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Introduction

The United States has been concerned about education reform for the better part of the last half century. From the dawn of the Sputnik crisis in 1957, to the publication of “A Nation at Risk” in 1983 (National Commission on Excellence in Education), and to the present day, educational reform has been a major policy issue in the United States. Numerous reform efforts have sought ways to improve education, spurred in part by reports that the U.S. lags behind other countries in international comparisons (e.g., PISA, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009; TIMSS, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007). The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, named the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, attempted to address these and other concerns by calling for standards-based education reform, increased accountability, school choice for low-performing schools, and increased standards for highly-qualified teachers (NCLB, 2001).

In the Los Angeles region, similar to other large urban centers, there have been numerous reform efforts over the last several decades (e.g., Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now, [LEARN]; Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project, [LAAMP]; California Charter School Act,



This study concludes that Catholic schools make a great contribution not only to the Catholic community but also to the common good of American society.

[1992, amended thereafter]; L.A. Compact). While there are a myriad of issues that influence school success or failure, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and its neighboring districts have responded to the implications of a changing population and the inherent educational challenges. LAUSD has tried a number of educational innovations attempting to improve academic achievement, including pilot schools, the iDivision, iDesign schools, charter schools, and Public School Choice (LAUSD, 2011). Conspicuously absent in the national and regional dialogues about school reform has been a discussion about the efficacy of Catholic schools, especially parochial schools that serve inner city urban populations similar to those in large public school districts. While some previous research has discussed the success of Catholic schools in their academic programs and educational model (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Frabutt, Holter, & Nuzzi, 2008; Higareda, 2010; Ouchi, 2003), very little attention has been paid to Catholic schools in the context of educational reform.

Catholic schools have made a tremendous contribution to the United States for over 200 years (National Catholic Educational Association, 2010). Catholic schools were founded historically

to embrace immigrants in the great cities of the United States (Hunt & Walch, 2010)—immigrants who suffered discrimination, prejudice and were not fully embraced by the systems and culture of the United States (McGreevy, 2003). Catholic schools have provided an exceptional education leading to successful career paths for millions of young people through the generations and have been called “national treasures” by the former United States Secretary of Education (Spellings, 2006). However, the Catholic school system is presently at a crossroads, facing unique and unprecedented challenges (Youniss & Convey, 2000). Today, Catholic schools must build upon historical successes, particularly in educating the poor who live in urban areas. They must keep a nimble and cost effective organization with visionary leaders who have the ability to innovate and change quickly. They must reinforce their successful model of education—including the strong core curriculum, high levels of parental involvement, spiritual development, and local decision-making—to accommodate an ever-evolving population. This study addresses each of these areas and concludes that Catholic schools make a great contribution not only to the Catholic community but also to the common good of American society (Martin, 2009).

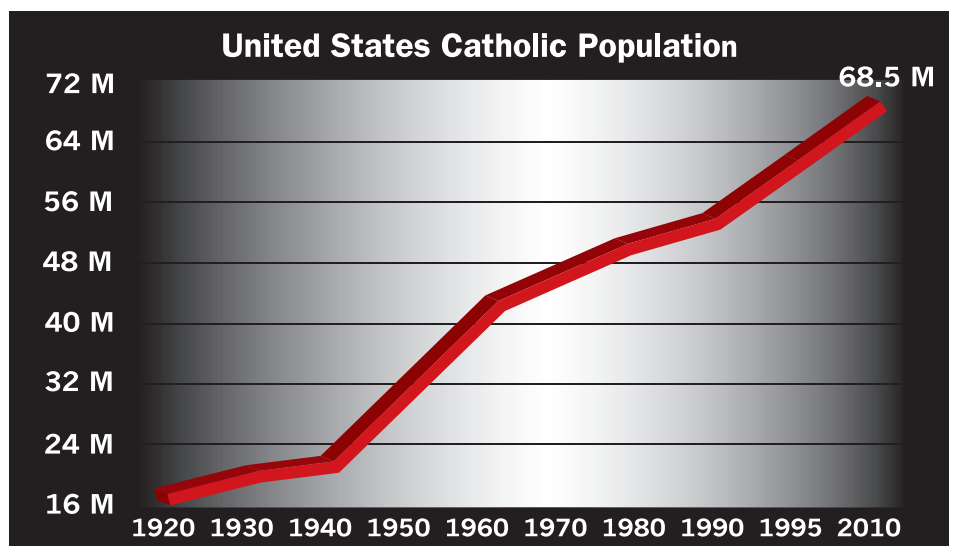
This study builds upon a pilot study that examined the efficacy of inner city Catholic schools in Los Angeles (Litton, Martin, Higareda, & Mendoza, 2010). The present study is the second phase of a multi-phase longitudinal study that examines the achievement results of inner city Catholic school students. This Phase 2 study builds on and expands the 2010 study. The present study continues to investigate the continuation and graduation rates for Catholic Education Foundation (CEF) supported students, and now specifically examines how Catholic schools prepare students for college through the admission requirements of the University of California and the California State University, SAT sitting rates, SAT scores, and college attendance rates. This study further examines the impact Catholic schools have on the communities they serve. To set the context for the impact and opportunity that Catholic schools provide to children in the Los Angeles region, a summary of the national and regional demographic data follows.



National Context

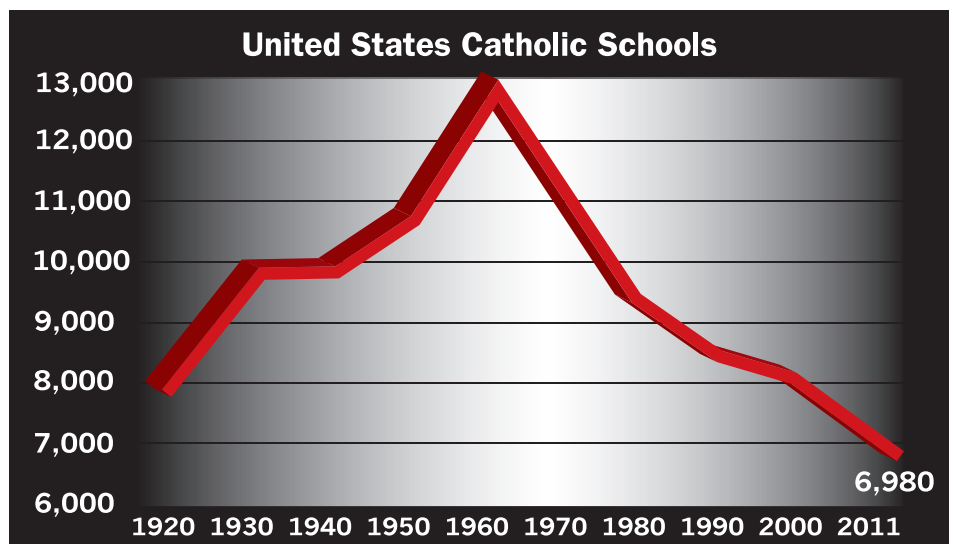
There has been considerable growth in the number of Catholics in the United States from 1920 to 2010, a 281% increase. **[Figure 1]** The Catholic population has grown as the total U.S. population has grown; the number of Catholics has remained roughly 25% of the U.S. population during this period and was 68.5 million Catholics in 2010. Roman Catholicism is the largest single religious denomination in the United States (National Council of Churches, 2010).

[Figure 1]



There is a very different pattern, however, in looking at the number of U.S. Catholic schools during the same time period. After a period of dramatic growth until 1960, there followed a period of steady decline to the current number of nation-wide Catholic schools at 6,980 in 2010-2011. **[Figure 2]**

[Figure 2]

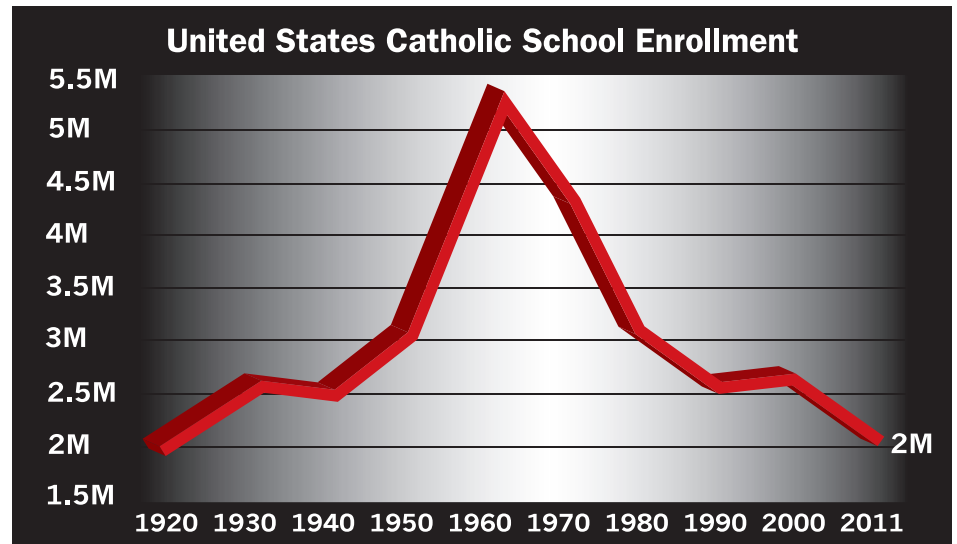




In 2010-2011 U.S. Catholic schools enrolled just over two million students, making Catholic schools the largest private preK-12 school system in the country.

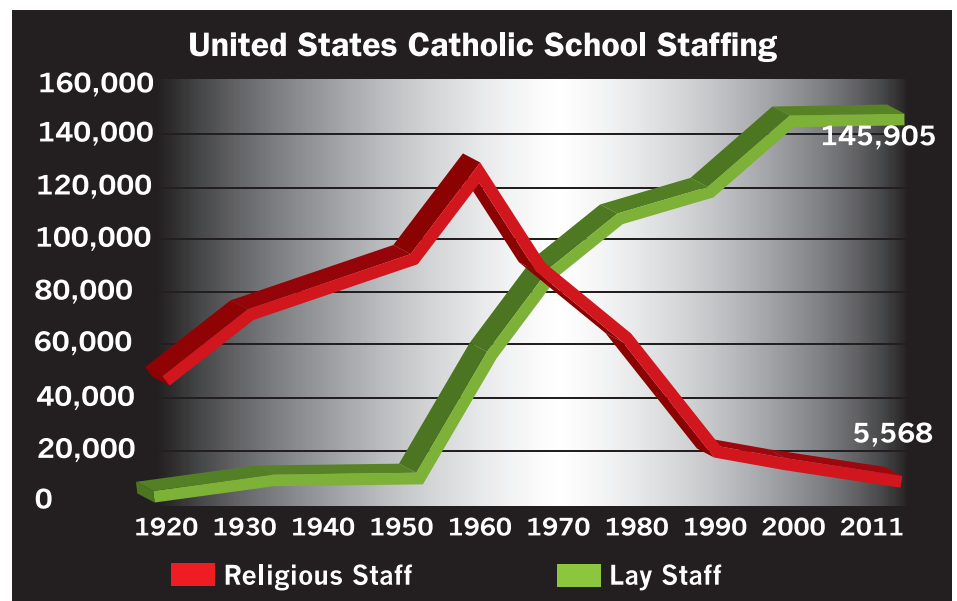
National Catholic school enrollment followed a similar pattern of rapid growth until 1960 continued by a strong decline in the post-Vatican II era. Nonetheless, in 2010-2011 U.S. Catholic schools enrolled just over two million students, making Catholic schools the largest private preK-12 school system in the country. [Figure 3]

[Figure 3]



There is a unique pattern in examining the staff of Catholic schools. The number of religious staff: priests, sisters, brothers, and religious who served in Catholic schools peaked at 112,029 in 1960 followed by a dramatic decline to only 5,568 religious staff in 2010-2011. As the number of religious staff has declined, laymen and laywomen are filling the roles of Catholic school teachers and principals, totaling 145,905 staff in 2010-2011. [Figure 4]

[Figure 4]



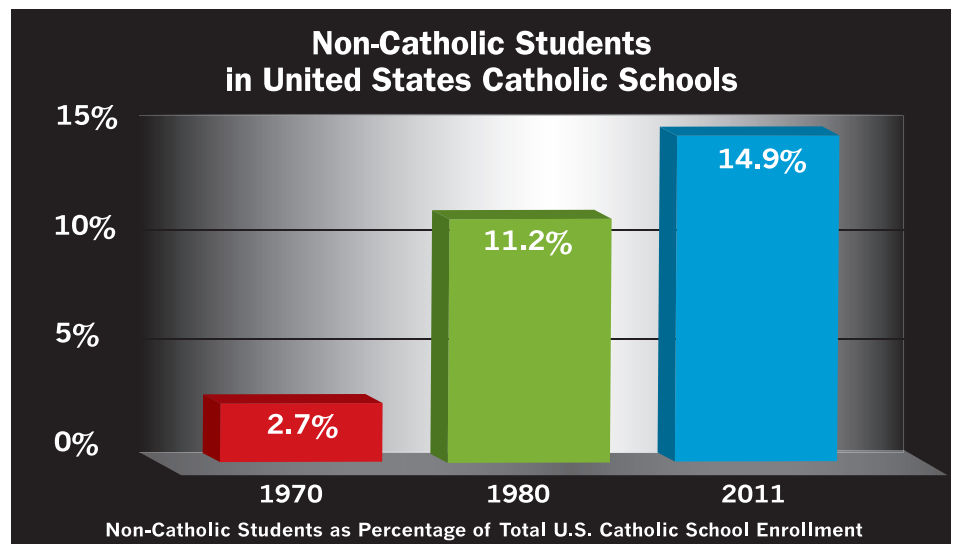


The decline in the number of Catholic schools and Catholic school enrollment is interrelated with the shift in Catholic school staff from religious to primarily laymen and laywomen. As the number of men and women entering religious orders declined, significant numbers of religious also left their orders. The low-cost religious staffing model no longer proved viable, which increased tuition and made Catholic schools less affordable for the students in the communities in which these schools were located (McDonald & Schultz, 2011). Changing attitudes toward Catholics in the U.S. after the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 led to greater acceptance of Catholic students in public schools (McLellan, 2000). Consequently, greater number of Catholics began to enroll in public schools.

While Catholic schools were founded primarily to serve the immigrant Catholic community, today they welcome students of all faiths to serve the communities in which they are located. In examining the number of non-Catholic students as a percentage of total U.S. Catholic school enrollment, there was dramatic growth from 2.7% in 1970 to 14.9% in 2010-2011.

[Figure 5]

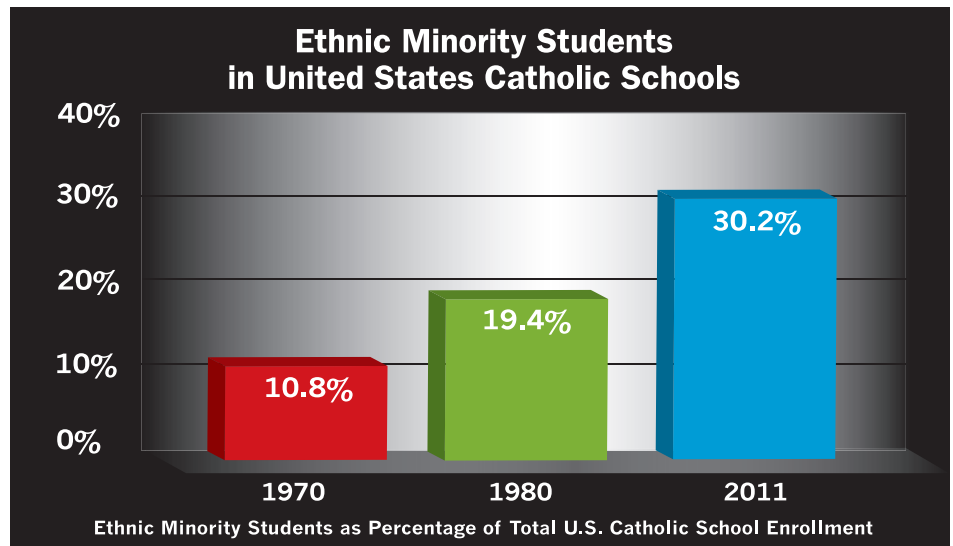
[Figure 5]



The Catholic school community is increasingly diverse in ethnicity. As a percentage of total U.S. Catholic school enrollment, the number of ethnic minority students increased from 10.8% in 1970 to 30.2% in 2010-2011. **[Figure 6]** This report will later examine the ethnic data for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles compared with national demographics. Catholic schools were founded to serve poor immigrant children. This study examines CEF supported students who are primarily from ethnic minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

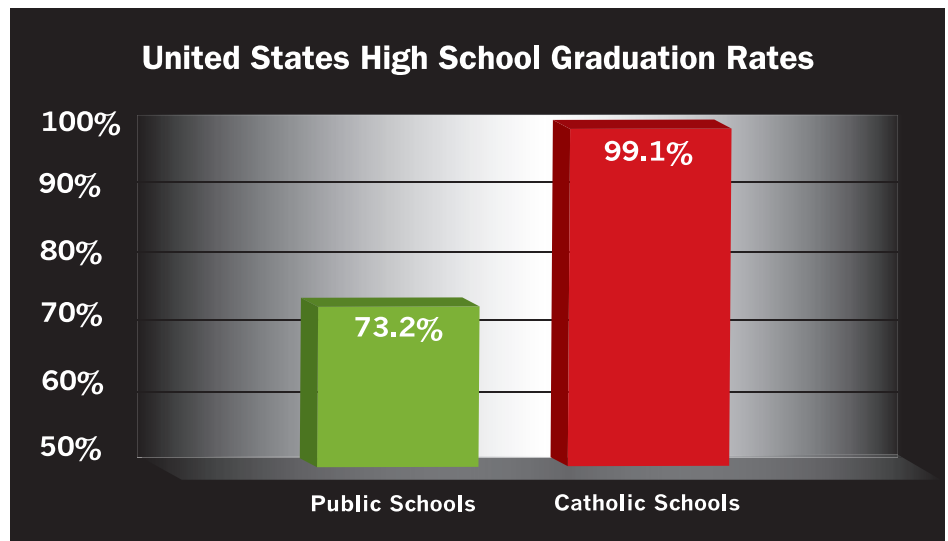
While Catholic schools were founded primarily to serve the immigrant Catholic community, today they welcome students of all faiths to serve the communities in which they are located.

[Figure 6]



While there are differences in the two systems of education, it is informative to compare academic achievement of Catholic schools to public schools. In analyzing national graduation rates from 2007-2008, Catholic schools graduated 99.1% of their students while the public school system graduated 73.2%. [Figure 7]

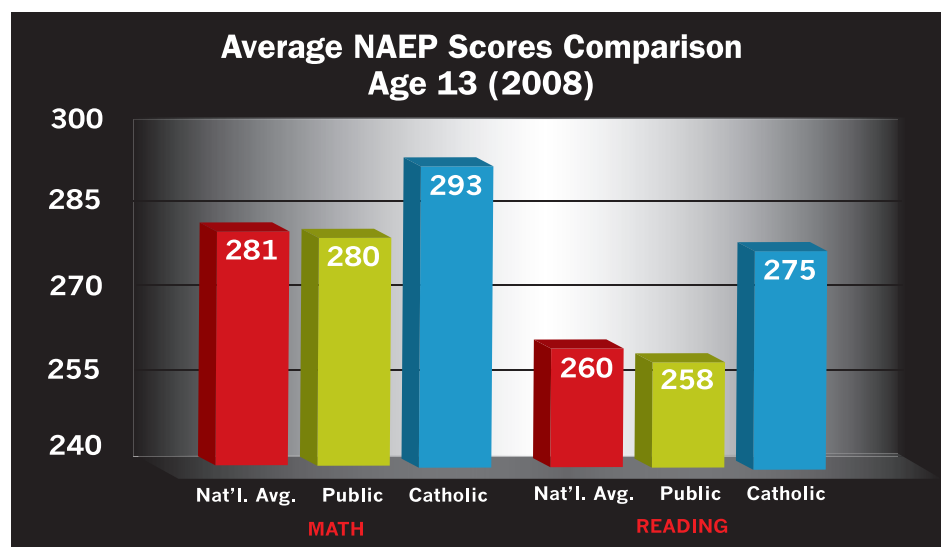
[Figure 7]



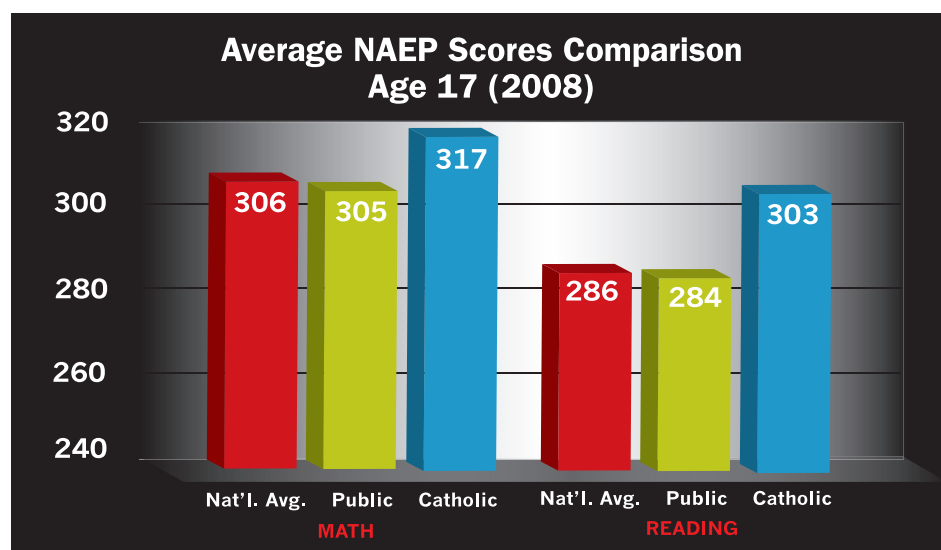
The scores for Catholic school students are higher than the public school average and the national average, which includes all public and private institutions.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in mathematics and reading provide another point of comparison. The average scores for Catholic school students on the NAEP are reported at ages 13 and 17 for both mathematics and reading. The scores on this examination for Catholic school students are higher than both the public school average and the national average, which includes all public and private institutions. [Figures 8 & 9]

[Figure 8]

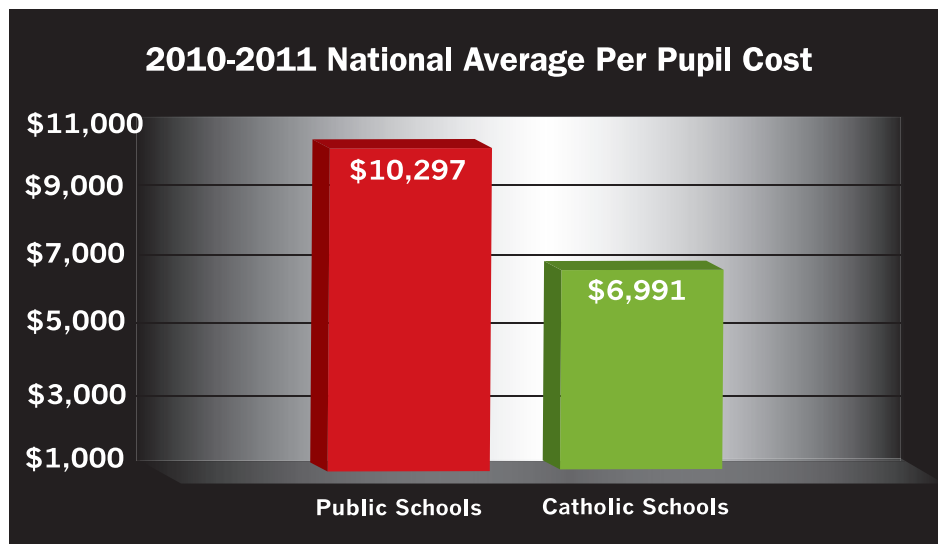


[Figure 9]



The study would not be complete without looking at the cost to educate a student in the Catholic school system and the comparative cost for public schools. The average 2010-2011 per pupil cost for public schools was \$10,297 while the Catholic school cost was \$6,991 per pupil. **[Figure 10]** These data coupled with academic achievement data, indicate that Catholic schools are able to provide a higher quality education with a lower per pupil cost. A report by the National Catholic Educational Association estimated that the national annual savings provided by Catholic schools to the United States was \$21.3 billion in 2010-2011 (McDonald & Schultz, 2011). This represents the cost to the U.S. if the entire Catholic school system ceased to exist and all of the children, teachers, principals, and facilities had to be absorbed into the public school system.

[Figure 10]



These indicators taken together—schools that are serving an ethnically diverse population, serving the poor, and showing exceptional results at a low cost—demonstrate the value Catholic schools add to the communities that make up this country.

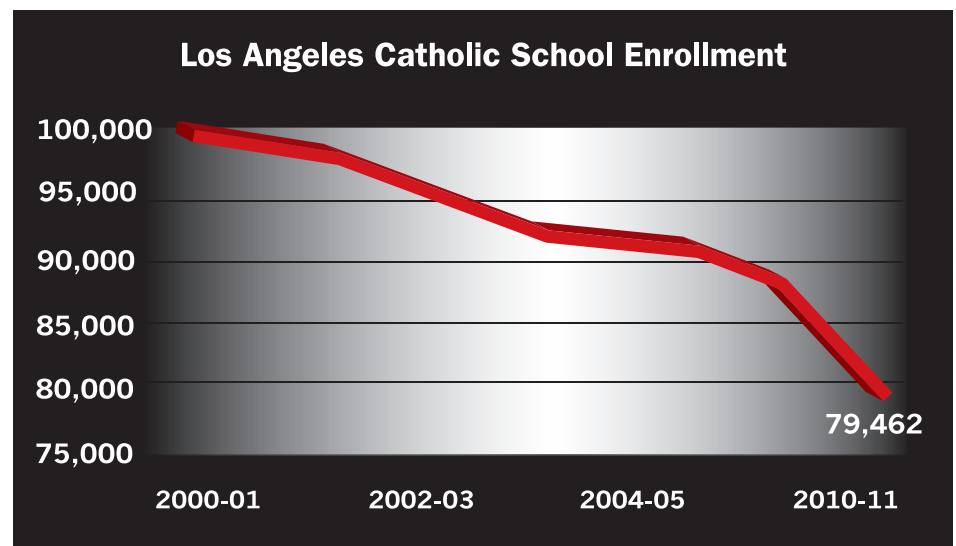


Los Angeles Context



Catholic schools are viewed as the pillars of their local communities because they provide a quality education in a safe, drug, and gang-free environment. This section specifically looks at the impact of Catholic education on Catholic school students enrolled in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the fourth largest Archdiocese in the country based on enrollment (McDonald & Schultz, 2011) and the largest in terms of geographical area. There has been a decline in school enrollment in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles over the last 10 years, from 99,708 students in 2000-2001 to 79,462 in 2010-2011. **[Figure 11]** According to the Catholic Education Foundation, this 20% decline in 10 years largely has been driven by economic factors and the decreasing inability of families to pay tuition. This decline follows the national trend and is very concerning for the future of Catholic education in Los Angeles.

[Figure 11]

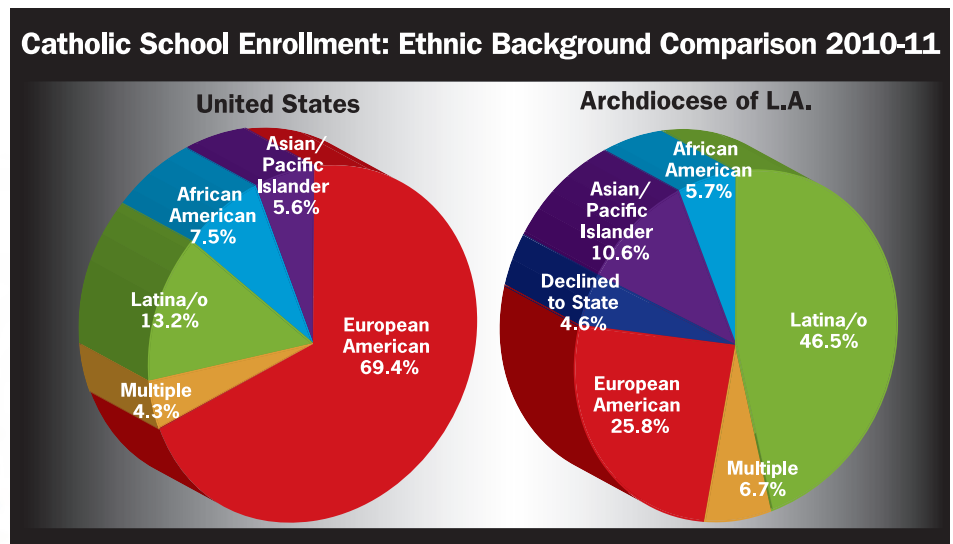


Catholic schools in the United States enrolled approximately 30% of students from ethnic minority backgrounds in 2010-2011, while the enrollment in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles was 69.5% for the same populations.



Los Angeles area Catholic schools continue to grow in student ethnic diversity, while the number of students from family backgrounds of low socioeconomic status also increases.¹ The student ethnic diversity in Los Angeles Catholic schools is much greater than Catholic schools nationally. Catholic schools in the United States enrolled approximately 30% of their students from ethnic minority backgrounds in 2010-2011, while the enrollment in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles was 69.5% for the same populations. This includes Latina/o students attending Los Angeles Catholic schools at 46.5% and 23% of students from other ethnic minority backgrounds. **[Figure 12]** These demographics in Los Angeles reflect the demographics of the communities served.

[Figure 12]



¹According to the Catholic Education Foundation, applications for CEF scholarships have almost doubled in the last year. As noted in Table 1, Appendix A, the CEF family income guidelines are at or near the federal poverty level. It should be noted that CEF tuition awards are not provided on the basis of academic criteria, but strictly on financial need.



LMU Catholic School Research Project

The first phase of the LMU Catholic School Research Project began in 2008 in partnership with the Catholic Education Foundation and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Department of Catholic Schools. The purpose of this study was to examine students who received tuition awards from the Catholic Education Foundation to attend Catholic schools in Los Angeles. The Catholic Education Foundation was founded in 1987 to provide financial assistance to students wanting to pursue a Catholic school education but were unable to afford Catholic school tuition. One student remarked on the impact of the CEF tuition assistance, “I was really grateful. Out of all the students they could choose, I was the one; it gave me motivation to try harder.” These students are ethnically diverse and are among the most disadvantaged students in Los Angeles, living predominately in under-resourced inner city areas. To apply for a CEF tuition award, families must be at or near the federal poverty level. [See Table 1, page 25]

CATHOLIC SCHOOL RESEARCH PROJECT PHASE 1 SUMMARY



The results of the first phase of this ongoing research have been published previously (Litton, Martin, Higareda, & Mendoza, 2010). That study examined the continuation rate from eighth to ninth grade and the graduation rate from twelfth grade for students receiving CEF tuition awards. The continuation rate of these CEF funded students from eighth to ninth grade in 2001 was 100%, with 69% continuing on to Catholic high schools. In analyzing the graduation rate, there was tremendous academic achievement in inner city Los Angeles Catholic schools, with 98% of the study sample graduating from high school with a diploma in four years. The study sample was followed from the beginning of ninth grade to their graduation from twelfth grade in 2005, utilizing the most robust metric for graduation rate. The graduation rate is significantly higher than the 71% graduation rate for all California public schools and the 66% graduation rate for LAUSD in the 2004-2005 study year. The CEF students in the sample were 80% Latina/o, reflecting the demographics of the communities from which they come.

... there was tremendous academic achievement in inner city Los Angeles Catholic schools, with 98% of the study sample graduating from high school with a diploma in four years.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL RESEARCH PROJECT PHASE 2

The present study set out to build upon and expand the Phase 1 study. For longitudinal studies, it is important to replicate the previous findings concerning continuation and graduation rates with a different cohort of students in order to determine if similar results would be achieved. Thus, that part of the Phase 1 study was repeated and the methodology and sample sizes used for the second phase are reported in Appendix A. The Phase 2 continuation and graduation rates are reported next.

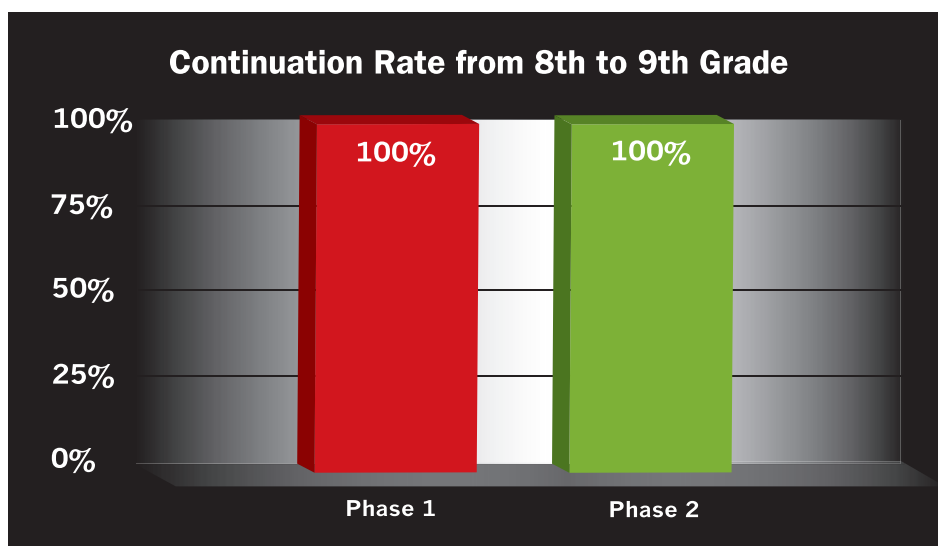


Founded historically to embrace immigrants in the great cities of the United States, Catholic schools have made a tremendous contribution to the United States for over 200 years.

CONTINUATION RATE

From a sample of 629 CEF supported students in Catholic schools, 100% continued their education from eighth grade to ninth grade in 2004. **[Figure 13]** Within this sample, 64.4% continued to a Catholic high school, 28.8% continued to a public high school, 4.9% to a charter school, 1.6% to a magnet school, 0.2% to a private Christian school, and 0.2% to a prep school. The Catholic Education Foundation attributes the 5% decline in the number of students continuing to Catholic high schools between Phases 1 and 2 to the cost of attending Catholic high school in challenging economic times.

[Figure 13]

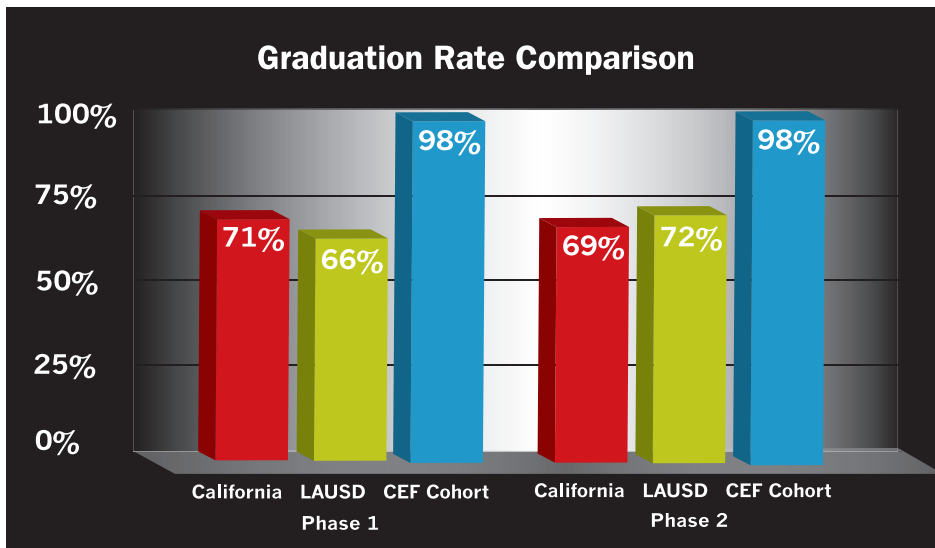


GRADUATION RATE

From a sample of 336 CEF supported students in Catholic schools, who were followed throughout their high school education from ninth grade through twelfth grade, findings indicate that 98.2% graduated with a high school diploma in 2008, 1.5% did not complete all required credits for graduation, and 0.3% left school prior to graduation. This compares to the 69% graduation rate in California public schools and the 72% graduation rate in LAUSD for the same time period.²

²Both the California and LAUSD figures use the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) methodology wherein students are followed from the beginning of their twelfth grade year to the end of their twelfth grade year. These figures do not account for missing data or those students who left school during ninth through eleventh grade.

[Figure 14]



The above data reported in Phase 2 validate the findings on continuation and graduation rates in the Phase 1 study. The continuation rate of 100% and the slightly higher graduation rate of 98% coupled with larger sample sizes indicate that these strong achievements are occurring over time.

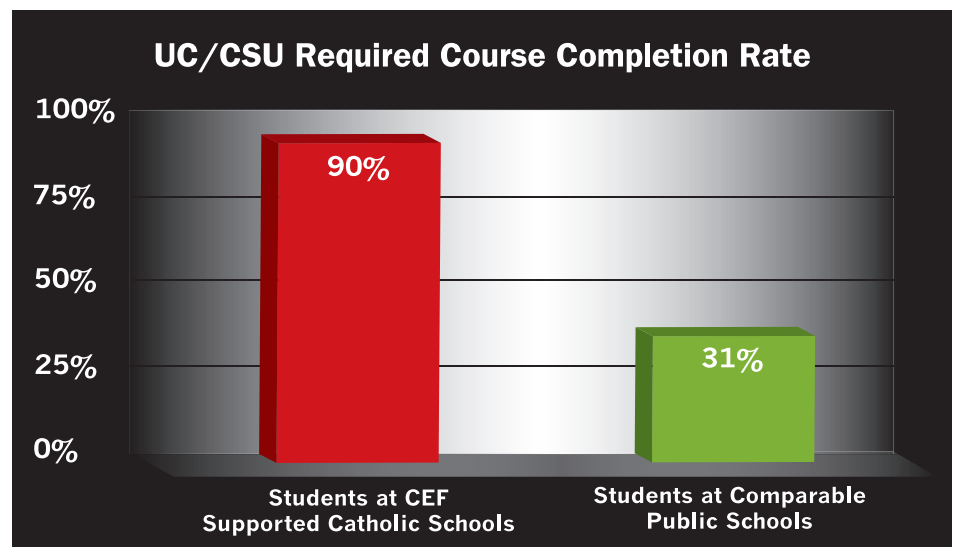
PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

The Catholic high schools of the Los Angeles Archdiocese are college preparatory schools. There is a belief and expectation in Catholic high schools that college is the next step for lifelong success for all students. Based on the curriculum and guidance provided by Catholic educators throughout high school, Catholic school students are on a college-bound path from their first day as ninth graders through the college application process in twelfth grade. This goal is reinforced and supported for all students during their high school years. Most CEF students are first generation college attendees. The following sections discuss indicators of how Catholic high schools prepare students for college success.

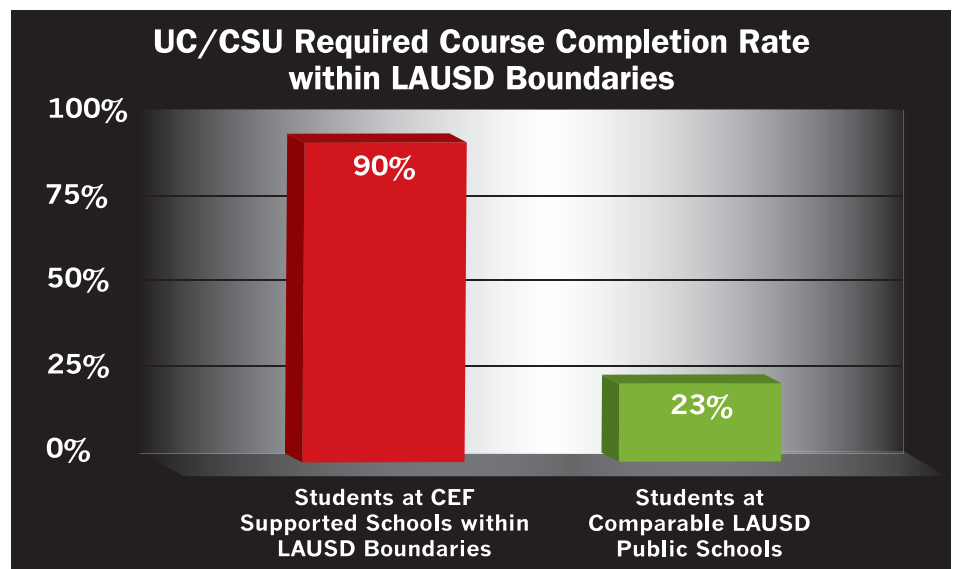
UC/CSU REQUIRED COURSE COMPLETION RATE³

All Los Angeles Archdiocesan high schools offer the courses required for admission to the University of California and California State University systems. Ninety percent of students at CEF supported schools graduated with the required UC/CSU courses completed. Thirty-one percent of students at comparable public high schools graduated with these courses completed. **[Figure 15]** In examining the sub-sample of students at CEF supported schools within LAUSD boundaries, 90% of these students completed the required courses compared to 23% of comparable LAUSD students. **[Figure 16]**

[Figure 15]



[Figure 16]



³The universities have delineated the specific high school courses required for admission to their respective systems. These courses are commonly referred to as UC/CSU courses.

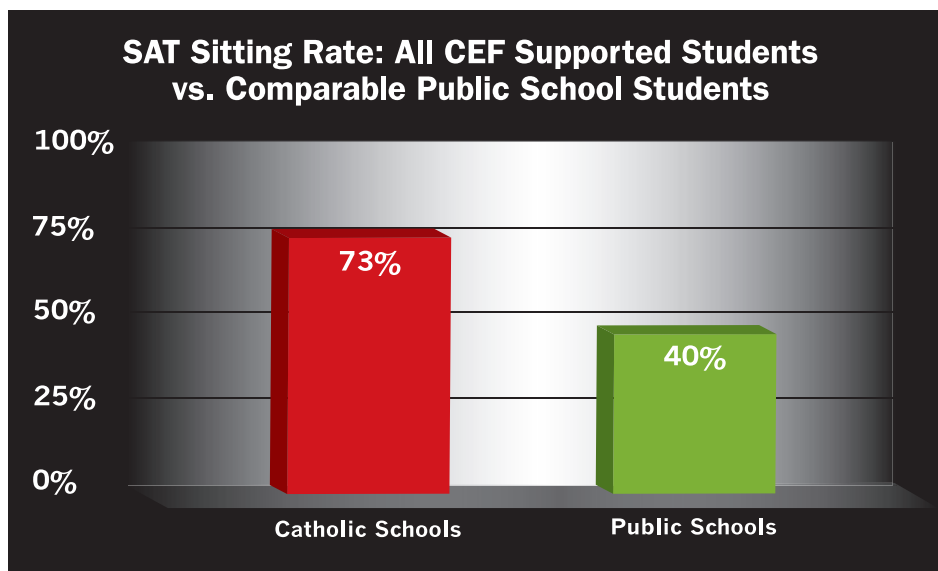


The SAT sitting rate for CEF supported students at Catholic high schools was 73% while the sitting rate for students at comparable public schools was 40%.”

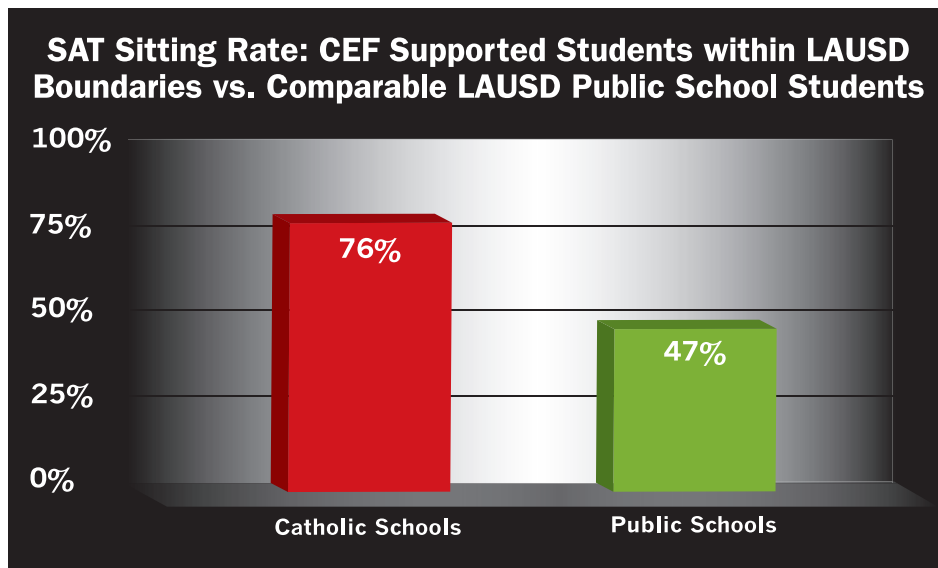
SAT SITTING RATE

Taking the SAT examination is an important step toward college acceptance. While some colleges and universities prefer the ACT examination, the majority require the SAT. One indicator of preparation for college is the rate at which students sit for the SAT. The SAT sitting rate for CEF supported students at Catholic high schools was 73% while the sitting rate for students at comparable public schools was 40%. **[Figure 17]** The SAT sitting rate for CEF supported students at Catholic schools within LAUSD boundaries was 76%, compared with 47% for comparable LAUSD public schools. **[Figure 18]** These data indicate the strong impact that Catholic schools have on preparing students for college.

[Figure 17]



[Figure 18]



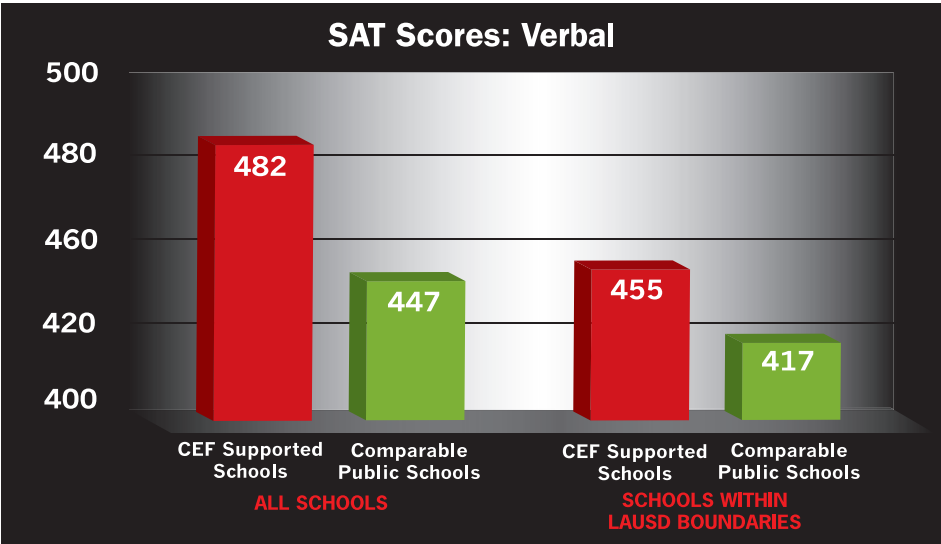


Across the verbal, math, and writing sections of the SAT, students in CEF supported schools had higher scores than students in comparable public schools.

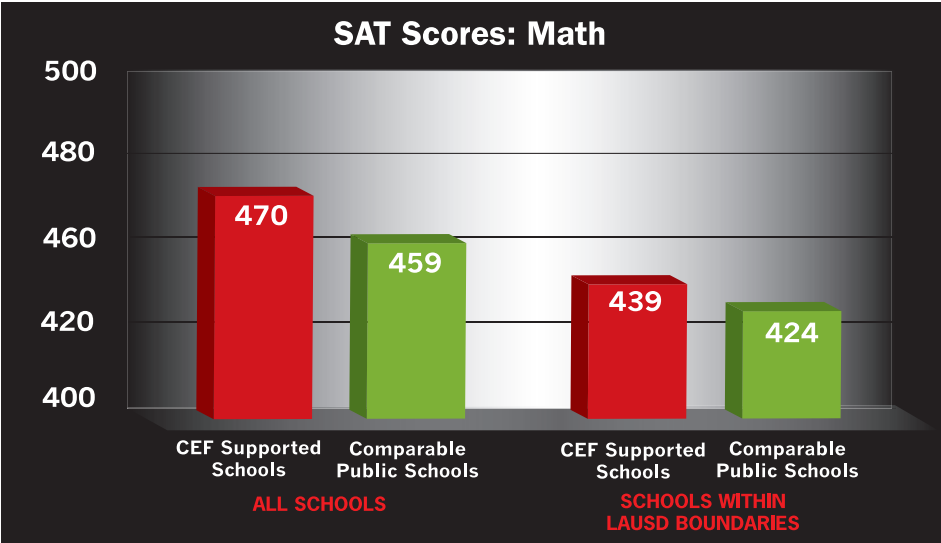
SAT SCORES

SAT test scores are another indicator of college preparation. Across the verbal, math, and writing sections of the SAT, students in CEF supported schools had higher scores than students in comparable public schools. This was true for all 29 CEF supported Catholic schools as well as the 10 CEF supported Catholic schools within LAUSD boundaries. [Figures 19-21] These data, coupled with the SAT sitting rate data, indicate that students in Los Angeles Catholic schools are taking the SAT at higher rates with better results than their public school counterparts at comparable schools.

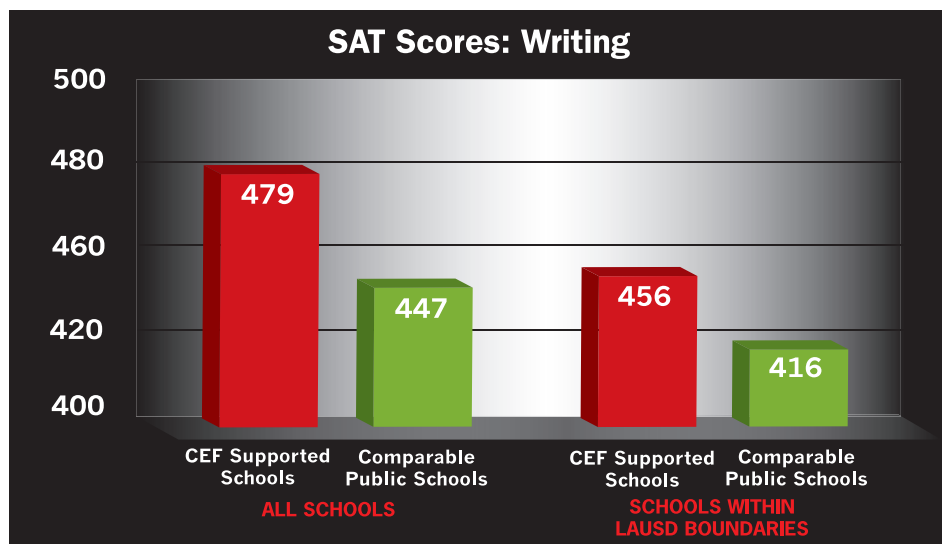
[Figure 19]



[Figure 20]



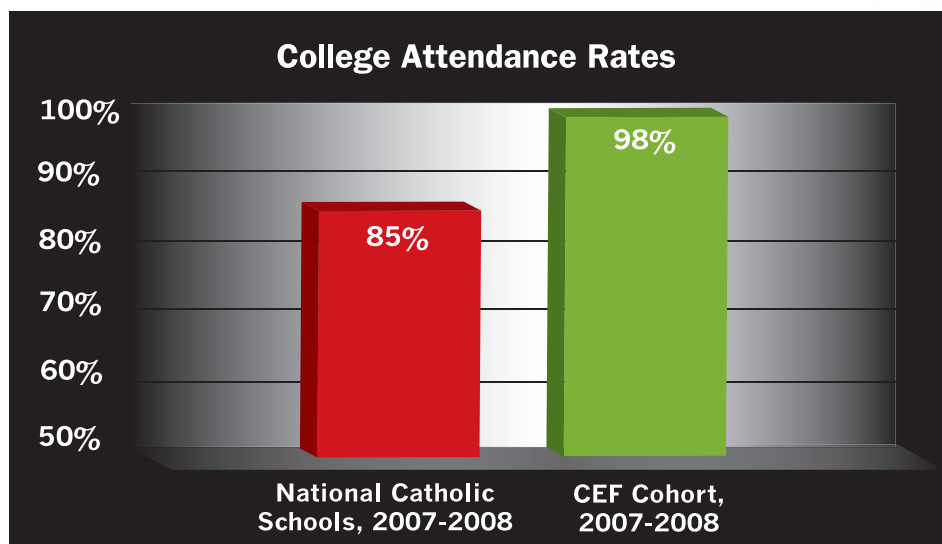
[Figure 21]



COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

With higher SAT sitting rates and stronger SAT scores than their public school counterparts, it is important to determine if CEF supported Catholic school students are progressing on to college. The sample of students studied in the graduation rate analysis was followed for the college attendance rate. In this sample 97.6% of students continued to postsecondary education, including two students who enlisted in the military. Of these, 65.5% attended a 4-year institution, 31.5% attended a 2-year institution, and 0.6% continued to the military. In this sample, only 2.4% did not attend college. This 97.6% college attendance rate for CEF supported students in Los Angeles Catholic schools is much higher than the national Catholic school average college attendance rate of 85%.⁴

[Figure 22]



⁴College attendance rates for California public schools and LAUSD schools are not currently reported.



Analyzing School Success

As part of this research, students, parents, guardians, principals, and teachers were engaged on the question: “Why are Catholic schools successful in the communities they serve?” Through interviews and surveys, a number of themes emerged:

“Why are Catholic schools successful in the communities they serve?”



(a) Catholic schools embody a positive, affirming school culture that is centered in a religious and values-based mission shared by all of the stakeholders, thus creating a very real sense of community and family. As one student said, “The teachers talk often about God; they emphasize that God is always there, guiding and protecting you.”

(b) Catholic schools have high expectations for their students in and out of the classroom. College attendance is expected and a strong effort is made for students to complete a college preparatory curriculum. One student said, “The way they are preparing me here is giving me assets for life. They are giving me the tools to succeed in college.” In Catholic

schools, failure is not an option and the administrative, teaching, and coaching staffs are willing to do whatever it takes for students to succeed. A student said, “Being in a Catholic school really makes you feel like you don’t have the choice to fail,” while another student remarked, “Teachers are very helpful and are always willing to help me whenever needed.” Another student shared that one of his football coaches gave a talk about his troubled past and how he turned his life around; the student was moved by the story because he could identify with it, and it gave him hope.

(c) Catholic schools tend to operate smaller school sites that allow teachers and principals to identify issues, find solutions, and implement changes that best serve students. These smaller schools create a personalized environment where Catholic educators know how to help their students succeed on an individual basis. One student stated, “Teachers remind you about the importance of working hard and succeeding academically.”

(d) There is a high level of parental involvement in Catholic schools reinforcing academic success, spiritual development, and the sense of family. This finding confirms the Phase 1 data that also looked at parents' beliefs about Catholic education. Parents overwhelmingly want to be involved in the education of their children. They find great congruence with the mission and values of the Catholic school and their hopes for their family life.

(e) Catholic schools are viewed as safe spaces, especially in communities that struggle with violence. When students feel safe, they can focus on high academic achievement. One student stated that her mother was worried about the student's safety and about being exposed to drugs and gangs in the public school, but that these issues did not exist in the Catholic school environment.

(f) There is positive peer pressure that creates an environment where achievement is valued and celebrated. This influences students to become dedicated citizens who want to serve others. Said one student, "The way I'm being helped now is how I want to help someone later."

There is a high level of parental involvement in Catholic schools that reinforces academic success, spiritual development, and the sense of family.





Conclusion: Catholic Schools Serve a Societal Need

There are many challenges facing Catholic schools today, as discussed in the beginning of this report—declining enrollment, changing ethnic and socioeconomic demographics, and school finances. Additionally, there are other aspects of education that Catholic schools must pay attention to as the demographics change. Many students come from backgrounds where English is not spoken at home, and most CEF students are first generation college attendees. Catholic schools need to respond to the educational needs of English language learners and students with special learning needs whose numbers are increasing. In order for Catholic schools to meet these challenges, visionary leadership is needed at all levels of Catholic education.

Despite the above challenges, the data in this study demonstrate the success of Catholic schools for some of the most economically disadvantaged youth in Los Angeles and across the country. There are strong indicators from the qualitative and quantitative results that Catholic schools are making a tremendous impact, not simply for the Catholic community but for the common good of all of society. Students attending Catholic

schools from the inner city in Los Angeles are completing a rigorous curriculum, graduating from high school in exceptional numbers, and going on to college.

While the results of this study indicate Catholic schools are achieving at higher rates than comparable neighborhood public schools, there is always room for improvement. In Phase 2, for the first time, SAT scores of an exclusively poor and underserved population attending Catholic urban schools were examined.

Inner city Catholic school students are attending college at 98%, an outstanding rate. In looking at the overall SAT

scores, however, students could be better prepared with a core curriculum that is stronger in math and science. This is important for their future success in college and career given the global economy. As Catholic schools continue to meet the needs of a large diverse, poor, and underserved population, they are in a position to serve the families of English language learners in a unique way because of the school site locations embedded in the communities, the caring and compassion of the teaching staff, and the visionary leadership in both

the schools and dioceses. These issues deserve further study in research on Catholic schools.

This study demonstrates the high achievement of Catholic school students. They are experiencing a rich values-based environment that shapes their own belief systems. In many parts of the inner city in Los Angeles, the local parochial school is the strongest educational option for students and their families. Based on a long and rich history of extraordinary results in educating economically



Inner city Catholic school students are attending college at 98%, an outstanding rate.

disadvantaged students in urban areas, Catholic schools have much to offer the Los Angeles region and the country in terms of the dialogue on educational reform. Catholic schools are achieving their successes with a lower per pupil cost, which could serve as a model for public education reform. Catholic schools welcome students of all faiths, and their place in the civic discourse has yet to be fully recognized.

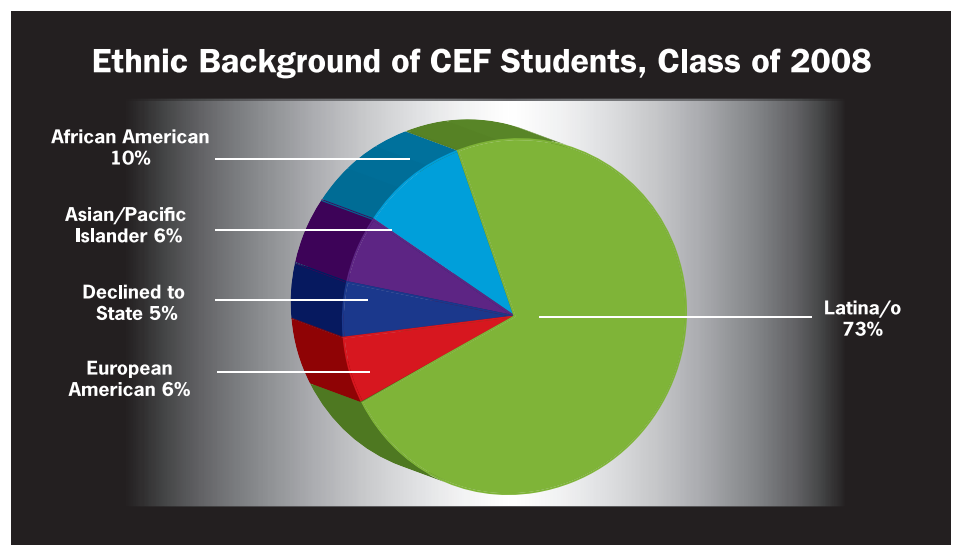
Appendix A: Methodology

As of 2011,
CEF has provided
approximately
\$108 million in
tuition assistance
to 110,000
students.

This research study examined the impact that Catholic schools have on students who are ethnic minorities and from family backgrounds of low socioeconomic status in Los Angeles. The study focuses on the students who were supported by the Catholic Education Foundation (CEF) in the 2003-2008 academic years. CEF was founded to provide financial assistance to students wanting to pursue a Catholic school education who were unable to afford Catholic school tuition. As of 2011, CEF has provided approximately \$108 million in tuition assistance to 110,000 students (Catholic Education Foundation, 2011).

This cohort of CEF students was selected for the study primarily because they represent the most underserved students in the Catholic school system in this region and more closely resemble the economic, ethnic, and personal backgrounds of their peers in the schools they would attend if Catholic schools were not available to them. Almost 90% of CEF supported students in the high school graduating class of 2008 are ethnic minorities. **[Figure 23]** The CEF family income guidelines for tuition awards in 2007-2008 demonstrate that this group of students is extremely under-resourced. **[Table 1]** It should be noted that CEF tuition awards are not provided on the basis of academic criteria, but strictly on financial need. The CEF population served is highly transient, necessitating the need to track students as they change schools over time.

[Figure 23]



[Table 1]

CEF Family Income Eligibility Guidelines for Tuition Award Programs, 2007-08	
Household Size	Annual Income
1	\$15,265
2	\$20,467
3	\$25,700
4	\$30,917
5	\$36,207
6	\$41,508
7	\$46,820
8	\$52,116
For each additional family member	+\$5,312

Other reasons for selecting this group include: (a) multiple years of data available through the CEF on each student, (b) the sample size could be tracked according to student records, and (c) the students were attending Archdiocesan schools (as opposed to private Catholic schools), which serve the poor in the poorest neighborhoods.

SETTING

The study was conducted in one of the most ethnically and economically diverse Catholic school systems in the United States. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is the fourth largest U.S. Archdiocese in student enrollment, and the largest in terms of geographical area. In 2007-2008, according to data from the Department of Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, it served approximately 88,000 students across three Southern California counties: Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara counties. In 2007-2008 the Archdiocese of Los Angeles had 29 CEF supported high schools, including all 21 Archdiocesan high schools, all five parish high schools, and three out of 24 private high schools. Private schools, within this context, are schools that are sponsored by a religious order (e.g., the Jesuits, Franciscans, Carmelites, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data were gathered from 29 high schools within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Department of Catholic Schools to analyze student academic progress and achievement from ninth grade through college attendance. CEF records were the main data source, providing student contact information, gender, ethnicity, schools attended, high school completion, and college attendance data. Missing data were obtained from students' school records, college attendance records housed at The National Student Clearinghouse, SAT score records housed at The College Board, individual mailings to students' homes, and direct phone contact with individual students. Additional data were obtained from the California Department of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), and United States Department of Education. All data were gathered using individual tracking numbers for student identification to protect student confidentiality.





CONTINUATION RATE

A sample of 629 eighth grade CEF supported students was selected to study the continuation rate, which was defined as the percentage of students who completed the eighth grade in Spring 2004 and continued to ninth grade in Fall 2004. Continuation rates were calculated by dividing the number of students that continued to ninth grade in Fall of 2004 by the sample size. Of this sample, 62% were female and 38% male.

[Table 2]

Student Ethnic Background: Continuation Rate		
Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Asian	18	2.9
African American	35	5.6
Declined to State	20	3.2
Latina/o	516	82.0
Native American	2	0.3
Pacific Islander	5	0.8
European American	33	5.2
Total	629	100.0

GRADUATION RATE

A sample of 336 CEF supported students was selected to study graduation rate, defined as the percentage of students enrolled in the ninth grade in Fall 2004 who graduated with a high school diploma from a Catholic school by June 2008. Graduation rates were calculated by dividing the number of students who graduated with a high school diploma by the sample size. Of this sample, 60.4% were female and 39.6% male.

[Table 3]

Student Ethnic Background: Graduation Rate		
Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Asian	12	3.6
African American	18	5.4
Declined to State	14	4.1
Latina/o	263	78.3
Native American	1	0.3
Pacific Islander	4	1.3
European American	24	7.1
Total	336	100.0

UC/CSU REQUIRED COURSE COMPLETION RATE

The UC/CSU admission requirements were established to ensure that students who attend a University within the University of California or California State University systems could participate fully in the first-year academic program in a wide variety of fields of study (University of California, n.d.). Two samples were calculated for the UC/CSU required course completion rate. The first sample size was 3,800 students in 28 CEF supported schools compared with 13,931 students in 28 comparable public schools (i.e. located in the same zip codes and serving the same population). The second sample size was 1,205 students in nine CEF supported schools within LAUSD boundaries compared with 4,432 students in nine comparable LAUSD schools. This rate was calculated by dividing the total number of students who took all UC/CSU courses by the number of students who graduated with a high school diploma.⁵

SAT SITTING RATE

The sample size for the SAT sitting rate was 336 CEF supported students drawn from the same cohort of recent high school graduates sampled in the graduation rate analysis. The SAT sitting rate was calculated by dividing the number of CEF supported students who took the SAT by the sample size. Of this CEF SAT sample, 60.4% were female and 39.6% male.

SAT SCORES

The sample size for the SAT scores was 2,919 students in CEF supported Catholic schools and 6,964 students in comparable public schools who took the SAT during the academic years 2004-2008. The mean verbal, math, and writing SAT scores were calculated for the 2,919 students as well as a sub-sample of 956 students in CEF supported Catholic schools within LAUSD boundaries and 2,656 students in comparable LAUSD public schools.

⁵UC/CSU course completion rates for Mary Star of Sea High School were not available and thus not included in the Archdiocese calculation. Its comparable public school was also excluded from the analysis.



COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

The sample size for college attendance was the 336 students examined in the graduation rate analysis. The college attendance rate was defined as the percentage of students who attended ninth grade in Fall 2004 and, after four years of a Catholic high school education, continued to postsecondary education (2-year institution, 4-year institution, or the military). The college attendance rate was calculated by dividing the number of students who continued to postsecondary education by the sample size of 336.

About the Authors



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Ignacio Higareda is a faculty member at Loyola Marymount University's School of Education and has served, since 2009, as Director of Research for the Leadership in Equity, Advocacy, and Diversity Center (LEAD) and, since 2007, has worked on several projects regarding Catholic schools' impact on students' academic achievement, graduation rates, and college attendance. Dr. Higareda's research interests are in motivation and resiliency of English Language Learners (ELL), the sociocultural influences on ELLs academic achievement, and Catholic school impact on student academic achievement. He teaches courses on educational psychology, statistics, and research methods and assessment. He has several published research projects regarding academic impact on low-income, ethnic minority students within Catholic and public school settings.



SHANE P. MARTIN, PH.D.

Shane P. Martin, an educational anthropologist by training and an expert in the areas of intercultural education, cultural diversity, Charter schools and Catholic schools, was appointed dean of the LMU School of Education in February 2005. Dean Martin is visible in the education community as chair of Green Dot Public Schools Board of Directors, and a member of Loyola High School of Los Angeles Board of Regents, and Teach For America, Los Angeles Board. He is a member of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Board of Examiners and the California Committee on Accreditation Board of Institutional Reviewers, and serves as a state commissioner to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Dean Martin received the National Catholic Educational Association's (NCEA) Michael J. Guerra Leadership Award in 2005 and the Catherine T. McNamee, CSJ, Award in 2009 and the Cahalan Award in 2008 from the Loyola High School Alumni Association. He is currently the president of the American Education Research Association (AERA) Special Interest Group (SIG) on Catholic Education.



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Jose M. Chavez is the research assistant for the LMU Catholic School Research Project. Mr. Chavez has worked for LMU since 2009 on various research projects focusing on the efficacy of Catholic education for ethnic minority students attending Catholic inner city schools. He serves as the research liaison with the Catholic Education Foundation to gather data and also works directly with students, parents, families, and high schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.



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Karen Holyk-Casey is currently a doctoral candidate at Loyola Marymount University. Her dissertation focuses on urban Catholic Schools and parental involvement. She has over twenty-five years of teaching experience in urban public elementary, adult school, and Catholic junior high school.

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One student remarked on the impact of the CEF tuition assistance:

“I was really grateful.
Out of all the students
they could choose,
I was the one; it
gave me motivation
to try harder.”

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This study represents one of several ongoing projects within the Center for Catholic Education at Loyola Marymount University. Housed within the School of Education, the Center has three main focus areas: Leadership Development, Teacher Preparation, and Research and Outreach. LMU has prepared Catholic school educators for over 60 years, educating more than 1,000 teachers and leaders for Catholic schools in the last 10 years alone.

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