



What is Regionalization?

History

The Archdiocese of New York has a rich history of successful Catholic schools, dating back to 1800. From their founding more than 200 years ago, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese have placed special emphasis on providing educational opportunities for immigrants, a mission which continues today. This is evident in the success of many alumni, and the diverse population present in our schools today. However, similar to most dioceses across the United States, Catholic elementary schools in the Archdiocese of New York have faced many difficulties over the last 25 years. The challenges are most severe in the urban environments where the financial demands, diminished resources, and demographic changes have placed insurmountable strain on vulnerable parish schools serving low- to middle-income populations.

In the archdiocese, these challenges are directly related to the effectiveness of the traditional parish school model of operating and governance. In this model, most Catholic schools in the archdiocese are managed by the pastor and/or the school's principal. Funding for the school's operations is supported by tuition collection, fundraising, and, in many cases, subsidies provided by the parish. Historically, this model has proved effective and is one reason why Catholic schools have been able to operate with greater efficiency than their government counterparts. However, parishes have increasingly faced their own financial challenges due to a changing parishioner base, hindering their ability to cover their operational costs. With this reduction in financial support, Catholic schools have increasingly turned to the archdiocese to help them pay their bills.

Pathways to Excellence Strategic Plan

With such financial challenges within its Catholic elementary schools, the archdiocese assembled key school leaders, archdiocesan officials, and other stakeholders in Catholic education to develop its *Pathways to Excellence* strategic plan. The strategic plan was implemented in the fall of 2010 with an innovative approach to improving the sustainability of Catholic elementary schools in the archdiocese.

An essential component of this plan included significant changes to school governance, the financial model, and school operations. The initial phase of the strategic plan recommended that the archdiocese decouple a large number of its elementary schools from their parishes as well as merge and close others. The outcome of this reorganization was "regionalization," a new structure of governance implemented to oversee nine elementary Catholic school regions throughout the archdiocese. Each region is served by a regional office, which assists the schools in many day-to-day operations. In addition, in order to support each region, the archdiocese created a central office to manage areas such as budgeting, marketing, tuition collection, and financial aid.

Regionalization involved the coming together of most parish elementary schools into geographic regions. Every parish is now responsible for, contributes to, and has a voice in Catholic education in the Archdiocese. Given the importance of Catholic education to the community and to the Church, the laity and religious are called on to have an expanded leadership role in school governance with clergy. The infusion of more lay leadership aids in reinvestment in our schools, which includes reallocating current resources back into Catholic education while identifying and securing additional funding. The goal is a system of strong, accessible, affordable Catholic schools, owned by every parish, supported by every Catholic, available to every child.