

## Hiring School Counselors in Faith-Based Schools

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*Although school counseling candidates in faith-based schools may possess an extraordinary résumé, it is essential that their beliefs and behaviors be compatible with the mission and philosophy of the school for which they are interviewing. If hiring practices are not addressed in faith-based schools, these schools run the risk of losing their identity. This article offers a pastoral model for interviewing and hiring Catholic school counselors. It is a model that assists school leaders and those responsible for hiring school counselors in faith-based schools to transform what would otherwise be a functional job into a pastoral ministry, thereby advancing the religious identity and unique mission of their schools.*

**Employment: High School Counselor**—St. Rita High School, a Roman Catholic school founded in the Augustinian tradition, serving students of a large metropolitan city, is seeking an experienced school counselor to join a collaborative department in a school community of 1,500 students, beginning September 2011. The search committee is looking for qualified applicants who must possess the following qualifications:

*Faith:* Candidate must be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church.

*Education:* A master's degree in school counseling or the equivalent and certification.

*Experience:* Minimum of 3 years of school counseling experience.

Qualified applicants are invited to send a cover letter, curriculum vitae, and list of references to: Counseling Search Committee, St. Rita High School.

Familiar are the classified ads in both religious and secular educational publications that advertise faculty and staff employment opportunities in faith-based schools. Also familiar are the categories of expectations: commitment to faith, education, and experience. Although expectations in regard to education and experience may be quantified, the expectations of applicants regarding commitment to faith are frequently relegated to the de-

scriptors “practicing” and “in good standing.” A recent study comparing the mission-focused practices of Catholic and public school counselors reported that, with few exceptions, Catholic school counselors often do not effectively incorporate Catholic identity and the school’s unique mission into their work with students, parents, or administrators (Murray & Kane, 2010). If a school seeks not only to exist but also to thrive, such a potential compromise to institutional identity and mission must be addressed.

All organizations, including schools, aspire to reach the “next level” (Breslin, 2000): As educational organizations, schools also seek to sustain and build upon the fine reputation that they already have established. Faculty, staff, parents, students, and alumni all recognize that it is in their best interest to galvanize the school community to go to the next level. Educators know that institutional success depends on having access to resources and on hiring the best possible personnel, specifically those who have the required professional background and related experience as well as a commitment to the institution’s identity and mission (Breslin, 2000).

Essential to the success of Catholic and other faith-based schools is that they be driven by a distinct mission and philosophy (Breslin, 2000). To compromise their unique identity by subscribing to a “cookie cutter” understanding of high school, even of a Catholic high school, is to undermine the variety of unique expressions or charisms of Catholic identity. One expects that all Catholic schools share an identity in terms of values and credal systems that are foundational to being Catholic (Ciriello, 1996). Within this shared identity, however, each Catholic school is challenged to articulate itself as a unique expression of the Catholic mission as shaped by the population, needs, and service required for faith-based living in the particular school community at this time in its history (D’Orsa & D’Orsa, 2008).

Whether a Catholic school is founded by a religious congregation or, as has become more common during the post-Vatican II era, by the laity, it is the vocation and responsibility of the Catholic educational leader, in collaboration with the faculty and staff, to facilitate a disciplined conversation between the school’s narrative structure and the socio-historical context in which it currently exists (Murray, 2008). This is how past and present founders and their progeny as well as religious mission and secular intent intersect in a school’s narrative structure as administrators, faculty, and staff articulate the school mission statement in and for this generation. Thus, it is essential that those who are employed in Catholic high schools enjoy a compatibility with the identity and unique mission of their Catholic school, and through their collec-

tive spiritual leadership possess a shared purpose or spiritual leadership density (Jacobs, 2005), by becoming a community of educators who daily give witness to their personal vocations.

Catholic school principals, as educational leaders, have many demands placed upon them (Ciriello, 1996). If they are to be successful in their role, it is important that these principals delegate some of their educational leadership responsibilities to other qualified, professional co-workers (Murray, 2008). In most instances, these co-workers are well-trained individuals who possess the expertise and skill set needed to accomplish the responsibilities delegated to them. Take, for example, the role of the Catholic school counselor. It would be unwise for a busy principal to spend his or her time directly consulting with administrators, faculty, and staff about routine student behavioral or developmental problems, engaging in one-on-one and group counseling, or assisting students in preparing applications for college. After all, school counselors are specifically trained to carry out these important functions (Murray, 2008). In educational leadership practice, however, when a principal delegates these functions to the counseling staff, certain concerns arise: Do principals sufficiently understand what constitutes the professional training of the members of their counseling staff in terms of their individual and collective areas of expertise and experience? Do principals sufficiently understand whether and how the counseling staff exercise their various roles in ways that both support and advance Catholic identity and the mission of the school? In other words, principals need to direct their attention to whether and how Catholic school counselors “baptize,” that is, make Christian, their unique role. Inviting Catholic school leadership, faculty, staff, and students to baptize their experience is to call them to view the entirety of their lives through the lens of Christian faith (Murray, 2008). To encourage Catholic school counselors to examine their profession through this lens is to call them to view their role not simply as a “job” but more substantively as a “ministry,” specifically, a pastoral ministry (Murray, 2008).

If hiring practices are not addressed in the Catholic school community, some of the schools will continue to call themselves Catholic but will have lost their real identity; they will have lost their souls (Breslin, 2000). They will have done so because their hiring practices fail to support and sustain the mission and philosophy of the Catholic school. For example, although it may be the case that a candidate has an extraordinary résumé, his or her beliefs and behaviors may not be compatible with the mission and philosophy of the Catholic school. Thus, this article offers a pastoral model as well as a hypothetical case

example for interviewing and hiring Catholic school counselors. It is a model that assists principals and those responsible for hiring school counselors in faith-based schools to transform what would otherwise be a functional job into a pastoral ministry, thereby advancing the religious identity and unique mission of their schools.

Effective implementation of this interview model first requires a clear consensus on the mission and vision of Catholic education as well as agreement on the skills and qualities required of candidates for counseling positions in Catholic schools. The clarification of these skills and qualities necessitates an understanding and appreciation of the role of counseling, as it affirms the goals of Catholic education as articulated in the Second Vatican Council's (1966a) *Declaration on Christian Education*.

### School Counseling and Vatican II

Within the Catholic community, the 1960s heralded the Church's openness to the modern world, as the edicts of Vatican Council II renewed and expanded the ideals of Christian thinking. These edicts enabled the Church and its schools to engage in a more proactive role in the development of their students as, for example, in the teaching of prayer, virtues, moral discipline, and decision making (Lickona, 1997). Catholic school counselors offer a unique contribution in building a faith community in which students experience the religious, academic, social, and psychological support they need to thrive during their adult years as they transition from concept to action, from the development of the love of God to the development of a love for their neighbor (Murray, Suriano, & Madden, 2003).

The documents of Vatican II summon Catholic schools to emphasize the intellectual values of students and to aim for the highest development of the human mind (Carter, 1966). In addition, "the Church remains true to itself by insisting that this must be done in the framework of the moral formation of man and in the fullness of his spiritual supernatural destiny" (p. 635).

As academic educators, Catholic school counselors provide students with the basic skills needed to process information so that they can search for the truth. As citizenship educators, they teach students how to be good members of their Church, schools, communities, and society. As vocational educators, counselors prepare students to discern a vocation that gives meaning to their lives. Finally, as religious and

moral educators, Catholic school counselors teach students how to address the current issues that affect students today, giving them the moral foundation on which to base their decisions and behaviors. (Murray et al., 2003, p. 39)

Thus, Catholic school counselors are called to a pastoral role in the care and development of their students, bringing together religious, ethical, and psychological perspectives (Murray, 2008). In this pastoral role, counselors must be aware of their students' comprehensive educational needs, which include religious training, how students construct their world, and how they can have a positive impact that reflects both religious values and academic standards (Murray et al., 2003). Counselors who adopt a pastoral approach direct students to learn from their own experiences, advocate for the incorporation of Christian values into their everyday lives, and guide them so that they can "see their life in God's light" (Faber & Van der Schoot, 1965, p. 115).

What sets Catholic school counselors apart from their public school counterparts is their call to incorporate the Catholic identity and unique mission of their school into their work with students, parents, teachers, and administrators. When immersed in the waters of Gospel living, these very skills are baptized into the Church's threefold ministry of preaching (*kerygma*), community building (*koinonia*), and service (*diakonia*), thus transforming their professional work into a pastoral ministry.

### The Threefold Ministry of the Church

#### School Guidance as Preaching: The Ministry of *Kerygma*

The goal of the Catholic school is to develop the whole person and his or her contribution to the betterment of society. In this regard, Vatican Council II (1966b) noted:

It remains each [person's] duty to preserve a view of the whole person, a view in which the values of intellect, will, conscience, and fraternity are pre-eminent. These values are rooted in God the Creator and have been wonderfully restored and elevated in Christ. (para. 61)

Catholic school counselors collaborate with school leadership and staff as they integrate a faith developmental perspective into their understanding of cogni-

tive, affective, and psychosocial development (Murray, 2008). This integration can assist school counselors to transform their profession into a ministry, making it possible for them to function as pastoral guidance counselors by sculpting information in such a way that students, administrators, faculty, and staff view their lives and concerns through the lens of faith. The integration of faith, professional knowledge, and skills provides a model for and, in actual practice, the capacity for Catholic school counselors to challenge faculty, administrators, and staff by preaching the Gospel in their particular form of service within the school community.

The preaching ministry component of the Catholic school counselor's ministry is more than enhancing the physical, cognitive, or emotional development of students. It issues an invitation to holiness by inviting young people to view the whole of their lives and work in terms of a personal vocation. Viewing themselves as disciples who belong to a formative community, Catholic school counselors can contribute significantly to building that "community of like-minded people whose shared desire is to live out their personal vocations and to demonstrate what vocational commitment means through their witness to one another, especially to young people" (Jacobs, 2005, p. 36).

### **Consultation in School Guidance: The Ministry of *Koinonia***

Catholic schools are intentional communities—in Greek, *koinonia*—whose members gather each weekday during the academic year for the purpose of providing young people what the Church calls an "integral education" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, n. 4). As the adult members of this community, administrators, faculty, and staff model and teach Christian values to the students entrusted to their care. Students can then model these values both inside and outside the school setting. The importance of this aspect of educating young people should not be underestimated because the values formed and nurtured within this community have the power to set the stage for and have a profound effect upon each student's interaction with the world beyond the school. When school administrators, faculty, staff, and students consciously use their time and talents to create a dynamic Christian community—whether in the classroom, school chapel, or athletic field—the New Testament call to *koinonia* is realized because a unity of mind and heart has been experienced.

Consultation is one of the many skills school counselors employ as they assist administrators, faculty, staff, and parents to work more effectively with students. The process of consultation within Catholic schools has the power to



contribute implicitly and explicitly to the formation of community as well as to the integration of explicitly Christian values within the life of that community. Unlike the traditional *dyadic* (or one-on-one) direct service, which school counselors oftentimes provide students, the work of consultation is one step removed in that the consultant (i.e., the school counselor) assists the client (e.g., administrators, faculty, staff, parents) who, in turn, assist students directly. When consultation is baptized in the water of Christian faith, school counselors transform the professional work of consulting into the pastoral ministry of building Christian community, that is, *koinonia*.

### Counseling in School Guidance: The Ministry of *Diakonia*

A common experience of many counselors in Catholic schools is working with students whose behavior is influenced by family dysfunction and peer relationships as well as by the normal developmental issues associated with adolescents (Murray, 2008). Divorce, betrayal, deceit, abuse, racism, unreliability, neglect, and criticism are common experiences for many young people who frequently reexperience these hurts later in their adult relationships (Murray, 2008). Even in functional families, a child may experience the pain associated with low income, the death of a loved one, or the chronic illness or disability of a family member “all of which may predispose children to certain hurts later on” (Coleman, 1998, p. 86). Unless the pain associated with these experiences is addressed, it has the potential to become a vicious cycle (Murray, 2008). The challenge that this presents for counselors in Catholic schools is a pastoral one, namely, to assist students in breaking unhealthy patterns, and, as servants of Christian hope, to walk with students toward a more promising future.

Catholic school counselors are well prepared to assist students and faculty in dealing with the challenges of life. Not only are they well trained in human development, but they are equally well trained in assessing, diagnosing, and treating students when healthy development is threatened, impeded, or arrested. As part of their graduate training, Catholic school counselors are exposed to and experienced in various counseling theories as well as the skills of counseling (Murray, 2008). Although counseling theories are abundant, not all of them lend themselves to a Catholic school setting. Therefore, the counselor in a Catholic school has the pastoral responsibility of baptizing those secular theories and exploring all avenues of Gospel living, such as forgiveness, in his or her ministry of healing, as well as providing referrals to therapists and other professionals who are committed to Gospel-based modes of healing.

When Catholic school counselors baptize their professional work into a ministry of service—*diakonia*—they soon discover how privileged they are to walk with students who increasingly take responsibility for the positive and negative experiences written into their life narratives. The reason for offering young people this ministry of service is the same: Unless they address such pain, volatile behaviors have the potential of becoming a vicious cycle that can thwart mutual holistic development. This ministry of service is a gift that Catholic school counselors freely offer as they walk with those entrusted to their care toward God who continues to invite His creation to deeper commitment.

As important as the threefold ministry of *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia* may be in providing the model for Catholic school counseling programs, it remains only a vision if it is not made concrete in those whose lives intersect inside Catholic schools, if only for a short period of time. Safeguarding the unique role of the school counselor to ensure that the Catholic identity and mission are embodied in the school's counseling program is the daily responsibility of both Catholic school leaders and counselors, a responsibility that begins with the hiring interview of the Catholic school counselor.

### The Interview Process

As noted, hiring practices in faith-based schools are crucial to maintaining the unique identity and mission of Catholic schools (Sullins, 2004). The demands of today's tight economy, coupled with the need to hire competent faculty and staff, could compromise the hiring process by focusing the interview primarily on the candidate's skills and ability to perform certain tasks. Among Catholic school leaders who interview and hire, far too many have learned, firsthand and painfully, the truth of the old saying, "Hire for skills and fire for behaviors" (O'Toole, 2006, p. 38). Most performance issues, which can consume too much of a school leader's time and energy in counseling, improvement efforts, and sometimes job termination, "arise from inappropriate behaviors rather than from lack of job skills" (p. 38).

In making hiring decisions, many Catholic school leaders also have come to rely on their feelings or intuition, referred to by O'Toole (2006) as a "gut instinct" (p. 38). Thus, it has become all the more important to the interview process that Catholic school leaders employ a model for assessing the candidate's personality, interpersonal skills, and character as a means to judge not only how well he or she will fit their school's counseling department, but also



to judge how and whether the candidate can support and contribute to the identity and mission of the school (O'Toole, 2006).

Within the Catholic community, there has been an increasing focus on offering a more consistent and objective means of assessing candidates for organizational fit (O'Toole, 2006). Although there is a great deal of literature that can assist school leaders with hiring classroom teachers (e.g., Naper, 2010; Papa & Baxter, 2008), comparatively little research has focused on the hiring of school counselors (Beale & McCay, 2001) and even less concerns the hiring of counselors in faith-based schools. The Sisters of Mercy Health System (O'Toole, 2006) offers one helpful model for interviewing candidates for job positions, a model that can be easily adapted to a faith-based school setting. This model incorporates the dual foci of assessing candidates for "job fit," that is, for their skills and ability to handle the job's technical components, and assessing for candidates' aptitude for, interest in, and alignment of personal beliefs and behaviors with the Catholic identity and unique mission of the organization.

The development and implementation of this Sisters of Mercy interview and assessment model involves three key steps: behavioral-based interviewing, assessment for process in service of charism, and value-based interviewing (O'Toole, 2006). While behavioral-based interviewing asks candidates to share examples of their behaviors in previous specific situations, based on the assumption that future behaviors can be predicted by past behaviors, assessment for process, the second step, assesses nonverbal cues, such as passion or disengagement, which frequently surface when candidates speak of themselves or others. The third step, value-based interviewing, arises from the belief that it is not enough for candidates to behave appropriately; he or she must also have a natural aptitude for, interest in, and personal agreement with the institution's Catholic identity and religious heritage.

This three-step model, originally designed for the interviewing of Catholic health care personnel, may be adapted for use in the Catholic school setting, and specifically for the interviewing of Catholic school counselors. To show how this can be made concrete, the following hypothetical case example of the interview model is provided. It is a model that adapts O'Toole's three-step model with the vision for the pastoral ministry role of the Catholic school counselor, creating a tool to help ensure the pastoral call for Catholic education by the USCCB (1973) is fulfilled: that Catholic education is an essential expression of the Church's mission of transformation, a mission that encompasses the twin purposes of personal sanctification and social reform.

### Case Example: St. Rita High School Guidance Program

The members of the St. Rita High School counseling staff are ever conscious of their role in transforming their secular profession into a personal vocation as well as their functional work into a pastoral ministry. They are a counseling staff ministering within a Catholic school founded in the Augustinian tradition. As a Catholic school counseling department, they engage with their school leadership in sharing in the Church's threefold ministry of building up the body of Christ in Catholic schools. Doing so requires engaging administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students in disciplined conversation, whereby Catholic school counselors can utilize their knowledge and skill set in service of St. Rita's Catholic identity and Augustinian mission. Further, as counselors enact their personal vocations, they transform what otherwise would be a functional job into a pastoral ministry characterized by preaching, community building, and service to the Body of Christ.

The school counselors at St. Rita High School are well aware of their mission and the unique brand of service that they bring to the school community. In the spirit of St. Augustine, the school community of St. Rita High School, through its preaching and service, continues to build the community of faith, whether the setting is the classroom, chapel, or sports field. The Augustinian charism is God's invitation to recognize, in the autobiographical events of their lives, the opportunity to discover God's presence and the quality of their Gospel commitment.

Ever cognizant of the importance of their school's charism and unique approach to what they do, the counseling staff at St. Rita High School places high priority on the hiring of school counselors as they join vowed Augustinians, school leaders, department chairpersons, board of trustee members, alumni, and parents in forming focus groups whose purpose is to articulate a clear understanding of the school's mission and vision at this time in their shared history.

Utilizing original sources, such as Church documents or the writings of St. Augustine, these focus groups identify descriptors that characterize those who serve in Augustinian-sponsored schools and, in so doing, bring to the conversation both the rationale and practice for shaping one's life according to a specific charism or religious heritage. The descriptors that they would identify would likely include "discovering God in community," "interiority," "restless heart tending toward God," and "conversion before God" (Prevost, 2011).

## Hiring Interview

**Step 1: In service of *kerygma*: Behavioral-based interviewing.** Having arrived at a clear articulation of St. Rita's High School mission and vision, the counseling search committee would begin by creating a behavioral interview tool to be used for the interview process. As most leaders know, future behaviors often can be predicted on the basis of past behaviors (O'Toole, 2006). Behavioral-based interviewing does not involve conceptual questions such as, "What are your greatest strengths?" Rather, such interviewing asks candidates to share examples of their behaviors in previous specific situations. An example might be, "Tell me about a time when you had to work closely with an adolescent in crisis" (see Appendix for additional interview questions).

Each Augustinian school descriptor, derived from the focus groups, would be developed into a behavioral-based question, along with assessment screens to enable the interviewers to evaluate a candidate's responses. The assessment is then scored on a 2-1-0 scale. A score of 2 means that the candidate—as is often said—already "gets it." He or she displays the behavior and appears to have the beliefs, values, and commitment necessary to be a wonderful fit for St. Rita High School. A score of 1 means that the candidate has given acceptable answers and has shown the potential to grow, either formally (in formation programs) or informally (through interacting with Augustinian co-workers) into a good fit. A score of 0 means that, although the candidate's answers may be acceptable in other organizations, they are not acceptable for an Augustinian-sponsored school; he or she would not be a good organizational fit. For example, in response to the question, "Tell me about a time when you had to work closely with an adolescent in crisis," the interviewer might evaluate the candidate's response in light of the following *kerygmatic* (preaching) criteria: Does the candidate provide a holistic approach to the student in crisis? As stated previously, the preaching ministry of the Catholic school counselor is more than improving the physical, cognitive, or emotional development of students. It issues an invitation to walk with young people as they name and critically reflect upon their present action from a faith perspective. This is a preferred response, earning a score of 2. Or is the candidate's response one that would be described as "standard care," providing the needy student with the same treatment as would be given to any student at any school setting, whether public or private (earning a score of 0).

When the interview is finished, scores for each question would be totaled. The total offers a good indication of the fit of the candidate with the organiza-

tion. The counseling search committee would use the same questions and assessment screens with each candidate to ensure that all candidates are treated and evaluated in an equal and fair manner.

**Step 2: In service of *koinonia*: Assessment for process in service of charism.** Although behavioral-based interviewing is important, school leaders and search committees also rely on their feelings and intuition when assessing candidates for organizational fit.

Nonverbal cues, that is, *how* a candidate talks about him- or herself and others, for example, and evidence of either passion or disengagement, can also be good indicators of organizational fit. Such cues, however, are inevitably filtered through the interviewer's subjectivity. (O'Toole, 2006, p. 40)

To reduce this subjectivity, a second step has been developed.

Members of the search committee experienced in conducting interviews would once again incorporate the focus group descriptors that characterize those who serve in Augustinian-sponsored schools. Based on these descriptors, committee members would be asked to list those qualities that would make them feel comfortable with a candidate as well as those qualities that would elicit an uneasy response. The most commonly expressed characteristics would be collected and listed on an evaluation sheet designed to be filled out by the interviewer after each interview. One column would identify the characteristics that are closely aligned with the Augustinian culture, while the other column would identify those that are less well aligned. Again, the scoring would be done on a 2-1-0 basis. The following question in service of *koinonia* is based on such characteristics: "Describe a recent case in which you acted in the role of consultant to school leaders, teachers, or parents and explain your understanding of your role in that case." When viewed through a Catholic-Augustinian lens, the school counselor acting as consultant becomes the school counselor as community builder (Murray, 2008). Preferred responses to a question on consultation, earning a score of 2, would view the school consultant as one who consciously acknowledges the strengths and talents of those within the school community and utilizes them to serve the best interests of a particular student. Additionally, responses that humbly communicate a comfort in not having all the answers and a willingness to rely on the expertise of others also would qualify within the preferred category because, in so doing, the school coun-

selor as a consultant would serve the school's faith-based mission. Responses that simply acknowledge the community dimension of serving students would earn a score of 1. Responses that involve standard care and that fail to link the gathering of resources to the school's mission and identity would receive a score of 0.

As before, the scores for each of the characteristics would be added to offer a numerical assessment of each candidate's fit with St. Rita's school community. When this is done consistently with each candidate, the most commonly intuited judgments of leaders offer a more objective assessment than what an individual could render without such a tool (O'Toole, 2006).

**Step 3: In service of *diakonia*: Values-based interviewing.** The third step in the interview process is designed to assess candidates' values, commitments, and personal character as these are embodied in the healing or counseling role that many Catholic school counselors perform as a ministry of service. It is not enough for a candidate merely to behave appropriately; he or she must also think critically about the specific counseling theories and interventions that they employ and to consider Gospel-based interventions, such as forgiveness, as they transform their professional work into a pastoral ministry. Given this, a set of interview questions and assessment screens for interviewing candidates for leadership positions would be developed. Again, the search committee would begin by incorporating the focus group descriptors and values that characterize those who serve in Augustinian schools, including community, conversion, humility, and restless heart. Interview questions and scenarios would be created for each descriptor, with an interest in assessing candidates' ability to integrate these Catholic and Augustinian values into their ministry of healing. For example, one question, rooted in the call to *diakonia* (service), might be: "School counselors must possess a variety of counseling skills to reach out and assist various types of students as well as devote themselves to equipping teachers with some counseling skills. What is (are) your preferred counseling theory(ies) and why?"

Although the interviewers are very aware that there are abundant counseling theories, they are equally aware that not all theories lend themselves to a Catholic school setting. Therefore, in evaluating a candidate's response, the interviewers are cognizant that the counselor in a Catholic school has the pastoral responsibility of baptizing those secular theories and that, as Sharp (2000) has noted, "whatever method the pastoral counselor chooses, he or she always [should rely] on the theological foundation" (p. 114). When viewed through a

Catholic and Augustinian lens, a preferred response would include any counseling theory that values the dignity of each student as a significant member of his or her family, school, faith, and societal communities as well as views each student as responding to a generous and merciful God's call to renewed commitment. Responses that characterize a particular counseling theory as community focused would receive a score of 1. Any response that offers a counseling theory as the preferred treatment modality backed by empirical research but fails to integrate a holistic appreciation of each student would receive a score of 0. A candidate providing such a response would not be a good fit.

### Conclusions

The spirit of openness established by Vatican Council II has called Catholic schools and their counselors to invite administrators, faculty, staff, and students to new ways of living and decision making, ways that are informed by academic, religious, and psychosocial training. Nevertheless, research conducted over the span of the 50 years since Vatican Council II has reported the failure of Catholic school counselors to incorporate effectively the Catholic identity and unique mission in their work with students, parents, and teachers (Murray & Kane, 2010). Instead, the trend in post-Vatican II Catholic school counseling is toward an emphasis on psychological theories at the expense of the religious formation of the student (Murray & Kane, 2010).

In response to this trend, it is incumbent upon the Catholic diocesan leadership to view this void in theological and spiritual training as indicative of a greater void in and need for the continuing education of adult Catholics. Catholic school leadership, at both the diocesan and local school levels, must initiate an inclusive formational program for all Catholic school employees to integrate the Catholic identity and unique mission at each level of service within each school. At the diocesan level, officials must make a concerted effort to include in the agenda of school counseling the need for congruence in counselors' personal and professional lives, thereby distinguishing what they do as a ministry rather than as a job. In addition, Catholic universities and colleges preparing school counselors must assist future Catholic school counselors to become pastoral guidance counselors as they transform their training into a ministry of preaching, community building, and service. When these operate in an integrated way, compassionate action can be anticipated, and their schools' Catholic identity and mission will be effectively served.

The hiring interview of Catholic school counselors must be appreciated



as an initial stage at the local school level in which Catholic school leadership makes a conscious effort to thread the Catholic identity, as it is embodied in the school's unique mission, into each academic and extracurricular program. In collaboration with other faith-based schools that are committed to developing effective assessment methodologies for hiring, Catholic school leadership must move beyond subjective judgments regarding the organizational fit of candidates to a consistent and relatively objective means of assessing a candidate's aptitude for, interest in, and alignment of personal behaviors with the school's unique religious identity and culture. Orientation programs, as well as annual reviews, are additional opportunities provided for school leaders to proclaim publicly the importance of their school's mission, thereby distinguishing what they do as a ministry rather than as a job.

Hiring for organizational fit is critical for sustaining faith-based schools. The activities of the search committee at St. Rita High School, while a hypothetical case study, should be understood as a "work in process," a work that should continue to be evaluated and refined with each iteration of candidate interviews. Future research must continue to assess and refine the hiring interview protocol for Catholic school counselors within and among dioceses as well as between Catholic schools founded by religious congregations and those founded by dioceses. Such refinement also should support the hiring protocols of other curricular and extracurricular personnel, for example, campus ministers and directors of athletics. In so doing, the hiring process for Catholic school faculty and staff will be one of proactive involvement in examining and reclaiming the components of their school's Catholic identity and unique heritage.

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## Appendix

### Suggested Interview Questions

#### In Service of *Kerygma*: Behavioral-Based Interviewing

- Tell me about a time when you had to work closely with an adolescent in crisis.
- Describe a method you have found helpful to challenge students in creating their own unique identity.
- Describe an instance where you “baptized” your professional psychosocial understanding. What effect has this had on your professional role?
- Relate two stories you have utilized to help a student understand another individual’s point of view.
- Describe a typical interview with a student preparing to apply for college.

#### In Service of *Koinonia*: Assessment for Process in Service of Charism

- Describe a recent case in which you acted in the role of consultant to school leaders, teachers, or parents and explain your understanding of your role in that case.
- Identify three Christian values that faculty overtly teach students.
- How do you see the word “leader” fitting into your role as a counselor?
- To whom do your primary allegiances lie: students, teachers, parents, or administrators?
- How do you foster a good working relationship with clients, staff, counselors, and administrators?

#### In Service of *Diakonia*: Values-Based Interviewing

- School counselors must possess a variety of counseling skills to reach out and assist various types of students, as well as devote themselves to equipping teachers with some counseling skills. What is (are) your preferred counseling theory(ies) and why?
- Identify three elements of other theoretical orientations that should be included in guidance practice.

- What is your philosophy of confidentiality in the school? What sort of information do you consider to be confidential? To the student? To the faculty? To the parents? To prospective employers? To the college admissions office?
- What do you think is the most important characteristic of a counselor?
- In what ways have you integrated a faith developmental perspective into the secular profession of guidance counseling?