



**CULTIVATING TALENT:**  
**A Summary Report of Findings from the**  
*National Study Examining Pathways to Increase the Presence of*  
*Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools*

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**BOSTON COLLEGE**

Lynch School of Education and Human Development, Roche Center for Catholic Education  
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# Introduction



# Study Overview

As a Catholic university rooted in the Jesuit tradition, Boston College remains committed to groundbreaking research that helps Catholics in the United States (US) and others interested in Catholicism to understand and appreciate the various ways in which Hispanics are transforming the American Catholic experience. Research that supports, strengthens, and transforms our Catholic schools is of particular interest, as these Pre-Kindergarten-12 (PK-12) institutions have served as beacons of light for many immigrant communities in our nation. The present study, *Cultivating Talent: National Study Examining Pathways to Increase the Presence of Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools (Cultivating Talent: Hispanic Educators in Catholic Schools)*, is one important step on this journey.

## The 2016 Study

In 2016, Boston College released *Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church: A Summary Report of Findings from the National Survey of Catholic Schools Serving Hispanic Families (Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church)*,<sup>1</sup> which became a turning point for several conversations about Catholic education and Hispanics throughout the country.<sup>2</sup>

In that same year, we at Boston College hosted a national summit that brought together Catholic education stakeholders to discuss the report. Led by the Roche Center for Catholic Education and the School of Theology and Ministry, bishops, pastors, superintendents, diocesan leaders, philanthropic organizations, researchers, principals, teachers, parents, and students, among others, came together to reflect on effective practices Catholic educators should embrace in an increasingly Hispanic church. Participants in the summit discussed the good work being done in many Catholic schools to reach out and support Hispanic students and the growing number of initiatives implemented to support these institutions in achieving that goal. At the same time, participants acknowledged that the good being done is not good enough. Hispanics remain severely underrepresented in Catholic schools at all levels, and the number of

Catholic schools that stand out for their excellent outreach to Hispanic children and families pales compared to the number of schools that are not doing enough to engage this population.

Following this national summit, participants returned to their dioceses and schools and held local conversations about how to address the findings from the study and its recommendations. Philanthropic organizations encouraged new initiatives and strengthened others to support Catholic schools in their outreach to Hispanics informed by the report. Data from the study played a central role in grounding the conversations about Hispanic Catholic children, youth, families, and education during the process of the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry, known as the V Encuentro, and subsequent published proceedings and conclusions from the 2018 gathering.

One of the main contributions of the 2016 report was to expand the conversation about Hispanics and Catholic schools beyond the concern for enrollment. Many Catholic educational and pastoral leaders assume that increasing the number of Hispanic students in Catholic schools is the primary goal of outreach to this community. Without a doubt, there is much truth to this commitment. We all need to do much more to encourage Hispanic families to enroll their children in Catholic schools. Yet, enrollment is only part of a much larger equation. The 2016 study demonstrated that the creation of a healthy and welcoming school environment for Hispanic families was a necessary, if not major prerequisite, for successful recruitment, enrollment, and retention. The study also highlighted the importance of engaging Hispanic families and leaders in exercises of advocacy, such as promoting legislation that supports school choice options. As schools and philanthropists support Hispanic children and their families with scholarships and other forms of assistance, we must be attentive not to reduce such support into forms of "assistencialism", where such financial support attacks symptoms, but fails to address social ills and create opportunities to empower the Hispanic community. Lastly, the report called for more

collaboration among Catholic educational and ministerial structures in dioceses and parishes. A silo mentality prevails in many sectors of our Church that prevents many efforts to increase access of Hispanic children into Catholic schools from being more successful.

### **Focus on Hispanic Teachers and Leaders**

Several conversations since the publication of the 2016 study have brought attention to the need for more reflection on the presence and role of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools. There is no doubt that structural change, as well as the setting of new visions, are usually the result of leaders with a particular set of competencies. In 2016, the National Catholic Education

Association (NCEA) reported that 7% of all faculty, including full-time and part-time teachers and leaders, in Catholic schools were Hispanic. That percentage increased to 9% (14,612) in the academic year 2020-2021.<sup>6</sup> At this time, NCEA does not disaggregate the number of Hispanic educators who are teachers or leaders, nor does it disaggregate full-time or part-time positions. The NCEA began asking about teachers and leaders' race and ethnicity only since 2011. Getting a closer look at who Hispanics teachers and leaders are in Catholic schools, their contributions, and their challenges and successes in the context of the institutions where they serve is the focus of this report *Cultivating Talent: Hispanic Educators in Catholic Schools*.

## *Nuestro Compromiso: Continued Commitment*

As we release this report, we commit to launching, supporting, and joining conversations — local, regional, and national — to explore the implications of its findings. Our first major initiative is a National Summit on Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools that we at Boston College plan to host in the fall of 2022. This summit will bring together various stakeholders in the world of Catholic education to review and discuss the results and analysis of the national study. Together we will envision strategies to support Hispanic teachers and leaders, as well as the Catholic schools where these educators serve. For more information about the summit, please visit the Roche Center for Catholic Education website at [rochecenter.org](http://rochecenter.org) or contact us at [rochecenter@bc.edu](mailto:rochecenter@bc.edu).



In addition to the summit, a number of academic and general audience articles are being developed, which will be published in the upcoming months. We look forward to working with bishops, pastors, superintendents, diocesan leaders, philanthropic organizations, researchers, national offices, teacher and leadership formation programs, and others interested in seeing Hispanic teachers and leaders flourish, as we know these individuals are a gift to our Catholic schools.

Our findings demonstrate convincingly that Catholic schools in the US are and will be further enriched by the presence and contributions of Hispanic teachers and leaders. As we plan for a stronger future for Catholic education in our country, we must make a renewed commitment to invest and cultivate talent within the Hispanic community.

Now is the time.

## Terminology

Our research team made the decision to use the term *Hispanic* rather than *Latino*, *Latino/a*, *Latine* or *Latinx*. While the use of the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* dates back to the 1970s and 1990s respectively, the term *Latinx* is more recent. With more than 15 years of polling by Pew Research Center, half of Americans who trace their roots to Spanish-speaking Latin America and Spain have “consistently said they have no preference for either *Hispanic* or *Latino* as a term to describe the group. And when one term is chosen over another, the term *Hispanic* has been preferred to *Latino*.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, in a 2019 bilingual survey of self-identified *Hispanic* and/or *Latino* adults in the US, only 23% had heard of the term *Latinx*, and only 3% use it. Thus, in order to provide consistent language throughout, we chose the more widely used term *Hispanic* for our study and report.

For the purposes of our study, all participants were classified under a universal term of *Catholic educator*. Beyond this universal term, we further classified participants as *teacher*, *leader*, or *other* based on the job title item in their survey response. Those who selected full/part-time teacher and/or teacher’s aid were classified as teachers, while those who selected pastor, principal, assistant principal, and president/head of school were classified as leaders. Additionally, those who selected the text entry “other” and provided job titles were manually assigned one of the three classifications (teacher, leader, or other).

Finally, the terms “immigrant” and “foreign born” are used interchangeably. “Under immigration law, the term ‘immigrant’ refers to an individual who has been admitted to the US on a permanent basis and as a Lawful ‘permanent resident’, or ‘green card’ holder. However, this report uses ‘immigrant’ colloquially and interchangeably with the term ‘foreign born.’ ‘Foreign born’ refers to an individual who was not a US citizen at birth or who was born outside the US, Puerto Rico, or other US territories, and whose parents were not US citizens. The ‘foreign born’ may include naturalized US citizens, lawful permanent residents, temporary residents, refugees and asylees, and others.”<sup>9</sup>

## A Theoretical Quadrant

This study was designed with the goal to understand better the various conditions and relationships that sustain the discernment, recruitment, success, and retention of *Hispanic* teachers and leaders in Catholic schools. In order to do this, we developed the following theoretical quadrant (Figure 1) that informed the development of the survey, focus group, and interview questions, as well as the overall analysis of the data collected in the following ways:

One, the decision to serve as a teacher or leader in a Catholic school is intimately linked to processes of vocational discernment, explicit and implicit, that evolve over time.

Two, such processes of vocational discernment are influenced by personal and communal (or relational) dynamics that are regularly intertwined and constantly affect one another. In the case of *Hispanic* educators, the study intentionally attended to the influence of cultural and religious self-identifying markers, chosen or inherited, and how these markers help educators to position themselves in Catholic schools and beyond. Such markers also influence how *Hispanic* teachers and leaders are perceived by others.

Three, Catholic schools are part of religious and social ecosystems that constantly influence the way they advance their mission and often serve as mechanisms of institutional accountability. By the nature of their roles, teachers and leaders in Catholic schools contribute to the nurturing of those relationships with the religious and social ecosystems, and in time become influenced by them. In particular, this study paid close attention to how *Hispanic* educators in Catholic schools interact with faith-based and neighborhood social structures where other *Hispanics* are present.

Four, there are communal dynamics, religious and non-religious, that have the potential to create effective pathways for *Hispanics* to serve in Catholic educational institutions. The more schools, dioceses, and other organizations advocating for a stronger presence of *Hispanic* teachers and leaders in Catholic schools become aware of such dynamics, and act upon them, the wider and stronger the pathways that should exist.



## Vocational Discernment

# 1

### Personal Discernment

The personal realities shaping the experience of the individual Hispanic teacher/leader as she/he discerned serving in the context of Catholic education, including the relationship between given (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity) and chosen (e.g., cultural, self-identification, religious affiliation, educational background) dynamics.

# 2

### Discernment with(in) the Institution

The various institutional conditions within the Catholic school that support Hispanic teachers and leaders (or fail to do so), including onboarding, professional development and support, mentoring, retention, compensation, and promotion.

## Relationships with the Wider Community

# 3

### From Community into the Catholic School

Identified pathways and realities that create pathways for Hispanic teachers and leaders to serve in the context of Catholic schools, including programs, initiatives, vocational discernment opportunities, recruitment practices; as well as obstacles and ways to overcome them.

# 4

### From the Catholic School into Community

Understanding to what extent Hispanic teachers and leaders retain, develop, cultivate, or forgo intentional relationships with the world beyond the Catholic school, especially church, neighborhood, and the larger society; including the ways in which the Catholic school invites teachers and leaders to participate in their own Catholic (evangelizing) mission and identity.

**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework on Discernment Developed for this Study**

# Methodology

Data sources for this study included a national survey, focus groups, interviews, and a review of existing literature on areas such as discernment and retention of underrepresented teachers. The survey was designed by the principal investigators and hosted by Boston College on a secure site using Qualtrics. The Boston College Institutional Review Board approved all materials and research activity.

The initial database for the *Cultivating Talent: Hispanic Educators in Catholic Schools* study was created in June 2021 and developed internally at the Roche Center for Catholic Education at Boston College. This database consists of the names, email addresses, school names, and positions of 10,896 school leaders of Hispanic and non-Hispanic descent from across the US.

In July 2021, Catholic school leaders in the database received a formal email invitation that stated the intended audience for the survey: Hispanic Catholic school teachers and leaders. Those who self-identified as Hispanic were invited to take the survey with the link identifying their name and email directly into the Qualtrics system. Those who self-identified as non-Hispanic were provided a universal survey link to forward the study invitation to Hispanic educators in their school and diocesan networks. The survey was distributed online via Qualtrics in July.

Our survey consisted of two separate sections — one designated for teachers and another for school leaders. Survey participants were asked to indicate their role as teacher, leader, or other, and depending on their response to their role, a set of questions was asked to each group. Additionally, another set of questions were administered to all respondents, including the collection of descriptive information regarding demographic and educational experience that would yield realistic and illustrative results.

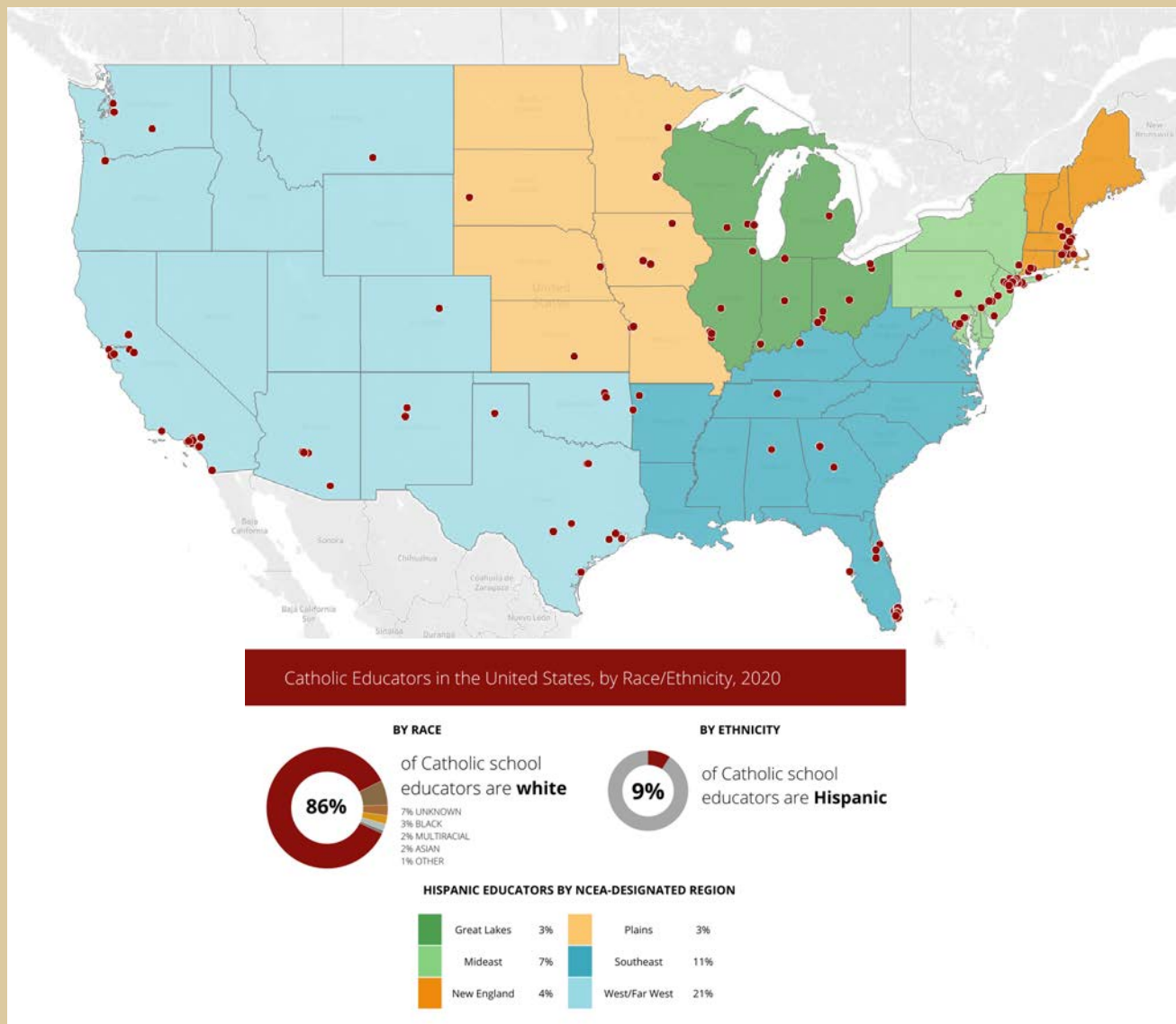
All questions were categorized utilizing the above mentioned theoretical framework on discernment developed for this study. This theoretical framework on

discernment categorized questions into the following four domains: 1) personal discernment, 2) discernment with(in) the institution, 3) from the community into the Catholic school, and 4) from the Catholic school into the community. Respondents' perceptions regarding the vocational discernment in each of these domains highlighted critical characteristics of the Hispanic educator experience.

All responding Hispanic educators signed a consent form and all survey emails were followed with monthly electronic reminders. Additionally, the team sent some follow-up phone calls or emails to answer participants' questions regarding the survey. Data collection for the survey closed in November 2021.

As a follow-up to the survey, a number of focus groups and one-on-one interviews were conducted with teachers, assistant principals, principals, associate superintendents, superintendents, and national advocates for Hispanic ministries. These interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo software utilizing open-coded based on the theoretical framework on discernment as an organizational guide. These qualitative data provided substantive insights into the experiences of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools and added further understanding beyond our survey results.

As a research team, we feel it is important to note that this study was conducted during a time of great anxiety for many educators as the COVID-19 pandemic surged across the world. Educators were under great pressure to keep children healthy and safe, and to keep their schools open for students' learning and holistic well-being. The demands on time were unprecedented for school leaders and teachers as they managed a public health crisis and facilitated student learning in challenging circumstances on a daily basis. We recognize that requests for survey responses and participation in focus groups and one-on-one interviews meant a sacrifice of time, a resource that many educators simply did not have during this time of the pandemic. We are grateful to those who were able to participate amidst these challenging times.



**Figure 2: Hispanic Catholic Educator Sample**

### Sampling

Per the latest NCEA Report in 2020, there are an estimated 146,367 teachers working in Catholic schools throughout the US. Of that workforce, Hispanic educators are estimated to comprise approximately 9%. These educators work in schools across the nation, although not in equal numbers by region.

The predominant regions of the country that employ higher percentages of Hispanic Catholic school educators are in the Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest, with clusters in major mid-Western cities (e.g., Chicago). In total, 291 Hispanic Catholic educators responded to the survey, representing a 3% response rate, and 2% of the estimated 14,612 Hispanic Catholic school educators

nationally. Of the 291 respondents, 142 were teachers (49%), 143 were school leaders (49%), and 7 were classified as “other” school personnel (2%); location of respondents are represented as dots on Figure 2. An additional 43 Hispanic teachers and leaders participated in interviews or focus group conversations.

The sampling was representative across the entire nation. Of the 32 archdioceses and 144 dioceses in the US, respondents from 71 archdioceses/dioceses participated in the study (40%). As shown in the following map (Figure 2), the highest response rate stemmed from Florida, particularly in the greater Miami metropolitan area, followed by Los Angeles, Boston, Galveston-Houston, Orlando, and New York. Figure 2 also details the percentage of Hispanic educator representation in a given NCEA region.

## The Gift of Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools

Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools play an important role in supporting the mission of these educational institutions at the service of the Church's call to evangelization. As Pope Francis specifically states, "Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture, even in those countries and cities where hostile situations challenge us to greater creativity in our search for suitable methods."<sup>11</sup>

The Hispanic teachers and leaders serving in US elementary and secondary Catholic schools today carry the torch of Catholic education and the hope of a bright future for hundreds of thousands of children enrolled in these institutions. Hispanic educators work alongside teachers and leaders from various other cultural groups, serving as instruments of communion amidst diversity.

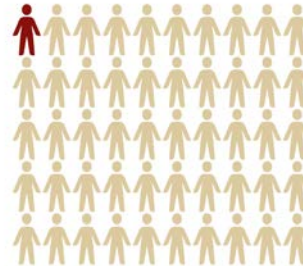
In an increasingly Hispanic church, as is the case of the Catholic community in the US, we need to ask ourselves who are the Hispanic teachers and leaders in our Catholic schools, how do they enrich these institutions with their presence and their work, and how do these schools support their flourishing. There are about 29.1 million Hispanic Catholics in the US (about 47% of all Hispanics self-identify as such), who together constitute about 41.6% of the nearly 70 million Catholics in the US. These<sup>12</sup> numbers suggest that the future of Catholicism in this country will be significantly defined by Hispanics. This means that we need to pay attention to how this community is being empowered to evangelize more effectively in the 21st century and how they are being equipped with the tools and structures to succeed as disciples and citizens.

Much of the historical record that we have about Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools is anecdotal. We know that there have been Hispanic teachers and leaders working in Catholic schools at various points in the history of the church in this nation, largely through the histories of religious orders, stories from leaders associated with the Chicano movement in the 1960s and other movements involving Hispanics, memories collected by immigrant groups, and a few

## Hispanic Students in Catholic Schools



As of 2020, nearly **1 in 5** Catholic school students are Hispanic...



...but only **1 in 50** Hispanic school-age children are enrolled in Catholic schools.

institutional histories. Based on these historical accounts and the existing quantitative data, it is safe to assert that the number of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools has been dramatically small for at least four reasons.

**1) Human Capital Compositional Shift in Catholic Schools:** When Catholic schools were staffed primarily by vowed religious women and men, the immense majority were white and of European descent. A shift to a mainly lay workforce meant welcoming more racially and ethnically diverse populations. With 86% of the lay workforce being white in Catholic schools, this shift to more racially and ethnically diverse educators has not occurred.

**2) Focus has been on Enrollment vs. Engagement and Empowerment:** Currently, about 2% of Hispanic school-age children attend Catholic schools (294,947 students) compared to the 13.4 million Hispanic students that attend public schools.<sup>13</sup> The highest Hispanic student enrollment in Catholic schools in a given year was reported in 2017-18 with 319,650 students.<sup>14</sup> Despite the national demographic growth of Hispanic students, and efforts by enrollment coordinators and institutes for Hispanic enrollment, there has been a decline of 25,000 Hispanic students in Catholic schools since 2018. Hispanic children and families are not a commodity in education, they must be meaningfully engaged and empowered should they enroll and stay in Catholic schools.

**3) Location, Location, Location:** A majority of Catholic schools are located in the Northeast and Midwest, about 61% of all such schools, also geographical regions where the Catholic population has been predominantly white, Euro-American, and English-speaking. <sup>15</sup>With the Hispanic population burgeoning in the Southwest and Southeast, the Catholic educational infrastructure for students is not strong and employment opportunities for Hispanic teachers and leaders in these schools are few.

**4) History of Prejudice and Discrimination:** Last, a long history of prejudice and discrimination has kept Hispanics from benefitting from Catholic schools. Besides struggling with poverty, which is a major factor that impedes affording the high costs of Catholic education in many parts of the country, Hispanics are often confronted with negative perceptions about their bilingualism, biculturalism, migratory status (for those who are immigrant), and even the various ways in which they live out their Catholic identity.

All these reasons together culminate in formulas that complicate any possible pathway for Hispanics to serve as teachers and leaders in Catholic schools.

The growth in the number of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools has been rather slow compared to the exponential growth of the larger Hispanic Catholic population.



*Historical Factors Driving Low Hispanic Educator Representation*

Yet, the overall size of the Hispanic Catholic population and a renewed effort to integrate Hispanic traditions and contributions into the larger ecclesial experience suggest that in the rest of this century the presence of these teachers and leaders will continue to grow and influence the character and direction of Catholic education. If we are to increase the number of Hispanic students in Catholic schools (currently at 18%), an intentional recruitment of more Hispanic teachers and leaders, investing in their formation, supporting and promoting them, is one way to ensure that our Catholic schools are welcoming environments that not only educate, but engage and empower Hispanic students and their families.

The Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican reminds us that teachers in Catholic schools are quintessentially “educators” or “formators.” This means that their ultimate goal is “to form human persons.” We must say the same about ministers in these institutions. This observation is pertinent as we reflect on Hispanic Catholic teachers and leaders. Hispanic teachers embody a particular set of experiences and skills that seem essential to form persons in an increasingly diverse church. Many Hispanic teachers are bilingual and bicultural; many have developed intercultural competencies through personal experience or academic training, usually both, that makes them ideal bridges to work with diverse students and families. They draw from the best of the worlds that give life to the Hispanic religious experience while helping immigrants and others to navigate the various ways in which the divine is experienced not only in our Catholic communities, but also in the religiously pluralistic society in which we all seek to make sense of God. Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools are ideal guides along a journey of transformation that is redefining US Catholicism, helping us all discern the struggles that come with change and embrace with hope the dawn of new ways of being Catholic in the US.

Perhaps one of the most important contributions of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools is the real-life effect that their presence and their work has upon the children enrolled in these institutions and their families. They are reservoirs of cultural, religious,

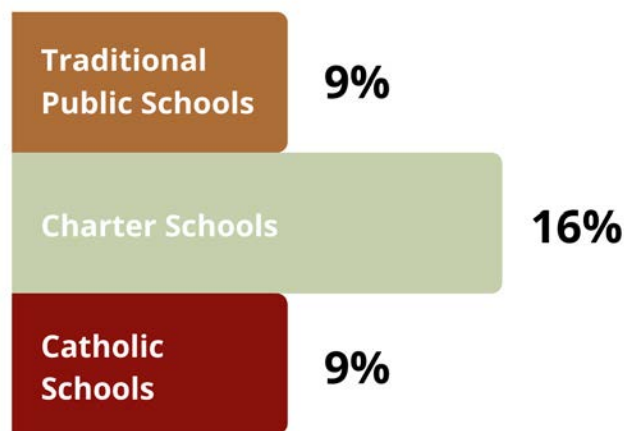
and intellectual wisdom placed at the service of educating all children — Hispanic and non-Hispanic — enrolled in Catholic schools. They are role models for the next generation of children who long to see other Hispanics in professional positions to which they can aspire. They are cultural accommodators and mediators helping families negotiate the intricacies associated with educating children from immigrant and underrepresented communities. They are advocates uniquely positioned to ask critical questions, explore prophetic answers, propose innovative solutions, and imagine alternatives to any status quo that insists in minimizing the value of the Hispanic experience in the Church and in the larger society. They are mirrors to Catholics who are more established than those immigrant ancestors who built Catholic schools to make the idea of a better future for their children and grandchildren truly possible.

### The Quest for Hispanic Teachers and Leaders

The broader research on the impact of underrepresented educators demonstrates that having the opportunity to learn with underrepresented educators diverse backgrounds — namely racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities who reflect the students and communities in their schools and classrooms — is an important factor in supporting academic and non-academic outcomes for all students, and particularly underrepresented students. In addition to increased academic scores in reading and mathematics, underrepresented educators from diverse backgrounds positively impact students' social-emotional learning (SEL), diminish absenteeism rates, and incidents of suspensions and expulsions. Hispanic educators are an important subset of this larger category of underrepresented educators from diverse backgrounds, particularly in Catholic schools. They serve a significant number of Hispanic students and families with an imperative to better serve the Hispanic community in Catholic schools. To understand the issues of recruiting and retaining Hispanic educators in Catholic schools, the following comparative analysis is useful to understand key realities affecting Hispanic educators across various sectors in US schools.

Hispanic educators are generally underrepresented in educational settings. Recruiting and retaining Hispanic educators is not a challenge unique to Catholic education. According to 2017-18 data from the US Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 9% of educators in traditional public schools self-identified as Hispanic. Public charter schools had 16% of educators who self-identified as Hispanic and so did 7% of educators in private schools, which includes Catholic schools. Though charter schools<sup>21</sup> recruit and retain a higher percentage of Hispanic educators, when taking into consideration the number of Hispanic students enrolled in these schools, the actual teacher-to-student ratio is smaller compared to other types of schools.

### Hispanic Teacher Representation by School Sector



The mismatch becomes evident when comparing the number of Hispanic educators to that of Hispanic students across sectors. Fall 2018 data indicate that 27% of all public school students self-identified as Hispanic. Fall 2017 data indicate that 11% of all private school students self-identified as Hispanic; 16% in all Catholic schools. In 2020-21<sup>22</sup> the NCEA reported that 18% of all Catholic school students are Hispanic.<sup>24</sup>

While the Hispanic educator-Hispanic student mismatch gap is largest for the public sector, it is still a critical gap in the private sector, including Catholic schools. In

response to the public sector mismatch, public school leaders and policymakers have been striving to close the gap by pursuing a number of innovative strategies and opportunities. Catholic schools have the opportunity to learn from these attempts, including empirical research conducted on attempted interventions, to inform their own efforts to recruit and retain Hispanic educators in a research-informed, mission-driven manner.

Research studies and reports, predominantly focused on the traditional public and public charter sectors, have determined that increasing the number of underrepresented educators, including Hispanic educators, requires a new and explicit commitment of strategy and resources. A stronger commitment to this goal means investing in educator preparation and formation programs specifically targeting underrepresented educators, providing intentional mentoring and induction for beginning educators, and

examining school culture and practices to create environments that welcome and support underrepresented educators, regardless of years in the education profession.<sup>25</sup>

State education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), non-profit organizations, and others in the public sector have led the way exploring and investing in new strategies and initiatives to recruit and retain underrepresented educators. For example, recommendations have informed the creation of new educator preparation programs and pathways; scholarships and other funding supports; loan forgiveness programs; teacher residencies; Grow Your Own programs; mentoring and induction programs; and other initiatives. As Catholic schools look to recruit and retain underrepresented teachers, much can be learned from public sector peers who have explored and invested in a number of strategies and initiatives.

### *Bright Spot: State of Connecticut*

#### *Efforts to Recruit and Retain Underrepresented Educators*

As Catholic educators, we have an opportunity to learn from our public school counterparts. Connecticut (CT) is a state taking noteworthy efforts to recruit and retain underrepresented educators their public school system. CT uses their identified shortage-areas,<sup>27</sup> including high-need areas, supporting students from diverse backgrounds and Hispanic students like Bilingual Education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), to offer specific benefits such as loan forgiveness<sup>28</sup> and mortgage or housing assistance. Additionally, CT has focused on retention<sup>30</sup> by attending to beginning educators and the relationship between their completion of an educator preparation program and their school-based support via mentoring and induction opportunities.



These efforts and investment have resulted in an increase in underrepresented educators in CT. In 2016, the State Board of Education set a five-year goal to increase the number of underrepresented educators in CT school by 10% by 2021. In May 2021, the governor announced that the goal had been met, with individual districts with higher percentages of underrepresented students, such as Hartford, attaining a much higher percentage. As of 2021, Hartford has at least 27% underrepresented educators in schools across their district. Unfortunately, the CT report does not break out the statistics by stating the improvement in the number of Hispanic teachers.

While these efforts in CT strive to close the mismatch gap between underrepresented students and educators in the public sector, broader systemic needs remain, especially when looking across the nation. A comprehensive commitment to diversity is needed at all levels, but particularly by those in systems-level leadership positions. This call equally applies to those in leadership in the US Catholic education system at the local, (arch)diocesan, and national levels.

## Bright Spot: Cultivating Talent in Partnership: The Two-Way Immersion Network of Catholic Schools (TWIN-CS)

Developed in 2013 by faculty in the Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College, the TWIN-CS network has grown from 12 original members to 22 member schools across the US. While many schools are Spanish-English programs, the Network also has a Mandarin-English school, a Lakota-English school, and one that is both Spanish-English and Mandarin-English. Two-way immersion and dual-language instruction is utilized in a number of educational settings; however, the TWIN-CS network is unique in that members work collaboratively in three essential partnerships:

**Partnership with Boston College.** This partnership provides continuous professional development, rigorous team training at an annual academy, national support from leadership coaches, and individualized consultation with the TWIN-CS design team faculty and staff at the Roche Center.

**Learning partnership with other schools.** TWIN-CS schools are encouraged to maintain learning relationships with a leadership coach and other principals of TWIN-CS schools through professional learning communities. Each school is assigned a leadership coach and a PLC, which meet monthly to ask questions, seek advice, discuss research, explore enrollment expansion strategies, and provide support.

**Leading partnership with other schools.** This partnership honors the teaching that TWIN-CS teams facilitate with other Member schools. Examples include participating in regional collegial visits and webinar conversations, presenting at the annual TWIN-CS Academy, and sharing meaningful resources to support the work of dual-language in Catholic schools.



*"Dual-language is about so much more than language learning. The real power of dual-language education is that it makes a true difference by developing empathetic, compassionate learners and human beings, which is the foundation of our Catholic faith."*

-Leticia, Principal, Far West



# Section I:

## *The Vocation and Identity of a Hispanic Teacher / School Leader*



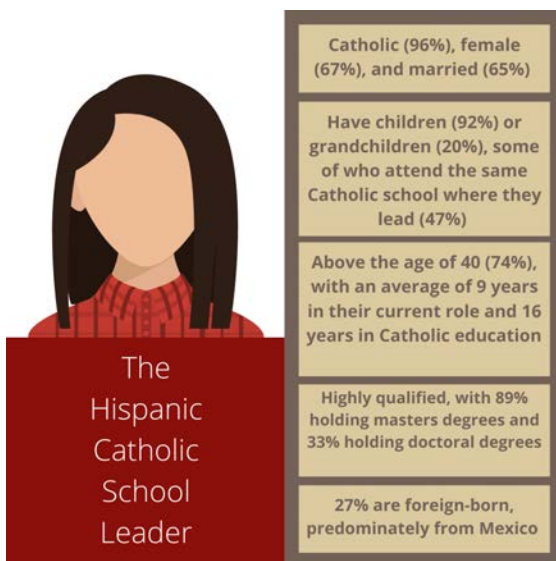
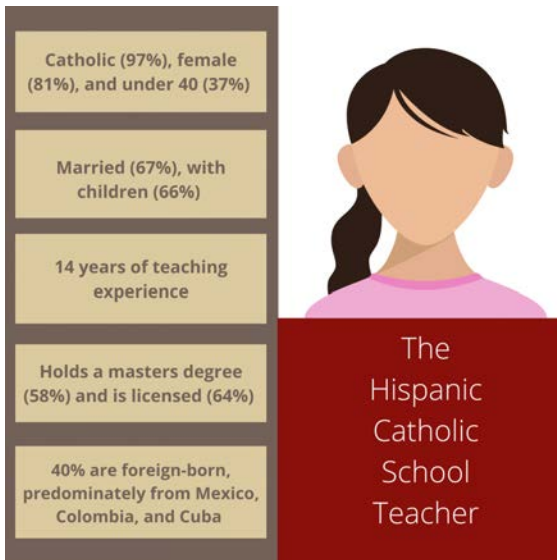
## The Hispanic Teacher and Leader in Catholic Schools

The 62 million Hispanic people living in the US are as diverse as any ethnoracial group in the world. They represent a tapestry of races, ethnicity, customs, academic trajectories, income levels, cultural traditions and even languages. Their profiles and identities in the US are very much defined by their roots – the US, Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain – , with salient differences deriving from place of birth and generational background. About two thirds of Hispanics are US born (67% in 2020). Nearly 20 million are immigrants. Their indigenous, Latin American, African, Caribbean, European and North American backgrounds come together to give birth to new ways of being American,

shaping how they are integrating into the larger US culture and how they nurture their spiritual lives.

Our study sample, i.e., Hispanic PK-12 educators in Catholic schools in the US, reflects this rich tapestry. Despite the diversity of Catholic educators who participated in our study, our research data highlights some important commonalities 1) the vocational call to Catholic education, 2) the motivational factors for working in Catholic schools, and 3) the evolution of professional identity. We begin with a descriptive overview of the Hispanic Catholic school teacher and leader, then expand on the identified commonalities by drawing from the voices of participating Hispanic Catholic school educators.

We begin with a profile of the 142 responding Hispanic Catholic school teachers. The overwhelming majority of these teachers self-identify as Catholic (97%) and are predominantly female (81%). Thirty-seven percent are under 40, 67% are married, a majority have children (66%), a handful have grandchildren (15%), with 42% of them enrolling their children or grandchildren to attend the same Catholic school where they teach. Study findings also indicate that Hispanic teachers in US Catholic schools are highly qualified and well-educated: they have an average of 13.7 years of teaching experience, 97% have bachelor’s degrees, 58% have master’s degrees, and 10% have doctoral degrees. Forty percent of the teachers are foreign born, with Mexico, Colombia, and Cuba cited more frequently as countries of origin.



While we know that 9% of all public school principals are Hispanic, only 7% of principals in Catholic schools self-identify as Hispanic.<sup>34</sup> Of the 143 school leaders that participated in our study, the vast majority self-identify as Catholic (96%). Two-thirds (67%) self-identify as female and 65% as married. The majority of Hispanic Catholic school leaders have children (92%) or grandchildren (20%), with 47% of them registering their children or grandchildren to attend the same Catholic school where they teach. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of responding leaders were above 40 years old with 30% reporting that they were in their 40s.

Findings also indicate that Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools in the US are highly qualified, highly-educated, and deeply committed to Catholic schools. Of the participants surveyed 99% hold a bachelor's degree, 89% master's degrees, 33% doctoral degrees, and an additional 5% hold other professional degrees (J.D., M.D., or D.D.S). Individuals reported being in their current role on average for nine years, and had been working in the Catholic school system for an average of 16 years. This tenure demonstrates a deep commitment to the sector of Catholic schools, as well as their individual school communities, with many having served in no more than three different Catholic schools. Twenty-seven percent of the leaders are foreign born, with Mexico cited most frequently as the country of origin.

### The Vocational Calling to Catholic Education

A sense of calling and life purpose constitutes a significant motivator for Hispanic Catholic educators to work in Catholic schools. This corroborates other research reporting that many Catholic educators see their work as a religious calling to help and serve others in society.

Vocational calling is based on one's interests, passions, and needs.<sup>35</sup> It is usually stable over a lifetime. Frederick Buechner in his book *Wishful Thinking* described a vocational calling as "the place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

The discovery of one's vocational calling is often influenced by others who see such interests and passions, and provide encouragement to put their gifts and talents into action.

A significant number of respondents (88%) indicated they "mostly" or "absolutely agreed" that they "have been called to [their] current line of work" and 82% "mostly" or "absolutely agreed" that they want a "career that ultimately makes the world a better place." Further, the overwhelming majority of study respondents (98%) felt that being a Catholic educator allowed them to contribute to the common good, with 94% "mostly" or "absolutely agreeing" that "making a difference for others is the primary motivation in [their] career." Their work as Hispanic Catholic school educators allows them to "live out [their] life's purpose" (88.7%) and bring "dignity and meaning to one's life" (82%).

This desire to be of service to others was heard repeatedly in interviews and focus-group conversations.

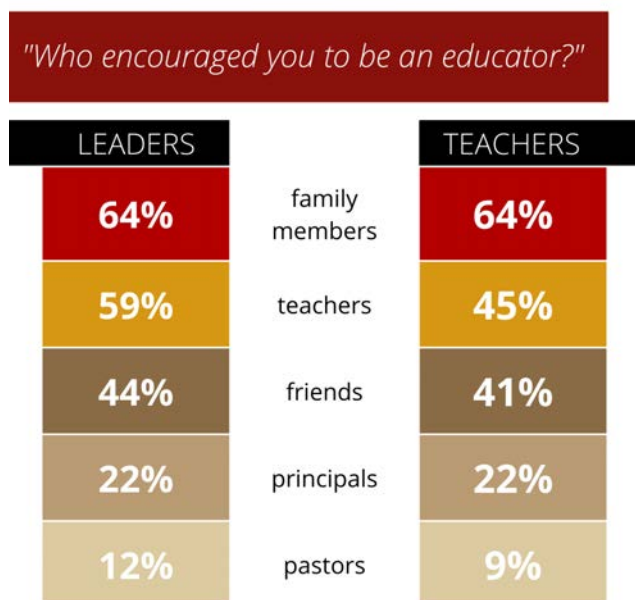
*"Service and education, and using my career to contribute to the good of my community were the underpinnings for why I became a teacher. What motivated me was to have the opportunity to form young men and women, who had similar backgrounds to me, to achieve more and be more."*

- David, Principal in West/Far West Region

Growing up, nearly 58% of the educators surveyed knew that they would become teachers or have a career in education. Of these individuals three-quarters indicated they were encouraged by others to be a teacher, with family members being a primary influence in entering the teaching force (64%), followed by teachers, friends, principals, and pastors. Many participating Hispanic Catholic school leaders indicated that they would not have considered applying for a leadership role if not for the encouragement and "gentle nudging" of supervisors and fellow educators.

*"During my first year of teaching, my principal said I would be a school leader one day. She saw something in me that I didn't see in myself...this confidence in my abilities shifted my commitment to Catholic schools. I began assuming more leadership roles that allowed me to build the necessary skills to become the leader I am today."*

- Sophia, Principal, Southeast Region



The results of this research can help Catholic school leaders think about what attracts and retains Hispanic educators. These educators feel a sense of vocational calling to serve others and have a sincere desire to make the world a better place. Often encouraged by others to utilize their gifts and talents to educate children, such teachers and leaders are strengthened in their resolve to secure advanced degrees, which, as we have seen many Catholic school educators have.

### **Motivating factors for working in Catholic schools**

Understanding what motivates individuals to enter educational careers and remain in these positions long-term is important for improving schools and helping to support top quality educators as teachers and leaders. Given the number of underrepresented educators in Catholic schools, we felt examining these motivating factors was of central importance. It is clear from the study data that the motivation to teach and lead in Catholic schools among Hispanic teachers and leaders is driven by faith and values. During a focus group, one teacher who spent over a decade in the public sector was drawn to teach in a Catholic school because of the values and beliefs of the school.

*“I feel like when you come from the Catholic values and beliefs, it’s easier to connect with your students. . . . being in a private Catholic school, you are allowed to make those faith connections to your life.”*

- Marisol, Teacher, Mideast Region

Hispanic educators do see value in working with Hispanic children and families. In fact, many leaders talked about the importance of the ethnic and cultural background of educators mirroring that of the communities they serve. However, the values and faith of the Catholic Church seem to attract many Hispanic educators to serve in Catholic schools. While this might run counter to some of the research examining what motivates individuals who enter the field of education, since the most common motivational factor being teaching as a means for promoting social justice and social change, Catholic schools and leaders can leverage these values and the Catholic faith in order to attract Hispanic educators.

When considering why Hispanic educators choose to teach and lead in Catholic schools, one must explore whether or not compensation is a motivating force. With salary schedules lower than what public school counterparts normally offer, many assume that Catholic educators would leave the sector. Interestingly, research has found that salary and benefits are usually ranked lower in a review of motivations for Catholic educators. The condition of salary has been found to influence the decision-making process of newly hired teachers, suggesting early career teachers may be swayed by pay.<sup>38</sup> However, teacher mobility is much more strongly related to characteristics of the teacher, such as background, training, and environment, than to salary. Thus, salary seems to serve as a differential motivator for Hispanic educators. When asked “to what extent does your salary motivate your work,” 42% of respondents claimed this was “not” or “only slightly influential” and about 25% said it was “very” or “extremely influential.” These data seem to indicate that some Hispanic teachers are not primarily motivated by salary; however, when asked about reasons they have considered not teaching or leading, salary and benefits are far and away the largest reason as 73% of all Hispanic Catholic school educators noted. This rises to 81% when just considering teachers.<sup>39</sup>

The perceived financial hardships in teaching are real, where moonlighting—holding a second job outside of normal working hours—is not uncommon for educators across sectors. Our study revealed that 46% of Hispanic teachers in Catholic schools hold additional jobs to subsidize their salaries and 5% can earn additional compensation from the school based on student performance. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of moonlighters took on second jobs within the school system, serving as coaches, after-school coordinators, or tutors; 26% work outside of the school system. While the number of Hispanic Catholic educators moonlighting is less in comparison to public teachers (59%) who took on additional paid work, the number of educators holding more than one job is significant across sectors.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike teachers, only 3% of Hispanic Catholic school leaders indicate they receive compensation outside of their current role, and 8% receive some additional

compensation through a retirement pension from previous experience in the public school system. Sixty-eight percent of leaders feel they are fairly or well compensated, on average making over \$70,000, and 43% indicated their salary “does not influence” or “slightly influences” their motivation to work.

While salary might not be the top driving motivation for many Hispanic educators, it cannot be ignored. The survey responses indicate that it still may be an important factor in being able to retain teachers and leaders in Catholic schools. Although there are a number of conditions that impact educator turnover and retention, the importance of salary should not be discounted.

*"My career is about kinship...accompanying my students on their life's journey."*

### **Evolution of professional identity**

Professional identities are multifaceted, with different components interwoven; family, ethnic origin, academic background, and occupational experience are all part of the mix. Research on how Hispanics define identity has found that this population is inevitably influenced by two major paradigms: (a) identity as influenced by political and racial discrimination; and, (b) identity as influenced by family, community/class and religion. <sup>42</sup>

Much of the research about underrepresented teachers and leaders in the field of education highlights that many enter the field with the motivation to work with minoritized students. However, our study paints a more nuanced view. Less than one-third of respondents (29%) say that the opportunity to work with Hispanic children drew them to work in a Catholic school. It is worth observing that during the interviews and focus groups the overwhelming majority of participants actually spoke about the importance of working with Hispanic students and families. In these conversations, participants spoke of their Hispanic identity as a fundamental aspect that perseveres in their careers. They expressed a belief that their cultural background and ethnicity create a strong connection with the underrepresented students and families they serve and that they offer perspectives that are different from those of non-Hispanic teachers and leaders.

*"As a first-generation son of immigrants, my career is about kinship...accompanying my students on their life's journey. Growing up, I never saw anyone that looked like me, not in schools, not in the media. I became a teacher because I wanted children who looked like me to see me and realize what is possible."*

- Carlos, Teacher, West/Far West

These educators see their professional identity as an essential part of their lives, having the potential to influence the identity of Hispanic youth, who often see a reflection of themselves in the leader.

*"Whether you want to be or not, you're a role model. The way you talk, the way you dress, the way you behave, you're a role model. And then when you become an administrator, you're even more so [a role model]. And being a Hispanic male and being in a leadership role, you also now take on that role of padrino, uncle, big brother, father to all those little boys and those little girls that don't have any of the above."*

- Miguel, School Leader, West/Far West

For another leader, a principal, moving into leadership roles allowed them to have an expanded influence on their school and the broader community,

*"If you look at the heart of the mission of our Catholic schools...we have to give our students a model of the excellence they hope they will achieve in the faith, in a virtuous life, in what it means to contribute to the good of society. Who are the people we need to deliver this? Having Hispanic teachers and leaders in the schools as models [for students] who can see a reflection of themselves, who can speak to the hardships and challenges maybe that they've overcome, and have that connection that is more readily there with others. Hispanic educators play a critical role in our Catholic schools, and we have to be bold enough to say that."*

- Joseph, School Leader, West/Far West

In interviews and focus group conversations with participants in the study, many shared about barriers to their success, commenting on how discrimination, alienation, and tokenism led them to question their identity. This aligns with research that points toward stigma and identity dissociation as some of the main obstacles faced when working towards success for first and subsequent generations of Hispanics.<sup>44</sup> For

individuals who feel stigmatized, it can be difficult to see themselves as an essential part of the professional community, and often they begin to question their purpose. For some participants, this questioning of identity began in college, where attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs) away from home was the first time they felt minoritized. For others, being in a minority-majority environment allowed them to embrace their identity and realize how their contribution as Hispanic educators in Catholic schools was significant.

*"When there are no intentional efforts to help teachers understand how they contribute to this, to have their voices be known, and how they contribute to the richness of the culture of their Catholic school, isolation occurs."*

*"When a Hispanic-majority teaching environment is not the case, there is a certain isolation that happens through alienation. When there are no intentional efforts to help teachers understand how they contribute to this, to have their voices be known, and how they contribute to the richness of the culture of their Catholic school, isolation occurs. When isolation happens, the teacher or leader wonders, am I suited for this? Am I contributing anything of value if my experience is so different from the mainstream? This factor translates into teachers leaving their careers or going to places where they see themselves."*

-Miguel, Leader, Far West

When Hispanic students are not represented among teachers and administrators, their cultural identity and their struggles are often not addressed. Likewise, when Hispanic educators are not represented among teachers and leaders in a system, their cultural identity and their struggles are depreciated by silence. For the strengthening of our Catholic schools, this is the time to emphatically embrace the identity of our Hispanic educators.

### **The Training of Hispanic Educators**

Hispanic educators in Catholic schools enter into their roles through a variety of pathways and programs. In general, few educator preparation programs in the US

dedicate strategies and resources explicitly to recruit underrepresented educators from diverse backgrounds, including Hispanic educators.<sup>47</sup> Something similar occurs in the Catholic educational world. Given the lack of focused program design and recruitment efforts, it is not surprising to see that Hispanic teachers and leaders follow a wide range of pathways into the profession. One particular effort focused on preparing and forming educators to serve in Catholic schools is the University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE). The UCCE's post-baccalaureate programs typically function as alternative training or certification initiatives. This collective of 13 programs housed at Catholic colleges and universities across the US recruits broadly amongst graduating undergraduate students. Responding to the need for more underrepresented educators in Catholic schools, UCCE programs have increased their efforts to diversify their student pool and better respond to the mismatch between underrepresented students and educators and Catholic schools. Recruitment strategies are still being developed and implemented, and the impact of these efforts is under review. Progress in this area will greatly inform UCCE programs and beyond in terms of preparing and forming underrepresented educators for service in Catholic schools. We applaud current efforts, yet more is needed to better support pathways for Hispanic educators to be prepared and formed to teach in Catholic school settings.

Our study revealed that the majority of Hispanic teachers working in Catholic schools did not attend a Catholic college or university either at the undergraduate or graduate level. Only 27% attended undergraduate programs and 19% graduate programs at Catholic colleges or universities. Barely 7% of Hispanic teachers were trained through alternative preparation and certification programs, including those specifically designed for Catholic school educators via the UCCE. Catholic school leaders, however, are more likely to have attended a Catholic college or university, with 42% attending undergraduate programs and 53% graduate programs. Some Catholic colleges and universities such as Boston College, the University of Notre Dame, and Loyola Marymount University, among others, have developed Catholic school-specific leadership degree and pathway programs. The existence of such programs may be a reason for the larger numbers of educators in our study who have undergone graduate-level formation.

## Hispanic Catholic Educators and Catholic Colleges/Universities

### TEACHERS

**27%**

attended Catholic undergraduate colleges/universities

**19%**

attended Catholic graduate colleges/universities

### LEADERS

**42%**

attended Catholic undergraduate colleges/universities

**53%**

attended Catholic graduate colleges/universities

These data raise important questions about the formation and training of Catholic educators. Catholic institutions of higher education do not seem to be playing a major role in attracting and forming Hispanic educators for Catholic schools. While Catholic school leaders fare better as graduates from these institutions, that does not seem to be the case for Hispanic teachers. As the Hispanic presence increases in Catholic schools, especially in terms of students, a great opportunity exists for Catholic colleges and universities to recruit and form Hispanics in undergraduate and graduate programs to cultivate vocational callings to teach and lead in educational settings, particularly Catholic schools.

When exploring pathways into teaching and leading in Catholic schools, it is important to realize that a significant number of Hispanic teachers received training and formation outside of the US, especially those who are immigrants. Our study indicates that 20% of teachers and 8% of school leaders in Catholic schools hold degrees from institutions of higher education not located in the US. Establishing degree equivalence and transferring educator certifications are difficult processes to navigate. This may be a factor in the relatively low percentage of Hispanic educators in Catholic schools who are not appropriately certified by their state certification offices. However, Catholic schools in general can hire Hispanic educators who are immigrants without regular state certifications,

which can provide a temporary pathway into service in Catholic education while they convalidate their degrees and certifications.

Pursuing higher education degrees in the US, undergraduate and graduate, can be costly. Oftentimes practices such as *padrinazgo* (i.e., sponsorship or patronage), can assist in offsetting the costs of higher education. Thirty-seven percent of all educators in the study indicated they received outside financial support to pursue a graduate degree. Sources of *padrinazgo* include family members, friends, pastors, fraternities/sororities, professional associations and philanthropic foundations. Financial support to pursue master's degrees also came from universities (16%), Catholic schools where they were employed (10%), and diocesan scholarships (7%).

Participants who were interviewed or joined focus groups commented on how *padrinazgo* paved the way to Catholic education. For instance,

*"I started in public schools until fifth grade, mainly because my grandmother who raised me couldn't afford to put me in a Catholic school. There was one day I said, I really want to change schools...I was raised very Catholic. I was an altar server. I was a lecturer in my church...[My grandmother] asked the priest for help...so he gave me a scholarship for me to go to high school. After that, I just went to a Catholic university on another scholarship. So my whole life...God put me there, and I've been blessed."*

- Jennifer, School Leader, Mideast

Catholic schools need to be more intentional in recruiting Hispanic teachers and leaders across all preparation and pathway options: traditional and alternative, public and Catholic, US-based and international. Additionally, Catholic colleges and universities should do more to partner with Catholic schools and diocesan systems to develop creative initiatives for Hispanic educators seeking formation to teach in Catholic schools. Additional scholarship opportunities need to be in place to make pathway options affordable.

## The Catholic Education Connection

When discussing pathways that Hispanic teachers follow into Catholic schools, and the challenges, and choices they make along the way, we cannot ignore the impact of attending Catholic PK-12 schools. Catholic school attendance appears to be a significant factor among Hispanics discerning an educational vocation. According to our study, 64% of Hispanic educators in Catholic schools attended a Catholic school at some point during their PK-12 educational journey. Of those who attended a Catholic elementary or secondary school, 73% were enrolled in both PK-8 and high school (9-12) institutions, 19% attended a Catholic school only during their PK-8 formation, and 8% only during high school. What is further compelling about those who attended Catholic schools is that nearly half (47%) claimed that their own background attending a Catholic school was a reason influencing their decision to work also in a Catholic school. This corroborates that a firsthand experience in Catholic schooling can significantly influence a commitment to Catholic education.

In several interviews and focus groups, participants reinforced how prior experience in Catholic schools inspired them to teach in Catholic schools. One Hispanic Catholic school teacher attended a Catholic school in Colombia run by vowed religious women from Spain. Subsequently, she attended a Jesuit Catholic university. When she encountered the opportunity to teach at a Catholic school in the US, she applied. *“I said why not? My whole education was in Catholic education [in Colombia]. I feel that I will be comfortable being a teacher in a Catholic school.”* Her own experience in Catholic education and the values learned from that experience motivates her to serve in a Catholic school now. Experiences like this lead us to recommend increasing the efforts to intentionally explore connecting with Hispanic alumni of PK-12 Catholic schools, immigrant and US born, supporting their vocational discernment journeys, and encouraging and inspiring them to work in Catholic schools should they feel so called.

Besides the demonstrated influence of a Catholic education upon graduates discerning a career as Catholic



educators, there seems to be a similar effect among adults who have been connected to Catholic schools as parents, volunteers, and even substitute teachers:

*“My kids went to Catholic school...it was a tiny school and they needed help, and so I volunteered to help. I was hooked immediately. I will never forget substitute teaching in fifth grade, and having the lesson plan, and doing my best to follow it. But I guess I wasn’t delivering it the right way and so I changed it up a little bit, and the kids then got it. It was that moment for me —I wanted to be a teacher. I started going to college very shortly after that and got my degree.”*

- Ana, School Leader, West/Far West Region

Our study demonstrates that Hispanic educators must confront multiple complex realities as they discern a vocation to serve in the Catholic education world. However, one factor that seems consistently positive and a good indicator of future commitment to Catholic schools is their own experience in or with Catholic education. It is important for current Catholic school teachers and leaders to acknowledge the influence they have on students, families, and community partners through their everyday interactions. As many educators do, they can intentionally invite or encourage individuals into a vocation to service in Catholic education. Recruiting, supporting and encouraging Hispanic children and youth in Catholic schools today will have long term effects and increase the potential of recruiting and retaining more Hispanic educators in Catholic schools tomorrow.



## Bilingualism Matters

Bilingualism, particularly cultivated in US schools with dual-language programs where students learn content in English and their home language, is a gift: it benefits academic achievement<sup>48</sup> and leads to cultural and linguistic identity affirmation, which has<sup>49</sup> been linked to students' and educators' academic and professional success.

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As Catholicism in the US embraces its pluralistic and multilingual identity in the twenty-first century, Catholic schools are uniquely positioned to foster multilingualism. One way of giving life to such a commitment is by affirming the numerous gifts bilingual educators bring to our schools and calling for their just compensation and support.

Bilingual educators are the foundation of dual-language programs; without them, dual-language education would remain an ideal, a dream for many, and an opportunity for few, as less than 2% of Hispanic children in the country have the opportunity to participate in dual-language programs.

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Educators in dual-language Catholic schools constituted 35% of participants in this study. Let us take a closer look at this sub-sample to understand better the growing and critical presence of dual-language programs in Catholic schools. Two-thirds (76%) of Hispanic educators in dual-

language Catholic schools “always” or “often” feel that the Catholic traditions embraced at their school reflect their own cultural background, compared to 52% of Hispanic Catholic school educators in non-dual-language settings. One example of such embrace is the fact that 56% of the Hispanic educators working in bilingual schools indicated that their school celebrates Mass in Spanish. Catholic schools with bilingual programs also have higher Hispanic representation on their boards, parent-teacher organizations, faculty, and staff. Having this representation provides Hispanic educators and families with increased opportunities to engage with individuals from the same cultural and linguistic background, opportunities that they might not otherwise have in monolingual school settings. Increased representation and centering the Spanish language in the classroom and community leads to an affirming educational experience for Hispanic students, uplifting and embracing their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and identities.

While the development of dual-language programs promote equity and growth in Catholic schools, some features of these schools require attention, especially when considering dual-language educator pipelines. Over three-quarters of dual-language school leaders (compared to just over half of leaders in non-dual-language programs) in our study consider insufficiently substantial salary and benefits as an obstacle to recruiting and retaining Hispanic teachers. Nearly a quarter of Hispanic dual-language teacher respondents indicated that they earn less than \$40,000 annually. About 65% stated that they received no financial help to earn their degrees, a detail that suggests many likely incurred debt, knowing that 60% of respondents hold a master's degree.

Lack of adequate financial compensation and sufficient financial support for professional advancement are deterring bilingual individuals from choosing to become bilingual teachers or to remain in dual-language programs. While this is an issue and reality across all education sectors, it is of particular importance for leaders in Catholic education as we consider the potential of our Catholic schools serving millions of Hispanic children and youth, Catholic and non-Catholic, who are bilingual.

## Teaching and Leading with Hispanic Catholic Imagination

Catholic schools have a long tradition of being communities dedicated to the cultivation of the Catholic imagination. In an increasingly Hispanic church, as in the US, the Catholic imagination is enriched and expanded by the traditions and contributions of the many Hispanics, immigrants and US-born who give life to churches and educational institutions every day.

Promoting the Hispanic Catholic imagination means encouraging young students to think boldly, but realistically, about what they can become, while always remaining grateful for the difficult sacrifices their own parents have made so that their children can eventually assume important, responsible positions in society. The embrace of the Hispanic Catholic imagination in the context of Catholic schools begins with an affirmation of those particular characteristics that identify Hispanic students and their families. In turn, the Hispanic Catholic imagination becomes alive as Hispanic teachers and leaders share the best of who they are and their traditions. For one leader in our study, leading from her heritage means unlocking new aspirations for the Hispanic children and families in her community. In a focus group discussion, she shared the story of her encounter with a woman looking to enroll her daughter in the preschool program at her school:

*“I remember clearly when I started as a director, one family came... a very humble family. And the lady was like, ‘So you’re Hispanic?’ I said yes. She didn’t know how to read or write. ... and she was like, ‘You’re the director? ... You speak my language?’ She was... pretty much in shock. And then she looked at the little girl and said, ‘One day, you’re going to be like her. You’re not going to be washing clothes like me.’ ... I had to hold my tears.”*

- Jennifer, School Leader, Mideast

Exchanges like these highlight the essential role that Hispanic teachers and leaders play as cultural accommodators and mediators interweaving with broader school and societal contexts. The work of creating welcoming and inclusive school communities

for prospective families, however, must extend beyond the presence of relevant role models.

Examining school culture through the lens of systems, processes, and procedures is key — leaders and policymakers must consider what barriers exist for underrepresented families to realistically consider and choose Catholic schools for their children. That same leader interviewed above went on to share how that woman had just come from a nearby school, where she received no support for navigating the enrollment process for her child because of the language barrier. Catholic school educators of all backgrounds must consider questions such as: Does the language used throughout the recruitment, enrollment, and retention life cycle affirm student and family differences as assets instead of deficits? Are our symbols, marketing materials, and interpersonal encounters marked with a joyful meeting of cultures and exchanges of genuine hospitality? Are the mutual demands beyond the exchange of tuition for education placed on schools and the families they serve marked by solidarity and cooperation or are they punitive and compliance-driven? Considering these elements of the experience of Hispanic families and students is essential to establishing family-school connections that speak to the heart of what Hispanic families seek in the school communities in which they engage.

*“Our parents bring such joy to our school community and a deep commitment to their children, how can I not be inspired to want to do more for them.”*

“I am continuously inspired by the Hispanic parents I am blessed to work with. In them, I see my parents, my aunts, and uncles, all who sacrificed much for my future. Our parents bring such joy to our school community and a deep commitment to their children, how can I not be inspired to want to do more for them.”

- Robin, Teacher, New England

Central to this engagement is the connection between increasing student learning by leveraging the impact of student identification with native culture and language.<sup>55</sup> When Hispanic students are guided and supported by Hispanic teachers and school leaders, they can leverage the gift of *confianza*—that is, establishing the trust and consequent willingness to share information with others—to strengthen the teacher-student relationship that is so integral to student success. We<sup>56</sup> also see that the transformative power of those relationships translates into increased student representation in gifted programs at the national level.<sup>57</sup>

*“We need partnerships with communities, bringing in guest speakers, things like that... so students can see that it’s possible for someone that grew up in a similar situation as they go to college, graduate, and pursue their passions and careers that they want.”*  
- Elizabeth, Teacher, Plains

Therefore, teaching with Hispanic Catholic imagination begins at the ground floor, where we see that for many Hispanic Catholic educators, creating classroom and learning spaces that are inclusive and representative are key. Creating inclusive and representative classrooms means beginning the school year with invitations for Hispanic students and parents alike to voice their hopes, dreams, fears, needs, and ambitions for the learning

community, and then using that voice and input to build classroom guidelines and routines to support student learning. Additionally, embracing bilingualism and biculturalism as should be nourished and valued as assets. For instance, the leader of a dual-language immersion Catholic school shared that an asset-based perspective on bilingualism helps to create foundationally vibrant school cultures that promote achievement and growth for every single student.

It is no surprise when a vibrant, culturally responsive, Catholic school culture is in place, conditions for learning that expand rather than constrict students’ imaginations will take hold.<sup>58</sup> Let us embrace this Catholic Hispanic imagination with zeal.

*“We need partnerships with communities, bringing in guest speakers, things like that... so students can see that it’s possible for someone that grew up in a similar situation as they go to college, graduate, and pursue their passions and careers that they want.”*

## Bright Spot: Archdiocese of Philadelphia Catholic Residency Program

One example of an archdiocesan system engaging in preparation and formation specifically for Catholic school educators, including Hispanic educators, is the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. With a teacher shortage on the horizon, the Catholic Schools Office created a residency model, entitled the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Catholic Residency Program, in partnership with a local Catholic university, Immaculata University, to offer a cost-effective pathway to preparation and formation to teach in Philadelphia Catholic schools. Supported by local foundations, the model involves initial coursework and training with extensive coaching once educators enter the classroom while continuing their courses at Immaculata and other formation through the Archdiocese.

This model, currently supporting 40 residents in 25 schools, mirrors residency pathway options across the country in which new educators begin with an intensive introduction to teaching and then largely learn on the job while serving as the teacher of record. The unique element here, however, is the partnership between the Archdiocese and Immaculata to address perennial issues of affordability and access while essentially driving a grow-your-own model that has been cited as helping to recruit a more diverse educator workforce in Philadelphia Catholic schools, including Hispanic educators.



Program participants reflect the socioeconomic and racial diversity in their respective Catholic schools and communities, with some individuals entering the program directly from high school to some others who are grandmothers, working on their associate's degree, who who have a desire to serve in the classroom as teachers.

Dr. Andrew McLaughlin, Secretary of Elementary Education for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Schools, noted, *“We have found that the participants in our residency program have surpassed our need to just fill teaching positions. They have emerged into the classrooms with the ability to teach effectively and integrate the faith seamlessly. It may be that they learned teaching theory and practiced it simultaneously or it may be the close bond that the group has formed with their cohort and their individual mentor. The participants of this program have impressed administrators, peers, and parents alike.”*

*Section II:*  
*Pathways into Catholic Education*



## From Ministry to Catholic Education

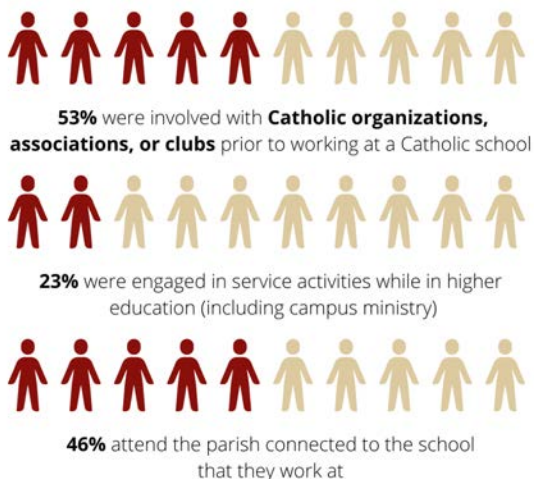
One pathway into Catholic schools for Hispanic educators is prior consideration or involvement, formally or informally, in ministry. Ministry here is defined broadly, ranging from regular lay engagement in church and faith-based activities to formal ministerial commitments, such as ordination, consecration, and full-time ministry. About 53% of all respondents in the study said that they had been involved in Catholic organizations, associations, or clubs prior to working in their Catholic school. When asked to describe the type of involvement, the majority named parish-based ministries, such as youth and young adult ministry, religious education, prayer groups, apostolic movements, liturgical ministries, and faith-based community organizing, among others. Based on these responses, engagement in parish-based ministries, combined with the desire to give back to one's community, has the potential to fuel discernment towards a career in Catholic education.

for undergraduate or graduate education, as we saw earlier; a reflection of the low numbers of Hispanic students in these institutions. In 2018, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) estimated that 12% of slightly more than 900,000 students in Catholic institutions of higher education self-identified as Hispanic.<sup>59</sup> Among those who did attend a Catholic college or university, 11% indicated being involved in campus ministry as a formative activity that facilitated community engagement and service experience while in college. Campus ministry in Catholic and non-Catholic institutions can play a more significant role in helping Hispanics discern vocations to Catholic education, but this effort needs to be paired with a focus on equity and access for Hispanics in Catholic colleges and universities.

Nearly a quarter of participants in the study (22%) have considered a vocational commitment in the church such as ordained priesthood or religious life. This signals that many Hispanic educators have a strong sense of ecclesial service and likely see their work as Catholic educators as an actualization of their ministerial vocation. The number of Hispanic Catholic priests and vowed religious women and men in the US is very small compared to the size of the Hispanic Catholic population. As of 2018, according to data collected through the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry process, there were 2,987 Hispanic priests (76% of them foreign-born) and 2,293 Hispanic vowed religious women and men in the country. Supporting Hispanic educators in Catholic schools could serve in turn as a pathway to other forms of ecclesial service.

While the connection to ministry prior to working in a Catholic school is of much importance in any conversation about pathways for Hispanics into Catholic education, current engagement in parish life and ministry provides another opportunity for cultivating talent. Strong participation in parish life and ministerial engagement should be seen as sources of nurturing the call to serve as educators in Catholic schools. Forty-six percent of respondents attend the parish connected with their school, a striking number, though not a majority, considering mobility trends in our society. Of those in this group, 45% attended that same parish prior to

### Hispanic Catholic Educators: Community and Parish Involvement



Our study revealed that for most Hispanic educators, engagement in Catholic educational groups or programs during their undergraduate or graduate years was minimal, with three-quarters of respondents indicating that they were not involved in Catholic educational groups or programs. Low engagement in these Catholic-centered programs may be attributed to the fact that most respondents (82%) did not attend a Catholic college

becoming an educator at the Catholic school where they work. Considering nearly half of participants indicated engagement in parish life as a pathway to working in a Catholic school, parishes and Catholic schools have an opportunity to create grow-your-own programs by strengthening relationships between parishioners and school personnel.

When asked whether they were engaged in activities at their Catholic parishes, an extraordinary 85% of respondents say that they attend church regularly. About 11% serve as catechists in their parishes, about 6% are involved in Bible study groups, and about 6% teach Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Nearly 29% serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, about 16% as lectors and about 9% are members of a choir.

As of 2020, there were 16,703 Catholic parishes in the US,<sup>61</sup> and only a little over a quarter of these parishes (26%) offer Hispanic ministry. A very small percentage of respondents in the study (2%) indicated they are directly involved in Hispanic ministries, 17% indicate that they collaborate with someone in their (arch)diocese whose work focuses on Hispanic ministry. If more parochial and diocesan offices of Hispanic ministry were to make a stronger effort to collaborate with Catholic schools, it is possible that more Hispanic educators in Catholic schools would be open to collaborating with their projects. Increased collaboration also bears the possibility of unifying and streamlining the messaging and outreach needed to recruit and retain Hispanic children, families, and educators within Catholic school communities.

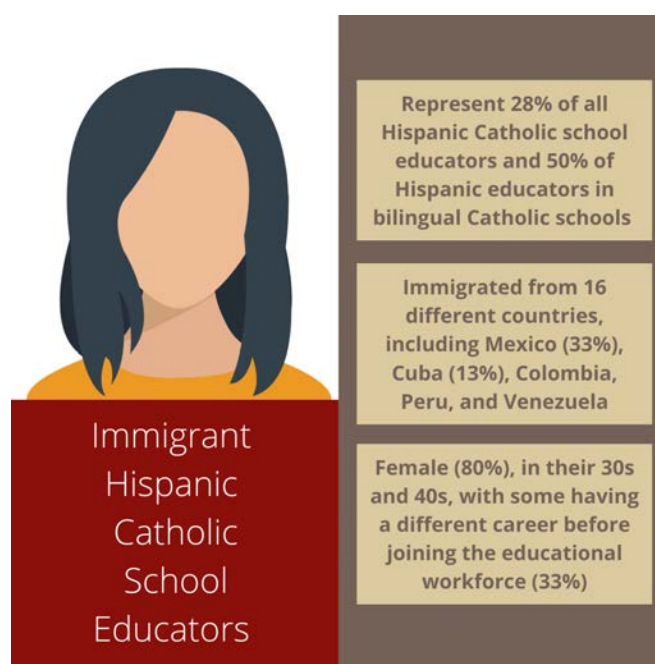
Parishes can play a major role in identifying, recruiting, and mentoring Catholic school educators. Parish leaders have an opportunity, and perhaps the responsibility, to attract educators from within the parish community. This hope, however, is curtailed by the fact that a large number of parochial Catholic schools have closed or merged, or their viability is in question, especially at the elementary level. A decade ago, there were nearly 4,253 parochial elementary schools, today that number has dropped to 3,138. The number of parochial Catholic schools is getting smaller and the connection of many of these educational institutions to parishes seems more

fragile in the past. However, we need fresher models that involve not only those parishes that sponsored Catholic schools but all parishes in identifying future teachers and leaders. A shared focus on Hispanic teachers and leaders may be a welcomed common goal at this time.

As Catholic schools look to recruit talent, a commitment to the renewal of parish life, including the embrace of Hispanic ministry programs, is necessary. Further, Catholic school leaders are encouraged to examine local recruitment efforts, focusing on possibilities within the parish and area community organizations, to develop customized grow-your-own programs.

### The Immigrant Journey

Of the estimated 8.1 million PK-post-secondary teachers in the US, approximately 857,200 are immigrant teachers, accounting for 11% of all teachers. Nearly half of these immigrant educators teach at the postsecondary level. In addition to supplying a critical labor force and having the potential to educate American children with a distinct international perspective, immigrant educators can also “serve as cultural ambassadors for immigrant students who may not be as familiar with American traditions, customs, and social norms.”<sup>65</sup>



However, when immigrant educators come to the US, it is not uncommon for them to face personal challenges, such as acclimating to a new country, isolation, and racial and linguistic discrimination. They may also face professional challenges for not knowing how to navigate work requirements such as work visas or state teacher certification/licensure requirements. “For immigrant educators employed in schools, it is not uncommon to experience hardships such as difficulty in socialization and interaction with colleagues and administrators.”<sup>68</sup>

*"I moved here from Mexico in 2001. My faith has always been my source of strength, so I would attend daily Mass at St. Joseph's. It was there I met Fr. Paul...he saw a joy within me when I spoke about working with children and when a part-time Spanish teacher opened up at St. Joseph's he encouraged me to apply. He has changed my life. I've been at St. Joseph's for five years and am so grateful for the community, the people, being able to share my faith, my culture with my students and families is truly a gift. I am eternally grateful to Fr. Paul who saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. Dios abre puertas. God opens doors and St. Joseph's is home."*

*-Maria, Teacher, New England*

Recent immigration policy changes and the complexity of most state's teaching licensing processes have aggravated the teacher shortage situation for US public schools. Thousands of teaching positions in the areas of bilingual education, foreign languages, mathematics, and science remain vacant every year in the US, positions that could be filled by well-qualified immigrant teachers. Unlike in the public sector, immigrant educators who receive employment authorization and wish to teach in PK-12 Catholic schools do not need to obtain a license or teacher certification from the state in which they wish to teach. This creates an opportunity for Catholic schools to hire qualified immigrants as teachers and leaders.

In our study, 40% of Hispanic teachers and 27% of Hispanic school leaders in Catholic schools self-identified as foreign-born. These educators indicated that they come from 16 different Spanish-speaking countries: 33% immigrated from Mexico and 13% from Cuba, the top source countries, followed by Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela.

Foreign-born teachers in the United States tend to be highly educated.<sup>70</sup> When examining their educational backgrounds, 95% have bachelor's degrees, 54% master's degrees, and 12% doctoral degrees. About 9% of respondents received degrees outside of the US. Respondents on average have worked for 12 years in the Catholic school system. These data indicate the majority of immigrant Hispanic Catholic school educators come to their Catholic school communities well-educated and are deeply committed.

Further, immigrant Hispanic educators in Catholic schools are highly engaged in the life of their school communities. Sixty-four percent of immigrant respondents noted they were “very” or “somewhat involved” in cultural diversity matters and programs at their schools, and nearly half (48%) indicated they are involved in advocacy efforts related to the Hispanic community e.g., food security, access to education, immigration. Such advocacy extends into their community as 34% of immigrant respondents are involved in advocacy around quality public school education. This demonstrates that immigrant Hispanic educators in Catholic schools see themselves as advocates for other immigrant and Hispanic students and teachers.

Attentiveness of the Catholic sector to educating, supporting, and providing development opportunities for immigrant educators can yield important fruits for Catholic schools.

*"To share my faith, my culture with my students and families is truly a gift. I am eternally grateful to Fr. Paul who saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. Dios abre puertas. God opens doors and St. Joseph's is home."*



## *Section III:*

*How Catholic Schools and (Arch)Dioceses Support Hispanic Teachers and Leaders*



## Support Structures within the Catholic School and across the (Arch)Diocese

Support structures e.g., mentoring, communication with leaders, feedback on one's performance, in a school and across any given educational system play an important role in influencing the retention and development of diverse talent. Given that education is a social experience, dependent on relationships, the value of these support structures is commonly dependent upon social capital. Social capital is defined as "resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed or mobilized in purposive actions." In a society in which education is highly esteemed, educators embedded within schools and across systems constitute perhaps the most valuable resource for an educator in the classroom. Scholars often categorize social capital as bonding social capital which helps an individual "get by" in life and cope with challenges through strong ties in similar social circles. Similarly, educators engage with bridging social capital, which helps one "get ahead" (i.e., achieve goals) through primarily weak ties connecting to different social networks.

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In this section, we examine how bonding and bridging social capital, specifically in the form of mentoring and expanding an educator's social network, create retention opportunities for Hispanic Catholic school educators. We also examine the onboarding process and types of support available to first-year teachers. Looking closely at the first-year experience provides insights into how teachers engage in new social and professional communities. The better new teachers are equipped with the tools and knowledge to be successful in their classrooms and school communities, the greater the sense of belonging and likelihood for a positive teaching experience. Finally, we examine how autonomy and classroom experience impact teacher retention over the course of their professional journey.

### The Power of Mentoring

One distinguishing characteristic of Catholic schools is that they are places where educators are primarily shaped by communion and community. As a genuine community of faith, supportive mentoring relationships that bond educators and provide pedagogical, emotional,

psychological, and spiritual support exemplify what being an educational community can and should be. Drawing from Scripture, Catholic educators are called to navigate their vocations in community as Jesus did. Jesus did not go about ministry alone. He "summoned the Twelve, and began to send them out two by two" (Mark 6:7). Placing value on relationships as Jesus did, Catholic educators likely benefit from intentional mentoring programs that support new educators. The power of mentoring has the potential to benefit not only the individual, but also the school community and, arguably, the larger system of Catholic schools.

For over a decade, empirical research has bolstered the premise that mentoring enhances growth in educators by providing pedagogical as well as emotional and psychological support.<sup>76</sup> The benefits of mentoring yield positive outcomes for the mentor, mentee, and the organization, demonstrating the numerous benefits of this practice.<sup>77</sup> Mentoring may occur at any stage in an educator's career, demonstrating the value of professional guidance across an educator's professional and vocational journey. While one-to-one mentoring is most common, mentoring groups of teachers via small groups utilized across professional learning collaborative designs, have been found to be effective and presents an opportunity to widen the network of support among groups of educators within and across schools.<sup>78</sup>

Of increasing interest is critical mentoring, also known as same-race or affinity-based mentorship, where underrepresented teachers explore the "potential benefits of culturally responsive" mentoring. Culturally responsive mentoring explores "the need to better understand the local contexts in which teachers work and the ways in which those conditions shape the power relations between these teachers and their mentors."<sup>80</sup> Culturally responsive or critical mentoring design allows underrepresented teachers to recognize the racial, cultural, and social identities along with ways to leverage experiential knowledge. It has been found to be an affirmative model of support for underrepresented teachers.<sup>81</sup>

Culturally responsive mentoring has been found to contribute to the mission of a Catholic school and individuals' positive spirituality, promote development

and learning, foster self-direction and autonomy, and cultivate a collaborative workplace culture grounded in continuous learning.<sup>82</sup> While researchers have widely promoted mentorship as a promising practice for professional learning and development in Catholic schools, there is little evidence that formalized mentorship programs have been embraced by Catholic school leaders or that the effectiveness of existing programs has been sufficiently investigated. Efforts to mentor Hispanic teachers and leaders, and other underrepresented educators, in Catholic schools are even rarer.

Despite the evidence on the impact of mentoring, our study revealed that a little over half of respondents (58%) were not assigned a mentor during their first year of teaching. For those educators who did receive a mentor their first year, more than half (57%) met monthly with their assigned mentor, a quarter (27%) met once or twice a month, and some (15%) met a few times a year or never. For the majority of respondents who had a mentor during their first year, three-quarters (75%) of the mentors taught in a similar subject area or grade level to the mentee. Participants in interviews and focus groups shared that the design of first-year mentorship was more likely to be one-on-one.

within a given school community. The overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) indicated that there were other Hispanic faculty or staff employed at their school. While two-thirds indicated they purposefully sought support from Hispanic colleagues, only 29% indicated that they were mentored by someone who self-identified as Hispanic. Nearly two-thirds of study respondents indicated there were Hispanic Catholic school leaders in their school community, the majority (66%) of whom indicated an openness to professional mentorship by these Hispanic Catholic school leaders. Despite the representation of Hispanic teachers and leaders, culturally responsive mentoring within Catholic schools are not common.

*Exploring my identity with educators from the public and charter school world really deepened my faith and emboldened my passion for Catholic schools all the more.*

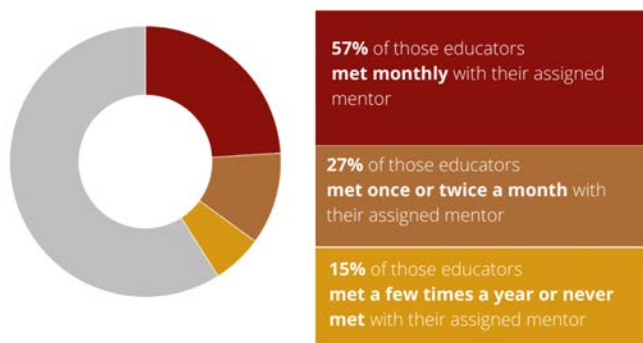
Study respondents indicated that Hispanic-to-Hispanic educator mentoring across a diocese was rarely common (6%) when compared to general or first-year mentoring opportunities. A handful of participants commented during interviews that they sought support from Hispanic mentors independent of their school or diocese. In recent years, philanthropic foundations committed to supporting Catholic school educators, such as the Lynch Foundation based in Boston and the Crimsonbridge Foundation based in Washington, DC, have generously supported Hispanic-to-Hispanic mentoring programs. These have respectively included professional organizations such as Latinos for Education, a Boston-based organization that develops Hispanic educators in public, charter, and faith-based schools. Also effective is the Latino Educator and Administrator Development (LEAD) program, based out of the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education and conducted in partnership with the NCEA.

*“Being part of Latinos for Education allowed me to learn from and connect with other Latino educators. I learned how to embrace my identity..., and why this is of value to the education sector. I never explored this before. Exploring my identity with educators from the public and charter school world really deepened my faith and emboldened my passion for Catholic schools all the more.”*

- Adriana, Teacher, Great Lakes

### Hispanic Catholic Educators: Mentoring and Support Frequency

Only **42%** of Hispanic educators were assigned a mentor or master teacher during their first year of teaching in a Catholic school.



When reflecting on mentorship provided by another educator of Hispanic background, examination of a school's faculty composition can provide insights into whether or not affinity-based mentorship is possible

Participants indicated that they also sought mentorship support through Hispanic professional associations in their local areas. When these exist, they create opportunities for educators to connect with Hispanic professionals from a variety of sectors e.g., business, law, medicine.

Mindful that a little over half of Hispanic educators who participated in the study indicated they had mentoring programs at their schools, it is worthwhile for Catholic leaders, both at the PK-12 and higher education levels, to consider the power of mentoring and how the design of this organizational support e.g., one-to-one mentoring, small-group mentoring, or critical mentoring, can impact the retention and development of Hispanic teachers and leaders. Diocesan offices and institutions of higher education that support Catholic schools have an opportunity to develop critical mentoring programs or partner with existing professional organizations to better support Hispanic Catholic educator communities. Expanding and improving current mentoring opportunities will likely have a significant and transformative impact on the retention of Hispanic Catholic teachers and leaders across the US.

### **Expanding one's social network**

At the heart of expanding one's social network is the practice of bridging social capital, which helps an educator meet professional goals by strengthening connections to other educators. Catholic school leaders have the opportunity to widen a Hispanic Catholic educator's network within a school, across a diocese, or across various sectors in the educational world. Given the small representation of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools, school-diocese, diocese-to-diocese, and educational cross-sector collaborations may be useful in this current moment.

Our study revealed that 77% of Hispanic educators in Catholic schools do not work or collaborate with those in Hispanic ministry; similarly, support from the diocese is minimal. However, Diocesan collaboration those in Hispanic ministry in a diocese provide support. Diocesan collaboration to support the cultivation of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools is critical. Expansion of an educator's social network should not be

a costly enterprise, and yet the results can be truly transformative. Gathering Hispanic teachers and leaders from different schools together within a diocese, across neighboring dioceses, or even nationally can now be done at little expense. Technology (e.g., virtual meetings) can leverage and increase participation when in-person gatherings may not be possible. Two programs that create space for dialogue and support for superintendents across the US are the *Roche Center's Superintendent PLC*, sponsored by Boston College in partnership with Catapult Learning, and the NCEA's *New Leaders Academy*, in partnership with FACTS Education. Both of these programs offer opportunities for superintendents to exchange best practices on such topics as the recruitment and retention of Hispanic educators.

Hispanic educators in Catholic schools overwhelmingly see their institutions as part of a larger system of Catholic schools in their local contexts. Respondents to our survey and participants in interviews and focus groups shared their desire for networking and sharing resources across schools. In the absence of diocesan support, we learned in our interviews that Hispanic Catholic school educators actively seek out support in spaces where they coexist with Hispanic teachers from public and charter schools.

*"We have an association to help connect Hispanic teachers in the community. Every year they have a conference, and so every year I try to attend. It doesn't matter if it's Catholic or non-Catholic, but it's just for Latinos overall. ...I started going to more of their networking events because I have all of these ideas of collaboration with other teachers. ...Most of them are public school teachers, but it doesn't matter. There's not a lot of representation from the Catholic schools."*

- Adriana, Teacher, Great Lakes



While making connections with educators across various educational sectors can provide valuable pedagogical, emotional, and psychological support, spiritual support anchored in the Catholic tradition can be provided only within the Catholic spaces. Practices of spiritual accompaniment and discernment have the potential to amplify system-level support and collaborative professional opportunities. For educators to feel supported not only during their first year, but throughout their career, an emphasis on relationships within a school community across the (arch)diocese and across educational sectors is critical. Investing in the expansion of an educator’s social network is necessary to support educators in their personal and professional growth. Doing this for Hispanic educators in Catholic schools creates opportunities for connection, increasing the potential to impact their retention in Catholic educational institutions.

### Onboarding & First-Year Supports

Participants in our study reflected upon onboarding, also known as the orientation, process, and additional support that they were provided during their first year. Examining these practices gives us a glimpse into Hispanic teachers’ first days in Catholic school communities as well as into the ways they received professional assistance throughout the first year.

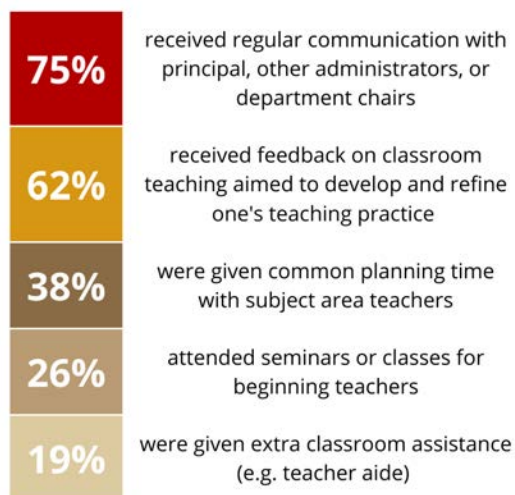
During the onboarding process, 83% of study respondents indicated that they interacted with school leaders. The majority noted that the focus of these orientation days was primarily on developing an understanding of the foundational purpose of working in a Catholic school and building relationships.

School leaders often begin the orientation process with an overview of the school’s mission and vision, along with the values the Catholic school community embraces. These foundational guideposts allow leaders to develop a shared understanding of the why of Catholic education with all faculty, new and returning. When reflecting back on their first year of teaching, over three-quarters (78%) of Hispanic educators responded that their leaders took the time to help them understand this shared purpose.

Among the practices considered of great value were the introduction of new teachers to other faculty members (90%), community building exercises (46%), and a faculty retreat (32%), all of which helped Hispanic educators in the school community get to know one another better. Such relationship building exercises instill a strong sense of belonging in, something that is often perceived as a challenge among Hispanic Catholic educators, particularly in PWIs. Research has found a strong correlation between teachers’ feelings of belonging and job satisfaction,<sup>84</sup> increased job performance, and greater retention.

Further, teachers’ feelings of being valued are often in alignment with their feelings of being supported by their school leaders as well as the development of positive relations with colleagues and parents.<sup>85</sup>

### Additional Supports for Hispanic First-Year Teachers



Hispanic first-year teachers ranked receiving regular communication and feedback on classroom teaching instructional as the highest additional support they receive in Catholic schools for. Similar to what happens in other educational sectors, only a few teachers in the study received additional time as a support structure, such as a reduced teaching schedule for additional preparation time or release time to participate in support activities for new teachers. While many leaders would be interested in allowing for such time, the inability to provide it likely reflects the thinly staffed composition of Catholic schools, lacking additional personnel to cover classes and financial resources to compensate them.

## Classroom discretion and autonomy

Research on recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers has found that educational leaders who provide more classroom discretion and autonomy, as well as time for faculty input into school decision-making, experienced lower turnover rates of teachers from underrepresented communities. <sup>86</sup>In the world of Catholic education, classroom discretion and autonomy are expressions of subsidiarity, which is in itself an exercise of trust and justice.

A significant portion of Hispanic educators in our study (70%) indicated that their Catholic school leaders offered them opportunities to engage in decision-making. Respondents indicated they were approached to participate in decisions such as selecting textbooks and other instructional materials (60%), establishing curriculum (55%), and setting performance standards (33%). A participant interviewed for the study expressed that when school leadership has “continuous confidence in me,” this person felt greater autonomy and the motivation to be more committed to the school community. “The fact that I have a lot of freedom to pursue interests or [other] positions in the school and how I fit [into the Catholic school community]...is really inspiring.” Knowing that autonomy and shared decision-making can contribute to fostering a professional and inclusive culture in Catholic schools, leaders should continue to find ways to increase teacher autonomy and engage Hispanic educators in school decision-making.



## Hispanic Teachers and School Leaders as Gente Puente

A cherished category *gente puente*, bridge builders, in the Hispanic worldview illustrates well the role of Hispanic educators recruiting and retaining other Hispanic educators in Catholic schools. *Gente puente* connect realities, possibilities, and dreams. They mediate, curate, and broker. This form of agency positions Hispanic educational professionals as influencers and leaders who understand well the Hispanic and non-Hispanic worlds. Hispanic teachers as *gente puente* function as architects of communion in the Catholic schools where they serve as well as in the larger church and society. We learned through our study that Hispanic educators who act as *gente puente* play a crucial role in helping other Hispanics discern a career path as educators:

*“A teacher had told me in high school that I was better suited for a manual or technical career — no one in my family had even finished high school. It was through a constant nudging of [a persona puente] later on that I eventually started to see the possibilities. I would have not made it where I am now, without those reminders that I could do it, that I could do so much good, que si se puede [that yes, I can].”*

- Francis, Superintendent, West

This experience of Francis from the West speaks of an identity evolution produced by the influence of *gente puente* that effectively allowed the participant to see possibilities and dream. *Gente puente* not only share beliefs, but they also foster potential and expand the knowledge in others. This sharing of skills and knowledge leads to dreams solidly built over time.<sup>87</sup>

*“It was through a constant nudging of [a persona puente] later on that I eventually started to see the possibilities. I would have not made it where I am now, without those reminders that I could do it, that I could do so much good, que si se puede [that yes, I can].”*

Three out of four Hispanic teachers in our study see themselves as *gente puente* for other Hispanic families (85%), students (83%), and fellow teachers (75%). Among Hispanic school leaders, this percentage is even higher because they see themselves as bridge builders for Hispanic families (91%), students (85%), and fellow teachers (65%). As Hispanic leaders embrace their identity as *gente puente*, they realize the impact they have on future generations of Hispanic teachers and leaders.

*“I see in the Hispanic teachers in my diocese the hopes and dreams of my own relatives who came from another country to make a difference for themselves and their loved ones. I intentionally develop personal bonds with these young Hispanic teachers, to mirror their aspirations and potential. By showing them a window of possibilities and laying down the opportunities before them, we are creating a pipeline for cultivating talent in our diocese.”*

-Andrea, female Assistant Superintendent, Mideast

*“I intentionally develop personal bonds with these young Hispanic teachers, to mirror their aspirations and potential. By showing them a window of possibilities and laying down the opportunities before them, we are creating a pipeline for cultivating talent in our diocese.”*

The interviews conducted as part of this study demonstrate the importance of personal relationships in the process of building bridges, and that *gente puente* are essential in the professional path for Hispanic educators - and others. Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools see themselves as *gente puente* —mentors, survivors, learners, or a combination of all of these. They have learned to compensate for stigmas and biases, learned to navigate the predominantly white environment in which they have been educated and work, and serve as ambassadors for Hispanic people.<sup>88</sup>

Affirming their Hispanic and professional identities, grounded in a profound sense of mission, Hispanic leaders are instrumental in creating thriving school environments where Hispanic students, families and educators feel at home. Hispanic teachers in the classroom exercise their calling to be *gente puente* by serving as mentors and increasing the possibilities of achievement for underrepresented students. Their presence allows them to serve as role models, teacher encouragers, and mentors to other educators and underrepresented students. Their presence and contributions can counteract unfortunate and harmful stigmas imposed upon Hispanics and other minoritized communities in the US.

<sup>90</sup>



## Bright spot: Alumni Engagement

### Growing Talent through Graduate Support

An opportunity Catholic schools have to grow-their-own talent is to remain connected to their alumni through formal *Graduate Support Programs*. Provides mentorship, career advising, and academic support during high school and college years, *Graduate Support Programs* are key features of schools in the Cristo Rey Network and Nativity Miguel Coalition.

One NativityMiguel school, Notre Dame Academy, located in Milwaukee, WI is also part of Boston College's Two-Way Immersion Catholic Schools Network (TWIN-CS) — a network of 22 dual-language Catholic schools across the US. Notre Dame Academy graduate support personnel intentionally remained connected to their young bilingual alumni. This school, founded in 1996 as an all-girls middle school, saw its first graduates go on to complete college in 2004. The school has since expanded to serve 3-year-old kindergarten through 8th grade. At Notre Dame Academy the graduate support personnel has a program to accompany graduates throughout high school and college.

*"Our single best tool for recruiting talent, particularly teachers and leaders that represent our school community, has been the graduate support program at Notre Dame School of Milwaukee. We have a read on what graduates are doing, studying, and are deliberate about keeping in touch to recruit them,"* said President Patrick Landry.

The school has hired nearly a dozen alumnae to teach in the classroom, support advancement efforts, or lead the graduate support program, and many more volunteer to support the extended day and summer program this school offers.

*"For us, what's been the most beautiful part about hiring alumnae is that they've gone to excellent high schools and universities, they are bilingual, and they understand the mission of the school because they've experienced it themselves,"* said Landry.



Alumnae become role models for younger students, offering them inspiration while demonstrating the importance of serving their community. *"I come from a lot of similar backgrounds as the girls who attend the school here now, so I think for them to see someone who is young and Latina, who has a master's and enjoys teaching and has come back to the community, it's nice for them to see that,"* said fifth- and seventh-grade teacher Veronica Romo, who graduated from Notre Dame Academy in 2006.

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## Section IV:

*Hispanic Catholic School Leaders as Agents of Transformation for Church & Society*



## Distinct Qualities of Hispanic Catholic School Leaders

When examining distinct qualities of Hispanic Catholic school leaders, three findings surfaced from our study upon which we want to expand in this section. They have the potential to impact the cultivation of Hispanic leadership for Catholic schools.

First, Hispanic school leaders are more likely to describe their work as a “calling” than Hispanic teachers, who are somewhat more likely to see themselves as “change agents.” Second, Hispanic school leaders are more likely to live in the neighborhoods served by their current school and attend parishes affiliated with their current school than Hispanic teachers. This illustrates a common trend among Hispanic leaders as being profoundly embedded in the life of the parishes and communities directly associated with their current schools. Finally, Hispanic school leaders frequently embrace their role as *gente puente* or bridge builders and advocates on behalf of Hispanic students, families, and others, Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Ironically, despite the fact that most Hispanic leaders see themselves and act as bridges and mediators for the Hispanic community, most (68%) did not receive training or underwent professional development to work with Hispanic children and families.

*I had to do things on my own and try to find out ways to communicate with the families, and really become an advocate for families...because of the challenges they have with language, with people understanding culture, and more. The school hadn't been so supportive in that way.*

- Maya, School Leader, New England

Study data suggest that the evolution from Hispanic teacher into Hispanic school leader rests on a distinctly vocational motivation. This is characteristic in the majority of Hispanic teachers in Catholic schools who are driven prominently by the desire to be “change agents” in their work.

Many are the motivations to discern the calling to be a Catholic educator. Callings “not only [come] from within but also from beyond the self,” and data collected provides evidence of this twofold dynamic. Vocational discernment usually involves external motivation and

internal conviction. Fostering vocations to educational leadership among Hispanic teachers and others demands the right balance among these dynamics. The core beliefs that motivate Hispanic school leaders in our study aligns with what is known as transcendental leadership. <sup>9</sup>Such beliefs differentiate Catholic school leaders from non-leaders. The former group of transcendental leaders place service, spirituality, social justice advocacy, and reflective decision-making at the center.

*I had to do things on my own and try to find out ways to communicate with the families, and really become an advocate for families...because of the challenges they have with language, with people understanding culture, and more. The school hadn't been so supportive in that way.*

Mentors and supporters can be more intentional in the process of guiding formative experiences of Hispanic educators leading up to and through the discernment associated with considering the vocation of being school leaders. During these formative moments, words and questions matter and can greatly influence a Hispanic teacher's decision to pursue leadership. Catholic school leaders, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, may consider questions like this: Do we offer opportunities during staff development and teacher formation to allow all educators the opportunity to reflect on their personal journey and motivations within their careers in Catholic schools? Do we do this for Hispanic teachers? Do we incorporate the language and frameworks of vocation into these reflective experiences, creating a common language within and across schools to describe the convictions that influence our daily work? Do we make known and prominent diverse stories of calling and responding to the call of Catholic school education? Do we listen to and honor stories of vocation from the Hispanic community?

Our study suggests that more is to be done to develop support mechanisms that align closely with the motivations and particular roles Hispanic school leaders exercise in their communities. Performance evaluation, supervision, and reflective goal-setting processes are standard policies with vast implications for the retention of high-quality Catholic school teachers and leaders. These are areas where integrating the language of vocation could enhance the work of Hispanic educators in Catholic schools. The majority of Catholic school leaders in this study reported that they received some formal training and support to assume leadership roles. When examining pathways for leadership development, 30% of responding Hispanic teachers indicated that there were specific programs for educators like them to move into leadership or administrative positions. However, the majority (70%) indicated that their schools did not have sufficient roles that cultivated leadership skills beyond regular teaching responsibilities. Schools need to engage in more concerted efforts to invite Hispanic teachers into leadership roles, including assistant principals and department chairs. Doing this will empower more Hispanic educators called to leadership to fulfill their vocations and signal a commitment to diversify leadership in Catholic schools.

Within Catholic schools identified as committed to cultivating educational leadership, 48% of study respondents indicated that they actively recruit Hispanic educators for leadership positions. This is promising but Catholic school leaders can do more to actively recruit Hispanic educators for such roles. It is critical to consider micro-level and macro-level initiatives, exploring partnerships and collaborations with institutions of higher education as well as parish and diocesan structures to succeed in this venture.

There exist opportunities to train and track communication practices and skills that align with the particular role of Hispanic school leaders as *gente puente*. Involving Hispanic Catholic school educators in “job crafting” i.e., determining roles and responsibilities, and assessing and measuring what constitutes “meaningful work” are some starting points.<sup>94</sup>



## The Making of a Hispanic Principal

### Step 1: Understanding the Context and Motivations

The Hispanic Catholic school leaders who participated in this study were less likely than their Catholic school teacher counterparts to have other Hispanic teachers or leaders as role models: 42% and 60%, respectively.

**Why this matters:** More research is needed to better understand how expanding the presence of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools increases the likelihood of Hispanics, motivated by their own ethnic and cultural heritage, discerning a vocation to serve in Catholic education. Research on culturally-based models of teacher mentoring suggests that there are both relational and pedagogical benefits to be gained from support and formation within the context of shared heritage.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, differentiating between role models and mentors in the formative pathways of Hispanic educational leaders in Catholic schools is crucial. It is common for female Hispanic educational leaders in public schools to have role models who tend to reflect their gender and ethnicity, while their mentors, who taught them a range of specific skills, tend not to reflect those same characteristics.<sup>96</sup>

### Step 2: Embracing patterns of discernment

As discussed in earlier sections, Hispanic Catholic school leaders engage in patterns of discernment marked by a strong emphasis on vocation and external calling. However, it is not readily apparent when in the life cycle or professional journey of a Catholic school leader the sense of calling distinctive to Catholic educational leadership occurs. Exposure to Catholic educational groups or programs during undergraduate or graduate professional preparation is uncommon, with less than 30% of Hispanic Catholic school educators surveyed reporting such involvement. Additionally, 45% of Hispanic educators were not formally involved with any Catholic organization, association, or club prior to working in a Catholic school.

**Why this matters:** These findings suggest a twofold challenge for institutions looking to establish diverse and sustainable leadership pipelines. We observe that regardless of formal position, Hispanic educators in Catholic schools frequently assume important, and expanded responsibilities outside of classroom duties but have relatively limited opportunities to



move into leadership or administrative positions. Without these intentional structures to cultivate and distribute leadership, the opportunity to authentically experience and discern Catholic school leadership goes missing for potentially large numbers of prospective leaders. On the other hand, it is important to note that Hispanic leaders rise from diverse professional and personal formative experiences, and not necessarily directly from a Catholic ministry pipeline. This insight ought to empower leaders and decision-makers entrusted with the responsibility of recruiting, hiring, and selecting leadership candidates for Catholic schools to look broadly and perhaps in non-traditional settings and pathways. Taken together, it is evident that Catholic school leadership has broad appeal to those who live and experience their faith in diverse ways. Limited opportunities for leadership advancement within schools and low levels of exposure to Catholic educational groups, programs, or associations in critically formative stages of a Hispanic's professional and personal journey suggest that we ask: Are service and leadership in Catholic schools being presented as a feasible option for enough Hispanic educators?

### Step 3: Ensuring quality formation and preparation

High-quality professional formation and licensure are essential to forming Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools. Ninety-six percent of Hispanic school leaders who participated in this study have master's degrees and 78% hold teaching licenses in their respective states.

Interestingly, Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools were almost twice as likely to have enrolled in graduate programs in Catholic institutions of higher education compared to Hispanic teachers. At the same time, 64% of Hispanic Catholic school leaders surveyed received no funding to offset the cost of their master's degree.

**Why this matters:** Professional qualification is necessary to exercise leadership in Catholic schools, yet procuring it could be a significant barrier for Hispanic educators who seek to serve in that capacity. How, then, do we pave the way for greater access to leadership formation and certification? With wages in Catholic schools being outpaced by a large margin in public and charter schools, prospective Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools face the dilemma of assuming significant financial burden for a career pathway that comparatively promises limited compensation. Failing to respond to this challenge and losing Hispanic school leaders to other educational sectors will deprive our Catholic schools, children, families, and communities of the presence and contributions of a body of qualified educators who can help us grow as a diverse church.

### *Bright Spot: Onward Leaders Program, Archdiocese of Los Angeles*

The *Onward Leaders Program* is a groundbreaking leadership formation program in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles where aspiring leaders serve as resident principals for one year in Catholic schools with a significant low-income population, led by highly qualified mentor principals. Over 50% of the school leaders who have been formed through this program are Hispanic and have gone on to lead in Catholic school communities with significant Hispanic student populations.

*“By intentionally recruiting for diversity and specifically forming leaders for inner-city schools, we aspire to give families and kids leaders who can understand their stories. It’s hard to aspire to something you can’t see.”*

Onward Leaders provides a foundation for leaders that focuses on faith, stewardship, and academic excellence. Program Director of Onward Leaders, Allyson Alberto Smith noted, *“By intentionally recruiting for diversity and specifically forming leaders for inner-city schools, we aspire to give families and kids leaders who can understand their stories. It’s hard to aspire to something you can’t see, and the relationships and mentoring that come out of Onward Leaders is so empowering. It’s the way to go.”*



## **It Takes a Village**

Fostering Catholic educational leadership in an increasingly Hispanic church requires the existence of an ecosystem of collaborations working together to ensure the cultivation, mentorship, and support of Hispanic teachers and leaders. It takes a village to achieve this goal. Within such an ecosystem of collaborations, we want to highlight at least five crucial areas of partnership, several already mentioned at various points in this report. The main goal of naming them together here is to explore strategies that increase dialogue, sharing of resources, and a concerted effort to challenge silo mentalities that thrive in isolation or uncompromising competition.

### **University-Based Teacher / Leader Formation Programs**

These programs play an important role in recruiting and forming teachers and leaders at the service of Catholic educational institutions. The previously mentioned University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE) emerges as an excellent example of such efforts. While not all UCCE member programs have developed specific initiatives to recruit and form Hispanic teachers and leaders, several have and more are in development. These programs are uniquely positioned to share knowledge and resources with others — and they should. Further, Catholic educational institutions need to offer more affordable and funding-supported Catholic teacher and leadership programs. A most necessary step is to expand collaborations with teacher / leadership formation programs beyond Catholic institutions of higher education, particularly education programs in public institutions of higher education. After all, most Hispanic teachers and leaders working in Catholic schools have been trained in non-Catholic settings.

### **Local Teacher / Leader Programs**

Dioceses and parishes can play a major role in fostering discernment among Hispanics to consider a vocation to serve as teachers and leaders in Catholic schools. The majority of Hispanic educational leaders in Catholic schools are actively involved in parish life. Beyond such natural exercise of vocational accompaniment, many dioceses do not have local programs to support teachers and leaders in Catholic schools with such discernment.

The work of superintendents of Catholic schools in dioceses, as well as that of principals at the local level, are crucial in this regard. Not every non-Hispanic superintendent and principal, however, has developed the intercultural competencies to work with Hispanic teachers and leaders, not all treat the development of Hispanic leadership as a top priority, and only a handful are themselves Hispanic. Some may feel at a loss trying to support Hispanic teachers and leaders when these individuals are present in small numbers in their dioceses and schools. We need to find ways to work together to support diocesan-based teacher/leader programs to increase their focus on Hispanic teachers and leaders while creating regular spaces for dialogue and formation about this important area of Catholic education across the US. The Roche Center's Superintendent PLC in partnership with Catapult Learning, and the NCEA's New Leaders Academy, in partnership with FACTS Education, are promising ventures. Both programs discuss pressing topics, such as the recruitment and retention of talent and the development of culturally responsive practices. The Roche Center / Catapult allows veterans and new superintendents to learn from one another. The NCEA/FACTS program targets professional support for new leaders in Catholic schools.

### **Research Centers and Dissemination Venues**

There is an urgent need to understand well the possibilities and challenges of advancing the mission of Catholic schools in a diverse church, especially as we witness the rapid growth of Hispanic families who can benefit from these institutions. Such understanding needs to be grounded in solid research about Hispanic children, families, and educators in Catholic schools. This report is one more resource that illustrates Boston College's commitment to advancing research to generate creative and informed conversations. We look forward to participating in more sustained conversations about Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic educational research contexts with partners such as the NCEA, Catholic Higher Education Supporting Catholic Schools (CHESCS), and the Journal for Catholic Education, among others, as we engage in a collective effort to continue to produce and share research on this topic.

**National Organizations and Conversations.** There is a growing number of conversations in the US about how current Catholic ministerial and educational structures can better meet the needs of the Hispanic Catholic community. Such is the case of the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic Ministry, convoked by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Raíces y Alas, convoked by the National Catholic Council for Hispanic Ministry (NCCHM). The National Association of Catholic Diocesan Directors of Hispanic Ministry (NACDDHM) has been consistently vocal about advocating for more presence and support of Hispanic children and youth in Catholic educational institutions. Yet, these efforts are led mainly by Hispanic Catholic leaders who do not always participate in larger conversations about Catholic life and Catholic education in the country. Also, while much emphasis is placed on the recruitment of Hispanic children and the support of their families in Catholic education research and practice, rarely does the conversation focus on the urgency of mentoring and supporting Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools. There is a need for more integrated conversations that involve the above efforts in closer collaboration with the NCEA, the USCCB Committee for Catholic Education, the work of Catholic colleges and universities, and the various other ministerial and educational organizations that advocate for a better experience in Catholic schools. Such conversations must bring to the center the cultivation of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools.

**Philanthropy.** There is no doubt that Catholic education in the US thrives in large part thanks to the generosity of countless individuals, communities, and foundations. For the foreseeable future, philanthropy will continue to play a major role in sustaining the vitality of Catholic schools. Many philanthropic efforts have made it possible for Hispanic children and their families to join Catholic schools across the US. Others have ensured that Catholic schools remain open and vibrant in locations where Hispanics are highly concentrated. One area in which there is more room for philanthropic investment is the formation, support, and mentoring of Hispanic teachers and leaders who are already in Catholic schools or are discerning to serve in this role. Such investment can happen in various ways: scholarships for teacher and leader preparation, grants and programs to boost salaries and benefits to move to parity with other sectors, retention programs and other efforts including intentional professional learning and professional development opportunities. University and research institutes can also assist by undertaking further research on Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools. In addition, well-designed diocesan programs to recruit and retain Hispanic teachers and leaders can be very effective.

# *Emerging Insights*

*Toward a Constructive Conversation*





## *Let's Continue the Conversation in a Spirit of Synodality*

Catholic schools are true treasures in the life of the Church. We can say this with certainty in the US where these institutions have served as centers of evangelization, as well as social and intellectual empowerment, for millions of Catholics and others. For many decades, teachers and leaders have given the best of themselves to ensure that these schools are truly life-giving communities. Buildings rise up and fall; old curricula, lessons, and methods of teaching give way to new ones as Catholic educators and leaders seek to respond to the challenges of a given present. Yet, there is always a constant: the profound sense of community that is embodied and sustained by the people who make possible Catholic education, especially teachers and leaders. We as a church owe so much to the many vowed religious, lay, and ordained people who have dedicated their lives to building community in Catholic schools as educators. In doing so, they have lived their baptismal vocation with joy and practice the call to holiness in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday). To them, we express our sincerest gratitude.

A few decades ago Catholic schools transitioned from a mostly vowed religious educational workforce to one constituted by mostly lay women and men. The moment called for major adjustments and for creative ways to do Catholic education. We are still learning to live with that transition and, as we do so, we are witnessing a new inflection point. The face of the Church in the United States has been and continues to change rapidly. While there are many cultural communities that are part of the US Catholic body, Hispanics constitute one of the largest groups, defining and redefining the Catholic experience in this country. We cannot ignore that about half of all Catholics in the US are Hispanic, and so are the majority of Catholics under the age of 18. One can only anticipate that more Hispanic children and youth will enroll in Catholic schools, and more Hispanic teachers and leaders will commit their wisdom and energy to serving in these institutions, just like Catholics from previous eras did. The national research study grounding this report has allowed us to get a glimpse of what Hispanic teachers and leaders bring to Catholic schools, giving us hope. It also identifies and documents some of the challenges that Hispanic teachers and leaders face as they take the baton.

What do we do with the data and analysis in this report? We have a two-fold invitation. On the one hand, we wrote this report to make sure that the entire Church and everyone else interested in Catholic education are aware of the transitions that are taking place in Catholic schools. We as a church cannot afford to ignore the contributions and the challenges of Hispanic teachers and leaders and, for that matter, those of any other group. To that end, the final pages of this report outline ten signs of hope associated with the presence of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools and ten areas of growth necessary to further support and retain Hispanic educators in Catholic Schools.

Our invitation is simple: pay attention, start talking, and take action. On the other hand, we want to embrace Pope Francis' summon to all Catholics across the world to engage in synodal dialogue about what it means to a disciple of Jesus Christ here and now. The term synodality evokes the idea of a common journey of discernment. We want to invite all Catholics in the US to engage in synodal discernment about how to cultivate Hispanic talent in Catholic schools using this report as a resource. This type of discernment requires openness to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and a necessary openness to trust in the promise the Lord made to those who trust in him: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

*"Behold, I make all things new"*

*-Revelation 21:5*

## *Signs of Hope Associated with the Presence of Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools*

1. During the 2021-22 academic year approximately 14,612 Hispanic teachers and leaders are serving in the 5,981 elementary and secondary Catholic schools in the US. They represent 9% of all teachers and leaders working in these educational institutions.
2. About 97% of Hispanic Catholic school teachers and 96% of Hispanic Catholic school leaders participating in the study self-identify as Roman Catholic. Eighty-five percent (85%) of study participants attend church regularly and are involved in church life. For 47% of participants, their religious identity is a motivation to work in a Catholic school. About 21% of Hispanic teachers and leaders in the study are considering further ecclesial service as priests or vowed religious.
3. Hispanic teachers and leaders generally share a deep sense of vocational calling to serve others and a sincere desire to make a difference in the world. While equitable financial compensation remains a concern (73% have considered this as a reason for a career change), especially since two thirds are married (67% of teachers and 65% of leaders) and are raising families, the vast majority named other values grounding their vocation: 98% of participants feel that being a Catholic educator allows them to contribute to the common good and 82% “absolutely agree” that what they do ultimately makes the world a better place. For these reasons, many stay in Catholic education.
4. About half (48%) of Hispanic teachers and leaders participating in the study indicate that they actively engage in advocacy on concerns related to the Hispanic community such as food security, access to education, immigration. About 40% also advocate for high quality education for public school students.
5. Hispanic teachers and leaders are highly diverse. About 40% of Hispanic teachers and 27% of Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools are immigrants, with a rich heritage from nearly every Spanish-speaking nation, mirroring the backgrounds of students and families in their communities. Their presence enriches the Catholic educational experience in the US with important global perspectives.
6. Hispanic Catholic school educators are highly qualified. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of Hispanic Catholic school teachers hold master’s degrees, and 64% hold a teaching license. 89% of Hispanic Catholic school leaders hold master’s degrees, 33% hold doctoral degrees, and an additional 5% hold professional degrees (J.D., M.D., or D.D.S.).
7. On average, Hispanic teachers have 13.7 years of teaching experience, mostly in a Catholic school context. Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools report being in their current role for about 9 years and working in the Catholic school system for 16 years on average. Despite potential efforts aimed at recruiting them into the public school sector and other forms of private education, Hispanic teachers and leaders demonstrate a deep commitment to Catholic schools and the faith communities that support them.
8. Three out of four Hispanic teachers (65% of US-born and 79% of immigrants) see themselves as *gente puente*, bridge-builders. Being bilingual and bicultural is embraced as an important asset to strengthen schools, faith communities, and the larger society.

9. The presence of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools has real-life effects on students, families, colleagues, and the larger community. They are regularly perceived as reservoirs of cultural, religious, and intellectual wisdom, role models, religious practitioners, cultural mediators, and symbols of possibility regarding leadership.

10. The majority of Hispanic teachers (76%) in bilingual Catholic schools feel that the Catholic traditions embraced at their school reflect their cultural background compared to 52% of Hispanic educators in non-bilingual settings. Bilingual schools are not only among the most creative alternatives for Catholic education in our diverse Church and society, but also spaces where Hispanic teachers and leaders thrive in light of their gifts.



*"Children are the joy of the family and of society... They are a gift. Each one is unique and unrepeatable, and at the same time unmistakably linked to his or her roots."*

*-Pope Francis, General Audience,  
St. Peter's Square,  
February 11, 2015*

## *Areas of Growth Necessary to Further Support and Retain Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools*

1. Hispanics constitute about 42% of the nearly 70 million US Catholics. Yet, barely 2.1% of all Hispanic school-age children attend Catholic schools. A total of 294,947 Hispanic students were enrolled in Catholic schools in 2020-2021, a significant drop compared to 319,650 Hispanic students in 2017-2018. In 2020, of the estimated 146,367 teachers working in Catholic schools throughout the US, approximately 9% (about 14,612) were Hispanic. Progress to increase the presence of Hispanic students and educators in Catholic schools remains steady, yet too slow. In some cases, we are witnessing setbacks as Hispanic enrollment declines and Catholic schools serving Hispanic populations close or merge. Ensuring that the students and families in our schools equitably represent the growing numbers of Hispanics in our nation and church is essential to recruiting and retaining Hispanic Catholic school educators both now and for generations to come. Just as many of the Hispanic Catholic school educators whom we spoke to shared how their formative experiences as Catholic school students instilled a passion and a desire to then later serve in Catholic schools, addressing the issue of representation is incomplete without continuing to invest in and expand efforts to increase Hispanic student enrollment in Catholic schools. In a secondary analysis conducted by our team using data on Catholic school enrollment and staffing provided by the NCEA and others, we found that increased Hispanic student representation is strongly and positively associated with increased Hispanic teacher representation at the national, state, and diocesan level.

2. The number of teacher preparation programs explicitly dedicated to recruiting educators who are from underrepresented groups remains small. In the context of Catholic colleges and universities, those programs are even fewer — which is a notable trend given the number of Catholic school educator preparation programs that orient their preparation towards serving in majority-minority, underserved communities. Only 27% attended undergraduate programs and 19% graduate programs in Catholic colleges and institutions. Only 7% of Hispanic teachers were trained through alternative preparation and certification programs, including those specifically designed for Catholic school educators. The numbers are somewhat improved for Hispanic leaders: 42% attended undergraduate programs and 53% graduate programs in a Catholic college or university. Closing the Hispanic representation gap in programs that seek to serve marginalized Catholic school communities — including many that serve majority Hispanic populations — must be a priority for mission-oriented leaders and advocates working in Catholic higher education. This reality is a clarion call for Catholic colleges and universities to redouble efforts to improve enrollment of the number of Hispanic students in all their programs.

3. About 81% of Hispanic teachers in the study make less than \$49,999 or less a year; 40% make between \$30,000 and \$40,000 annually. Approximately 46% of Hispanic teachers in Catholic schools hold additional jobs to subsidize their salaries. Hispanic leaders in Catholic schools tend to be better compensated, with 59% making \$70,000 or more a year. Traditionally, salaries have been low in Catholic schools, and significantly much lower compared to those offered in the public sector. While many Hispanic teachers and leaders stay in Catholic schools because they see their work there as a vocation, many choose to leave for better-paying opportunities. We need to explore ways to improve the reality of financial compensation in our Catholic schools in order to retain Hispanic talent.

4. A natural pathway into Catholic educational leadership is the cultivation of teachers who would consider serving in administrative roles. As of 2017-2018, only 7% of Catholic school leaders in the nation identify as Hispanic, with estimates of under 2% of these leaders serving as associate superintendents or superintendents. Yet, only 30% of responding Hispanic teachers indicated there were specific programs for teachers to move into leadership or administrative positions, with a majority (70%) indicating roles that cultivated leadership were not present in their school. Graduate education attainment paves the way to advance into school leadership, yet 64% of Hispanic Catholic school leaders indicated that they received no funding to offset the cost of their master's degree. Dioceses, schools, and teacher preparation programs need to take note of this reality and respond accordingly.

## Areas of Growth (cont.)

5. Loneliness, alienation, and tokenism were identified by Hispanic teachers who participated in focus groups and interviews as persistent barriers to their success in the context of Catholic schools. Some struggle with the fact of being culturally underrepresented in their schools with colleagues and leaders who sometimes do not recognize their presence and the impacts their representation has on students, Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Hispanic educators serve in essential roles, such as cultural brokers and de facto family engagement specialists, beyond those required of the typical (non-Hispanic) classroom educator. Schools need to invest in the training of personnel to better recognize the value of Hispanic teachers and leaders, while supporting them in their sense of belonging. School culture is a critical factor at play and needs to be addressed directly and holistically.
6. Immigrant teachers account for 11% of all teachers in the US, accounting for nearly 400,000 teachers in the elementary or secondary level. In our study 40% of teachers, and 27% of leaders are foreign-born. When examining their education backgrounds, 9% of respondents received degrees outside of the US; 95% have bachelors degrees, 54% have master's degrees, and 12% have doctoral degrees. Respondents on average have worked for 12 years in the Catholic school system. The majority of immigrant Hispanic Catholic school educators come to their Catholic school communities well-educated, and are deeply committed. Often times pastors are not aware of the talent in their parish schools, especially immigrants who are teaching there. As pastors come to know immigrant Catholic school educators in their parish or neighboring schools, these individuals often have compelling life stories to share with parishioners. Highlighting these contributions extends the American history of centering the immigrant in our Catholic institutions, parishes, as well as schools.
7. Most Hispanic Catholic school educators (77%) reported few to no opportunities to connect with ecclesial structures of Hispanic ministry and other areas of church life — at the diocesan, parochial, or organizational level. We should always be reminded that it takes a village to ensure the cultivation, mentorship, and support of Hispanic teachers and leaders. In this village, we must build networks of collaboration that bring together ecclesial structures, such as parishes and dioceses, national and local teacher / leader formation programs, research centers, publications, national organizations, and philanthropic efforts.
8. Although increasing representation of Hispanic educators to reap the benefits of teacher-student race / ethnicity matching is critical to addressing achievement gaps within Catholic schools, those who direct the professional learning, preparation, and development of Catholic school educators must increase opportunities in an equitable manner for all. This includes professional learning prospects in areas such as culturally relevant pedagogy, high-quality instructional practices, meaningful engagement with children and families, and the equitable use of assessment and evaluation practices to identify and support learning and growth for all. Wide ranging professional development opportunities focused on balanced outcomes for Hispanic children and families are critical.
9. Catholic school leaders, diocesan leaders, and others charged with the stewardship of Catholic schools must make intentional efforts to sustain and expand the legacy of Catholic schools serving in marginalized communities and those that serve majority-minority populations, especially Hispanic communities. This includes equitable, high-impact distribution of philanthropic funding, a relentless pursuit of federal and state funds to support equitable access and holistic support for whole child education, and decisive interventions to support the operational vitality of at-risk Catholic schools.
10. Philanthropy continues to play a major role in sustaining the vitality of Catholic schools. Philanthropic efforts have already made Catholic education affordable for numerous Hispanic children. One area in which there is more room for philanthropic investment is the formation, support, and mentoring of Hispanic teachers and leaders who are already in Catholic schools or are discerning to serve in this role. Investment may take the shape of scholarships for teacher and leader preparation, support for mentoring programs, grants to boost salaries, or further research efforts on Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools. With continued and increased investment in these areas, philanthropists can and will continue to shape the future direction of Catholic schools in the US.

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## Roche Center for Catholic Education

The Barbara and Patrick Roche Center for Catholic Education (The Roche Center) forms educators to become agents of change who work to create excellent and equitable Pre K-12 Catholic schools. The Roche Center accomplishes this mission through a strong commitment to research, leadership and teacher formation programs, professional development, and outreach.

Housed within the top-ranked Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College, the Roche Center brings together a collaborative community of Catholic school leaders, teachers, researchers, scholars, and innovators to support, strengthen, and sustain PK–12 Catholic education. Signature programs include: the Two-Way Immersion Network for Catholic Schools (TWIN- CS), a national dual-language immersion initiative; the Catholic Leadership Cohort (CLC), a master's degree program in educational leadership and policy, the SELebrate Academy, a school-wide initiative focused on implementing social-emotional support structures, and Imago DEI, a program focused on enhancing the diversity, equity, and inclusion of Catholic schools. Research initiatives focus on our professional programs and targeted collaborative projects with an emphasis on outcomes. Highlighted projects include: the *National Survey to Examine Effects of Implementation of the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*, and the *National Survey of Catholic Schools Serving Hispanic Families*.

## School of Theology and Ministry

The Boston College School of Theology and Ministry (STM) is an international theological center that serves the Church's mission in the world as part of a Catholic and Jesuit university. STM is committed to the Catholic theological tradition, which encompasses academic inquiry, interdisciplinary study, ecumenical dialogue, interreligious encounter, and the engagement of faith and culture.

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“Go forth and set the world aflame.”  
— St. Ignatius Loyola

