

Metrics must measure success by Gospel-based mission

Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

As I write this, I am returning from a meeting hosted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate conversations among (Arch)Diocesan leaders on topics related to keeping Catholic schools vital into the future. I came away from this meeting with several thoughts and ideas.

First, it seems that all of us across the country are facing similar challenges, but it was affirming to hear the various approaches to solutions. I was encouraged to learn that many of the presentations described programs that are similar to ours, yet I also was able to see concrete ways we could improve what we do. For example, we will be developing better dashboards of metrics that will clearly show how well our schools are accomplishing their mission. We must take care to measure the right things, in the right way, at the right time, for the right reason!

Second, I came away with several ideas about how we can assist pastors and principals with the tremendous ministry of Catholic schools. I think we can provide greater support and guidance to ensure that we continue to have the best leadership and practices in our schools.

Third, I was inspired by the caliber of leaders we have in Catholic schools across the country. They are highly competent and professional, but more importantly, enthusiastically faith-filled individuals with extraordinary energy and a desire to continually learn and share their gifts with others for the good of our Church and our families and students. Quite simply, these are some of the most warm and genuinely good persons that I know. It was a joy just to be with them!

Fourth, it was apparent that now, more than ever, we in Catholic schools need to better articulate the distinct differences between our schools and other schools. One of the hallmarks of our students always has been how well they do in college and their careers, but if that were all we did for our students – make them “college and career ready” - we would have failed them. Yet that seems to be all that other forms of education are stressing. I have great hope in our future because the type of formation the students in our Catholic schools are receiving prepares them for service to our society. Our graduates learn that they have a responsibility to follow the Gospel message of Jesus, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

¡Vaya con Dios!