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# THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL: A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE TEACHING OF GOSPEL VALUES

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*The United States Catholic bishops, in their 1998 pastoral statement Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, challenge Catholic educational leaders to address the need for a more explicit and intentional integration of Catholic social teaching into their programs and institutions. This article proposes a model for strengthening a Catholic school system's commitment to sharing the social doctrine of the Church through critical examination of its identity, mission, and culture.*

The United States Catholic bishops are urging Catholic educational leaders to acknowledge Catholic social doctrine as an integral component of the identity and mission of Catholic schools. While affirming current efforts to teach the Church's social tradition and to connect community service and Christian charity with social action and justice, the bishops' 1998 statement *Sharing Catholic Teaching: Challenges and Directions* advocates a more explicit and intentional integration of Catholic social teaching into Catholic education. This article presents a model of a Catholic school system's response to this challenge. The discussion consists of an examination of the theoretical basis for the model and an overview of the proposed model, including illustrations of the academic component, co-curricular support, home-school ideas, and institutional structures. A description of a suggested process for implementation of the model concludes the discussion.

## MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS: THEORETICAL BASIS

A Catholic school system's commitment to the principles of Catholic social teaching is expressed through its mission, shared vision and core values, educational goals, academic program, and support systems (Byron, 1999; Janosik, 1999; Murphy, 1991). In partnership with parents and with the support of the entire Catholic community, the mission of a Catholic school system is centered on promoting the human dignity, self-transcendence, and liberation of students. Inspired by the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and Catholic social teaching, Catholic school educators respond to the human need for identity, relatedness, and meaning by creating a learning community in which students are respected and empowered to value diversity, promote peace, and act on behalf of justice. Students' spiritual, moral, emotional, and cognitive intelligences are nurtured. Through community service and the development of social analysis skills, students are charged to act compassionately and courageously to transform social structures and relationships that dehumanize and victimize persons.

Members of a Catholic school system communicate through words and actions the shared vision of promoting the continuous improvement of and innovation in quality Catholic education grounded in the Gospel values of justice and peace. Constitutive to this shared vision are the core values of creating a community of lifelong learners, empowering teachers, and advocating high expectations for students.

Integral to the mission of a Catholic school system is the responsibility of Catholic school educators to call one another and their students to live with integrity, respect for human dignity, compassion, courage, and social responsibility. Transforming personal prejudices and systemic discrimination into just and peaceful interpersonal relationships and social structures creates a culture of respect and caring. This is achieved through the expression of educational goals that infuse Judeo-Christian values of justice and peace and principles of Catholic social teaching into the spiritual, social, and academic dimensions of the Catholic school. An environment in which human life is protected, economic justice is promoted, and nonviolence is valued provides students with a moral framework for everyday action. Charity and social justice are connected by integrating within the Catholic school culture and curriculum Christian service to those in need, critical reflection of the related social injustices, and advocacy on behalf of and in solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Intrinsic to the academic dimension of social justice education is respect for human dignity, from which emanate the basic concepts of social justice and peace which are to be integrated into the Catholic school curriculum. Such concepts include communication, conflict resolution, cooperation, nonviolence, global community, human rights, power, distribution, interdependence, cultural diversity, stewardship, citizenship, structural transformation, empowerment, and liberation. The effective communication of the knowledge, skills, and values inherent in social justice education necessitates that these concepts are lived as well as taught. Cognitive, affective, and behavioral goals must be intertwined throughout the educational process (McGinnis, 1993a; 1993b). Students are to be challenged to develop an awareness of their own giftedness, of social justice issues, and of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and Church social teaching. From this awareness flows a sense of solidarity or concern, which is ultimately expressed in local or global actions of direct service and structural change.

Committed to its shared mission and vision yet respectful of the autonomy of each Catholic school community, a Catholic school system supports and encourages schools in implementing diverse approaches to social justice education in response to the unique needs of their students. Learning experiences are perceived as an integral component of the Catholic school culture and are integrated appropriately within all academic disciplines, with special emphasis given to the religion curriculum. A strong commitment to the full implementation of such learning activities and processes provides a developmentally appropriate and consistent education in justice and peace values, concepts, and skills for Catholic school students.

Students engage in learning activities that reflect effective methodologies for social justice education and best practices in pedagogy as defined by current educational research. Educators' design of appropriate educational experiences and expectations of students' responses are predicated on research of child and adolescent development as articulated by a variety of theories, including intra- and interpersonal intelligences by Gardner (1983); cognitive development by Erikson (1950) and Piaget (1997); moral development by Kohlberg (1981) and Gilligan (1982); and faith development by Fowler (1981).

A wide array of effective methodologies for implementing the justice and peace educational process in Catholic schools is available. The infusion technique (Justice and Peace Education Council, 1981) incorporates justice and peace concepts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes into appropriate segments of the curriculum. Teachers relate justice and peace concepts to the original aim of an individual lesson or thematic learning unit by modifying or expanding teaching and learning activities. Making effective use of teachable moments,

such as critically examining classroom, school, local, or global events from a social justice perspective, broadens the scope of the infusion methodology.

An action-reflection-analysis approach to social justice education can be initiated through community service projects, in which students are challenged to reflect on and analyze injustices that cause and perpetuate the social conditions that necessitate outreach and advocacy. Using such processes as the pastoral circle (Holland & Henriot, 1988) and shared Christian praxis (Groome, 1980) enables teachers to challenge students to pose structural questions through reflection and seek structural responses through analysis.

Specific justice and peace education programs and school and diocesan days of awareness may enhance the integration of processes that promote the principles of Catholic social teaching. Programs such as *Seeking a Just Society: An Educational Design* (Van Merrienboer, 1978); *Educating for Peace and Justice* (McGinnis, 1993a; 1993b); *AIDS: A Catholic Educational Approach to HIV* (National Catholic Educational Association AIDS Education Task Force, 1992); and *Facing History and Ourselves* (Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc., 1994) provide opportunities for direct teaching of social justice concepts. School or diocesan days of communal prayer, reflection, exploration, analysis, and action regarding themes such as cultural diversity, nonviolence, poverty, and hunger create a more meaningful integration of Catholic social tradition into the life of the school community.

## CO-CURRICULAR SUPPORT

The infusion of justice and peace values, skills, and concepts extends beyond the academic disciplines and permeates the entire culture of the Catholic school community. Co-curricular activities represent ways in which a Catholic school system can demonstrate its commitment to "building and living community" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972, p. 30) in which students are empowered to deepen their "concern for and skill in peacemaking and the achievement of justice" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972, p. 31). Student leadership of and participation in co-curricular activities provide them with opportunities to enhance and integrate more fully into their personal lives and interpersonal relationships the values being taught and modeled in the formal learning environment. In Catholic elementary schools, students in the middle and junior high grades can give special service to their school community by acting as role models for and facilitators of younger students. In like manner, interschool collaboration among Catholic high schools and elementary and junior high schools should be encouraged by partnering secondary students with younger students.

Co-curricular support systems that illustrate the integration of principles of Catholic social teaching include faith communities, youth ministry pro-

grams, student governance, and peer mediation processes. Faith communities within each grade or homeroom can support an inclusive sense of community. A diverse group of adult members of the Catholic school community, including administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, support personnel, clergy, and parents, should ideally be invited to serve as facilitators of the faith community gatherings. Under the guidance of these adult facilitators, students will be empowered to become self-disciplined, respectful, and socially responsible leaders within their school community. Students may come together regularly to share prayer and discuss and act on issues and conflicts relevant to their interpersonal relationships and school community life. Projects can include student-initiated school and community service and social action and creative expression through art, drama, and music. Students should be encouraged to celebrate and give thanks together for their individual and communal achievements.

A Catholic school system should consider adopting a comprehensive approach to youth ministry for the purpose of student development, participation, and empowerment (United States Catholic Conference, 1976). Catholic high schools and junior highs can provide retreats, prayer and worship, community service, and social action experiences for students. In creating these experiences, the impact of diverse social systems that affect students' values, beliefs, and decisions is considered. Among these systems are the family and school community as well as the dominant, youth, ethnic, and racial cultures within society. The talents and expertise of parents, local community members, diocesan personnel, and clergy in the development and implementation of these experiences contribute to the creation of an active community that supports students' needs.

Active involvement in the youth ministry program can foster the personal and spiritual development of students; engage students in responsible participation in the communal life, mission, and work of their school community; and empower students to critically analyze and transform their culture and society (Roberto, 1990). Students share in the power, responsibility, and commitment to the life of their school community through an active involvement in the planning, organization, and implementation of retreats and prayer experiences. Connections between local and global levels of reality can be actualized through participating in such projects as Oxfam America, in which students reflect on the global issues of hunger, poverty, and injustice and take action in their community by serving in nursing homes and soup kitchens.

Arguably, it seems that Catholic schools can promote student knowledge of and involvement in the democratic process through the organization of student councils. Through active participation in student councils students develop leadership potential; respect for diverse perspectives; social responsibility; stewardship of their environment; and skills in communication, collaboration, problem solving, and decision making. Assuming responsibility

for the planning and implementation of social activities, community involvement projects, and learning experiences challenges students to express their beliefs, values, and needs and to become advocates for themselves and those whom they serve.

Student responsibility for peacemaking and nonviolent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships can be developed through the implementation of peer mediation programs. Junior high and high school students are taught to be peer mediators who facilitate a process of communication and problem solving that leads to peaceful resolution of conflicts. Mutual understanding of diverse groups within the school community and skills in active listening and critical thinking are promoted, and conflict is perceived as a normal part of everyday life and an opportunity to learn and grow. Through peer mediation, students adopt a win-win attitude, making a commitment to cooperate and create new possibilities that are beneficial to all involved (A. Desrosiers, personal communication, February, 1997).

The peer mediation process challenges students to become partners who dialogue about the quality of their lives, and creates a forum through which they can experience democracy in their school community. Catholic school educators may facilitate further reflection and analysis among students, linking the discussion of justice issues and the nonviolent resolution of conflict on the interpersonal level to the global occurrences of oppression and violence, thus enabling students to become socially responsible peacemakers.

## **HOME-SCHOOL SUPPORT**

As the primary educators of their children, parents are responsible for the formation of their children's values, perspectives, and attitudes (United States Catholic Conference, 1991). By affirming their children's self-esteem, parents empower them to grow in compassion and social responsibility. A Catholic school system may support parents in this mission by providing a forum for adult learning and community building. Catholic school educators assist parents in the formation of their social conscience and development of effective parenting skills by providing educational processes and resources that support the school's social justice educational process.

Greater understanding of Catholic social teaching among parents can be achieved through the integration of an ongoing educational process within regularly scheduled home and school meetings or specially created parent gatherings. The following illustrations describe family activities, resources, and processes that may be initiated and sponsored by the Catholic school community to promote healthy self-esteem, social awareness, and action on behalf of justice within the family.

A Catholic school system, in collaboration with Catholic Charities, can sponsor a parent-child forum to promote self-esteem, trust, communication,

and healthy lifestyles among Catholic junior high and high school students and their parents. The day of dialogue may focus on "youth at promise" rather than on "youth at risk." Such a program aims to increase the number of research-proven assets, identified by the Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN, that enable youth to be resilient and overcome risks that may lead to behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse, violence, and school failure. Through engaging in interactive sessions, parents and students can learn to recognize and enhance those asset-building activities existing in their homes and implement additional initiatives (J. Smogor, personal communication, November, 1998).

Catholic school educators can facilitate an educational process in which parents become aware of ways to promote family unity and foster values consistent with Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and Catholic social teaching. Available resources include *Parenting for Peace and Justice* and *Parenting for Peace and Justice: Ten Years Later* (McGinnis & McGinnis, 1982, 1990) and *Just Family Nights: Activities to Keep Your Family Together in a World Falling Apart* (Vogt, 1994). Parents are provided with a theological foundation and practical application of such themes as stewardship and simplicity, nonviolence in the family and the world, appreciating cultural diversity, sex-role stereotyping, family involvement in social action, and prayer and spirituality.

A recommended format for family activities begins with an opening ritual such as lighting a candle or singing a song to calm minds, bodies, and spirits. This is followed by a presentation of the theme of the activity through a story or Scripture reading. The family's response is a physical or hands-on activity such as art or dramatization. The activity concludes with a treat, such as a special dessert or an excursion to a favorite place. Through participating in ongoing networking sessions, parents can gain support and assistance by sharing their experiences with one another and receiving further input from the facilitator.

A parent education program on nonviolence should mirror the themes and learning outcomes of a Catholic school's conflict resolution curriculum. The program goals—to prevent child abuse and family violence and reduce family conflict; to build better understanding and caring, healthy family relationships; and to teach pro-social behavior to children in the family setting—are attained through weekly interactive sessions in which parents develop and practice nonviolent conflict skills. Parents should be challenged to apply these skills in their daily life and receive feedback and support from one another and the group facilitator. Themes for the weekly sessions are Christian spirituality of nonviolence; viewing conflict differently and community building in the family; conflict management styles; the escalation of conflict; understanding and managing anger; building better understanding through communication skills; and the cooperative problem solving model of

win-win negotiation.

To augment the parent education program on conflict resolution, Catholic school educators may want to support the Families Against Violence Initiative, sponsored by the Institute for Peace and Justice's Parenting for Peace and Justice Network, St. Louis, MO. In this program, parents are encouraged to implement the Family Pledge of Nonviolence in their daily life through stories and family activities. The pledge is a commitment to respect others and themselves, communicate better, listen, forgive, respect nature, play creatively, and be courageous. Corresponding classroom and school pledges communicate to children a consistent vision of our commitment to nonviolence. The Catholic school community may form clusters of families in which parents share their experiences, celebrate, and take action in their community. Parents should be encouraged to participate in the Families Against Violence Advocacy Network (FAVAN), a coalition of national groups committed to advocacy on the issues of children, family, and violence, with a special focus on nonviolent discipline, dealing with violence in the media, and reducing gun violence.

The 1971 Synod of Bishops' document *Justice in the World* states that, "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel. (#6)" Preaching of the Gospel by parents and Catholic school educators alike creates a partnership between home and school. The Catholic school community empowers parents to become advocates for justice by creating a network of parent associations in which they can participate proactively in local, state, and federal legislative issues regarding educational reform and the welfare of children. The mission of the parent associations is to educate and advocate for the enactment of public policy initiatives that support values consistent with Catholic education and social teaching through a united diocesan grassroots effort.

Representatives of each Catholic school parent association can form regional parent councils to network and collaborate on state or federal legislative initiatives. A diocesan parent council of regional representatives can serve as an advisory board to the bishop and state Catholic Conference on children and educational reform issues. Through advocacy initiatives on the local, regional, and diocesan levels, Catholic school parents exercise social responsibility and promote social justice by voicing their support of fair and equitable public policy.

## **INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**

The shared mission and vision of a Catholic school system can be realized through the development and implementation of institutional support systems that unify its schools and reflect the diverse and unique needs of individual



school communities. Thus, solidarity among Catholic schools can be strengthened while the autonomy of each Catholic school is respected. The following examples illustrate institutional support systems that render our Catholic schools communities of faith that are "living, conscious, and active" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972, p. 30).

Each Catholic school should articulate and communicate through words and actions a mission statement that reflects its Catholic identity and purpose for existence. The mission statement should be prominently displayed and symbolized through some form of artistic expression, such as a school coat of arms. All members of the Catholic school community—students, educators, and parents—should understand and embrace the mission statement, using it as the foundation for all major decisions regarding school activities, programs, processes, and policies. The values expressed in the mission statement can also drive the institutional advancement program and marketing strategies of the Catholic school.

Diocesan frameworks for curriculum and instruction which reflect the integration of Catholic moral and social teaching and align with current research on effective teaching and learning should guide the development and implementation of school curricula. The Catholic social teaching themes of life and dignity of the human person, the call to family and community participation, rights and responsibilities, option for the poor and vulnerable, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, solidarity, and care for God's creation are infused into all academic disciplines. Under the leadership of the principal and with full participation of the faculty, each Catholic school can create and continuously refine school curricula that infuse a commitment to Christian service, social analysis, and advocacy; and reflect emerging perspectives on constructivism, brain-based research, and technological literacy.

The assessment system adopted by the Catholic school should be premised on the importance of stressing learning, cultivating intrinsic motivation, and helping students to improve. Students' growth and development in interpersonal skills, social responsibility, social analysis skills, and participation in community service and social action are critical components to their education that demand the recognition, support, and accountability that academic development is afforded. Substantive feedback as well as opportunities to participate in self-evaluation should be provided to students. Teachers should engage in a continuous critical examination of the justification and criteria for grades and ensure that artificial limits are not placed on the number of high grades in a class.

Expectations and standards for student behavior should promote self-discipline, respect for self and others, social responsibility, and stewardship of the school environment. Respecting the human dignity of each student, school and class rules must be formulated with the involvement of students, articulated and communicated positively, and enforced equitably.

Consequences for rules violations should relate to the infraction, emphasize learning, and assist students in changing their attitudes and behaviors. Based on the concept of restorative justice, consequences should provide opportunities for violators to make restitution for their misconduct and for the community of students to grant forgiveness and act compassionately.

Conscious construction of a school environment that conveys the Catholic identity of the school community; respect for individuals; and a celebration of their individual and communal achievements, global awareness, and multicultural perspectives can reinforce the Catholic school's commitment to its mission. Classroom space should allow for interactive and engaging learning activities. An inviting and comfortable library, rich in resources, should serve as the intellectual center of the school. The school facility must accommodate the kinesthetic, musical, and artistic development of students and be equipped for the effective integration of technology and science. There should be ample physical space conducive to individual and communal prayer and meditation and a gathering place to create an informal social environment for students.

The regional offices of Catholic Charities can establish counseling services that are consistent with Catholic and Christian values. Counselors should assist school professionals in responding to the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of students and their families by offering individual and family guidance. Implementation of crisis intervention plans in Catholic schools is enhanced by collaboration between educators and Catholic Charities staff.

A formal systematic forum in which parents and members of the community participate in the leadership of Catholic schools is created through consultative school boards on the local and diocesan levels. Through service on such boards, those committed to Catholic education voice their concerns, share in decision making, contribute critical analyses based on their expertise, oversee the school's financial management, and recommend educational policy.

In determining personnel and financial policy, school boards and school administrators are governed by the moral imperative for just treatment of personnel. As stated in *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, "All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the Church and its agencies and institutions; indeed the Church should be exemplary" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986, p. 174). An obligation of those responsible for the governance of the Catholic school is the critical examination of hiring practices, methods for maintaining employees, processes for voluntary and involuntary termination, and just compensation systems. School board members and principals must ensure that all contributors, suppliers, and manufacturers associated with the Catholic school comply with the just standards for labor and

employment set forth by Catholic social teaching. Requiring manufacturers of Catholic school uniforms to conform to fair labor standards by providing just wages and safe working conditions for their employees illustrates this moral obligation.

## **DIOCESAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Implementation of this model begins with the Catholic schools superintendent engaging administrators, teachers, parents, and school board members in a reflection and action process. They examine their beliefs and assumptions, extend their knowledge through dialogue and research, and take individual and collective action to create a more just and nonviolent learning environment. This transformational process is based on commitment to the principles of valuing all people, using conflict constructively, promoting change in a creative manner, and perceiving oneself as part of a global system. The following implementation plan describes the manner in which a Catholic school office might nurture and sustain this process of reflection, structural analysis, and transformation.

### **PHASE ONE: YEARS ONE AND TWO**

The superintendent, in collaboration with the associate superintendents, designs a structure and process for a leadership team, develops criteria for the selection of members, and invites individuals to serve on the team. Facilitated by the superintendent, the team is composed of the associate superintendents, principals, teachers, diocesan and local school board members, parents, clergy, and high school students. Geographical location, level of education (elementary, junior high, high school), and type of school (diocesan, regional, parish, private) are considered in the membership selection process. Individuals who are selected believe that justice and peace are integral components of spiritual life, that there is a diversity of valid responses to the Gospel challenge, and that there are signs of hope for the future. The bishop communicates his support of this process and officially appoints leadership team members.

Members of the leadership team reflect on and share their understanding of the meaning of a Catholic school system as a social structure committed to the values expressed in Catholic social teaching. Input regarding justice and peace concepts and methodologies, stages of human development, Catholic social teaching, and structural analysis is presented to the team by the superintendent and associate superintendents.

The superintendent and associate superintendents share a draft of the model of Catholic social justice education with the leadership team. Team members critique and reach consensus on the mission statement; vision and

core values; educational goals; and plans for the academic program and co-curricular, home-school, and institutional support systems. Based on their experience and observation, team members develop a profile of the present status of the diocesan school system in regard to the elements of the plan, affirming the achievements and successes of the school system and identifying areas of needed improvement. The team assesses organizational, cultural, social, political, and economic forces in the diocesan school system that contribute to or obstruct the promotion of the plan. Thoughtful consideration is given to the manner in which the identified positive forces will be maximized and the hindering forces will be addressed in the planning process.

Using the profile of the present diocesan school system and the assessment of forces that contribute to or obstruct the implementation of the plan, the leadership team develops and prioritizes diocesan initiatives for the school system. For each initiative, goals are stated and implementation strategies are developed. Procedural steps, a timeline and calendar, available and needed resources, personnel requirements, and evaluation methods are identified and implemented.

## **PHASE TWO: YEARS THREE AND FOUR**

The diocesan initiatives unite Catholic schools in their pursuit of becoming a system that promotes the principles of Catholic social teaching in all dimensions of its ministry. In support of and as an extension to these diocesan initiatives, the leadership team develops guidelines for school processes and programs. The superintendent, in collaboration with the associate superintendents and the diocesan leadership team, shares the plans for the implementation of the diocesan initiatives and the guidelines for the school initiatives, first with principals and then with teachers, parents, school board members, and clergy. Feedback from these constituencies is continuously collected and used to refine the process. Principals are asked to determine the readiness of their school communities for developing and implementing initiatives following the diocesan guidelines by conducting an assessment among the teachers, parents, school board, and clergy. If ready to proceed, the school community describes the manner in which it will use the diocesan guidelines to develop and implement its plan and identifies the professional development processes and resources it needs. If the school community is not ready to begin the process, it defines the issues or conditions that prevent it from proceeding. An action plan and timeline for addressing these issues are outlined, and professional development processes and resources that are needed to overcome these obstacles are identified.

School leadership teams, consisting of the principal and representatives from the faculty, parent community, school board, clergy, and high school students, are established. Representatives from the diocesan leadership team

facilitate an orientation to the planning process; educate the teams on justice and peace concepts and methodology, stages of human development, and structural analysis; and provide ongoing support and technical assistance. Planning and implementation on the school level mirror the diocesan process. The school leadership team develops a profile of the status of the school community in regard to the elements of the plan; assesses and addresses the contributing and obstructing forces to the implementation of the plan; and develops and prioritizes school initiatives. The team uses the assessment tool "Assessing School Progress as a Peaceful and Just Institution" (Justice and Peace Education Council, 1985).

After setting priorities, the school leadership team coordinates the planning and implementation of goals and strategies for the academic, co-curricular, home-school, and institutional support initiatives and conducts formative and summative evaluations of the process. Upon completion of a school's plan, a visiting team consisting of administrators, teachers, parents from other schools, and educators from Catholic colleges evaluates the plan and offers commendations and recommendations.

### **PHASE THREE: ONGOING**

Throughout the development and implementation process, the diocesan leadership team provides opportunities for Catholic school teams to come together for networking and mutual support. An orientation for new professional staff on the rationale for and elements of education in Catholic social teaching and the diocesan and school initiatives is held annually.

Ongoing communication between the diocesan leadership team and school communities through school visits, regional focus group sessions, visiting team reports, and periodic school progress reports provide continuous feedback regarding the effectiveness of school and diocesan initiatives. The diocesan and school leadership teams oversee the process of improvement of diocesan and school initiatives through ongoing review and refinement of plans based on this accountability system. Figure 1 summarizes the implementation plan.

**FIGURE 1**  
**DIOCESAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:**  
**A REFLECTION AND ACTION PROCESS**

**Phase One: Years One and Two**

**Aim**

Establishment of diocesan leadership team

**Process**

Diocesan leadership team:

- Reflects and dialogues on Catholic school identity
- Learns about Catholic social teaching, justice and peace education, human development, structural analysis
- Critiques proposed model of Catholic school system
- Develops profile of status of Catholic school system
- Assesses and addresses contributing and obstructing forces to implementation of plan
- Develops diocesan initiatives, goals, and implementation plan

**Phase Two: Years Three and Four**

**Aim**

Development and implementation of school initiatives

**Process**

Diocesan leadership team:

- Develops guidelines for school processes and programs
- Revises implementation plan for diocesan initiatives and school guidelines based on feedback from school communities
- Assists principals in determining readiness levels for developing and implementing initiatives of school communities, developing action plans, and establishing school leadership teams

School leadership teams:

- Reflect and dialogue on Catholic school identity
- Learn about Catholic social teaching, justice and peace education, human development, structural analysis
- Develop profile of their school's status
- Assess and address contributing and obstructing forces to implementation of school plans
- Develop school initiatives, goals, and implementation plans
- Conduct formative and summative evaluations of process
- Establish visiting teams to evaluate implementation and offer commendations and recommendations

### Phase Three: Ongoing

#### Aim

Continuous support, evaluation, and improvement

#### Process

Diocesan Leadership Team:

- Provides support to and networking of school leadership teams
- Orients new staff
- Communicates with school communities through school visits and regional focus group sessions
- Provides for ongoing evaluation and improvement of diocesan and school initiatives through visiting team reports and school progress reports

## CONCLUSION

Catholic school leaders are called

to build on the good work already underway to ensure that every Catholic understands how the gospel and church teaching call us to choose life, to serve the least among us, to hunger and thirst for justice, and to be peace-makers. (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998, p. 3)

This aim is achieved through affirming the efforts of Catholic school educators to teach and model the values of justice and peace, while critically examining educational structures, policies, and processes. The systemic integration of Catholic social teaching into the culture and curriculum of a Catholic school system, as reflected in the proposed model, empowers all constituencies of a Catholic school system to articulate and act on their beliefs and commitment to human dignity, justice, and peace. Inspired by the leadership of diocesan and local school administrators, teachers, students, and parents together create caring and just school communities whose mission calls them to respond faithfully to the Gospel imperative to act on behalf of justice and participate in the transformation of the world.

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