Four Models of Catholic Schooling in Massachusetts

No. 84
March
2012

A Pioneer Institute White Paper

by Cara Stillings Candal, Ed.D.

PIONEER INSTITUTE
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

Pioneer's Mission

Pioneer Institute is an independent, non-partisan, privately funded research organization that seeks to improve the quality of life in Massachusetts through civic discourse and intellectually rigorous, data-driven public policy solutions based on free market principles, individual liberty and responsibility, and the ideal of effective, limited and accountable government.

Pioneer's Centers

This paper is a publication of the Center for School Reform, which seeks to increase the education options available to parents and students, drive system-wide reform, and ensure accountability in public education. The Center's work builds on Pioneer's legacy as a recognized leader in the charter public school movement, and as a champion of greater academic rigor in Massachusetts' elementary and secondary schools. Current initiatives promote *choice and competition, school-based management, and enhanced academic performance in public schools.*

The Center for Better Government seeks limited, accountable government by promoting competitive delivery of public services, elimination of unnecessary regulation, and a focus on core government functions. Current initiatives promote *reform of how the state builds, manages, repairs and finances its transportation assets as well as public employee benefit reform.*

The Center for Economic Opportunity seeks to keep Massachusetts competitive by promoting a healthy business climate, transparent regulation, small business creation in urban areas and sound environmental and development policy. Current initiatives promote market reforms to *increase the supply of affordable housing*, *reduce the cost of doing business*, and *revitalize urban areas*.

The Center for Health Care Solutions seeks to refocus the Massachusetts conversation about health care costs away from government-imposed interventions, toward market-based reforms. Current initiatives include *driving public discourse on Medicaid*; *presenting a strong consumer perspective as the state considers a dramatic overhaul of the health care payment process; and supporting thoughtful tort reforms.*

Pioneer Institute is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization funded through the donations of individuals, foundations and businesses committed to the principles Pioneer espouses. To ensure its independence, Pioneer does not accept government grants.

Four Models of Catholic Schooling in Massachusetts

Cara Stillings Candal, Ed.D.

Contents

Executive Summary

Thought leaders in education, especially in Massachusetts, rarely acknowledge the precedent that Catholic education sets and the model that it has long provided in offering high quality educational options to students of all backgrounds. Education policy conversations that include Catholic schools would recognize that they are successful with diverse populations of students because they offer a diversity of schooling options, all of which emphasize academic excellence. Generally speaking, Catholic school options in Massachusetts can be described in terms of four models, which are loosely differentiated by their governance structures and, to a lesser extent, the philosophical approach that they take to education. Those models are: 1) parish schools, 2) consolidated academies, 3) Cristo Rey schools, and 4) independent Catholic schools. Taken together, these models provide a range of options for the families of Massachusetts, ensuring that as much as Catholic schools are linked by a common faith, they are also distinct enough from one another to provide high quality choices for people of diverse backgrounds. The following work describes these four models in detail, outlining the hallmark of each model and highlighting how each model is working to provide high quality educational options for diverse groups of students and families across the Commonwealth.

Introduction

Over 15 years of educational innovation in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, coupled with an exemplary accountability program, has helped Massachusetts' students rise to lead the nation and even the world in national and international standardized examinations.[1] State leaders and school officials alike are eager to tout and even take credit for the Commonwealth's accomplishments as products of good policy and hard work.[2] One of the things these leaders and politicians often fail to acknowledge, however, is that their accomplishments often lag behind the high achievement that Catholic schools all over the Commonwealth have been eliciting from students for years—even decades.

Thought leaders in education, especially in Massachusetts, rarely acknowledge the precedent that Catholic education sets and the model that it has long provided in offering high quality educational options to students of all backgrounds. This could be because many Catholic schools serve poor and minority students with great success, thus revealing the comparatively low quality of too many public schools that do not.[3] In dismissing Catholic education in this way, education leaders and policy makers fail to understand how Catholic education can and does contribute to the overall health of the Commonwealth. They also neglect the families of the tens of thousands of children in Catholic schools in Massachusetts.[4]

Catholic schools in the Commonwealth and within the Commonwealth's largest archdiocese, Boston, serve families of varying cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds, all of whom are looking for an alternative to the public school system. In urban centers in the state, especially, Catholic schools are becoming increasingly attractive to low-income and minority families who perceive the public schools to be of inferior quality. Catholic elementary and middle schools in the cities of Boston, Brockton, and Lawrence, for example, despite being tuition-based, have concentrated populations of low-income African American and Hispanic

students. Indeed, even in a city like Boston, which has made great gains in recent years but remains unable to close a persistent achievement gap, some of these schools are a haven for students who desire a private education but cannot afford the high cost of other private school options;[5] there are 5,790 school-aged children in the city of Boston that attend parochial schools.[6]

Students in Catholic schools in Massachusetts, including those in urban centers, outperform their peers nationwide on norm-referenced tests of achievement. They also graduate and go on to college at higher rates than their public school peers.[7] Importantly, a great number of these students achieve such results in schools that spend drastically less per-pupil than their public counterparts and rarely charge families for the actual cost of that education.[8]

But parents are not only choosing Catholic schools because they provide a high-quality education at such a low cost. Among the many reasons that parents—Catholic, non-Catholic, and non-religious alike—choose Catholic schools is that they are perceived as providing a safe space for students and a space where peer culture is formed around ethics, morality, and a sense of duty and service to others. Not only because of the quality of Catholic schools in the Commonwealth but also because of the obvious demand for their services, it is difficult to fathom why these schools are so often left out of important conversations about the future of educational policy and opportunity in Massachusetts.

Figure 1: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, 2010 Stanford 10 Results Compared to the National Average[9]

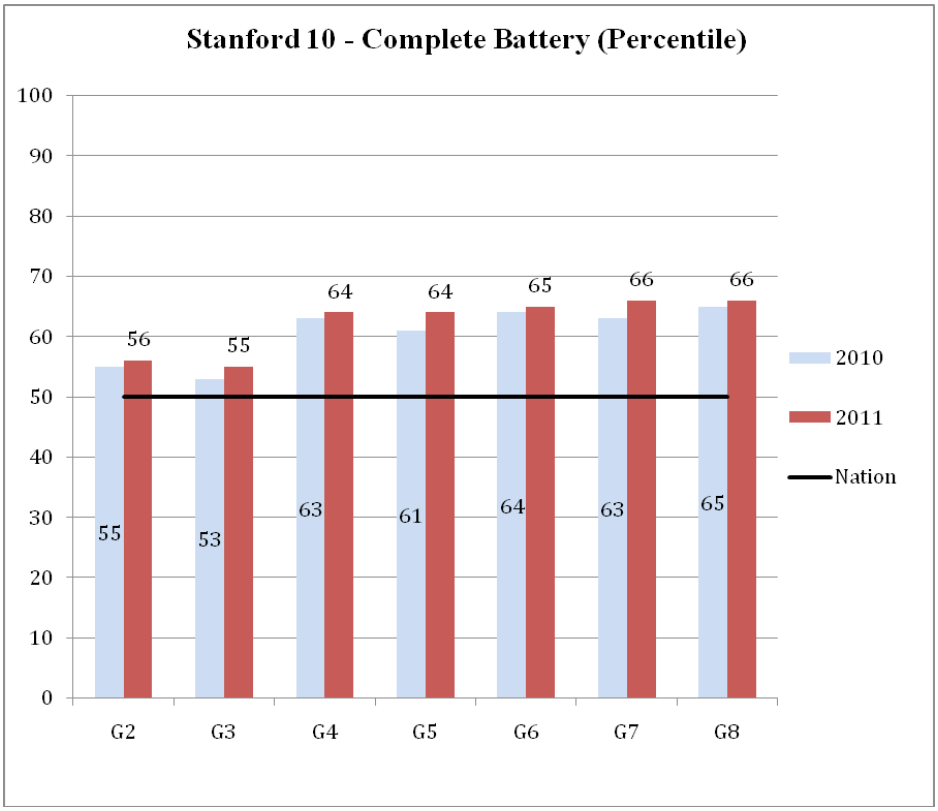
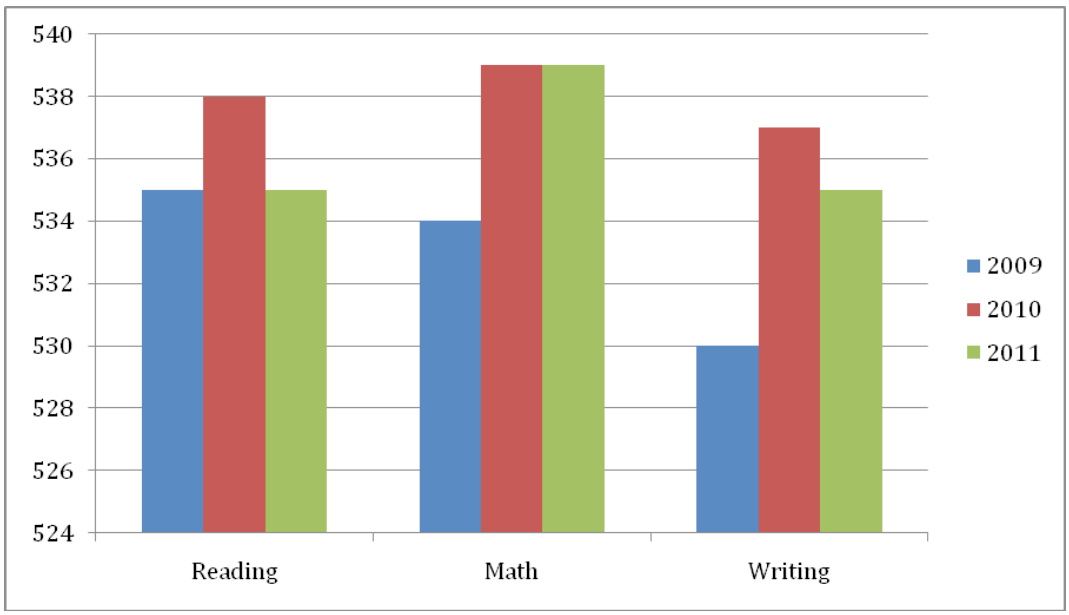


Figure 2: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, 2010 SAT Results[10]



In 2010, RCAB students scored 76 points higher than the Massachusetts public schools average (1,526); In 2010, RCAB students scored 119 points higher than the national average (1,483).

Education policy conversations that include Catholic schools would recognize that they are successful with diverse populations of students because they offer a diversity of schooling options, all of which emphasize academic excellence. Generally speaking, Catholic school options in Massachusetts can be described in terms of four models, which are loosely differentiated by their governance structures and, to a lesser extent, the philosophical approach that they take to education. Those models are: 1) parish schools, 2) consolidated academies, 3) Cristo Rey schools, and 4) independent Catholic schools.

Catholic schools in Massachusetts are a system of schools rather than a school system. The historical, structural, and governance features of each model contribute to both the successes that Catholic schools in Massachusetts have had and the challenges that they face. More importantly, they provide a range of options for the families of Massachusetts, ensuring that as much as Catholic schools are linked by a common faith, they are also distinct enough from one another to provide high quality choices for people of diverse backgrounds. The following pages describe some aspects of that system and outline not only the hallmarks of each model of schooling, but the ways in which schools that subscribe to each model provide a high quality education to all Catholic school children and especially to the poor and minority students among them.

Parish Schools

Parish schools are likely what come to mind for most people when they think of Catholic education. They are usually small schools, affiliated with a specific parish and formally led by the same pastor that leads that parish. As recently as the 1950s and 1960s, parish schools were flourishing in places like Boston and other urban centers across the United States.[11] In the 1960s and 1970s, as second generation Irish and Italian immigrants became upwardly mobile and moved from the cities into the suburbs, suburban parishes

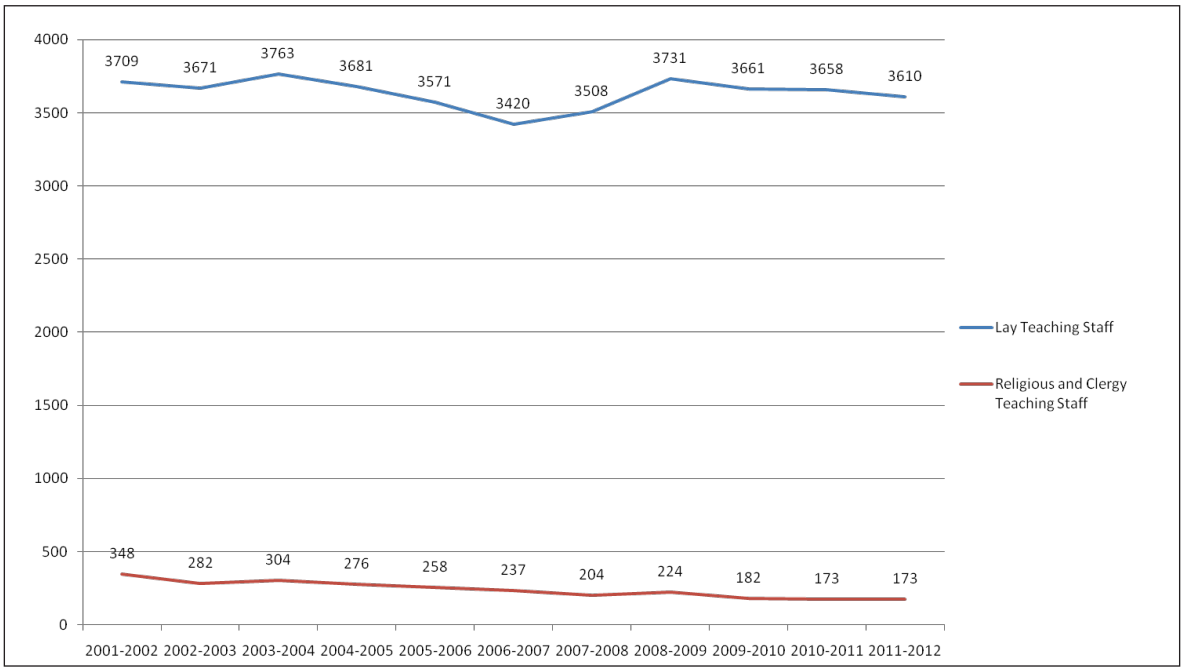
and parish schools were formed, though not at the same high rate that these schools had formed in urban centers at the beginning of the twentieth-century.[12]

There are several key differences between the parish schools of the 1960s and 1970s and those of today, and they relate mainly to the number of schools in existence, the structure and organization of those schools, and the students that parish schools serve. In the Archdiocese of Boston, there are 41, 964 students enrolled in Catholic elementary and secondary schools, and the majority of Catholic elementary schools, are parish schools (67 in total).[13] When compared with the 151,562 students that were enrolled in Archdiocese of Boston schools in 1965 and even the 84,769 students that were enrolled in 1973, this number is quite small.[14] It is reflective of an overall decline in school enrollments in the state of Massachusetts generally speaking and of other major changes that Catholic schools have undergone in recent decades.[15]

The greatest of those changes has been a shift in school faculty and administration. Whereas parish and other Catholic schools were once led and staffed by nuns and priests who worked for little to no salary, today's Catholic schools are predominantly staffed by lay people. Even parish schools, which are formally led by a pastor, are likely to have a lay principal and employ very few, if any, priests or nuns as staff members.

This change has had a profound impact on school budgets and finances because lay faculty, unlike their religious predecessors, draw a salary. Coupled with the fact that few modern parish schools receive any substantial financial support from the parishes with which they are affiliated, this shift from religious to lay staff in schools has meant that many parish schools have had to struggle mightily to stay financially afloat. As will be discussed in greater detail below, many have found a way to do so, particularly because they feel a continuing sense of duty to provide a

Figure 3: Lay and Religious Staff in Archdiocese of Boston Schools[16]



high quality education to families that have difficulty accessing it in the public system.

This commitment to the education of underserved youth is ingrained in the Catholic school and especially the parish school history and tradition.[17] Parish schools are deeply rooted within the geographic communities that they serve; thus neighborhoods in places like Boston and Lawrence, which were at one time predominantly working-class Irish-Catholic and Italian immigrant communities, are now overwhelmingly black and Hispanic.[18] As the demographics in these communities have shifted, so have the demographics of the parish schools that serve these communities. This means that parish schools today, especially in urban centers, not only serve many low-income African American and Hispanic families but also families that do not necessarily identify as Catholic. It is in part because of this commitment to the provision of a high-quality education for all students that the parish school remains emblematic of the social teachings of the Catholic church, but is at odds with the financial realities of the current institution of the American Catholic church.

Like many other Catholic schools in Massachusetts and across the country, most parish schools charge a tuition that is less than the actual per-pupil cost of education and even then admit pupils even if their families cannot afford to pay the full cost of that tuition.[19] It is not at all uncommon for these schools (like other Catholic schools, generally speaking) to provide generous, need-based scholarships to families, which is one of the main reasons that they rely on the generosity of the wider Catholic community and on philanthropists of various backgrounds.

When asked how the school that she leads, The Sacred Heart School in Roslindale, Massachusetts continues to flourish despite serving a population of students that is 46 percent low-income and largely dependent upon financial aid, Monica Haldiman answers: "you offer a high quality product, delivered in a safe/caring environment, and you know that every decision you make, the subjects you teach, all of this is a reflection on your excellence . . ."[21] Indeed, Haldiman is offering a high quality product. Despite the challenge of poverty that almost half of her students face, this pre-kindergarten to

Table 1: Sacred Heart School, Roslindale, MA (Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8), Student Profile[20]

African American	47 percent
Hispanic	35 percent
White	11 percent
Multi-racial	7 percent
Asian	Less than 1 percent
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	46 percent
Actual per-pupil cost of education	$5,500.00
Tuition (2011-12)	$4,500.00
Number of students receiving financial aid	177 (50 percent of student population)

8th grade school achieves excellent results and has continued to make excellent gains in recent years.[22]

A school like Haldiman's is able to provide many students with financial aid because of a generous endowment from a local business (the Roche Brothers). It also works very hard to garner other needed resources, fundraising within and beyond the parish and making informed decisions when it comes to budgets about how to provide the best possible education at the lowest possible cost.[23] Catholic schools, as one interviewee noted, especially parish schools, are not known for competitive sports programs and luxuries such as swimming pools. They are, instead, schools "built on the backs of parishioners—sons and daughter of parents who wanted a solid education for kids."[24]

Of course, not all parish schools cater as heavily as Haldiman's to students of limited economic means, and this is a function of parish schools being rooted in the geographic community that each parish serves. Many suburban Massachusetts parents, for example, choose Catholic education for the same reasons as parents in urban communities. In a community like Melrose, Massachusetts, which the principal of St. Mary of the Annunciation describes as "not wealthy but not poor," parents of all faiths look to her parish school because it offers an education that is not only "high quality and safe" but one that also has a strong "faith foundation."[25]

Many Massachusetts parents that choose Catholic parish elementary schools prefer that their children continue to be educated in the Catholic tradition upon entering high school.[26] At the high school level, however, there are fewer options for an affordable parish school education (though other models of Catholic schooling, discussed in greater detail below, are beginning to fill that void). In 2012, of the 69 total parish schools within the Archdiocese, only two are high schools.[27] This is in part, according to one interviewee, because Catholic parents historically sought Catholic education, via their parishes, especially when children were young and making the sacraments of Catholicism.[28]

For the existing parish high schools, this means that an overall decline in school enrollments in Massachusetts is having little impact. Indeed, in terms of the demand that exists for it, Arlington Catholic High School, in Arlington, Massachusetts, is a bit of an anomaly. Principal Steve Biagioni describes: "we are trying to decrease enrollment so that we can continue to provide a focused, high quality education to the students that we do have." He also points out that Arlington Catholic's popularity among families in the area (it draws students from several greater Boston communities and even as far away as Korea) is a testament to the quality of the Catholic school model more generally.[29] At Biagioni's school 100 percent of students graduate high school and 98 percent go on to college (94 percent of those students go on to a four-year college). These statistics compare quite favorably to the high school in his surrounding district.

The quality of the model, Biagioni also suggests, is due in large part to the great amount of autonomy that Catholic schools (parish schools included) have.[31] Although all Catholic schools technically answer to the authority of the Bishop of the diocese in which they are located, the day-to-day management of these schools is left to the pastor or his appointed school head, unless, as is increasingly the case, the parish has chosen

Table 2A: Graduates of Arlington Catholic and Arlington Public High Schools[30]		
	Arlington Catholic High School	Arlington High School
Graduation rate	100 percent	97.5 percent
Graduates attending 4-year college	94 percent	78 percent
Graduates attending 2-year college	4 percent	14 percent

Table 2B: Arlington Catholic High, SAT I Mean Scores			
	Critical Reading	Math	Writing
Arlington Catholic	519	522	549
National	497	514	489
Massachusetts	513	527	509

to organize itself under a board model (as has Arlington Catholic and, more recently, The Sacred Heart School in Roslindale).[32]

The autonomy that comes from being part of a system of schools, as opposed to a school system, allows parish schools, especially, "to invest money in the right way and make the best decisions to serve clientele."[33] This great authority for making even the most difficult decisions is undoubtedly a large part of what has allowed successful parish schools, like those profiled here, to survive. It has also allowed them to attract a clientele as diverse, in every sense of the word, as the many Massachusetts communities in which these schools are located.

The Academy Model

The great academic success stories that many parish schools have shaped have, of course, been accompanied by the enrollment and financial challenges described above. The financial model on which so many parish schools once thrived proved unsustainable in the face of such a great decrease in the number of men and women choosing to become priests and nuns in the latter half of the twentieth-century. The parish schools most committed to providing Catholic education to families regardless of their ability to pay have been hit hardest; many parish schools have closed not because of a lack of demand for their service but for a lack of funding.

The closure of St. Mary's of the Assumption parish school in Lawrence in 2011 was, unfortunately, a typical story. As described by a story in *The Boston Pilot*[34] at the time:

> *[T]he kindergarten through grade 8 school is closing because of significant operating deficits, which the school has faced over the past few years. Presently, the school is running a $300,000 debt, and more deficits are anticipated as operating costs continue to rise. 'It has also become painfully clear over the past several months that the parish no longer has the fiscal resources to fund the school at the level required,' Father Reyes (head of school) wrote. 'I have made every effort and reviewed every possible opportunity to overcome our financial burdens but have concluded that we have no alternative but to close.'*

In an attempt to ensure that quality Catholic schooling options remain accessible to all families, the academy model was born. Under the academy model, one or more parishes located within a defined geographic area agree to merge into one school and come together under one Board of Trustees. Though the Board is autonomous, save for direction

Table 3: Lawrence Catholic Academy and Trinity Catholic Academy[38]		
	Lawrence Catholic Academy	Trinity Catholic Academy, Brockton
Average per pupil cost of education	$6,000	$6,200
Annual tuition	$3,555	$4,100
Percentage of students receiving financial aid	16 percent	40 percent

that it might be compelled to take from the Cardinal of the Archdiocese in which the school is located, the creation of an academy means that each school represented in the consolidation is no longer under the authority of a single pastor.

In 2012, there are five academies within the Archdiocese of Boston serving 3,055 students in pre-kindergarten to eighth grade.[35] As a new governance model of Catholic education, these schools are proving an innovative way to keep the doors of Catholic schools open to many students and families who couldn't otherwise afford a private school education.

Pope John Paul II Academy is one example of this new model. When the pre-kindergarten to grade 8 school opened in 2008, it consolidated seven existing parish schools in the neighborhoods of Dorchester and Mattapan, bringing them on to five separate campuses and under the authority of one Board and one regional director. According to the Archdiocese of Boston, quoted in a news report at the time, "the reorganization provide(s) greater resources for curriculum, staff, technology, and finances and ensure(s) the 'long-term viability' of the schools while maintaining their Catholic identity."[36]

Academies like Pope John Paul II and others, located in communities such as Lawrence, South Boston, and Brockton, are also making sure that the preservation of access to a Catholic education for low-income families is a top priority. At Lawrence Catholic Academy, for example, tuition is $3,555, which is not reflective of the entire per pupil expenditure that the Academy makes. Even considering this low cost, 16 percent of students that attend the Academy receive some sort of financial aid, and 15 students are on full scholarships.[37]

To be able to subsidize tuition in this way, and much like the parish schools that merged to create them, Academies continue to rely on the generosity of organizations such as the Catholic Schools Foundation and other outside donors. The difference, however, is that "each academy is now one entity vying for concentrated funding," as opposed to several parishes all seeking money to survive.[39] Notes Sister Lucy Veilleux, principal of Lawrence Catholic Academy, which was formed in 2009 and now comprises three former parish schools in the city of Lawrence: "the advantage of the academy model is that it really helps all parish schools involved, relieving them of the individual financial burden." It also ensures for families that prefer the quality and faith foundation of a Catholic education, that such an education remains accessible, at least at the elementary level.

And some of these academies, though the model is young, are already showing impressive gains in academic achievement, helping students of diverse backgrounds to attain the strong foundational education that they will need for success in high school and college. For example, "since its

opening three years ago," students at Trinity Catholic Academy (in Brockton) have shown "tremendous growth in a year's time, notably in reading and mathematics, with over 90 percent of students showing growth at or above grade level. Several students reached the maximum level of twelfth grade on the Terra Nova examination."[40]

Furthermore, students in the gifted program at Trinity Academy are outperforming the average student within the Archdiocese of Boston on norm-referenced tests of achievement. This is especially notable because students in Trinity's gifted program are much more likely to be of a low-income and/or minority background than the average student in the Archdiocese of Boston as a whole. Notes Cynthia Dunn McNally, Prinicipal of the upper school at Trinity, "in the past year students at Trinity have shown tremendous growth . . .the Academy has made some important decisions about retaining strong teachers and moving weaker teachers out. We have also established some new programs, especially in reading, with a high bar for entrance. We are tracking students, making sure that everything they do is at grade level."[41]

Of course, there are also some key ways in which the academy experience is different from that of attending a parish school. The obvious difference between parish schools and academies is governance—although some are moving to a board model, few parish school heads currently answer to a board, and existing parish school boards do not have the same governance authority as the academy boards. Whereas a school like Pope John Paul II has a board comprised of community members ranging from the Superintendent of the Archdiocese of Boston, Dr. Mary Grassa O'Neill, to lay leaders outside of the Catholic school community, a parish board, such as the one that was recently implemented at Sacred Heart in Roslindale, will be more of a "sounding board," without the ultimate ability to hire and fire school leaders, for example.[42]

Other important differences between parish schools and the new academies pertain to school size and even school culture. When Our Lady of Good Council and St. Patick's school in Lawrence merged, the resulting Academy was almost double the size of either parish.[43] A school of 500 handles resources much differently than a school of 250, and students also respond differently to different school environments.

The act of merging two schools also poses cultural challenges. Sister Lucy Vielleux, principal of Lawrence Catholic Academy, acknowledges some of the challenges that her school has faced: "Although the academic standards at both schools were similar," she notes, "there were customs that were difficult to let go of on both sides." Moreover, to avoid having one school's customs or even faculty dominate, the school had to go through somewhat difficult and arduous exercises in the beginning, such as having every faculty and staff member reapply for his or her job.[44] There are also the challenges that all Catholic schools face, such as retaining good teachers who can make significantly higher salaries in the surrounding public systems and maintaining a distinctly Catholic brand of education while ensuring high academic standards for all students.[45] With such diversity within the parish school and even the Catholic school system, different schools express their faith in different ways.

At Lawrence Catholic, at least, one of the benefits of merging is that students are now being educated by a comparatively large number of nuns and priests. The school has six nuns and two pastors working in it, which helps to allay fears that students will not have enough contact with religious figures.[46] The fear of declining contact with religious faculty is one that many Catholic schools face: notes Cynthia Boyle of St. Mary of the Annunciation school in Melrose: "one of the biggest challenges we face going forward is making sure the school is still Catholic. . . as younger and younger faculty come on board many of them have not had the opportunity in their own education of contact with religious faculty. We don't want to become just an alternative to public school."[47]

Remaining more than a simply alternative to public schooling is at the fore of consciousness of all of the Catholic school leaders consulted for this work. In that it is a distinct attempt not only to keep Catholic schools but the tradition of social justice in Catholic schooling alive, the academy model holds great potential in the eyes of many Catholic school administrators and educators. Its ultimate growth, however, will be very dependent upon the successes of individual academy schools.

Cristo Rey

Academies are not the only new model of Catholic schooling to come to Massachusetts in recent years. The state is now home to two new schools that are part of a larger national network—the Cristo Rey Network—that has a very specific mission to bring a high quality, college preparatory education to children from families of limited means.

The first Cristo Rey Jesuit High School opened in Chicago in 1996. It was unique from other faith-based, charter, and public schools nationwide not in its mission to serve a targeted population of students, but in the specific model it used to enable student success.[48]

The Cristo Rey model couples a high quality, college preparatory education with a work-study program, which places high school students in for and non-profit organizations within the communities that they serve. Massachusetts Cristo Rey students work five full days of every month in "170 of the best known companies in the state, building résumés, contacts, and experience that will have an immeasurable impact on their lives."[49] Working in these organizations also allows students to contribute to their own tuition which, coupled with their work experience, allows students to "learn the work and life skills necessary for success in the wider world."[50]

Although Cristo Rey schools nationwide can be sponsored by different religious orders and have their own governance structures, each school that bears the Cristo Rey name is affiliated with the broader national organization. The religious sponsor of each individual school signs an agreement with Cristo Rey Network and that agreement ensures that each individual school is accountable to the greater Cristo Rey mission, which mandates that all participating schools serve only disadvantaged students, require student participation in a work-study program, and be explicitly Catholic.[51]

The two Cristo Rey schools currently operating in Massachusetts provide wonderful examples of both the unity and diversity of the national movement. Cristo

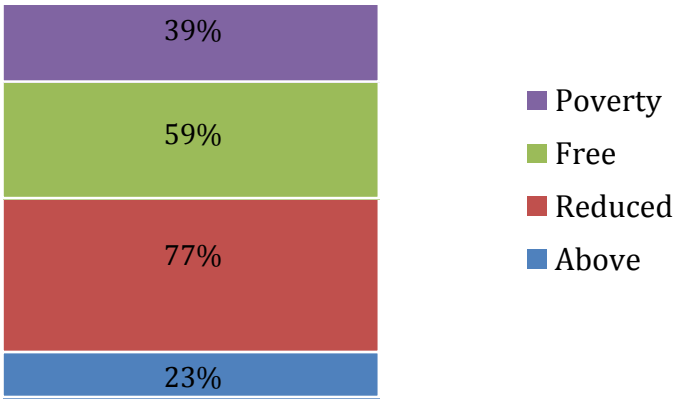
Rey Boston (now located in Dorchester) opened in what was once a thriving parish school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. When the parish opted to close the school, the school's leaders discovered and turned to the Cristo Rey Network, reopening Cambridge Catholic High School as a Cristo Rey school in 2004.[52]

Though it has an independent governance structure, Boston Cristo Rey is a Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston-related school (RCAB related), which means that Cardinal Sean O'Malley is the formal signatory on the school's agreement with the Cristo Rey network and that the Archdiocese appoints and approves board members. Additionally, Boston Cristo Rey, like many other Catholic schools, leases its building from the Archdiocese at the cost of $1 annually.[53] That financial support allows Boston Cristo Rey to remain focused on the only population of students that it serves, those living at or below the poverty line. It does so by keeping the cost of its high quality educational offerings low and putting the money that work-study jobs generate to each student's tuition.

At Boston Cristo Rey, as in most other Cristo Rey schools, only 10 percent of funding is actually generated by tuition that families pay. The other 70 percent comes from work-study generated monies, and an additional 20 percent from outside donors, some of the largest of whom, according to Thielman, are non-Catholic.[54]

Notre Dame High School in Lawrence, MA, the state's only other Cristo Rey school, also opened its doors in 2004. Unlike Boston Cristo Rey, in addition to being associated by the wider Cristo Rey Network (which is rooted in the Jesuit tradition), Notre Dame High School is run by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, an order founded on a mission to "stand with poor people, especially women and children, in the most abandoned places." The Sisters' long tradition of providing service and education to the poor is well aligned with the Cristo Rey mission more broadly. Just as its Boston counterpart, Notre Dame high school operates independently but signs an agreement with the national Cristo Rey network, and serves students who are predominantly poor.[56]

Figure 4: Cristo Rey Boston, Student Financial Status[55]



Both Notre Dame High School and Boston Cristo Rey fill an important void in the Catholic school landscape in Massachusetts. Though many Catholic schools have long operated on a mission that prioritizes service to the poor, because of its work-study program, Cristo Rey is able to stay open and remain virtually tuition free to students when other Catholic schools cannot. Beyond, the innovative work-study model, however, both Massachusetts Cristo Rey schools are providing a rigorous, college preparatory education to students. According to Thielman, "We're finding a way to close the gap between those with resources and those without at Cristo Rey Boston High School, and everyone involved in our school in any way can take pride in our success."

Academic success at both Cristo Rey schools is facilitated by the advanced placement courses that are available to students in addition to a rigorous course of study.[57] Such coursework, coupled with a safe environment where students of all backgrounds and faiths feel welcomed and challenged by their teachers, contribute to the growing popularity of the Cristo Rey model with parents. The sentiments of one Cristo Rey Boston student neatly summarizes this assertion: "I think they want us to have a better future for us, and for our next generation as well. . .they want us to go to college."[58]

Both Cristo Rey schools serve many non-Catholic students (at Boston Cristo Rey only 38 percent of students identify as Catholic) and students come to Cristo Rey high schools from various public and elementary schools in Boston, Lawrence, and beyond. Indeed, many Boston-area students see Cristo Rey Boston as a desirable alternative not just to the city's public schools but even to some of its high performing charters schools—only 18 percent of students attending Cristo Rey Boston in the 2011-12 school year came from other Catholic schools.[60]

But the success of the Cristo Rey model is not as much in its ability to attract students of various backgrounds as it is to ensure that these students, who are as socio-economically homogenous as they are culturally diverse, succeed. In 2011-2012, both Cristo Rey schools in Massachusetts reported that 100 percent of students had been accepted to four-year colleges.[61] Boston

Table 4: Cristo Rey Boston SAT, Compared to Top-Performing Boston Schools[59]

Rank	School	Math	Writing
1	Boston Latin	638	613
2	Boston Latin Academy	548	528
3	Boston Collegiate	504	480
4	O'Bryant Public School	523	457
5	Academy of Pacific Rim	489	470
6	Cristo Rey Boston	480	471
7	MATCH	492	434
8	Another Course to College	439	437
9	Fenway School	431	427
10	City on a Hill	446	416

Public Schools has fewer students who live below the poverty line (roughly 70 percent) but sends only 51percent of students to four-year colleges. This comparison shows that Cristo Rey schools should be proud of their accomplishments.

Of course, for all of the success they have achieved, there are also challenges that Cristo Rey schools face, some of which are inherent in the model. Firstly, these schools can have high student attrition rates. One recent study of Boston Cristo Rey reported that the Boston Cristo Rey class of 2010 began with 100 students but decreased to 41 by graduation. "Faculty and students attribute this high attrition rate to a number of things, including the high academic and behavioral expectations that the school sets and the very adult demands that holding a job while attending school places on students."[62]

In addition to attrition fundraising and teacher retention are two challenges that Cristo Rey schools, like most Catholic schools, continue to face. The 20 percent of school funding that is not raised by work-study arrangements and modest student tuition comes from outside donors. Even in a good economic climate fundraising can be difficult, thus the fundraising challenges that these schools face have been exacerbated in recent years. Coinciding with the need to raise funds is the challenge of keeping good teachers on staff. Like most Catholic schools, notes Jeff Thielman, Cristo Rey schools simply cannot afford to pay teachers the same rate they would make in public districts: "today," says Thielman, "50 percent of teachers remain in the profession at Catholic schools for five years or less."[63]

Independent Catholic Schools

The fourth and final model of Catholic schooling in Massachusetts is one that contains some Catholic schools that are characterized as "elite" because of their very competitive admissions processes. These competitive schools are also often, though not always, able to charge very high tuitions. In this sense, some of the schools that fall within this model are quite different from most parish and academy schools and certainly from those that belong to the Cristo Rey Network.[64]

Independent Catholic schools have a long tradition in Massachusetts, and some of the best-known Catholic schools in the Commonwealth, such as Boston College High and Ursuline Academy, come under an independent governance model. Like all Catholic schools, independent schools are subject to the ultimate authority of the Bishop. In order for these schools to call themselves Catholic, the Bishop must approve each school's official Catholic program and the religion classes taught. Beyond this important approval, however, these schools live up to the name "independent;" they are governed by fully independent boards, which have authority for all other decision-making (unlike academy boards, which are subject to approval by the archdioceses). Moreover, though they may be affiliated with a religious order, independent schools are not affiliated with a parish or run by a pastor.[65]

Even though many of the Catholic schools falling under the independent model are considered "elite" and can be comparatively expensive, not all of these schools were always known for these characteristics. Boston College High School, located in

Dorchester, Massachusetts is an example of an independent school that has undergone significant change. According to Stephen Hughes, current headmaster of Boston College High School:

> *For a long time Boston College High School educated the sons of immigrants. It was established in response to the anti-Catholicism at the turn of the century, and was part of the notion that education was part of a cradle to grave Catholicism. This school was established to prepare boys to take go on to further Catholic education and be Catholic citizens.*[66]

Today Boston College High School, a school that is rooted in a very long Jesuit tradition (though it is no longer officially run by the Society of Jesus), is known as a rigorous exam school that turns away three or four students for every one it takes in. Students come to Boston College High School from the City of Boston, many of the Boston suburbs, and even from New Hampshire. They come because the education they receive provides entre into the country's top colleges and to receive an education rooted in Catholic tradition and Catholic ideals of service to others. "We form young men that have a conscience and will act on that," says Principal Stephen Hughes. "Conscience should permeate everything we do: science, language, math, history . . .We believe in developing a morality (in our students) that says you have to strange the structural things that keep injustice alive."[67]

This commitment to altering injustice through education comes in two forms at Boston College High School. First, all students are required to perform community service. Second, the school give earmarks a great deal of money for financial aid that will enable needy students to attend. About 18 percent of young boys at Boston College High School are considered low-income, though these students, as in many other Catholic schools are not necessarily of minority backgrounds. According to Principal Hughes, one of Boston College High School's biggest challenges is its "ability to attract and retain African American students." Of the students at the school who might be classified as black, many are of immigrant background.[68]

Ursuline Academy in Dedham, Massachusetts, is another competitive independent Catholic school that has also served a population of students less racially and culturally diverse than many parish and academy Catholic schools. An all women's school, Ursuline Academy is known for having an academic program similar in rigor to that at Boston College High School. Although some financial aid is available at Ursuline Academy, the tuition per student is $14,000 per year. Students at Ursuline are admitted based on their scores on competitive examinations and recommendations as to their abilities in math and English. Once admitted, young women at Ursuline have access to a variety of advanced placement offerings as well as an array of extra-curricular offerings.[70]

Much as at Boston College High School and even at many of the other schools profiled thus far in this work, students at Ursuline live out their Catholic faith not only by attending mass and taking the sacraments but also by engaging in community service. Students in 7th and 8th grade are required to perform thirty hours of service per year, whereas high school students are required to perform 40. This commitment to service is seen as a "cornerstone of development" for the young women of Ursuline Academy, who live by

Table 5A: Boston College High School, Demographics[69]	
Asian	3.7 percent
Black/African American	5.7 percent
Hispanic	3.3 percent
Multi-racial	1.6 percent
White	74.4 percent
Unknown	9.6 percent
Other	1.4 percent

Table 5B: Boston College High School, Tuition and College-Going Rates	
2011-2012 Tuition	$16,4000
Financial aid distributed 2011-2012	$4 million
Percent of students admitted to college	100 percent
Percent of students attending 4-year colleges	98 percent
Number of students accepted to Harvard in 2011	5

Table 5C: Boston College High School, Mean SAT Scores, Class of 2012	
Critical Reading	608
Writing	699
Math	617

the creed "one committed person can make a difference in the world."[71]

Although many Catholic schools that fall under the independent model tend to be competitive, this is certainly not true of all independent schools. Moreover, there are some independent Catholic schools in the Commonwealth that, much like traditional parish schools or even those that are affiliated with the Cristo Rey Network, are committed to providing a high-quality, low-cost education to disadvantaged youth.

Cathedral High School in Boston is an example of one such school where the majority of the student population qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch and comes from a background that is predominantly minority and even non-Catholic. Even though it is governed by an independent board and has an endowment, without an endowment the size of its two counterparts profiled here, Cathedral struggles, like many Catholic schools, to raise money. The money that it does raise is used to make up the difference between actual per-pupil cost and the cost of tuition and to meet the cost of basics, such as facilities and teachers' salaries.[72]

Also like many of its counterparts in the parish school and Cristo Rey affiliated world, Cathedral High School produces excellent achievement results for its students. Though not as many Cathedral students go on to attend the elite universities of their peers at Boston College High and Ursuline Academy, Cathedral is proud to graduate 100 percent of its students and send a majority on to four-year colleges.[73]

Even though the financial struggles that a school like Cathedral faces are somewhat representative of the general financial challenge that a great number of Catholic schools in the Commonwealth currently face, Cathedral's independence allows it to make decisions without having to consider the input of any outside entity, such as the parish or even the archdiocese. This autonomy is certainly an advantage of the independent model of Catholic schooling.

Summary and Recommendations for Change

Catholic schools and the various models of Catholic education that are available play a vital role in the delivery of high quality education to the students of Massachusetts. For decades, they have been serving students and families, regardless of background or income, and enabling even the most disadvantaged students to succeed academically and go on to college.

Despite their proven track record, many Catholic schools in the Commonwealth are struggling to survive. Should Catholic schools in the Commonwealth continue to close, students and families will be deprived of an important alternative to public education, one that parents seek not only for its excellent academic reputation but also for the physical and psychological safety as well as moral foundation that it provides to students.

Recommendations

Be transparent about both the successes and challenges of the Catholic model:

Catholic schools have much to be proud of. They have a long tradition of serving the Commonwealth's neediest students and helping them to achieve great academic success, yet not all schools collect and publish the data that can help the general public to understand the great student outcomes that they achieve. By focusing on the collection of accurate data regarding everything from budgets to student achievement and being transparent about the data that they collect, Catholic schools can help families and politicians alike understand how to better support them. This recommendation could be achieved with assistance from a central body, such as Catholic schools offices in the archdioceses of the Commonwealth. While these offices already collect a wealth of valuable data, playing a clear role in data collection for the various Catholic schools that function with great autonomy will help to unite much of this great system of schools.

Pursue innovative funding models:

Cristo Rey Network schools in Massachusetts adhere to an innovative funding model that works. While they still rely on some outside funding to meet the per-pupil cost of education, they also attract a much broader donor base, in part because donors know and like that Cristo Rey schools garner resources for students via the innovative work-study program. Moreover, the kind of visibility that the innovative Criso Rey model has achieved on a national level has brought valuable attention to the student population it serves.

Increase professional development and support for teachers:

Many Catholic schools struggle to pay a living wage to their teachers, and it is not likely that they will be able to compete with the comparatively generous pay that many public districts can provide. In order to retain competent faculty for longer periods of time, Catholic schools should seek professional

development opportunities for these teachers that will renew their commitment to and possibly extend the length of their stay in Catholic school classrooms. Additionally, Catholic schools should work hard to leverage the knowledge of senior faculty members in order to ensure that they better share best practices with younger faculty. Paying keen attention to teacher development can be one measure to ameliorate the teacher retention problem that many Catholic schools, especially those of limited means, experience.

Promote Tuition Tax Credits:

Tuition tax credits for Massachusetts families will make a high quality Catholic education available to more children in the Commonwealth and will also help to alleviate the burden of fundraising that so many Catholic schools, especially those who serve low-income youth, experience. Tuition tax credits could enable Catholic schools to charge the actual per-pupil cost of tuition while ensuring that any family that desires access to a Catholic education can still access it. With tuition tax credits, Catholic schools could also better address many of the important issues raised in this policy brief, such as the teacher retention problem that so many schools are experiencing. If they have the ability to charge the full per-pupil cost of education, a cost that is still significantly below that of most public schools in the Commonwealth, more Catholic schools would be able to pay their teachers a living wage.

Embrace the Full Catholic Mission of Catholic Schools:

While there are many important things that differentiate Catholic schools from their counterparts, across all models of Catholic schooling an explicitly Catholic education is thing that most differentiates Catholic schools. Catholic schools should embrace this differentiating characteristic and not shy away from providing an explicitly Catholic education in the name of attracting more students. Parents of all faiths and backgrounds appreciate Catholic education for the many things that it is, including its basis in the Catholic faith, whether those parents themselves identify as Catholic. To fail to be explicitly Catholic in some defining way is to make Catholic schools more like their secular public counterparts—the very institutions that the students who currently attend Catholic schools declined to attend.

About the Author:

Cara Stillings Candal, Ed.D., has worked in the field of education for fifteen years as a high school teacher, a curriculum and large-scale assessment specialist, and as a Research Assistant Professor at the Boston University School of Education. She is currently the Director of Research and Curriculum at the Center for Better Schools/National Academy for Advanced Teacher Education. In this role, she works to provide targeted, differentiated professional learning opportunities for experienced educators from across the country that have been identified as highly effective by the districts, charter, and faith-based networks in which they work.

About Pioneer:

Pioneer Institute is an independent, non-partisan, privately funded research organization that seeks to change the intellectual climate in the Commonwealth by supporting scholarship that challenges the "conventional wisdom" on Massachusetts public policy issues.

Recent Pioneer Publications

Regulating Virtual Schools: A New Policy Challenge, White Paper, March 2012

Testimony to the South Carolina Legislature's Education Subcommittee in Support of S.604, Public Testimony, February 2012

National Cost of Aligning States and Localities to the Common Core Standards, White Paper, February 2012

The Road to a National Curriculum: The Legal Aspects of the Common Core Standards, Race to the Top, and Conditional Waivers, White Paper, February 2012

Virtual Schools, Actual Learning: Online Education Becomes a Valid Option, White Paper, December 2011

Follow us on Twitter:
http://twitter.com/PioneerBoston

Find us on Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/PioneerInstitute

Endnotes

1. See: "TIMSS results place Massachusetts among world leaders in math and science," Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, press release, December 9, 2008.

2. ibid

3. Coleman, James S., Thomas Hoffer, and Sally Kilgore. (1982), *High School Achievement*. New York: Basic Books.

4. The National Catholic Education Association reports that there were 121,877 children enrolled in Catholic schools in New England in 2010-2011, http://www.ncea.org/news/annualdatareport.asp.

5. McKinsey and Company (September 2007) "How the world's best performing school systems come out on top."

6. Boston Public Schools at a Glance, 2010-2011, downloaded Jan. 30, 2012 from www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/bps_at_a_glance_11-0428_4.pdf.

7. Archdiocese of Boston, internal data

8. ibid

9. Data provided by Archdiocese of Boston, Catholic Schools Office

10. Data provided by Archdiocese of Boston, Catholic Schools Office

11. Saroki, Stephanie and Levenick, Christopher (2010), *Saving America's Urban Catholic Schools*, pp. 13-14.

12. O'Connor, Thomas, H. (1998), *Boston Catholics: A History of the Church and its People*.

13. Archdiocese of Boston, internal data

14. ibid

15. For information about school enrollment patterns (and declines) in Massachusetts, see Ardon, Ken "Enrollment Trends in Massachusetts," Pioneer Institute Policy Brief, September, 2008.

16. Data provided by Archdiocese of Boston Catholic Schools Office

17. See Bryk, Lee, and Holland, 1993, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

18. For overall demographic information on the school-aged populations of Boston and Lawrence see Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE), school and district profiles, http://profiles.doe.mass.edu.

19. See Saroki & Levenick, 2010

20. Data provided by Sacred Heart, Roslindale

21. Interview with Monica Haldiman, Jan. 17, 2012.

22. ibid

23. ibid

24. Interview with Stephen Biagioni, Jan. 13, 2012.

25. Interview with Cynthia Boyle, Jan. 17, 2012.

26. Interview with Stephen Biagioni, Jan. 17, 2012

27. Archdiocese of Boston, internal data

28. Interview with Cynthia Boyle, Jan. 17, 2012.

29. Interview with Stephen Biagioni, Jan. 17, 2012.

30. Data provided by Arlington Catholic High and Massachusetts Department of Education, School and District Profiles

31. Ibid

32. Interview with William McKersie, Jan. 24, 2012.

33. Interview with Stephen Biagioni, Jan. 17, 2012.

34. "St. Mary School in Lawrence to close," *The Boston Pilot*, April 15, 2011.

35. Archdiocese of Boston, internal data

36. "Archdiocese of Boston breaks new ground with Pope John Paul II Academy," *The Boston Globe*, May 7, 2008.

37. Interview with Sister Lucy Vielleux, Jan. 18, 2012.

38. Data provided by Lawrence Catholic Academy and Trinity Catholic Academy

39. ibid

40. Unpublished "position paper" provided by Trinity Catholic Academy, Brockton, MA

41. Interview with Cynthia Dunn McNally, February 16, 2012.

42. Interview with Monica Haldiman, Jan. 17, 2012.

43. Interview with Sister Lucy Vielleux, January 18, 2012.

44. Interview with Sister Lucy Vielleux, January 18, 2012.

45. Interview with Cynthia Dunn McNally, February 16, 2012.

46. Ibid

47. Interview with Cynthia Boyle, January 17, 2012.

48. See http://www.cristoreynetwork.org/.

49. "Cristo Rey's timeless lesson," Thomas P. O'Neill III, *The Boston Herald*, December 17, 2011.

50. Quoted in Glenn and Candal, *Race Relations in a Catholic and Evangelical High School* (2011), The Cardus Foundation.

51. See http://www.cristoreynetwork.org/.

52. Interview with Jeff Thielman, January 18, 2012.

53. Interview with William McKersie, January 24, 2012.

54. Interview with Jeff Thielman, January 18, 2012.

55. Data provided by Boston Cristo Rey

56. ndhslaw.org/

57. See cristoreyboston.org and ndhslaw.org/

58. Glenn and Candal (2011).

59. Data provided by Boston Cristo Rey

60. Boston Cristo Rey, internal data

61. see cristoreyboston.org, ndhslaw.org, Boston Public Schools at a Glance, 2010-2011, downloaded Jan. 30, 2012 from bostonpublicschools.org/files/bps_at_a_glance_11-0428_4.pdf; see also http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles

62. Candal and Glenn (2011).

63. Interview with Jeffrey Thielman, January 18, 2012.

64. Interview with William McKersie, January 12, 2012.

65. ibid

66. Interview with Stephen Hughes, January 13, 2012.

67. ibid

68. ibid

69. All data provided by Boston College High School

70. Interview with Mary Jo Keany, January 18, 2012.

71. ibid

72. Interview with Jim Rice, February 7, 2012.

73. ibid

85 Devonshire Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109 T: 617.723.2277 | F: 617.723.1880 | www.pioneerinstitute.org