PRINCIPALS SESSION

PRESENTER
JOHN ROBERTO

KENORA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

1

SCHOOL CULTURE

A culture will be strong or weak depending on the interactions between the people in the organization. **In a strong culture, there are many, overlapping, and cohesive interactions among all members of the organization**. As a result, knowledge about the organization's distinctive character — and what it takes to thrive in it — is widely spread and reinforced. In a weak culture, sparse interactions make it difficult for people to learn the organization's culture, so its character is barely noticeable and the commitment to it is scarce or sporadic.

Within that weak or strong structure, what exactly people believe and how they act depends on the messages — both direct and indirect — that the leaders and others in the organization send. A good culture arises from messages that promote traits like collaboration, honesty, and hard work.

2

SCHOOL CULTURE

Culture is shaped by five interwoven elements, each of which principals have the power to influence:

1. **Fundamental beliefs and assumptions**, or the things that people at your school consider to be true.
2. **Shared values**, or the judgments people at your school make about those belief and assumptions — whether they are right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust.
3. **Norms**, or how members believe they should act and behave, or what they think is expected of them.
4. **Patterns and behaviors**, or the way people actually act and behave in your school.
5. **Tangible evidence**, or the physical, visual, auditory, or other sensory signs that demonstrate the behaviors of the people in your school.

Each of these components influences and drives the others, forming a circle of reinforcing beliefs and actions; strong connections among every member of the school community reinforce the circle at every point.
[Dr. Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University]

3

6 STEPS TO SHARING A SCHOOL CULTURE

Everything a leader does — her statements and philosophy, reactions to key events, energy, and interaction style — influences culture in a powerful way.

1. **Look in the mirror**. The leader is the main role model for an organization.
2. **Select staff wisely**. (Hire for mission.)
3. **Teach what you'd like to see**. Create formal trainings and space for honest conversation about the attitudes, norms, and practices that are core to being a member of your school community.
4. **Broadcast your vision**. Every formal communication you have with your community should reflect and reinforce the culture.
5. **Make your vision tangible.** Mottos, symbolic objects, special traditions, and the design of physical space can all help reinforce your cultural vision.
6. **Restructure social networks.** Culture is spread through connections. Encourage greater interaction with others who are committed to the culture.

4

LASALLIAN CATHOLIC GUIDING VISION

concern for the poor and social justice

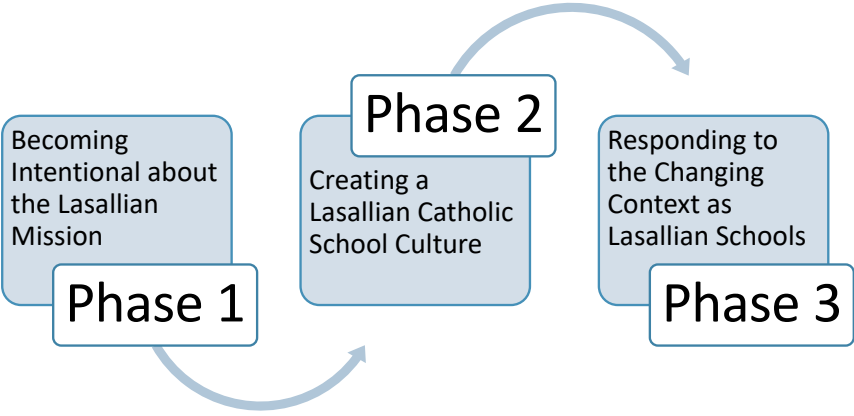faith in the presence of God

quality education

respect for all persons

inclusive community

5 Core Principles

expressed through

19 Characteristics

with

Specific indicators for each characteristic

5

FOCUS OF EACH PHASE
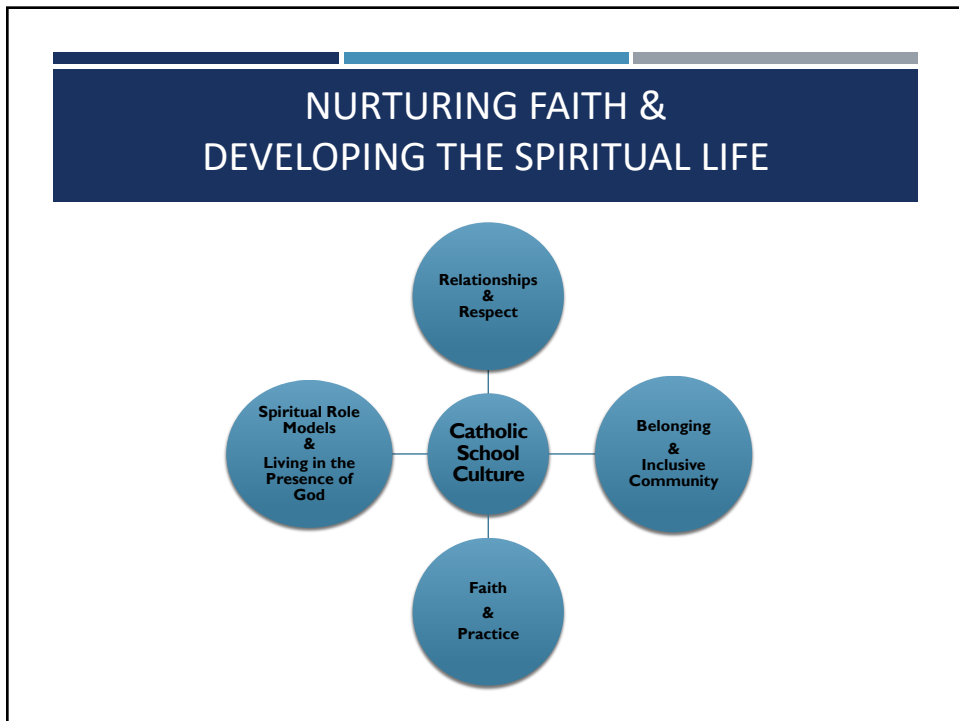
Becoming Intentional about the Lasallian Mission

Phase 1

Phase 2

Creating a Lasallian Catholic School Culture

Responding to the Changing Context as Lasallian Schools

Phase 3

6

EDUCATORS SESSION

7

NURTURING FAITH & DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Relationships & Respect

Spiritual Role Models & Living in the Presence of God

Catholic School Culture

Belonging & Inclusive Community

Faith & Practice

8

EMERGING CHALLENGES

1. The wellbeing (and mental health) of children, teens, and their parents
2. Record levels of loneliness among young people
3. The search for meaning, purpose, and belonging among the younger generations
4. Increased connectivity, decreased connection
5. The loss of trust and confidence in society's institutions
6. Gender identity, gender expression, and sexual identity have changed substantially
7. The diversity of religious belief and practice; decline in religious affiliation

9

COMMUNITY OF FAITH & PRACTICE

Faith Community

Respect, Presence of God, Hospitality, Cultural Diversity, Jesus, Way of Life, Bible, Story, Worship, Prayer, Moral Living, Service Justice, Gifts

10

NURTURING GROWTH

For children: The emphasis is on *experiencing* faith and *belonging* to a faith community. Schools provide an immersion into the Catholic faith through faith forming practices embodied in the life of the school community.

For adolescents: Building on experiencing and belonging in childhood, the emphasis moves to the young person building or constructing a spiritual/religious life by *exploring*, *discerning*, and *integrating* beliefs and practices into one's life.
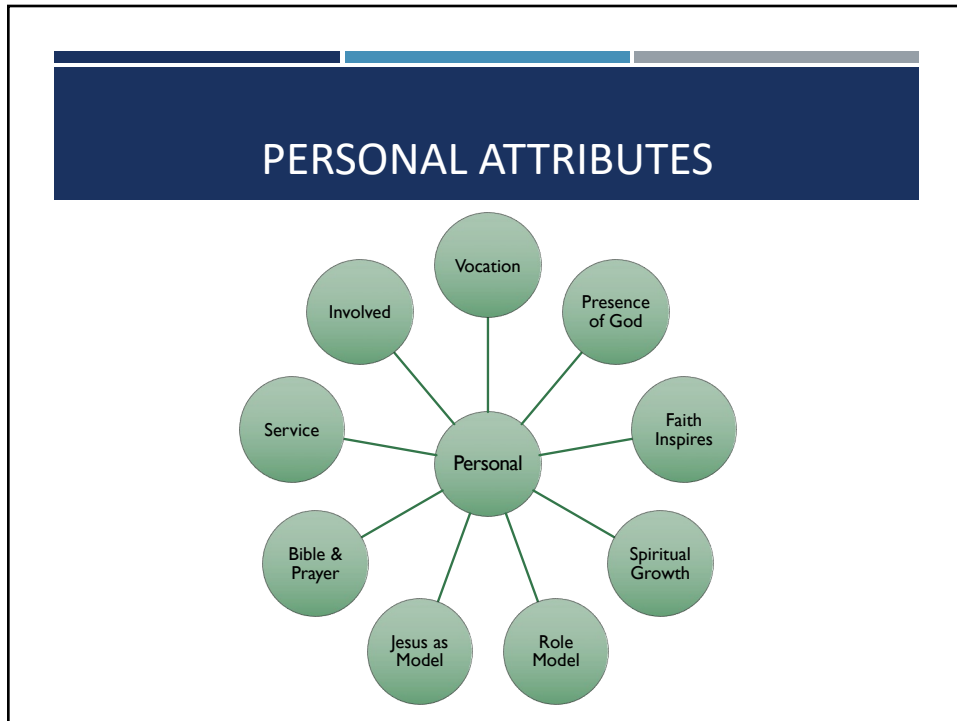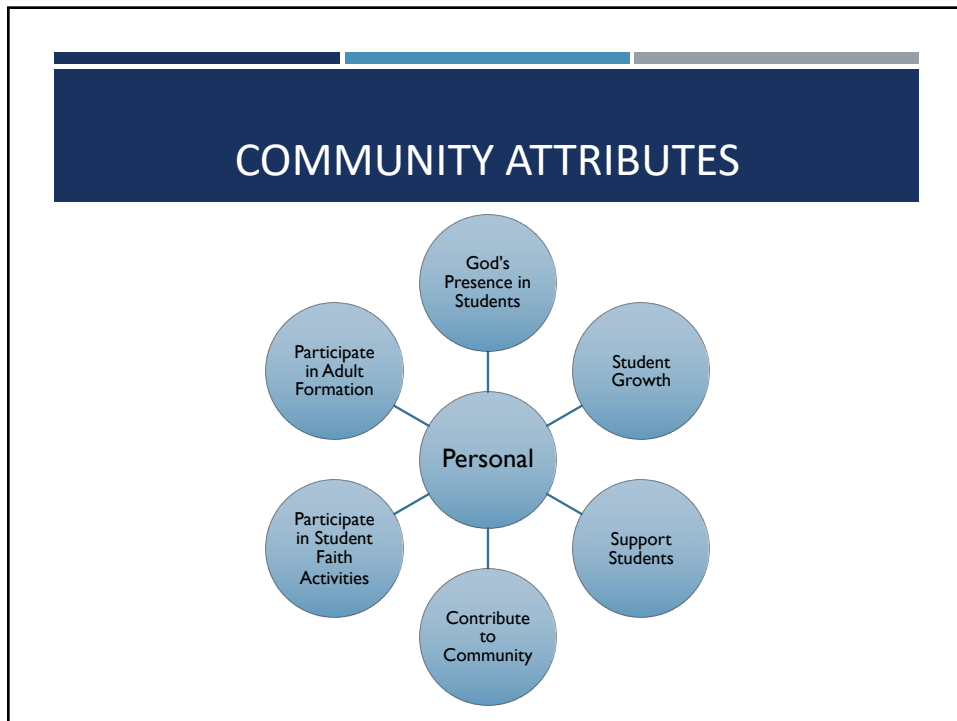
11

THE CHALLENGE OF SPIRITUAL & RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

1. Declining numbers of people (children, teens, adults) participating in religious communities
2. Increasing age (and deaths) of the Christians most engaged in a religious community
3. Rising numbers of disaffiliation among younger generations (40s and younger)
4. Rising number of children growing up in second generation religiously unaffiliated home, i.e., their parents disaffiliated and not transmitting a religious faith and practice at home

Inactive Nonbelievers	Inactive Believers	Spiritual but not Religious	Involved Believer	Active Believer

12

13

14