all school leaders are well-grounded in the essentials of the Catholic faith and that a strong Catholic identity permeates every feature of the schools, additional educational programs for principals and teachers were created.

- A standardized and enhanced **annual retreat program** for principals and teachers was instituted. This year's

program, "A Day of Reflection: Educators Educating for Faith, Hope and Charity," covered the history and practice of the Catholic Church in New York and offered guidance to help participants develop their personal spirituality to its potential.

- **Educate to Elevate**, an annual, yearlong, in-service training program for teachers in grades 3-8, is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010. The new initiative is targeted to teachers in schools where students historically have underperformed on the archdiocesan religion exam.





Leadership

The archdiocese's school system excels because of exceptional leadership at every level. The strategic plan strengthens the collaboration among pastors, principals, teachers, parents and the Office of the Superintendent, and provides new training, development and evaluation tools to support and enhance leadership.

- The Office of the Superintendent has embarked on an ambitious multi-year effort to revamp and integrate the principal job description with rigorous hiring, evaluation and professional development practices. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, which are leadership standards used in over 40 states, as well as numerous colleges and universities, were selected as the basis for the **new principal standards**. The ISLLC standards, which are not faith-based, were revised to reflect Catholic identity and mission.
- An aggressive and **comprehensive principal search and screening process** was initiated, expanding strategic relationships with universities and extending advertising to new media outlets. A multi-stage screening procedure for principal candidates was implemented, including a writing assessment, multiple individual and group interviews and a mechanism to match candidates' skills with schools' needs.
- **The Curran Principal Academy**, an initiative launched in 2008 to prepare excellent Catholic school teachers to transition into elementary school administration, was assessed and improved. A new interview process for candidates, including a rigorous case-study interview, was introduced and the program's curriculum was enhanced. The second cohort of eight candidates began the program in early 2010, and will graduate in May 2011. Recruitment for the third cohort of candidates is ongoing.
- A **new formative principal assessment** was created to supplement summative assessments, which are typically given every three years. The new standards-based assessment will help ensure principals receive timely feedback and targeted professional development. All principals attended a one-day workshop on the standards and assessment tool in summer 2010. The new formative assessment program will be piloted during the 2010-2011 school year and will "go live" in the 2011-2012 school year.
- In order to support principals in recruiting and hiring high-caliber teachers, **outreach to prospective teachers** was increased through aggressive advertising and participation in university career fairs. A **new centralized database** of teacher applications, www.teachleadserve.org, was created to enable principals to search for all full-time, part-time and substitute teacher candidates using select search criteria. More than 1,100 teacher applicants are already stored in the database.





Progress to Date



Academics

Catholic schools have a well-deserved reputation for consistent academic excellence. To maintain and improve this proud tradition, the strategic plan concentrates on curriculum and instruction enhancement, professional development and accountability.

- A standardized **curriculum review cycle** for all core subjects was instituted and a standard format for the Essential Learnings **curriculum guides** was adopted. These guides outline the expected content and skills taught at each grade level and are vital to promoting academic excellence throughout the school system. A new guide for social studies has already been rolled out and new science curriculum standards are under development.
- A guideline for **technology literacy** was developed for implementation during the 2010-2011 school year. It is based on national standards set by the International Society for Technology on Education (ISTE) and provides guidance to teachers on integrating technology into instruction.
- Additional **universal pre-kindergarten (UPK)** programs were opened, bringing the total to 23, with five more sites awaiting approval.
- Multiple enhancements to teacher professional development were implemented to support both new and veteran teachers throughout the archdiocese.
 - Additional **literacy and math coaches** were provided for teachers during the 2009-2010 academic year. More coaches will be added this school year.
 - **Teacher summer symposiums** in math and English language arts began in summer 2009 and continued in 2010. More than 1,000 elementary and high school teachers attended these optional workshops each year.
 - A centralized and redesigned **new teacher training program**, including a virtual mentoring component and professional development throughout the first year of teaching, was implemented in summer 2010.
- A **data assessment protocol** based on a continuous improvement model was developed to analyze student assessment data to inform decisions about classroom instruction, professional development and interventions at schools with significant needs. Teachers and principals will take part in the first archdiocesan-wide **D³ - December Data Day** on December 13, 2010, during which they will use this protocol to develop classroom and school-wide action plans.
- Two elementary schools in the archdiocese were among 304 schools in the country identified as **U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon Schools** for 2010. Only 50 private schools achieve this distinction each year.



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Governance and Finance

The traditional model of Catholic school governance and finance is undergoing careful examination to determine what modifications are necessary to ensure that Catholic schools are sustainable now and in the future.

- Pastors throughout the archdiocese provided **detailed feedback** on draft models of school governance and finance. These models describe new revenue sources, cost-cutting opportunities and improvements for financial transparency.
- To maximize limited financial resources and strengthen the entire system, a **reconfiguration steering committee** was established and tasked with reviewing school and parish data and recommending schools for closure or merger.
- A **regionalization steering committee** was formed to help create and implement sustainable governance models to strengthen Catholic schools throughout the archdiocese.
- **Budget/financial review workshops** for principals and their bookkeepers were conducted during the 2009-2010 school year in conjunction with the Archdiocese of New York Offices of Parish Finance and Parish Training. The workshops incorporated concepts of budgeting, financial statement analysis and tuition-setting practices. Additional workshops are planned for the 2010-2011 school year.
- A **formalized budget review process** for the schools, including guidelines for enrollment projection and tuition-setting, was developed in conjunction with the Office of Parish Finance.
- **Information management systems** were enhanced with the creation of an online census system for submission of annual school data and the rollout to the schools of the Immediate Response Information System (IRIS), an emergency contact management program. IRIS provides mass communication and emergency notification to the schools, staff, parents and other stakeholders designated by the school administration.





Progress to Date

Enrollment Strategies and Communications

The archdiocese is committed to ensuring that schools are dynamic and fully enrolled. An aggressive outreach effort is underway to promote the achievements of the schools, illustrate the unique benefits of Catholic education and encourage new families to enroll.

- An integrated **marketing campaign** entitled “**Build Bold Futures**” was launched to inform both prospective families and the larger community about the benefits of Catholic education.
 - The integrated multi-media campaign includes geo-targeted advertising to supplement traditional print ads with online, cinema and bus shelter advertising. With assistance from Rubenstein Communications, the good news about Catholic schools in the archdiocese was shared through television interviews, high profile articles in New York broadcast and print media, and increased access to executive and legislative leadership.
- The revitalized and **upgraded website of the Office of the Superintendent**, www.adnyeducation.org, “went live” in July 2010, providing a current, user-friendly and comprehensive view of academic results throughout the archdiocese.
- A bi-lingual **recruitment website**, www.buildboldfutures.org, was launched in March 2010, providing prospective families with information about specific Catholic school options by zip code. An interactive information-request form on the website provides a dynamic database that enables the Office of the Superintendent to forward parent inquiries directly to the requested schools.
- The Archdiocese of New York partnered with the University of Notre Dame in the pilot of **The Catholic School Advantage: The Campaign to Improve Educational Opportunities for Latino Children**. The campaign seeks to close the achievement gap between Latino and other children in the classroom by doubling the percentage of Latino children benefiting from a Catholic school education in the next decade. The campaign will assist school leaders in 30 schools to develop and implement culturally responsive practices to more effectively serve Latino students and their families.
- Five **field marketing coordinators** were trained and deployed during 2010 to support 25 schools with troubled enrollments. Each coordinator spends one day a week with each of five schools to provide customized marketing training and support in website design, recruitment materials and community outreach.





Conclusion

Pathways to Excellence is the result of considerable prayer, research, analysis and hard work. Ultimately, its purpose is to make sure that the school system of the Archdiocese of New York is among the best in the nation.

Pathways to Excellence shines a well-deserved light on the exceptional success of Catholic education in New York and prepares the school system for a long, healthy future. The objectives and strategies detailed in this plan are bold yet achievable. They challenge traditional models and ask for selfless collaboration among all stakeholders for the benefit of students. They seek to improve the core features of Catholic education while opening the door to more opportunities for principals, teachers, students and parents.

Looking ahead, the next three years will be a time of great change and optimism for the schools. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the entire Catholic community, including pastors,

priests, religious, principals, teachers, parents and the laity, will demonstrate its commitment to turning the strategic plan's key objectives in realities. All of the stakeholders must join together to strengthen the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York.

Although the timeless mission of the Catholic schools remains unchanged, the tools used to fulfill it vary with each generation. This strategic plan identifies challenges and solutions for today and is the start of a more comprehensive strengthening effort that will reach into the next decade. The current plan will be reviewed and revised to meet the needs of a responsive and ever-improving school system.



“*Pathways to Excellence shines a well-deserved light on the exceptional success of Catholic education in New York.*”



Advisory Committee and Subcommittee Members

Thanks are due to the many people who gave so generously of their time and expertise to develop recommendations for the archbishop's consideration. Their keen insights and thoughtful deliberations became the first iteration of this *Pathways to Excellence* document. In the intervening months of the continuing planning and internal review processes, some of the recommendations were expanded upon, new ones added and still others

deleted, to reflect changing conditions in the school system and the communities it serves.

While the document exists because of the considerable work of the advisory and subcommittee members, this final version is different from the last draft reviewed by these committees. It is a powerful reminder that the task of maintaining an outstanding, vibrant Catholic school system is not static, but ongoing and responsive.

The following advisory and subcommittee members are acknowledged with deep gratitude for their contribution to the development of *Pathways to Excellence*.
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