



Committee on Catholic Education
Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church
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Report on K-12 Catholic Schools in the U.S. And Underserved Populations

Dear Brother Bishops,

On behalf of the Committees on Catholic Education and Cultural Diversity in the Church, Bishop Flores and I appreciate this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the important and urgent topic of Catholic Education and underserved populations, particularly Latino Catholics. [\[Opening Slide 1\]](#)

Catholic schools are a **vital aspect of the Church's mission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and so an important aspect of our own teaching office.** [\[Slide 2\]](#) As such they are important to the **future and vitality** of the Church in the United States. Our Committees have begun to collaborate on this topic with a particular focus on the benefits that Catholic schools both provide and receive by serving Latino families and other underserved populations.

I. Catholic Schools: Context and Contours

Bishop Flores and I have experienced firsthand the effectiveness of Catholic schools [\[Slide 3\]](#) in spreading the Gospel, educating the young, and forming the next generation of Catholic leaders for both the church and civil society. We know many of you have had similar experiences. We would like to share with you current successes, challenges and opportunities in our Catholic schools, and the importance of an intentional outreach to underserved groups.

A. Demographic Context

In 1950 76% of all Catholics in the United States lived in the Northeast and Mid-West. The majority of churches and schools were built there by our grandparents and great grandparents to address the huge influx of immigrants who poured into this country in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

This generation spared nothing in building and establishing a large network of parishes and schools for their children and grandchildren. Many of us in this room were the beneficiaries of this sacrificial effort. In addition to providing the physical infrastructure, they fostered vocations of priests, brothers, and sisters who served in these parishes and schools, providing an excellent and Catholic education for little to no monetary cost. [Slide 4] As this immigration surge peaked by 1965,¹ Catholic schools boasted an enrollment of 6.5 million students – the largest private school network in the US.

At about the same time, people started moving away from the central cities in the Northeast and Midwest and into the suburbs, as well as to other areas throughout the country. [Slide 6 and 7] The net result, as the charts behind me illustrate, is that in 2010 the Catholic population reached almost 25% across each sector of the country. When you move, you cannot take a building or community with you. Since 1965 many parishes and schools have either merged or closed reflecting the decrease in parishioners supporting these communities, resulting in an enrollment of just under 2.0 million, of which approximately 1.6 million is Catholic.

¹ Catholic school enrollments in the U.S. peaked during the 1964-1965 school year at approximately 5.6 million students. 1999-2000 school year enrollment was slight over 2.5 million. 2014 enrollment came in slightly under 2 million. See <http://ncea.org/data-information/catholic-school-data>.

In the meantime, the Catholic community has grown in other parts of the country, particularly the South and West. Parishes and schools in these parts of the country, see the need for growth, while communities in the Northeast and Midwest continue to address stabilization.²

The concern about stabilization and growth of Catholic schools includes millions of students—Hispanic, African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American and many others who do not have high quality educational options available to them. [Slide 8] We must reach out and create pathways for the underserved, at-risk, immigrant and minority families to have access to a Catholic school education. In their 1984 pastoral on Evangelization, the African American Catholic Bishops articulated the value of a Catholic education to the African American community, which could be said of many minority students in our country:

Today the Catholic school still represents for many in the Black community, especially in the urban areas, an opportunity for quality education and character development. It also represents – and this is no less important – a sign of stability in an environment of chaos and flux.

The Catholic school has been and remains one of the chief vehicles of evangelization within the Black community. We cannot overemphasize the tremendous importance of parochial schools for the Black community.³

The ethnic makeup of the Catholic Church in the United States is and has always been diverse. [Slide 9] Data continues to point to the Latino/Hispanic population as a rapidly growing group within this diversity. More than half of the Catholic school-age children are Hispanic and the numbers are growing. In the 2002 statement *Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry*, the Hispanic Bishops spoke of the need

² Cidade, Melissa (2013). The Catholic Church in the United States: Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We're Headed. Momentum (NCEA), November/December 2013, p 7-10.

³ USCC/NCCB What We Have Seen and Heard, Pastoral of the Evangelization of the Black Community, 1984.

for a renewed effort in reaching out to the growing Hispanic population, and specifically encouraged dioceses and parishes to take steps to increase Catholic school accessibility and attendance by Hispanic children. In these days of economic turmoil for so many families, a good education remains the single best way out of poverty for young people. At the same time, we cannot forget, through the education and faith formation of children and youth, our Catholic schools are part of a solution to support families and to build productive lives for future generations.⁴

[Slide 10] It would be easy to conclude that declining enrollment and the financial strains are the only major challenges facing us. However, the truth is that enrollment is but a sign—and a measurable one at that—of the deeper challenges facing us. Understanding the reasons for the selection or non-selection of Catholic schooling by parents today is a more complex and nuanced question. [Slide 11]

B) The Catholic School Value

1) The New Evangelization

The focus of the New Evangelization gives us the opportunity to think creatively about the vitality of the Catholic culture in our schools. Pope Francis has reminded us that the New Evangelization is not precisely about what we do and what programs we adopt; rather, it is about what God is doing, the graces we are being blessed with, and the Spirit

⁴Bryk, A.S., Lee, V.E., & Holland, P.B. (1993). Catholic Schools and the Common Good. Boston: Harvard University Press. In J.J. Irvine & M. Foster (Eds.), *Growing Up African American in Catholic Schools* (pp.11-46). New York: Teachers College Press. Jeynes, W.H. (2007). Religion, Intact Families, & the Achievement Gap. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, 3, 1-24; Marks, H.M., and Lee V.E. (1989). *National Assessment of Educational Proficiency in Reading 1985-1986: Catholic and Public Schools Compared*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association. York, D. (1996). *The academic achievement of African Americans in Catholic Schools: A Review of the Literature*.

that is always being poured-out over our ministry.⁵ This fresh way of thinking is needed at this critical time in our schools.

One recent study put it this way: [Slide 12 and 13]

A new evangelization is needed...that emphasizes the core convictions of Catholicism, reclaims the basic truths of the faith, and develops a Catholic worldview in a way that modern families can understand and embrace...A Catholicism fully understood, a Christianity fully realized, will lead adults, we believe, to a more robust participation in parish life, including enrollment of their children in Catholic schools.⁶

The New Evangelization calls us to open up an inviting space where God's grace can take hold and bear fruit, to welcome the Spirit in ways that support conversion, touch the heart, and inspire. What better vehicle is there to do this than our Catholic schools? Bishops and Pastors can take an active role in helping our schools become intentional environments for learning who Jesus is and for deepening the faith lives of parents, teachers, and students in new and unapologetic ways.

Bishops and pastors, parents and teachers are anxious to support schools of lasting faith formation, vocations to the religious life and priesthood, high educational attainments, and communities of the New Evangelization.⁷ The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) has found positive ecclesial outcomes for those who have attended Catholic schools. Among these outcomes are: increased attendance at Sunday Mass, increased likelihood of being confirmed, and an increase in the consideration of a vocation

⁵ Pope Francis. (2013). *The Joy of the Gospel*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, ¶24.

⁶ Nuzzi, R.J., Frabutt, J.M., & Holter, A.C. (2008). *Faith, Finances, & the Future: The Notre Dame Study of U.S. Pastors*. Notre Dame, IN: Alliance for Catholic Education Press, p.54-55.

⁷Nuzzi, R. J., Holter, A. C., & Frabutt, J. M. What Are They Saying about Catholic Schools? A Systematic Review of the Discourse on PreK-12 Catholic Education, 2005-2010. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, v.22 no.1, pp. 75-96, 2013.

to the religious life and priesthood.⁸ These results are most pronounced among the Millennial Generation, namely those born in 1982 or later and who today would be thirty-two (32) years old or younger. These results also point to the urgency of encouraging our school communities to think creatively in their outreach to parents and families to return to the practice of the faith.

2) Faith Formation

As you can see from the data students with either Catholic grade school or high school experience attend Mass and celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation at higher rates than other students. [Slide 14 and 15]

3) Vocations

Catholic schools provide an environment that encourages vocations to religious life and the priesthood. Again, as you can see by the data not only those considering religious life, both male and female, but also a good number of vocations to the priesthood come from our Catholic schools.⁹ [Slide 16]

4) Academics

Catholic schools continue to maintain their track record of serving children and families admirably well, closing the achievement gap for poor and minority students, and doing so at a fraction of the cost of public schools. [Slide 17]

Our schools tend to operate as communities rather than bureaucracies, which links them to higher levels of teacher commitment, student engagement, and student

⁸Gray, M. (2012). *Catholic Schools in the United States in the 21st Century: Importance in Church Life, Challenges, and Opportunities*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

⁹Gautier, M. & Saunders, C. (2014). *The Class of 2014: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood. A Report to the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life & Vocations-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate.

achievement.¹⁰ 99% of the students who attend a Catholic high school graduate. 87% of Catholic high school graduates go on to attend a four year college.¹¹ These numbers have been consistent for many years. [Slide 18] The research also shows that Latino and African American students attending a Catholic school are more likely to graduate from high school and college.¹²

Nationally our students perform well academically. In the National Assessment of Educational Progress, considered the gold standard for the U.S. Department of Education, Catholic schools are high achieving.¹³ In fact, two groups, Latino/ Hispanic and African American students, stand out in the literature as benefiting from their access to Catholic schools in the urban core.¹⁴

II. Present Challenges and Opportunities

If we are going to maintain our overall effectiveness while expanding our reach within the Catholic community and beyond, several measures, all related and already under way, will need to be strengthened, deepened, and better resourced. We have identified four challenges and opportunities for today's presentation. [Slide 19]

¹⁰ Marks, G. (2009). Accounting for school-sector differences in university entrance performance. *Australian Journal of Education*, 53, 19-38.

¹¹ Dale McDonald and Margaret M. Schultz, *The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing: United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2013-2014* (Arlington, VA: National Catholic Education Association, 2014), 5.

¹² Jeffrey Grogger and Derek A. Neal; "Further Evidence of the Effects of Catholic Secondary Schooling," *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs*, 2000, pp. 151-93.

¹³ General information on the participation of private schools in the NAEP can be found at:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/nonpublicschools.aspx>. For specific information regarding Catholic school NAEL scores, see:

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CCwQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fnces.ed.gov%2Fnationsreportcard%2Fpdf%2Fabout%2Fschools%2FPrivateSchoolResultsBrochureForNAEP2013.pdf&ei=Ff75U6mFIZWkyAS3tIGwCw&usq=AFQjCNFShdbKukNZOVPP5CKprJVyQiM4_w&sig2=A3TInP7Ace82NPLCVGRI5g&bvm=bv.73612305,d.aWw

¹⁴ Jacqueline Jordan Irvine and Michele Foster, (Eds.), *Growing up African American in Catholic Schools*. NY: Columbia University Press, 1996; Notre Dame Task For on Catholic Education, *To Nurture the Soul of a Nation: Latino Families, Catholic Schools, and Educational Opportunity*. South Bend, IN: Alliance for Catholic Education, 2009.

(1) Formation of Future Leaders and Teachers

So much of our discussion today depends on clarity of vision and strong leaders who are formed in the faith so that they are capable of establishing a rich Catholic culture in the schools. To that end, we need ongoing and inspiring faith and catechetical formation efforts for pastors, schools boards, teachers and principals. [Slide 20] These efforts can be enriched by partnerships with diocesan programs, associations, academic institutes and Catholic higher education. In addition to solid faith formation, the work of evangelization also calls for building up the intercultural competence or the ability to relate, work and communicate across cultural boundaries among our school leaders and staff. Being academically excellent schools is critical and necessary, but not sufficient for us. We must be fully Catholic. As bishops we should be actively engaged in identifying and forming present and future leaders and teachers in our Catholic schools.

- School of Faith
- Scholarships for Teachers in the Archdiocese

(2) Multiple forms of Governance and Financing Including Advocacy for Parental Choice

In days gone by the parochial school was the only private school option for miles. With the advent of homeschool, charter and magnet schools, independent private education, and good district public schools parents have many options. Our schools cannot continue to operate business-as-usual and hope to thrive. [Slide 21] A qualitative study which has just been completed by *Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities* or FADICA will be shared with the bishops. It examines different governance models

presently in use in over 25 dioceses. Effective governance is essential to the vitality of our schools. There is a great deal of room for growth in this area.

Several things are clear:

(1) One single governance model does not meet the needs of the diversity of our schools and communities across our country;

(2) Forming leaders - pastors, superintendents, principals, and school board members - is becoming critical to success.

Clarity of vision, strong leadership, and effective planning are necessary for good governance. Best practices in governance include strategic planning, marketing, advancement, and ethical use of financial resources, as well as focused outreach to the wider community. Good governance respects subsidiarity while holding schools and leaders accountable for mission and instruction. Good governance supports environments of fiscal transparency, and creates an environment of good decision making.

In addition to opening our doors to the underserved, it is also critically important to support the middle class families that are the backbone of many of our parishes and schools. In recent years multiple legislative initiatives have been undertaken at both the federal and state levels to fund parental choice in the education of children, and to authorize the use of tax dollars in support of a parent's right to select the best education for their child. These legislative efforts have taken various forms—vouchers in Wisconsin and Indiana, tax credits in Pennsylvania and Arizona, opportunity scholarships in the District of Columbia, and many others. Today over twenty programs exist across the U.S. that currently support the costs of 320,000 children's attendance in Catholic schools. This year, over \$1 billion dollars will be used to support such scholarships for students from families

otherwise unable to access a Catholic school. The Secretariat of Catholic Education has been actively supportive of these efforts and has been engaged in education and communication efforts as various legislation has come to the floor in many states across the nation.

Many of you have participated in regional conversations about this important question. You have also pointed out the burdensome regulations that can often accompany the acceptance of public funding. We are cautiously optimistic thus far. We must remain politically aware and engaged, advocating for our middle class families as well as families in poverty. This January we will host the second workshop for Bishops about Parental Choice. A good number of bishops have signed up for this and we appreciate your interest in this topic. [Slide 22]

(3) Partnerships, Benefaction and Philanthropy

In addition to legislative efforts related to funding, and because of the successful track record of Catholic schools, student scholarships are an attractive vehicle for donor support. Catholic schools should tell their success story and invite the support of external constituencies who are committed to children and to high quality education. We have wonderful examples of such success in the Children's Scholarship Fund based in New York, the Fulcrum Foundation in Seattle, and many diocesan and family foundation efforts financing student scholars (recent success in Omaha). These efforts need to be expanded with professional assistance and strategic goals.

Partnerships

Associations, academic institutes, and Catholic colleges and universities offer another area of collaboration and partnership. Through rigorous scientific inquiry these institutes help and support bishops, pastors, superintendents, principals and teachers in areas such as academic achievement, finances, governance, curriculum, technology, Catholic culture, and the effects of school closures. Institutes such as the *Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE)* from the University of Notre Dame are finding new ways to assist Catholic schools to accomplish their mission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

All of these challenges and opportunities impact and are impacted by our outreach to underserved populations. At this time, I would like to invite **Bishop Flores** to share with you more about this topic.

(4) **Outreach to Latino and Other Underserved Communities**

[Transition to Bishop Flores] [Slide 23]

Thank you, Archbishop Lucas. Brother Bishops, allow me now to share a few thoughts on the importance of our Catholic Schools intentionally reaching out to the Latino Community and other underserved populations.

Welcoming more children from diverse populations in our Catholic Schools, and particularly making an effort to reach out to underserved communities, is important for the future of Catholic schools and of our Church. First of all, our schools are an important instrument of evangelization and a seedbed of vocations. So reaching out to the families in the neighborhood in our increasingly diverse parishes contributes to the mission of the Church and is in keeping with Pope Francis' exhortation to us in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Secondly, it is simply in keeping with the reality of the times. And finally, it is about making sure we do everything we can to form and educate the future leaders in our Church and society. Our Catholic schools contribute to the Church's missionary spirit, but we also need a missionary spirit to promote Catholic schools among our varied immigrant and underserved populations.

Underserved populations in our schools

Allow me to make now a few specific remarks concerning some of the underserved populations in our schools, beginning with the **Latino community**.

Latinos are the fastest growing school-age population in the United States. And if this is true in the nation, it is even more so in the Church. So Latinos are inextricably bound up with the future of the Church and of the nation.

Over the last decade, but particularly in the past 3-4 years, the issue of Latinos and Catholic schools has become quite vivid in the minds of almost every Bishop and Superintendent. The needle is moving in the right direction, even if slowly. [Slide 24] Thanks to major initiatives, consistent training in cultural competencies at the diocesan and school levels, and to financial investments, many Bishops and Superintendents, Pastors and Principals are seeing an increase in Latino enrollment in their schools. Over the past four years alone, the percentage of Latino children in Catholic schools has gone from 12.8% to 15% of the total enrollment. If we look specifically at those who are Catholic, almost 20% of the Catholic children in our Catholic schools are Latino.

Even with the positive enrollment trends, we must pay attention to findings such as those contained in the Boston College study on *Hispanic Ministry in Catholic Parishes*, released earlier this year, which cautions about the fact that “[a] widening distance

between parishes with large Hispanic populations and Catholic Schools may undermine the development of a “Catholic School Culture” among Hispanic Catholics. Such distance may also have a negative impact upon efforts to increase enrollment of Hispanic children and youth in Catholic Schools.”¹⁵ [The study revealed that the larger the number of Hispanic parishioners active in a parish, the less likely that community is to have or share responsibility for a school. It also found that Catholic schools are less available where the Catholic population, mostly thanks to Latinos, has grown the most, the South and the West.]

On Sunday, a number of bishops attended a workshop on Catholic Education and underserved populations. A number of reasons were offered concerning why Latinos don’t send their children to Catholic schools in higher numbers. From the school point of view it is often said that “Latino families are not interested and they do not inquire”; some assume financial concerns are the main or only reason. From the parent point of view, however, we know that often Latino families do not even consider Catholic schools to be an option. There is no parish school system in Latin America, where Catholic schools are usually private, and often unaffordable, hence only accessible to the wealthy. If an effort is not made to reach out to these families, why would they think that Catholic schools are a viable option here? Parents do not know how to access the system, think they cost a lot of money and, without much further consideration, discard even the thought of inquiring. [Slide 25]

In general, many of our schools are not culturally responsive to the Latino reality. Cultural responsiveness means knowing that many Latino homes are bilingual, with the children more comfortable in English than the parents. Bilingual staff in schools can do a lot to bridge the cultural gap. Such responsiveness is key to retaining students from

¹⁵ Ospino, Hoffsman, Hispanic Ministry in Catholic Parishes, A Summary Report of Findings from the *National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry*, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, 2014

underserved populations, and schools that have high retention rates of Latino students tend to experience continued growth in Latino enrollment (and parent involvement). The same is true for students from other cultures.

Again, the good news is that Latino enrollment has increased in recent years in many schools and in many arch/dioceses. So, what are the most important drivers of increasing Latino enrollment in Catholic schools? [Slide 26] At the diocesan level, it becomes an intentional priority of the Bishop and of the Superintendent. Similarly, at the parish and school level it becomes an intentional priority of the Pastor and the Principal. They make it important and it becomes important to the school advisory council, to the faculty, and to the parents.

The one word that you will consistently hear is that increasing Latino enrollment in Catholic schools boils down to *relationships* — between the Bishop and the Superintendent, between the Pastor and the Principal, and between the school staff, including the Principal, and families. Developing trusting relationships with the families is a must in a community that often doesn't even consider Catholic Schools. And this is precisely where the issue of cultural responsiveness becomes crucial: school staffs especially need to include people who are competent in diverse cultural settings.

What I have just said can be applied to most other underserved populations. Let me share some thoughts now with regard to the **African American** community and Catholic schools.

The number of African American Catholics has hovered around 3-4% of adult Catholics for years. [Slide 27] Those who attended Catholic schools, tend to be better educated and earn higher than average incomes. Many of today's African American leaders,

in all sectors of society (e.g., government, higher education, corporations and non-profit organizations) whether they are Catholic or not, can trace their success to a foundation in Catholic schools. African American Catholic leaders, such as Sr. Thea Bowman, converted in their youth and helped evangelize many others. Their biographies attest to the inspiration of members of religious congregations who worked with African Americans, most often in economically impoverished or struggling communities.

From the first National Black Catholic Congress in 1889, to *'What We Have Seen and Heard,'* which the African American Bishops of the United States issued in 1984, to the Pastoral Plans of Action for Congresses IX, X and XI, African American Catholics have reiterated concern for the vitality of Catholic schools. [Though there are many other fine examples, I would like to mention here the efforts done by Bishop Terry Steib and the Catholic School system in the Diocese of Memphis as a great case study that can inspire us.]

Concerning Native Americans and Catholic schools:

According to US News and World Report, Native American graduation rates are declining while other groups are making improvements.¹⁶ In 2010 the report states that roughly 51% of Native students earned a diploma. The Catholic schools who serve largely Native American populations are doing much better than their public school and Bureau of Indian Affairs school counterparts in getting students to college. For instance, students who attend St. Bernard Mission School in Fort Yates, ND go on to have a 90% high school graduation rate compared with their reservation counterparts (Standing Rock) who have a 65% graduation rate.¹⁷ Pine Ridge Reservation has some of the bleakest educational statistics anywhere in the country, with the exception of the Catholic school on their

¹⁶ US News. Accessed October 3, 2014.

¹⁷ "Saint Bernard Mission School." Saint Bernard Mission School. Accessed October 3, 2014.

reservation. Red Cloud, has tremendous success stories graduating nearly 81% of their students and sending them on to great American colleges and universities.¹⁸ At St. Michael's Indian School on the Navajo Nation the class of 2013 had 93% of their class graduate.¹⁹

Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, particularly Filipinos, seem to be taking advantage of Catholic Schools available to them in higher percentages than their share of the U.S. Catholic population. While not considered an underserved population in our schools, it is important to continue efforts to reach out to them, especially as generational shifts occur.

The role of the Bishop and the Pastor in Reaching out to Underserved Populations

The Bishop and the Pastor have an important role in welcoming and increasing enrollment of diverse populations in our Catholic Schools. [Slide 28]

As Bishops, we must make every effort to assign pastors to parishes with schools who are champions of Catholic schools. I know that this is easier said than done. But every effort must be made to make this happen.

- The Pastor, must make the increasing of Latino enrollment, and of other underserved groups, in the parish school a priority. He must work closely with the Principal and with pastors of surrounding parishes to make this a shared goal. He will have an important role in working with families directly and personally encouraging them to come to the school. Please, encourage pastors and principals to sit down together and acknowledge the demographic shift, and

¹⁸ "Education in Indian Country: Running in Place." Education Week. Accessed October 1, 2014.

¹⁹ Tsinnie, Renee. Interview by Brian S. Collier, Ph.D., by phone between St. Michael's, AZ and Notre Dame, IN. October 3, 2014.

to be intentional about developing a plan to reach out to the new populations.

Priests need to embrace Catholic schools anew, understanding that there is mutual benefit.

- It is important to talk to seminarians about Catholic schools. Inculcate young men in formation so that they are fully on board with Catholic schools before they are assigned.
- And, there is help available. There are many people doing this work now and being successful at it. For example, the Alliance for Catholic Education at the University of Notre Dame, offers assistance to any Bishop or Superintendent who needs help with successfully increasing Latino enrollment. Just ask for help.

Archbishop Lucas mentioned before a few good examples of what happens when dioceses and schools team up with benefactors and philanthropists. There are also examples of dioceses that have come up with creative and innovative ideas to reach out to underserved populations, thus making it financially feasible to keep some schools open. I would like to mention just one example today.

In the Diocese of Richmond, in Virginia, the Bishop, the Chief Education Administrator, partnering with the Office of Hispanic Ministry, and the community, teamed up to make Catholic Education a viable alternative for Latino children. Through the Segura Initiative, a creative “*madrina*” approach was developed. The *madrina* is a field coordinator and recruiter who is a trusted member of the community. She serves as an advocate for the families and helps them navigate the enrollment process. This, combined with funds raised by the Latino community itself, working with diocesan staff, made it possible for more children to avail themselves of a Catholic education. This approach has helped to increase

Latino enrollment considerably, and even prevented one or two parochial schools recently from closing. Recruitment is accomplished through word of mouth by pastors with Latino congregations, Latino diocesan and parish leaders, as well as satisfied parents. Bishop DiLorenzo's PSA's in Spanish, which run in mainstream Latino TV and other media, personally inviting families to consider Catholic schools made it clear to everyone that the invitation and the welcoming is coming from the top.

Renewed Commitment of the U.S. Bishops

As we gather today in Baltimore, let us remember that over 100 years ago, at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, the Catholic Bishops of the United States made a commitment to immigrant families by creating Catholic schools and making them accessible to poor immigrant families. This commitment allowed families to keep the faith and become upwardly mobile members of their community. The children and grandchildren of these families have risen as leaders in their communities, in the nation, and in our Church. We must continue this commitment for a new group of immigrants from Latin America, Asia and Africa, and to the younger generations born and raised in the United States. This commitment is one of the ways the Church offers life-changing educational opportunities to the poor. Catholic schools can change the trajectory of many young Latino lives and others, and help keep parents engaged in the Catholic Church, while increasing enrollments.

And now back to Archbishop Lucas for a few final thoughts.

Concluding Remarks:

Our Catholic schools are a unique and rich blessing to the Church. Within the context of the New Evangelization they are a vital aspect of the Church's mission to preach

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our schools receive and offer hope when they reach out to diverse populations of Catholic children as we have heard so well today. The Secretariat for Catholic Education has provided the resources for the bishops related to the topics we discussed today. For your convenience, they have been posted on the Bishops Only Website. [Slide 30]

And so, in closing, Bishop Flores and I are asking you to:

- 1) Encourage participation in our Catholic schools.
- 2) Support new efforts to develop leaders in our Catholic schools. Encourage best practices of good governance, strategic planning, and financially sound practices in the parish and schools. Support efforts that enable parents to choose the education that is best for their child. And,
- 3) Encourage pastors and principals to review how welcoming their school communities are to Latinos and other underserved communities – and to be intentional about developing a plan to reach out to them.

Thank you for your attention.