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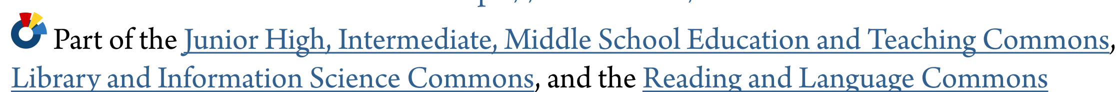

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DISCOVERING *REGALOS:*

A CASE STUDY OF SAINT ANNE'S MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Nicole Jenks May

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Library and Information Science

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2013

ABSTRACT

DISCOVERING *REGALOS:*

A CASE STUDY OF SAINT ANNE'S MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Nicole Jenks May

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013

Under the Supervision of Professor Laretta Henderson, Ph.D.

Saint Anne's Middle School is a Catholic, bilingual, bicultural, middle school for girls that participates in the Milwaukee Parental School Choice Program. This case study explored reading and language arts as experienced in the school through the lens of a school library media specialist. The students' social, emotional, and intellectual needs appeared to be met at the school for the most part. The school also exhibited best practices for teaching reading at the middle school level to bilingual students. However, to improve reading, the school would want to consider changing the school's focus from reading comprehension to reading engagement so that students become lifelong readers. In addition, as schools begin to roll out the new educational framework known as the Common Core, which will change how librarians and teachers present reading, and standardized tests assess reading, it is essential that more time be dedicated to exploring point-of-view in informational texts. Finally, because the students tend to score lower on vocabulary than comprehension in reading assessments, increasing the use of free-

reading books to introduce vocabulary may provide further opportunities for students to improve on standardized test scores while teaching a valuable lifelong skill. In sum, even a strong school can improve on reading and language arts instruction, and this project shows ways that teachers and librarians can change their thinking to be ready to implement Common Core and still achieve reading engagement.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Accelerated Reader. Adequate Yearly Progress. Common Core. Budget cuts.

Those words are taking over school library media centers around the country. A school library media center, the heart of a school, and place where young children learn about Clifford the Big Red Dog and Arthur the Aardvark, and older children and teens discover Harry Potter's adventures and seek out books about dying teenagers to feed their angst periods, is under attack. Where children and teens once discovered resources for school projects and freely explored their interests is under increasing scrutiny by school officials who appreciate the role of the school library in the past, but have increasing trouble fitting it in when they are forced to focus on standardized test results.

But how long will the current tests be around? With the advent of the Common Core curriculum, which is a new educational framework that is currently being implemented nationwide, the standardized tests may change to match the new instruction goals. According to Doorey (2012), states will begin rolling out new assessments in the 2014-2015 school year. The new assessments will most likely be computer-based, feature more complex, multi-part tasks including searching for information online, selecting appropriate sources, and writing arguments on those sources (Doorey, 2012). In addition, the new tests will involve more complicated reading material, and students will have to make connections in multiple passages as they tackle more real-world tasks (Doorey, 2012). Because school librarians, who are often in charge of the school computer labs, are best positioned to help with everything from securing lab time to test and helping to instruct students on how to find and use information online, it is essential that school librarians keep abreast of these changes to testing and find ways to support

teachers as they transition their teaching to align with how students will be tested. The question is, how can school librarians support teachers when there is so little time in the day? This project will explore reading development at an urban, Catholic middle school for girls that participates in the Milwaukee Public School Choice program. Through taking a known example of a school that has posted standardized test scores under current examinations indicating that students score at or above grade level in reading upon graduation, librarians will learn strategies to support teachers as they support students. They also can better help grow lifelong readers who, in turn, will do well on whatever kind of standardized assessment is thrown at them as time progresses.

Setting

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a unique place in which to position a study about reading improvement because of the Milwaukee Parental School Choice Program ("Choice"). Begun in the school year of 1990-1991, the program allows some parents in Milwaukee to opt into private sectarian (religious) and non-sectarian schools. As a result, there are many private and religious schools in Milwaukee that serve a wide range of students. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee currently operates 29 elementary and 7 secondary schools that participate in the program. Not all students who want to attend a Catholic school receive school choice funds, however, and there are grants and scholarships available to help families to attend a Catholic school even if they cannot get a Choice voucher due to earning more money than the program allows. Initially the financial limitation on income was 175% of the federal poverty level; today, it is 300% of the federal poverty level so that a family of 4, for example, can earn $69,801 and still qualify for a choice voucher so long as the family resides in the city of Milwaukee. But

even if a family has a Choice voucher, there might not be enough space in the school the family wishes to attend because of limitations on the number of Choice spots available at a given school. If there are more students who want to attend a school with a choice voucher than there are spaces available, the school must hold a "lottery" and place all names into a drawing and select students to attend plus alternates. For those students who do not get a "Choice" slot, the schools try to find ways to make the school affordable if the parents really want their children to attend a specific school. In 2011, the city of Racine, just South of Milwaukee, also joined Milwaukee in offering school Choice options. For the 2013-2014 school year, 13 schools, mostly Catholic or Lutheran, participate in that program, which provides an alternative to the Racine Unified School District.

Part of the reason that Milwaukee has the Choice program and most other cities do not is a city with great need for the assistance. In 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 21.9% of people in Milwaukee County live in poverty. This compares to 15.3% of the United States and 13.2% in Wisconsin. For those under the age of 18, 34.6% of children and teens in Milwaukee grew up in poverty as compared to 21.6% of children and teens in the entire United States or 19% of Wisconsin children and teens. In 2009, Milwaukee was the fourth-most impoverished big city, up from 11th place in 2008. According to the Milwaukee County Historical Society (2012), poverty in Milwaukee for African-Americans in particular has been high as compared to the white population since the 1960's.

The school being studied, Saint Anne's Middle School (SAMS)[1], is also a unique setting. A school opened by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (S.S.N.D.) community, a religious order of Roman Catholic women religious, SAMS was set up to serve the economically disadvantaged, was formed in 1996. The S.S.N.D., religious sisters have a focused ministry that specializes in empowering women and girls; in particular, SAMS serves poor urban girls as part of the S.S.N.D. mission. Emphasizing respect, responsibility, and finding and sharing one's personal talents, the school is bilingual (Spanish-English), and focuses on helping its students develop leadership skills, critical thinking skills and learning to serve others. The school's slogan is Respect, *Regalo*[2], and Responsibility and this slogan underscores the commitment the school has to helping students to succeed and be leaders. It has grown to serve approximately 40 students per grade with about 20 students in each class, in grades 5-8. The school is based on the NativityMiguel Model, which includes a longer school day and year and more support for graduates than is typically found in a traditional middle school. The school opened a new school in the 2012-2013 school year for students in K-4. The primary school is a dual-immersion model (Spanish-English), also receives Choice funds, and serves boys and girls. According to the principal at SAMS, who helped in both founding SAMS and in opening the Primary school as well, the plan is to have that school "feed" SAMS and Saint Ignatius Middle School, the Jesuit-sponsored school for boys that also operates under the NativityMiguel model. The school library at SAMS serves both the primary

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[1] A pseudonym

[2] *Regalo* is the Spanish word for gift. As it doesn't work in English to have the 3 R's be Respect, Gift, Responsibility, the school simply does not translate *regalo.* The Spanish word for respect, *respeto,* and for responsibility, *responsibilidad,* complete the Spanish language version of the motto.

and middle school. As of the 2010 data, students in NativityMiguel schools like SAMS and Ignatius Jesuit have a 97% attendance rate, 79% graduate from high school in four years. In addition, 67% of those who graduate from high school move on to college or trade school and 49% of those who attempt higher education go on to graduate (NativityMiguel, 2011). In Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools graduated 70% of their students and Choice schools graduated 82% of their students in 2008-2009, according to Richards (2011) in an article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* comparing graduation rates of "Choice" schools to Milwaukee Public Schools. SAMS's Facebook page boasts that 99% of SAMS students graduate from high school and 84% of their alums enroll in college, and the school's website shows SAMS students who take the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE) score better than their public school counterparts.

Problem

SAMS is one of many schools in Milwaukee tasked with serving the urban poor, but because it is a participant in the Milwaukee Parental School Choice Program, it cannot "cream;" in other words, it cannot select only the best students for its program. SAMS, like other parochial, public, and private schools in Milwaukee, is tasked with serving a diverse community of learners and also demonstrates high scores on standardized tests. Is there anything about this Catholic, urban, school for girls, that a co-educational public or private school can replicate in order to increase test scores, high school graduation, college attendance, or other success factors? Many school librarians and teachers struggle in finding a model school to emulate. Determining what SAMS does well (and struggles with) will help teachers and librarians attempting to help with reading

achievement with similar urban populations to have a model to use when planning reform efforts in their own schools.

Need for the Project

Teachers increasingly complain about "the test," saying that it stifles effective teaching, but standardized testing as a part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), is not going away any time soon, and even if it did, standardized tests have been a component of modern education well before NCLB took place. Because the "test" is a required measurement and the WKCE is a required test for all schools in Wisconsin that accept Choice funds, learning how a Choice school achieves strong test scores under current testing measures would benefit other schools. In that reality, the question is how can a school achieve impressive test results? Do such results require a sacrifice of effective teaching and curricular goals? In an atmosphere in which teachers are evaluated based on their students' successes, it seems essential that more research is needed to show schools how to do better without sacrificing their integrity by cheating to achieve these results. At the same time, in an era when information is easy to access at a push of a button, information that helped students of color improve on test scores should not be hidden knowledge. In addition, since schools are one of the primary places knowledge is shared and explored, it is critical to explore the role of school libraries in helping students to learn to find, evaluate, and use information. Lance (1994) found that better funded school libraries produce higher average reading scores regardless of the socio-economic of the students served. In an era when budgets for school libraries are slashed, it is essential to figure out whether a strong school library is an essential component of strong test scores or if the skills a librarian brings can be replicated in the classroom. In the end,

librarians need to be active stakeholders in their schools and step out of the library and into the classrooms to better assist teachers to teach reading, and this project will help inform librarians about best reading practices so they can better help teachers to succeed.

Assumptions

While much research has explored the use of standardized testing and its relative advantages and disadvantages (Lomax, et al., 1995; Kohn, 2000; Mabie, 2000; Shannon, 2008), this study will be taking standardized testing as a given. This is because “Choice” schools, like their public school counterparts, do not get to choose whether or not they take the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination. As a result, it will also assume that the tests that have been administered to the students at Saint Anne’s Middle School are adequate measures of progress in a middle school student because the Department of Public Instruction has deemed the tests to be so. It voluntarily takes other tests, such as the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) and MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) in order to learn about students’ growth and to compare to other schools in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and throughout the United States. While one might argue that the tests, whatever their purpose, are inadequate measures, this project will take the perspective of the “Choice” schools and accept the tests as a given without delving into the research for and against standardized testing.

Parameters of the Project

The research was conducted over approximately three and a half months during the academic school year of 2012-2013 at SAMS. The researcher had access to past test scores, and interviewed and observed personnel in order to attempt to discover what elements at the school are present that may have led to these successes. At the same

time, the researcher spoke to graduates of the school to learn more about their experiences. It would be unwieldy for a project of this size to interview all alumna, but by speaking to a few graduates, it might be possible to uncover some insight into SAMS, past and present.

Terminology

In this project, a few terms will be used often enough that they bear explanation now. They are:

- **Social Justice:** Social justice is a term initially coined by Jesuit priest Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio in 1840 who based his work on the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). The basic idea behind social justice theory is that society ought to treat all people equally and that which harms one member of society harms all society and has roots in the values of the French Revolution (liberty, equality, and fraternity) (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). **Catholic Social Justice** in particular is a religiously-motivated desire for individuals to serve the Jesus in everyone, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, religion or creed (*Catholic Worker Journal,* 2012).
- **Common Core:** This new framework of education is currently being implemented in many, but not all, of the states. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) developed the Common Core Standards in 2009 (Loertscher 2010). Under the Common Core, schools are free to choose *what* they teach, but common goals such as having elementary students reading 50% fiction and 50% non-fiction and secondary students reading 70% non-fiction are

designed to help increase the academic rigor of all schools, nationwide. The Common Core is designed to increase rigor while at the same time encourage greater preparation for the "real world."

- **Literacy:** Literacy is defined based on the cultural, political, and historical contexts of the community in which it is used (Gee, 1999). In other words, literacy in a culture in which storytelling is valued would include the ability to recount a story orally and perhaps would not emphasize the ability to decode print at all.
- **MET-PLATO:** The MET (Measures of Effective Teaching) study was conducted by the Gates Foundation and used data from various sources[3], in conjunction with videos of the teachers' lessons, to determine which factors of instruction were most linked to success (Gates, 2010a). Pam Grossman developed the measure for Language Arts instruction used for MET called PLATO, the Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations, (Gates, 2010a). The original Grossman protocol includes thirteen elements that Grossman found in successful urban English teachers (Gates, 2010b). This will be described in greater detail in the literature review.
- **Iowa Tests of Basic Skills:** Standardized tests provided by the College of Education of the University of Iowa and published by Riverside Publishing. These tests provide a comprehensive assessment of student progress in major content areas and allow nationwide comparisons. The Iowa Basics test

[3] The MET study used student achievement gains, teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, student perceptions of the classroom instructional environment, and teachers' perceptions of the working conditions at their schools in addition to recordings of teachers' lessons.

vocabulary, word analysis, listening, reading comprehension, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, written expression, mathematics, social studies, science, and reference skills for students from K-12. Student reports indicate the approximate grade level scored in each area tested with a numerical score.

- **Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE)**: This is Wisconsin's test used to comply with No Child Left Behind. It is an assessment designed to assess students' ability to meet Wisconsin's standards in reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and 10. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take additional tests in science, language arts, and social studies. Typically, only Wisconsin public school students take this set of tests, however students enrolled in "voucher" schools that participate in the Milwaukee or Racine choice programs also take these tests. Student reports primarily indicate the level at which the student scored on a four-point scale (Minimal, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced).
- **MAP Tests:** The Measures of Academic Progress is a computer-based assessment administered by the Northwest Evaluation Association to evaluate reading, mathematics and language.[4] These adaptive assessments help teachers to see specific areas of weakness for each student so that they can remediate the exact areas where the student struggles. Unlike a traditional standardized test, MAP "remembers" how the student has done in the past and can show growth from one administration to the next. Also, the test adjusts based on how the

[4] MAP for Primary Grades tests reading and mathematics only, and there is an additional Science assessment that is separate.

student does on each question: when a student gets an answer correct, she is offered a harder question; if she misses one, she is given an easier question.

- **Public School:** A school supported directly through property tax dollars designed to serve students in a geographic area. This is the "default" school to which a student is assigned, but can include charter schools. The use of property tax as the funding base creates inequities in schools that replicate those in the larger society; in other words, a high poverty neighborhood will have fewer funds available to the schools than a wealthier school district (Kozol 1991).
- **Charter School:** A private-public school which is funded more directly through property tax dollars but managed through a private partnership. Students have to enroll as they would a private or parochial school and charter schools may have a special focus in their curriculum that makes them different from the traditional public school. They may expel students the same way other schools can, however, they may not discriminate against students based on disabilities.
- **Private School:** A non-sectarian school that, while not public in that it does not receive public dollars directly through property tax, may receive some public funds through programs like Milwaukee Parental School Choice or Title I funding.
- **Parochial School:** Generally, a parochial school is a one run by a religious organization. Some are truly parochial, in that one parish is in charge of the school's mission, goals, curriculum, and administration, much like a school board directs a public school. As an example, a school like St. Margaret Mary School in Milwaukee is a parochial school because it is managed by St. Margaret Mary the

parish church and funded primarily through tuition and support of the parish, though the school may accept federal or state money such as Title I funds, which are tied to the poverty level of the students in the school.

- **Independent Religious School:** Typically the word "parochial" means any religious school whether or not it is associated with a parish, synagogue, or other religious community, to distinguish it from a non-sectarian private school. At times, however, it will be necessary to discuss religious schools that are independent, that is, they are not attached to any parish as separate from parochial schools.
- **NativityMiguel Model School:** The NativityMiguel Network schools typically are independent religious schools run by religious orders such as the Jesuits or the School Sisters of Notre Dame without a parish church of their own. The common elements of the schools are a small class size with a small school community, an extended school day and year in a faith-based program (NativityMiguel, 2011).

Research Questions

Do students score at or above grade level in reading and language arts?

Because the WKCE does not indicate grade equivalent levels, it is difficult to take WKCE test scores at face value. As a result, the first question is to determine whether, in fact, the school is achieving test scores worthy of note on the ITBS because that test will be easier for teachers and librarians to use as a comparison. If the school is doing well, it is more likely that other schools will want to emulate some of the school's techniques. If the students are not reading at or above grade level or tend to score poorly

on standardized tests in the Language Arts, it is unlikely that the school will be one that other schools want to follow.

What factors of instruction at Saint Anne's Middle School might lead to high test scores? I selected this question because it attempts to correlate the student success with a measure that has been effectively used in urban districts in public schools. While the study will take place at an urban Catholic middle school for girls, in order to have the success that the school has enjoyed with WKCE results, teachers may have observable skills that could be applied to any setting: public, private, or parochial. The answer to this question would help determine whether its success would be replicable by a school that is Catholic, single-gender, and involves a school CHOICE lottery. It would also help to determine if the successes may be as result of "good teaching" which would suggest the same educators could teach at any school and have the same results. It also remains open to other possibilities.

The specific measure, PLATO, was selected because it is a researched-based method that has been used to measure several qualities of "good" language arts instruction in urban environment. Further, it includes a measure for connecting instruction to personal and cultural experiences, which may touch on "culturally-relevant teaching" and also the Catholic school philosophy. It also measures whether accommodations are made for language learning. As the school studied has a significantly large population of students whose primary language is Spanish, observing how (and whether) teachers make learning both relevant and accessible may be important in the overall assessment of what is being done in the classroom.

What factors affect a teacher's decision to teach at a Catholic "choice" school for girls? Teachers may choose to teach at a specific school because of certain benefits attached to the school. They may choose to teach at a school because of the school philosophy, the support by the principal, the specific ethnic composition of the students, or other factors. By investigating why teachers have come to this school, and stayed at this school, it may be possible to determine factors that may help schools to recruit and retain teachers that are capable of achieving high test scores or other measures of achievement. Teachers who select an urban school may be more apt to find teaching to be a "calling" and thus are more likely to stay (Freedman and Appleman, 2009). Alternatively, they may be teaching at this school simply because they could not get a better paying job and might leave at the earliest opportunity. By understanding why teachers come to SAMS (and why they stay there), it might shed light on an ongoing teacher issue: teacher retention. Ingersoll (2002) noted that as many as 46% of new teachers let the profession within five years and that this was actually the reason for the ongoing teacher shortages reported in the United States.

How does the school library support reading development? This question will address the role of the school library in reading at SAMS. Because students obtain free-reading books from the library and visits to the school library are a component of the reading/language arts programs in particular, studying how it is used will help teachers and librarians know how the library is used at SAMS, and whether its model is one that would be successful at their own schools.

What other successes have SAMS students achieved, and, what factors have led to today's successful students? This is, in reality, a multi-part question. First, it

will involve exploring what successes, beyond test scores, the students have achieved. One example of non-test-based success is college attendance. Hispanic immigrant youth have become the fastest-growing population in schools (Fry, 2007). While 49% of white high school graduates enrolled in higher education options in 2008, only 36.7% of Hispanics did (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Typically, however, Hispanic females are more likely than males to attend college. Approximately 39.5% of 25 to 29-year-old Hispanic females completed at least some college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Even so, the number is quite small compared to white youth; while historically, Latinas do not attend college in the United States in great numbers, many SAMS alumnae have attended some form of post-graduate study. According to a Pew Hispanic Center study, the number of all Latinos in college is growing, and increased dramatically starting in the year 2010; however, SAMS has enjoyed a higher rate of students attending college than the average (Fry, 2011). Other examples of success may involve community leadership and/or being more successful at their later jobs. While teachers are likely a significant factor leading to success, it is difficult to know what, if anything helped the students to achieve the successes that will be uncovered. By exploring the school's documents, visiting the school library, and interviewing past students, past and present teachers and others associated with the school, it may be possible to discover threads that, when woven together, demonstrate the school's involvement in student's lives during attendance and years later.

Summary

This thesis is, in short, looking to determine what factors may have contributed to SAMS' high scores on standardized tests in reading and language arts. Focusing on both

the reading and language arts curriculum and the school library, it will investigate the qualities of the teachers in the classroom and try to explore what factors were integral to the school's success as measured by this standardized test achievement. It will also explore what the library is currently doing to assist teachers in the goal of literacy instruction. It will also explore the teachers and others associated with the school to see the extent to which the particular teaching staff might be an integral factor to the school's success.

First, I will review the literature in the areas of Catholic Social Justice Theory, literacy, race and multicultural education, Catholic education, and school libraries. Next, I will outline the methodology of the project, followed by the research findings. The thesis concludes with exploring what can be learned from the study and whether or not it might be applied to other schools.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

In order to understand the project and the lens through which the researcher sees the project, it is first necessary to discuss what is meant by Catholic Social Justice Theory. The S.S.N.D. community, like many Catholic religious sisters, focuses on social justice as an essential part of their mission and SAMS is a tangible example of that commitment in action. Social Justice to Roman Catholics is not about governments; rather, it is a religiously-motivated desire for individuals to serve the Jesus in everyone, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, religion or creed. Exemplified by Catholics such as Dorothy Day and advocated on radio and in newspapers by Archbishop Oscar Romero, Catholic Social Justice focuses on justice and charity of Jesus Christ as exemplified through various Catholic saints (*Catholic Worker Journal,* 2012). In other words, individuals actively work to serve society's disadvantaged. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church endorses Catholic Social Justice as part of its ministry, though it has only relatively recently articulated social justice as an important part of Catholic teaching.

The Papal Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Workers), issued in 1891, was the first document to officially articulate the church's teaching beyond a general view that one should feed the hungry because Jesus did so in the Bible. While *Rerum Novarum* focused on the rights of workers which Pope Leo XIII believed were being ignored during the industrial revolution, the first papal encyclical to really focus on concrete social issues did not appear until 1961, when Pope John XXIII issued *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress). This letter revisited *Rerum Novarum* and focused on specific ways to apply the church's teachings to the then-modern world.

After *Mater et Magistra,* church leaders published 19 decrees, declarations, encyclicals, and other documents articulating the Church's position in areas of Social Justice, the most recent of which is *Caritas in Veritae* (Charity in Truth), published by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, taking its cue from all of the papal and conciliar documents, has woven together themes from various papal, church council, and bishops, to create seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012). These themes are: *Life and dignity of the human person*, which focuses on "life issues" such as abortion, euthanasia, cloning, and the death penalty. It underscores the reverence for life. The second theme is the *call to family, community, and participation*, which explores how communities are set up to serve the common good for all members. The third theme has to do with *rights and responsibilities*, which focuses on the rights of each person, as the Church sees them, and the corresponding responsibilities that are required for human decency. Next, there is the *option for the poor and vulnerable*, which illuminates the philosophy that a gauge for how society fares is how the poorest among us fare. The fifth theme is on *the dignity of work and the rights of workers*, which focuses on the idea that everyone should be able to find meaningful work and to be treated justly as a worker. The sixth theme is *solidarity*, which focuses on the one human family, regardless of our differences, and thus we must love everyone, regardless of race, creed, culture, national identity, etc. Finally, there is the *care for God's creation*. This theme focuses on using resources wisely because humans have been given stewardship of the planet and its plant and animal resources and must protect them. These seven themes form the core social teaching of the Catholic

Church and thus point out the need for schools that serve the poor in particular, regardless of religion of the students.

While the Catholic bishops have regularly articulated a call for Catholics to serve the poor, the School Sisters of Notre Dame have helped to expand the definition of the "poor" to include serving those who are disadvantaged because of gender. While they serve in co-educational institutions, many of their endeavors are aimed at women and girls. From the beginning, serving women was important to Theresa Gerhardinger, the order's foundress, because she believed that by teaching women and girls in particular, she could improve the lives of the poor by helping the mothers in the community to be better prepared to be their children's first teacher (Generalate of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, 2013). By helping the women, the S.S.N.D. community believes that it can lift entire families out of poverty. Thus, by focusing on serving women and girls, the S.S.N.D. community extends the call of the church to serve those who are not necessarily financially poor, yet are still at a disadvantage.

In order to explore the multiple challenges urban students face, this remainder of the literature review will discuss literature in several key areas. To begin, it will focus on what literacy really means to provide some framework for why schools concerned with Catholic Social Justice Theory and others interested in a more secular or alternate religious viewpoint of social justice might view the concept of reading differently.

This chapter will explore difficulties some students in particular have with reading instruction at the middle school level and other academic barriers to success the students may have. It will also explore the philosophies of multicultural education, which, if explored fully, should help students to read more effectively. The next section

of the review will explore teachers, specifically with regard to the issues white teachers may face in a school setting with students who are multicultural and also address some concerns specific to second language learners (ELL or ESL students). Next, it will provide a brief history of Catholic education in the United States, and what modern urban Catholic schools offer in terms of curriculum and effectiveness. Because Catholic schools operate in a different context than public schools, though they serve similar students and often use similar curricula, they often produce different results, and thus, looking into how the history of Catholic education will help readers understand the different context in which Catholic schools operate. Finally, it will bring the school librarian into the mix and explore the role of the librarian in reading education. In exploring the issues with the content, the location, and the instructor, the literature will provide a picture of the unique challenges of the urban environment and the ways in which Catholic schools, teachers, and librarians deal with those issues.

Reading at the middle school level is complex. Traditionally, schools focus on reading ability as a factor of student success. Literacy, however, is about more than just the ability to decode the printed text (Gee, 1999; Jiménez, 2001). Reading practices at the middle school level are of particular concern because teachers often assume that middle school students can read fluently. Add to that the reduction in state and federal funding targeted at middle and high-school reading programs, and secondary students are unlikely to encounter a “reading teacher” at all in the secondary level (Rojtas-Milliner 2010). Further, for adolescents, reading is no longer taught as *how* to decode printed text; rather, students are given material to read and since they can read, it is deemed they can read it, and no difference is made between a complex historical document and a short

recipe: reading is all considered the same (Gee, 1999; Jiménez, 2001). Under the Common Core, which emphasizes point of view and rhetorical devices, rather than simply comprehending texts, students' ability to understand texts may fall by the wayside while teachers struggle to focus on reading comprehension. In theory, reading is taught in the other subject areas such as how to read a word problem or how to decipher a historical document, but many secondary teachers whose coursework may have focused on areas other than reading, may therefore not have the skills necessary to teach reading skills, whether they be comprehension skills or higher-level analytical skills (Gee, 1999; Jiménez, 2001). As a result, students who are having difficulty continue to have trouble and even students who did just fine on phonics and word decoding skills may struggle.

Defining Literacy

To begin, it is necessary to question what we know about literacy according to Gee (1999) and Street (2011). If the average person is asked about what it is to be literate, she might respond by describing the ability to read and write. But that "average person" response may be based on an idea that the "knowledge-makers" believe is true, but may not be completely so. Before exploring literacy, it is necessary to explore our definition of literacy, and beyond that, explore the idea of education around which alternative views are based.

Paulo Freire, whose views of education helped to form "populist" or "radical" education ideologies, writes of two kinds of education. The traditional form, or "banking" education, is based on a teacher transmitting ideas to a passive student audience and is contrasted to "problem-solving" education, where the teacher and students work together, as equals, to solve problems (Freire, 1993). Problem-solving

education empowers men and women, as well as boys and girls, who have been oppressed in society, because it helps them to understand that they can solve the problems in their own lives, such as those presented because of their oppression. Thus, Freire calls for teachers who work with the marginalized to rethink how they teach, refuting the assumption that teachers must be "talking heads" who merely supply information that students copy down and memorize. In order to be successful, teachers must work *with* the students to solve real problems; in doing this, then, they will be able to help people learn to read.

Creating an effective atmosphere is only part of the battle. Brian Street and James Paul Gee have called for revisiting the idea of what constitutes literacy. Traditional definitions often define literacy as someone who can read a newspaper and write a simple letter in any language (Latif, 2009). However, in some cases, only the "official" language of a country counts (Latif, 2009). So, too, in the United States, even immigrants with a low-level education in their home countries often can read enough to read simple text and write a little in their own languages, but not English. Beyond using alternative languages, however, Gee (1999) and Street (2011) argue that literacy is in reality many "literacies," each intricately connected to specific social, cultural, institutional, and political practices. Gee points out that we use different literacy strategies for different occasions. For example, reading math is different than reading history. Also, some forms of literacy may not be print; as an example, some cultures engage in oral storytelling, and Gee and Street argue those are forms of literacy as well. Silver-Pacuilla (2004), who worked to define literacy with women who had disabilities, believes having the students help name what literacy is, is important because often

literacy learners are not asked about their own definition of the word. It is in that naming and describing what literacy is that educators can learn that the meaning of literacy varies and those who teach literacy may have hidden agendas in teaching people. Uncovering that hidden agenda may prove essential in helping women and girls in particular to make progress in learning to read and write. Thus, arguably, with different types of literacies, few people, if any, would be truly "illiterate." Some would simply need to learn to read print or to read in a new language, either of which would be no different than an English-speaking student learning to read and write in Spanish.

Reading is often a challenge because the dominant paradigms may contribute to the illiteracy of teenagers and adults in the United States. Gee (1999) points out the "Fourth Grade Slump" as an example. Gee blames common reading practices for the Slump because teachers work to teach phonics and reading strategies until the students get to third grade, after which the students are deemed to be literate and comprehension is taught as one simple skill to apply in all situations. Thus, reading actually becomes harder after third grade because the dominant reading model emphasizes the single comprehension skill model. At the same time, teachers are more likely to be certified in areas other than reading or language arts, so they might not have a strong command of comprehension strategies. Many teachers at the middle school level believe students already arrive with reading skills and thus, they focus on other language arts tasks, not how to read (Jiménez, 2001). But for all students, being able to read and comprehend text is essential to succeeding academically (Lesaux and Kieffer, 2010). Reading accurately and fluently requires a working knowledge of the words in front of the reader as well as the order in which they are presented, so a working knowledge of the target

language has to be in place for comprehension strategy instruction to have any effect (Lesaux and Kieffer, 2010). Thus, if a student had poor vocabulary when comprehension strategies were initially taught, likely in elementary school, if these strategies are not taught again later when the student has a better vocabulary, the student would likely continue to struggle in reading.

The effects of poor reading instruction can be tremendous and seem to coincide with other societal problems. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) study performed in 2003, by the National Center for Education Statistics (2004), the average reading proficiency in the household population was 273 in prose, 267 in documents, and 271 on the quantitative scale on a scale ranging from 0 to 500, which is like getting a "high 2" on a scale of 5. This indicates the average household could read and understand a pay stub and basic graphs, but would have difficulty using multiple sources of information to answer questions. In the prison population, however, on the same study, respondents scored about 246 in prose, 240 on document, and 236 on the quantitative scale putting them at a level 1. This indicates the average prisoner would have trouble using his or her paycheck to provide information such as what their own net pay was. Therefore, it is easy to understand why people with low literacy may have trouble securing and keeping employment if they cannot understand the basic documents associated with their employment.

Rivera (2004), who worked with homeless women, mentioned that many women had positive school experiences in elementary school, but struggled afterward due to family issues. Maher (2004) worked with women in prison, many of whom earned their GED and even college coursework while incarcerated because they were finally able to

concentrate on their studies. These concerns are in line with the troubles Gee mentions are a part of education today, that distractions from home life, coupled with ineffective instruction in reading for later elementary school and beyond, contribute to the reading challenges often faced by low-income adults. These adults may actually be low-income because they cannot read effectively and therefore are unable to pull themselves and their families out of poverty. Gee (1999) argues that social, cultural, and political issues are involved with reading; underfunded and overcrowded schools contribute to a seeming apathy about literacy education and thus, if all women had access to quality schools as girls, they would have been helped to read more effectively, despite the family challenges they faced.

Pleasure reading and the middle school student. Some people believe that the reason students have problems reading is because they do not read (unless they are required to do so). Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) wanted to determine what, if anything, urban students actually read. They surveyed students from a large urban middle school in a large northeastern city in the United States that serves approximately 1,340 students in grades 5-8, primarily Latino/a students (66%) with African-American students (27%) making up much of the rest of the student body. The students ranged in age from 10-15 with 47% of respondents being male and 53% female (p. 23). Of the 584 surveys analyzed, the survey revealed that 72% of students read for fun, 22% of whom said they read constantly. It also revealed that females (78%) were more likely to pleasure read than males (64%). The survey further uncovered that, contrary to opinions about reading, students do, in fact, read, but they mostly were reading magazines. Also, students got most of their reading material from the school library (71%) suggesting that

summer vacations may disrupt the reading taking place in the school community. While summer reading programs may be an answer to this problem, the survey results suggested that students were not taking advantage of this resource. The survey did not cover internet materials, which might be another source of reading that the students are doing. If students are reading, but they are reading non-traditional materials, in all likelihood they are also reading internet sources, possibly moreso than print sources. This raised a question of why students selected magazines over books, whether it was because of the easy-to-read format which includes pictures, because of ease of access, because they are more relevant to their interests than books, or whether some other reason existed to reduce interest in reading books.

Verden and Hickman (2009) studied students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) in a sixteen-week study in which the teacher read-aloud experientially-relevant literature to students to help them to learn social skills and to increase reading enjoyment. In Verden's pilot, she found that whether the students were younger (grades 3-5) or older (in grades 6-8), reading aloud on a daily basis helped students enjoy reading more while learning to make more socially-appropriate choices. While the published study seemed to focus more on bibliotherapy, the idea that read-alouds can help engage EBD students at the middle school level is a strategy that may help middle schoolers regardless of ability learn to enjoy books.

Perceived student apathy. Typically, students who enjoy reading do better on standardized tests, regardless of family income, race, ethnic background (Gambrell, 2011). As a result, the goal should focus on getting students to *want* to read, which brings with it other intangible benefits beyond standardized test success such as relief

from boredom. Gambrell (2011) listed seven rules of "engagement" that summarized reading "best practices," which could be summarized as such: students read when they can find a wide variety of relevant material, plenty of time to read, can choose what they read and how they read it, can talk about what they read with others (Gambrell 2011). Gambrell also adds students need to be challenged, but not overwhelmed in terms of content, and that praise for reading achievement should be genuine, and tangible prizes for reading achievement should match the goal: good readers get books and bookmarks as prizes, not pizza parties. Thus, some reading strategies such as forcing students to read material only chosen by the teacher, overreliance on standardized test prep that clutters the schedule so that sustained silent reading times have been dropped or rewarding students for reading with candy, might actually backfire.

Beyond that, students might engage more in reading, possibly, if they just cared more about school in general. Ogbu (1987) argues the job ceiling causes a barrier to academic achievement by African-Americans because no matter how well they do in school, they do not generally become rewarded with jobs and wages that fit how hard they worked, and in later work, Ogbu and Simmons (1998) extend this to apply specifically to the educational system. Ogbu and Simmons (1998) argue that immigrants enjoy greater successes in life and when they do well at school, they seem to be rewarded, whereas African-Americans do not, and this belief is what causes students to seem apathetic. Steele (1997) tested this theory, calling it a "stereotype threat," by grouping African-American and white students and learning how they performed on the GRE under different conditions: being told that whites perform better, or not being told anything. African-American students who were told that white students performed better

did, predictably, worse, but on average those who were not told anything performed equally well as the white students.

Smith, Estudillo, & Kang (2011) surveyed 8th grade students who attended two large Midwestern school districts about students' feelings about academics. The questionnaire was distributed to the 256 African-American students and 208 white students and a small number of Asian and Latino students who attended the school. In general, Smith found that white students perceived testing items as being fairer than the African-American students. White students tended to have higher grade-point averages as well. But despite this, the African-American students studied generally believed that school had a greater value than their white counterparts. Thus, the researchers believed that students could be helped by continuing to mentor and support students so they learn how to get to college so they do not lose hope.

Unrau and Schlackman (2006) explored reading and motivation in an urban middle school by studying students in grades 6-8 in a setting of 75% Latino and 20% Asian students; only 3% were identified as English Language Learners. Students were given the 54-item Motivation for Reading Questionnaire twice: once in the fall of year one and again in the fall of the second year. The researchers found that the Asian students were intrinsically motivated, and it affected how well the Asian students succeeded at reading, whereas the Latinos were more likely to be motivated externally than internally, which in turn tended to have a negative impact on reading achievement.

In her conversations with students, Delpit (2012) found that African-American boys, who are often deemed very apathetic, want to care about school, but without a "culture of achievement" in the schools, the lone student who succeeds will be ostracized.

In addition, the few African-Americans they (and their teachers) see are famous for something like sports, which suggests that their race is simply better at sports than at reading. Finally, they do not understand the link between education and achievement. After all, their teachers drive old cars and they are educated; what possible purpose does all that education have? Delpit's observations could equally be applied to Latinos, Asians, and American Indians, all of whom have many fewer role-models than whites and, unless they have the intrinsic motivation mentioned in the Unrau and Schlackman article, may succumb to the same pressures. Thus, if the students cannot read, they may not put much effort into rectifying the situation despite the fact that they might hold onto some degree of hope that school will bring them success.

Multicultural Education and Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy

Because diversity of learners is becoming increasingly a given in today's classrooms and it also seems to be a factor in success or failure at school, it is necessary to explore multicultural education. As Banks (1994) points out, the purpose of multicultural education is to help students live in a pluralistic society, and it should both affirm and help students understand their own cultures while freeing them from their own cultural or economic boundaries imposed upon them from within the American culture. It is easier to explain what multicultural education *is* by explaining what it is not. According to Banks (1994), it is not about making the student's culture central, as in Afrocentrism, and those interested in true multicultural education do not wish to throw out the canon of literature currently in place; rather, they want to enlarge it to include more works, rather than purge those that currently exist. The goals of true multicultural education are twofold: to increase educational equality for students from diverse groups

and to help all students to develop the skills they need to function in an increasingly diverse society (Banks, 1994). But multicultural education does not mean doing country studies on, say, China, and assuming the experiences of Chinese-Americans have therefore been covered (Banks, 1994).

Banks (1994) points out three approaches to multicultural education. The first is curriculum reform, the second, achievement, and finally, intergroup education. The curriculum reform approach focuses on adding to or changing the existing curriculum by incorporating new groups into the existing curriculum by transforming the canon and its underlying paradigms (Banks, 1994). Meanwhile, the achievement paradigm has a goal of increasing academic achievement of students, whether they are students of color, students from a lower socio-economic status, women, etc. Examples of these programs include bilingual and/or bicultural education programs, special math or science programs for girls, and so on (Banks, 1994).

Finally, intergroup education focuses more on changing attitudes and values by encouraging cooperative learning to get people to work together and other prejudice-reduction projects (Banks, 1994). While the 1994 Banks model is the one often cited, in reality, Banks (1995) later added two more "dimensions" to his three approach model, so his current list is content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure.

Not many alternatives to Banks exist, though Bennett (2007) considers four dimensions: curriculum reform, multicultural competence, equity pedagogy, and social justice. Gay (2011) considers that both Banks and Bennett's perspectives are sound and work well in terms of frameworks, but neither fully takes into account globalism, the

environment, or issues of gender, class, and other differences. As a result, Gay (2011) posits that the five contexts of critical pedagogy, developed from Kincheloe (2005), could be adapted to serve the needs of a more modern multicultural framework. These dimensions are the social dimension, the political dimension, the economic dimension, and the cultural dimension (Gay, 2011). By using these dimensions, Gay (2011) posits, both Banks' and Bennett's perspectives could be accommodated alongside the newer issues he identified.

Whichever the overall goal is, deciding how to handle the curriculum can take multiple approaches. Many schools choose the infusion approach, which keeps the point of view of the dominant group and includes minorities in the curriculum, but minorities are viewed through the lens of the dominant group (Banks, 1994). But multicultural education can go beyond that and become transformative. A transforming curriculum uses multiple perspectives and changes how we look at everything. As an example, rather than describing "Westward Expansion" a new name could take into account that only the white people were moving and, to the American Indian, it wasn't West at all, but more like the center of their world (Banks, 1994). A transformational approach might be better able to produce higher-level thinking because it would incorporate more viewpoints as a natural part of the curriculum, rather than incorporating those viewpoints as an "extra" bonus that could potentially be dropped when a teacher is running short on time. Thus, there is a lot more involved with multicultural education than initially meets the eye.

In practice, however, teachers do not often understand that multicultural education is about more than cultural celebrations. Nieto (1999) points out that the initial attempts

at multicultural education, if imperfect, did help to do one thing: they got the idea of different students being present in the classroom into discussions. In this way, once teachers were talking about multiculturalism, they could create a more inclusive environment in their classrooms. One way they did so was by the adoption of cooperative learning into the classroom. Unfortunately, by stopping at considering new teaching methods, educators did not really examine the underlying issues of race and culture; such examination is essential in truly making a difference. In other words, if teachers fail to consider the sociocultural context in which they are teaching and learning, they will not be able to make any systemic change (Nieto, 1999). Sleeter (1999) found that teachers she studied were open to including more multicultural *methods* in their teaching practice, but she found it difficult to encourage them to actually change their teaching *philosophies* and perspectives regarding power and privilege. Nieto (1999) notes that part of the difficulty of actually changing one's teaching philosophy may lie with the schools; in other words, because the modern school does not allow teachers much latitude, teachers are forced to implement the curriculum as given to them. Therefore, it is probably much easier for teachers to add new *practices* than to actually change perspectives. Even so, if real change is to be made, it must be done within the larger context (Nieto, 1999).

Building on multicultural education and encouraging the discussion of the sociocultural context more directly is culturally-relevant pedagogy. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) describe culturally-relevant pedagogy as a "way for schools to acknowledge the home-community culture of the students, and through sensitivity to cultural nuances, integrate these cultural experiences, values, and understandings into the

teaching and learning environment" (p.67). Ladson-Billings (1995), who defined the term initially, has three propositions: first, that students have to experience academic success, second, that they must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and third, that students must develop a "critical consciousness" so that they can use it to challenge the social order (p. 160).

Ladson-Billings (1994) describes teachers who see teaching as an art, and who assume all students can learn, rather than that some students are destined for failure. Teachers who teach in a culturally-relevant style also understand that they are not only connected to the students when they are at school, rather, they are also connected to the student in the community and that learning is everywhere (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Beyond that, however, Ladson-Billings (1994) notes that white teachers often struggle because they believe that students of color are exactly like little white children and emphasize poverty as the sole reason for the difference between students of color and white children. Further, she also argues that teachers who pretend racial and cultural differences do not exist, can do a disservice to their children; ignoring students' ethnicity and race means that the teacher does not actually see the children in front of them and is teaching to a fictitious, homogenous, white, middle-class group of students and therefore such a teacher may not be an effective teacher, despite her best intentions by being "color-blind" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Recent research of the "color-blind" model seems to indicate it is a comfortable perspective for whites, who prefer to ignore differences among groups, but for people of color, a more multicultural perspective that focuses on what each group brings to the conversation is preferable (Rattan & Ambady, 2013).

Teachers and Race

At the same time, as Howard (2006) points, out, education today is a unique place. While the students are increasingly children of color, the teachers tasked with their instruction are mostly white, and the children of color have the greatest risk of struggling in schools. Thus, it is not really an option to simply teach a white-focused curriculum designed by and taught by white professors, students, and administrators to students of color; this is the current system and it is not working. But Howard (2006) points out a real issue is not that teachers do not understand these realities; they understand them, rather,t hey do not know what to do about them. Pre-service teachers often are viewed as unprepared to cope with the challenges of a multicultural classroom and some of the literature points out that the teachers themselves feel unprepared as well (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2011). Meanwhile, some professors who hope to fix the problem find that white students are so comfortable in their colorblind mentality that professors have difficulty changing anything (Simmons, 2010; Gay, 2011).

Unfortunately, attempts to fix the problem have not necessarily improved teachers' ability to work with students who are different than they are. Howard (2006) argues that part of the trouble is that it is not possible to simply learn skills to become a better teacher. A teacher needs time to transform herself completely. This transformation, Howard argues, does more than change the teacher as a person, but change how she is as a professional and how she views the world. Cochran-Smith (1995) argues that teachers need time to examine that which is often unexamined: language, culture, and power, and suggests using personal narratives to explore those feelings and to grow.

But while teachers want to become better teachers, they do not necessarily want to undergo the often painful process of transformation necessary. As the literature shows, simply getting white teachers to talk about race issues can be a challenge. A study by Galman, et al. (2010), involved focus groups to talk about diversity requirements in teacher education programs, and invited all students from the program, but none of the white students in the program came. Some of the students of color who did were disappointed. They wanted white students to talk about race, but even after "graduating" from these diversity requirements and, in some cases, entering the classroom as teachers, the white teachers did not seem to want to participate (Galman, et al., 2010). By not naming whiteness and power, white students exit their diversity requirements still unable to grapple with racial issues. As a result, they remain silent when race is addressed.

At the same time, even when they do have multicultural education courses, the teachers might be misinterpreting what they are expected to do to help students succeed. Sometimes they think that valuing students who are different than themselves means making excuses, or the idea of a "deficit" with the culture that results in the behavior they do not like. As an example, teachers can get stuck in the idea that the reason an African-American child cannot succeed in class is because his parents cannot read, and therefore he is doomed to failure. This type of thinking causes teachers to "dumb down" the curriculum for that child out of pity (Ford, 2004). Some teachers believe that "culturally-responsive" teaching requires them to lower standards (Young 2010). In reality, culturally-responsive teaching increases the rigor in the classroom; all it asks is that teachers value the students' background and perspectives while helping them get the skills they need to understand the dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Thus, while

the teachers may have concerns about lowered standards, in reality, they are unwarranted.

But teachers who do participate in development opportunities, when forced to do so may find they have a chance to feel more comfortable talking about race and better understanding culturally-responsive teaching. Pollock, et. al (2009) attempted to help teachers grapple with these issues by creating a professional development opportunity (which was required for the graduating seniors) in which pre-service teachers would learn about race by exploring the question of "What can I do?" through discussion and journaling. This would help teachers determine practical suggestions (which are often absent from the literature), help teachers to determine what is possible to do in the face of overwhelming statistics such as dropout rates that can discourage a teacher from even trying, and finally, determine who they are and what gifts they have so they can move forward and help students (Pollock et al., 2009). The researchers found that the pre-service teachers that took the seminar who indicated a desire to continue to question and seek information and grapple with the issues raised seemed more likely to succeed, suggesting that making people feel "better" by alleviating tension in the discussions completely was not manageable, nor ideal (Pollock et al., 2009). Thus, teachers may have to continue to question themselves about how (and whether) they are making a difference, and the tensions must remain in place to spur them to continue to act. Delpit (2012) told a story of a successful white teacher who taught history the students decided was "really black," not because he tried to look like them, but because he seemed to understand them. She found that he regularly met with and discussed racism with a group of African-American teachers, and due to their mentoring and support, he became successful as a teacher of urban youth.

One difficulty in being an effective teacher to multicultural students is that the teacher, like the students, is living in the United States. Therefore, each person in the classroom is receiving messages from the culture that are unstated, the "cultural smog" that Tatum (2003) refers to in her writing. Eisner (1994) mentioned that there are three kinds of curricula: 1) the "express" curriculum, which is what is expressly taught by the teacher, such as content; 2) the "implicit" curriculum, which is not taught per-se, but is carried along with the message, such as that the school expects every student to go to college, and therefore the stakes have been raised; and 3) the "null" curriculum, which is what is *not* taught, for whatever reason. The null curriculum also has a message, however, and that message is that it is forbidden to talk about this topic; it is taboo. As Milner (2006) mentions, this is why white teachers shut down when talk of race arises. Part of the "null" curriculum they received is that nice people do not talk about race. What's more, the persistent idea that racial discrimination does not occur is a fallacy created by whites; this fallacy prevents some teachers from being as effective as they might because they are not able to grasp what is really going on in the world (Milner, 2010).

Taking a step back, teachers are generally required to have a multicultural education class, but it might not be enough to teach them about race. Some classes consist of describing the litany of evils whites perpetuated against other groups without helping students to know what to *do* about all of this. But as Howard (2006) points out, true multicultural education is not about the evils of white people per-se, but about the problems with dominance. Dominant groups are not limited to whites; Christians dominate non-Christians, men dominate women and so on. Thus, even a member of a so-

called minority group could be dominating others in some ways. Further, Howard (2006) mentions, that multicultural education coursework often takes place from the perspective of dominance, which emphasizes the sameness of all people. In other words, “we are all the same” means that we are all like me. The “me” referred to is a person in the dominant culture. Thus, to say one is “color-blind” is to say that we are all “white.” Howard further explains that whites do not view themselves as having a culture; they view themselves as simply being “right” or the default. They are unable to “see” themselves as a group the way they see other races; rather, whites see themselves as individuals. The solution Howard recommends is to have white students hear what whiteness is from the perspective of those who are not white.

When confronted with ideas about race, pre-service teachers of all races often do not know what to do or how to begin. They just want a “quick fix” such as a pre-packaged set of materials that will tell them how best to be a culturally-sensitive teacher and be done with it. As Nieto (2006) points out, we often find it easy to jump in and solve the problem by buying something and doing our best to implement it, tossing it aside when the next new idea comes along. But, like Nieto, Ladson-Billings (1995) does not endorse such an easy fix. Ladson-Billings believes just giving a list of steps is a recipe for disaster because the teachers will then do the same thing for every child who comes before them, rather than think critically and adapt to each child. True multicultural education is an attitude one takes, rather than prescriptive steps.

Thus, if teachers are to be successful teachers, and relevant to their students’ experiences, they may have to be forced to confront race before entering the classroom and, once they have done so, be provided with repeated opportunities to continue

grappling with the issues in their classroom by talking with other teachers. While teachers are actively questioning themselves, they seem more open to analyzing and growing. It is very easy to stop the discussion, and the students need teachers who keep growing and learning and trying to understand them and their experiences.

Second Language Learners

Jiménez (1997) mentions a myriad of problems face Latina/os. Some have attended schools in the United States since pre-school or kindergarten, but for some reason have not received quality education due to problems such as changing schools, being labeled as special needs students when they may not be, or being placed in classrooms with teachers who are not familiar with the distinct needs of second language learners. As a result, they may lag behind their peers even though they have just as many years of formal education in the United States as their native-speaking peers. Lesaux and Kieffer (2010) noted that studies have shown that even when bilingual students do equally well as native speakers on word identification, they lag behind their English-only counterparts in comprehension. Thus, speakers of languages other than English may pose special challenges.

Jiménez (1997) studied five middle school students who were reading up to four grade levels below their current grade and who struggled to read in both English and Spanish. Jiménez designed the study to include an instructional program that included culturally relevant, familiar text to work on traditional comprehension and reading strategies and build fluency. During the course of the study, Jiménez learned that the students found reading to be a complete mystery to them. As they began to talk more about their reading, they discovered that having the culturally-relevant materials were of

great use to them, as was the researcher's encouragement to use Spanish skills to decode as they learned traditional reading skills. As a result of the limited study, Jiménez encouraged the use of quality, culturally-relevant children's literature so bilingual students could more easily make the transition from Spanish to English while teaching traditional reading skills. A concern of Jiménez was that the students being bilingual may have been viewed as "language impaired", believing that they could not read in English because they spoke Spanish when it seemed to be the case they simply could not read, period, and thus more traditional reading instruction would help them read in both languages.

Lesaux and Kieffer (2010) studied struggling readers in a large urban district serving a large number of low-income students and tried to determine whether those who were poor readers had similar difficulties in comprehension whether they were bilingual or monolingual. Both groups seemed to have minimal differences; struggling readers were struggling readers and second language acquisition did not seem to be an issue. Thus, the researchers concluded that students would benefit more from learning explicit, systematic vocabulary and reading comprehension in the classroom that is not segregated; second language learners need the same type of instruction as single-language speakers (Lesaux and Kieffer, 2010).

Communication styles also differ in families, and when a teacher's style of speech matches the style of speech in some families, but not others, it can take children a while to catch on to the new style even if the language spoken at home and school is the same. Delpit (1995) notes that communication in African-American homes differs from the communication patterns white parents use with their children. In African-American

families, for example, their children might be told what to do more directly, as in, "Pick up your toys." Meanwhile, in white homes, children are more likely to be told, "Could you pick up your toys?" The white student recognizes this is a command, even though it is phrased as a question. The African-American student who does not help the class pick up the toys because he continues to play may be considered belligerent, when in reality he simply thought he was being asked if he wanted to pick up the toys and he wanted to keep playing. Knowledge of such differences can help teachers to avoid misidentifying a misunderstanding as a behavioral concern.

Catholic Education

If urban education is so challenging, who would *want* to pursue teaching in an urban environment? But Catholic schools have been part of the "urban" experience since the 1500's in the United States. They began in parts of the country settled by Spanish-speakers, but increased dramatically in the 1800's, as more and more immigrants from Catholic countries settled in the United States and more schools were necessary for recently-freed slaves. Catholic schools started by focusing on educating the newly-arrived immigrant population to start, but over time, they taught both the immigrant and students whose families had been in the United States for much longer. Before there were cities, there were Catholic teachers guiding diverse groups of young people, and over time, Catholics built a school "empire" so vast that their schools can be found in both large urban areas and in poor areas, ministering to young people who may not even share the Catholic faith through providing an education. This section describes the American Catholic education experience historically and today. By describing how this

educational philosophy varies from the mainstream educational system, it will be easier for the reader to understand what Catholic schools are doing differently.

American Catholic education. Where one finds a Catholic Church, one will often find a Catholic school as a way of putting its faith into action. This is true today throughout the world. While not every Catholic church has its own school, the legacy of Catholic education is significant in the United States.

According to Cattaro (2002), Catholic education came to the New World in the 16th Century with the mission schools Franciscans opened in the Spanish lands. The French Jesuits explored the area around the Mississippi River and set up schools in the late 1690's. The early schools were intended to bring Christianity to the Indigenous population. Catholic schools also served African-American students early in U.S. history as some African-American girls were served by the Ursuline Academy in New Orleans in 1727 (McDermott and Hunt, 1991). The Code Noir (1724-1803) proscribed a better treatment of free African Americans, mulattos, and slave in the Louisiana territory, which was managed by Catholics from France and Spain (Polite, 1992). A lay African-American woman opened the first Catholic school for African-Americans in 1828 in Baltimore, MD and also her own religious order, the Oblates Sisters of Providence, as an order for African-American women when no order was yet integrated (Ilg, Massucci, & Cattaro, 2004). There were but limited attempts for early African-Americans to be educated, unfortunately; some religious orders actively owned slaves and slave codes prevented slave owners from teaching slaves to read and write, and thus, within this context, it is intriguing that there were any African-Americans being educated in Catholic schools (Green, 2010). Meanwhile, the larger U.S. Catholic Church was struggling with

larger goals with its educational endeavors in the new world. There was a tension of whether a central purpose of Catholic schools in America was to "Americanize" students or isolate students, helping them to keep and pass on the traditions of their home country (Cattaro, 2002).

Between 1851 and 1870, Catholic immigration made up 65% of the immigrants, but the unique needs of Catholic students were overlooked in schools that did not seem to be bothered with the "ethnics" (Cattaro, 2002). Due to this tension of being white, yet treated differently Greeley argues that Catholics in the United States are themselves a sub-culture, or a different ethnic group (Massa, 1999). This may be an accurate view because while Irish Catholics may be different from German Catholics, both historically were more like each other than many of their Protestant neighbors. Meanwhile, in 1858, the first Catholic school specifically designed for freed African-Americans was opened in Washington, D.C., with 76 schools opened specifically for African-Americans between 1890 and 1917 (Benson, Yeager, Wood, Guerra, & Manno, 1986).

While public schools may have been Protestant enterprises, by 1910, more than a third of the public school teachers in Chicago, Boston, and other large cities, were Irish-American women (Fisher, 2008). This caused some academics to lament the number of non-"Americanized" teachers, so called because the teachers still answered to the Vatican in their personal lives. The growing Anti-Catholic bias encouraged church leaders to simply build more Catholic schools (Fisher, 2008). There were around 400,000 children attending American Catholic schools in 1880; in 1920, there were 1.7 million (Fisher, 2008). More Catholic Universities were built as well.

Part of the reason Catholics broke off was because of the educational philosophies of John Dewey and the other Progressives. Wagner (1995) noted that in Progressive Education, there is no room for the authoritative stance of the school promulgated by Catholic teaching. In Catholic schools, the church (through the teacher and religious authorities) was instructing the students, and thus, learning by doing does not fit in with this model. Thus, the schools were not only "religious" vs. secular, the Catholic schools had their own system of education.

By the 1930's, Catholic education was growing large enough that it was too big to ignore by the mainstream educational system. Unfortunately, according to Wagner (1995), the country was growing more anti-Catholic because of the ongoing concerns about Catholics' dependence on a foreign power. In the end, according to McGreevy (2003), intellectuals continued to express concern that Catholicism, with its slavish adherence to a foreign leader and thus stance against freedom, could ever be integrated into American society well in to the 1950's.

Whatever it may have looked like on the outside, the Catholic system of education in the United States was a success from the inside. The parish school provided a "captive audience" for the priests and religious sisters and brothers to encourage families to conform to Catholic teaching. According to Morris (1997), if parents slept in and skipped church, their parochial school kids would nag them mercilessly. At the same time, however, the parish would know when people were in trouble and needed help. For example, if a father lost his job, the priests would know and would pray for him and use their connections to help him find another job, likely with another parishioner. Thus, the Catholic parochial school and parish became a separate Catholic world within the larger

United States to help Catholics unite. The world could be surprisingly inclusive sometimes, as remembered by an African-American Catholic attending school in various Catholic schools and, in one case, he and his sister were the only African-American students in the school, but seemed to fit in just fine as "you were Catholic first, and Negro second" (Ilg, Massucci, & Cattaro, 2004). Despite some parishes openness to people of color, in other parishes, the doors were closed to people of color, and Catholics were on both sides of the Civil Rights Marches, as highlighted by the surprise people felt with Sister Mary Antona Ebo of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, marched with five of the sisters from her congregation in Selma (Hart, 2007). Thus, in some ways, Catholic schools were no different from their secular counterparts with regard to treatment of people of color.

But by the 1960's, the Catholic population, and the bigotry against them in the United States had changed. By 1966, according to Massa (1999), Catholics had a higher level of education and income than the national average, and were more likely to vote for progressive policies, such as social welfare for the poor than their Protestant neighbors. As academic rigor increased, however, Theodore Hesburg, the University of Notre Dame's fifteenth president, wrote that he was concerned that Notre Dame would fail if it did not retain its Catholic identity (Massa, 1999). By the end of the twentieth century, according to Massa (1999), Notre Dame was becoming too secular for the Catholics as it increased its academic rigor at the expense of moral formation, but the secular institutions still believed it to be too Catholic to be really rigorous. As a result, bigotry against Catholicism had not completely subsided, nor had the internal conflict Catholicism had with itself.

As urban Catholics began moving to the suburbs, the Catholic schools found themselves in an odd position: there were children to be educated living around the schools, but they were not necessarily Catholics. Tuitions increased to pay the salaries of the lay employees (McCloskey, 2010). The schools solicited more donations by selling the enterprise as part of the social justice ministry of the Catholic Church: they would help educate the poor, as they'd always done, but rather than a community helping itself, they would reach out to have others, not necessarily in the parish, donate to the cause. This was too little, too late in some cases, as more and more schools began to close starting in the 1970's and 1980's due to lack of funds. Interestingly, as schools began to close, people started taking notice of the schools and recognizing that the schools that no longer served white parishioners and had reached out to the non-white neighbors who may not have been Catholic, were having impressive results (Welsh and Campbell, 2011). Against this backdrop of closing schools, more and more African-American students began attending Catholic schools, increasing from 170,000 in 1982 to approximately 220,000 in 1991 (Brigham, 1991). African-Americans and Hispanics began enrolling in Catholic schools in greater numbers because these schools provided a chance at academic success in neighborhoods filled with underperforming public schools (Stern, 2011). Today, however, many Catholic schools have closed in areas where charter schools are the new options to public schools such as New York City, which does not have a school choice program that includes parochial schools. O'Keeffe and Scheopner (2009) found that when they tried to work on a follow up study to O'Keeffe's study of Catholic schools in 2004 in 2008, 30% of the participating schools had closed (p. 21). In the 2007-2008 school year alone, 169 elementary schools closed or consolidated,

and only 43 Catholic schools opened (O'Keeffe and Scheopner, 2009). As McCloskey (2011) points out, urban areas should be concerned about these schools closing; in Catholic schools in New York City, over 80% of disadvantaged minority students graduate on time with an average spending rate of just $10,000 per student; meanwhile the city schools spend $21,500 per student and fail to graduate a majority of their students. Thus, cities may have missed an opportunity to save successful schools in the urban areas while saving money.

Catholic schools today are not limited to schools attached to churches (true parochial schools because they are parish schools). Some Catholic schools are "standalone" schools founded by an order of nuns, monks, priests, or lay people who come together to build a school. Still others are "diocesan" schools run by a particular diocese.

Modern urban Catholic schools and their challenges. While modern Catholic schools may be "parochial" or stand-alone, the urban schools do have some similarities with their urban Catholic counterparts. While the image of the race of a Catholic school student is white for many people, in the inner-city, that is not always the case. Catholic schools are located in inner-school areas and are often an affordable choice for even poor families (Scanlan, 2010). Thus, urban Catholic schools may serve a similar group of students as their public school neighbors. In 1992, for example, 65% of Catholic schools in the U.S. were eligible for Title I services[5] (Bringham, 1992), and by 1997, that number rose to 72% (Milks, 1997). Since 1971, the percentage of minorities in American

[5] Title I is the largest federal education-funding program. It provides funding for high poverty schools to help students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind.

Catholic schools has increased to 33.2% (McDonald & Schultz, 2012). The most recent figures available show that 14.5% of all students in American Catholic elementary and middle school students are Hispanic (12.5% of high school students), and 7% of elementary and middle school students are African-American (8.6% of high school students) (McDonald & Schultz, 2012). This compares to 45.1% of all students in public schools who are identified as minority students (Keaton, 2012).

Studies of Catholic education have been mixed. Some scholarship points to a "Catholic school advantage" that may disproportionately favor Catholic education for disadvantaged and minority students (Bryk, Lee, and Holland, 1993; Morgan, 2001) Other studies suggest that when prior achievement and background variables are controlled, Catholic schools are equally good as urban public schools (Hoffer, 1998; Carbonaro and Covay 2010). Hallinan and Kubitschek (2010) suggest the reason the studies varied were because the public schools and the private schools have changed since they were benchmarked against Catholic schools, and thus the more recent studies suggest that urban schools, at least in Chicago, are equally good in terms of achievement (Hallinan and Kubitschek, 2010). If anything, the student body is now more similar than it was in the past, with the same *types* of students being represented in both schools (similar backgrounds, socio-economic status, ethnicities, etc.) and therefore, the modern studies may be a fairer indication of the current state of education (Hallinan and Kubitschek, 2010). When Hallinan and Kubitchek analyzed recent data for public and Catholic schools, they found that Catholic school students do better in reading overall at the middle school level (grades 5-8), however, the public school students make considerably greater gains in general, and the Catholic "advantage" in reading seems to

be the same whether the students are in urban or suburban schools. However, when race was factored in, Black and Latino students had smaller achievement gains in public schools than they did in Catholic schools, and the Blacks and Latinos also had greater achievements in Catholic schools than their white counterparts. Thus, the data suggest that, at least in Chicago, there is not much difference between urban Catholic middle schools and their public school counterparts in terms of achievement if one is a white child, but for Blacks and Latinos, it might be a significant “advantage.”

Bempechat (1998) found that Catholic and public schools treat minority students differently. Bempechat found that public schools are more likely to send the African-American and Latino/a students they serve to a remedial track that has less intense work, regardless of ability, whereas Catholic schools are more likely to only send the students who need remedial help to such a track. Bempechat also noted that the “remedial” track in Catholic schools tends to be more academically rigorous than it is in the public schools. Catholic schools also are more successful than public schools at using ability grouping to good advantage because the students in the “low tracks” still achieve academic success, rather than work toward a modified curriculum (Ellison & Hallinan, 2004). Ladson-Billings (1994) notes that this is true not only of Catholic schools, but African-Americans attending private and independent schools in general tend to do better than students in other schools; critics argue that “creaming” is going on, which is when the best students (the “cream”) are the ones in the private schools. Historically, there might be some accuracy in the statement as in 1985, 70% of Catholic high schools required rigorous high school entrance examinations (Bryk et al., 1993). Today, however, many inner-city schools are open to everyone, and schools that accept students

with “Choice” funds cannot administer such a test. Ladson-Billings (1994) points out that many students of color do better in Catholic schools after they have already failed in public schools.

Another factor to consider is graduation rates. Catholic schools graduate 95% of their minority students across the country and over 90% of minority graduates of Catholic schools go on to college (McDonald & Schultz, 2009).

Academic achievement is not the only factor of a “successful” education. Merritt (2008) studied five female urban Catholic high school graduates who came from disadvantaged backgrounds to determine whether Catholic high schools were meeting all of the needs (academic, emotional, social, and spiritual) of their students. Merritt studied each participant by interviewing her six times for 60 to 90 minutes over 15 months. Merritt found that teachers helped students meet academic needs, and the school culture pushed students to excel. In general, the school met the students’ emotional needs with teachers being supportive and emphasized working together, though one white student in a more middle-class, white school keenly felt the administration favored the “popular, rich kids”. Finally, all students felt comfortable that their spiritual needs were met, whether or not they shared the Catholic faith. Thus, in general, Catholic schools met the needs of these students, reaching beyond academic needs, so, at least subjectively, the disadvantaged students studied were pleased with the results of their education. This idea of the importance of teachers in the education of a Catholic school student may be as a significant factor in success as students who feel as though their teachers care tend to do better in school (Bempechat, Boulay, Piergross & Wenk, 2008). This may explain why Catholic school students at least perceive that they have had a better education.

Because of the poverty of many of their students, urban Catholic schools often struggle to stay open, sometimes due to poor management. McCloskey (2010), interviewing Jane O'Connell, president of the Altman Foundation, found that generally dioceses, like parish priests and school principals, are not good with money. Therefore, where other private schools and charities often have strategic plans like a business does, Catholic schools may not. O'Connell pointed out that this lack of plan means that the schools may not have enough money to operate, which results in desperate pleas for help. These pleas happen repeatedly, making it harder for donors to continue to donate since the schools do not do what is necessary to improve their financial situation by planning ahead. Some schools have thus turned to financial managers to avoid this problem so that educators can focus on teaching and priests can focus on ministering. Polite (1992) argued that parents served by the schools need to increase their support for their school either through additional funding or, where impossible, through greater service. The benefit of having a Catholic school is so great that it is essential that parents and community members do more to keep them open (Polite, 1992). Additionally, Catholic schools represent a safe haven for students in poor neighborhoods and thus, they should remain open so they can continue to provide that safe place for children (Green, 2011).

Scanlan (2010) focused on one struggling school in his study. The school was the surviving school after five schools merged into one new school. As a result of the merger, it was difficult to get new students, keep the old students, and reach a stable financial position. Like many Catholic schools, it originally served Catholic students, but by the time the school was studied, the majority was Christian, but not Catholic, and students attended some 50 different congregations (Scanlan, 2010). As in many public

schools, the majority of the teachers (84%) were white, and female (67%) who spoke only English (87%) (Scanlan, 2010). One interesting finding from his research showed that while St. Malachy was making progress by reaching out into the community and removing barriers to a private education to non-Catholic students, and thus had recruited a very diverse student body, the white principal and an African-American teacher in the school raised questions of whether institutional racism was still present in the school (Scanlan, 2010). Thus, while both the Catholic and the public school model may be equally diverse in terms of recruited teachers and student body, both types of schools may struggle with institutional racism, despite a genuine move away from a traditional white, Catholic student body (Scanlan, 2010). This research suggests that the modern Catholic urban school may have more in common with its public school neighbors than many realize.

A unique type of Catholic school is those schools that subscribe to a Ignatius philosophy. The first Ignatius middle school opened in 1971. The organization that sponsored it had already been serving Latinos, specifically Puerto Ricans, in the lower East side of Manhattan since the 1950's (Fenzel, 2009). This became the first middle school operated by the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). Others saw what they were doing and the successes they were having, and more schools opened with a similar model. Today, there are over sixty schools subscribing to the NativityMiguel Model (NativityMiguel (2011)). The common elements of the schools are a small class size with a small school community, an extended school day and year in a faith-based program. To ensure students will continue to serve their communities as role-models, students give service to the economically poor and marginalized, and the school partners

with the family to ensure success. Finally, graduates are provided with ongoing mentoring and college counseling. In other words, the model focuses on providing a holistic education that serves the whole child (Fenzel, 2009). In 2010, students in NativityMiguel schools had a 97% attendance rate, 79% graduate from high school in four years, and 67% of those who graduated from high school moved on to college with 49% of those graduating from college or trade schools (NativityMiguel (2011)). Because only 59.2% of Ignatius grads attend a Catholic high school, the leap from a small school to a larger urban school may explain why some graduates fail to complete high school, but given the dropout rates for urban youth, the results remain impressive. Interestingly, Wenglinsky (2007) found that, in general, there was not much difference between Catholic, private, and public schools in terms of achievement, but the Catholic schools run by independent orders such as the NativityMiguel model, which tend to be operated by independent orders of nuns or priests, had a greater achievement rate in reading, math, and history than other schools. Fenzel and Domingues (2009) found similar results when they compared Ignatius schools to comparison parochial schools. This suggests that while the academic effects of traditional Catholic schools are comparable to public schools, an alternative model may enjoy greater success.

Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) and the Protocol for Languages Arts Teaching Observation (PLATO)

One thing education research has consistently found, is that a good teacher makes a lot of difference, and may even be more important than the specific school a child attends (Gates Foundation, 2010a). But what constitutes “good teaching” is typically

subjective, and principals are confused as to what to evaluate, and so they often report that teachers are doing fine when they could have some improvement (Gates Foundation, 2010a). The Gates Foundation funded research with multiple academic institutions (Dartmouth College, Harvard University, Stanford University, the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, the University of Virginia, and the University of Washington), non-profits (Educational Testing Service, RAND Corporation, the National Math and Science Initiative, and the New Teacher Center), and educational consultants (Cambridge Education, Teachscape, Westat, and the Danielson group) to first, determine measures principals and teachers can use to evaluate instruction, and second, to discover how those variables actually worked in the classroom. Using data from various sources (student achievement gains, teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, student perceptions of the classroom instructional environment, and teachers' perceptions of the working conditions at their schools), in conjunction with videos of the teachers' lessons, the project hoped to determine which factors of instruction were most linked to success (Gates, 2010a). This project was called MET (Measures of Effective Teaching) and measured instruction using various protocol developed by partner universities.

Pam Grossman developed the measure for Language Arts instruction called PLATO, the Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations, (Gates, 2010a). In the initial research, Grossman studied twenty-four teachers in nine New York City public schools in 2007-2008, with a follow-up the next year that included 177 teachers in 12 schools. While Grossman is still analyzing the data from the follow-up, the initial project showed a correlation between the high value-added teachers (those who "scored highly" on the PLATO protocols) and student achievement (Gates, 2010b). The original

Grossman protocol includes thirteen elements, but the project focused on eight, referred to as "Plato Prime", which were considered the most critical, to make it easier for raters to score (Gates, 2010b). The final criteria were: intellectual challenge, modeling, strategy use and instruction, guided practice, classroom discourse, text-based instruction, behavior management, and time management (Gates, 2010b). Interestingly, connections to prior knowledge and personal and cultural experiences, and accommodations for language learning, both part of the initial elements, were not included in the MET (Gates, 2010b).

The final MET project worked with nearly 3,000 teacher-volunteers in public schools who provided video for four to eight lessons during the 2009-2010 school year. The school districts involved in the project were Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC; Dallas; Denver; Hillsborough Co., Fla; New York City; and Memphis (Gates, 2012). The project reported that those teachers who scored well on the instruments used had greater achievement gains as measured on standardized tests, than other teachers (Gates, 2012). The report suggested that if a school selected a specific protocol and helped teachers understand what that protocol means (and looks like in the classroom) and repeatedly observed teachers, rather than once or twice a year, administrators and teacher mentors could help teachers become more effective teachers (Gates, 2012). In terms of PLATO, teachers typically scored the highest in behavior management and time management, but only slightly more than one-third of the lessons scored were proficient or above in the areas of intellectual challenge and classroom discourse, and fewer still were proficient or better for explicit strategy use and instruction and modeling, where more than half of the lessons rated were unsatisfactory (Gates, 2012). Given what researchers have found about middle school language arts teachers typically not teaching *how* to read explicitly,

this is probably not surprising (Jiménez, 2001). But as other researchers have found, as mentioned earlier, students who struggle can be helped by teaching explicit reading strategies (Jiménez, 2001; Lesaux and Kieffer, 2010). Therefore, the marked lack of such explicit instruction found in the study is of significant concern, and while parents and principals alike might find comfort that the teachers volunteering for the project, in general, could keep order in the classroom, that is not enough for effective language arts instruction.

Librarians' Role in Reading Education

The role of the school librarian in reading instruction has changed over the years, but may be circling back as today's librarians are becoming a more necessary component in reading education.

The American Library standards were first introduced in 1920; titled *Standard Library Organization and Equipment for Secondary Schools,* the standards were comprehensive in that they covered *everything* a school librarian would need to have in the library from tables to book lists. In 1925, the report for elementary schools followed and included a recommendation that materials in all formats, not just print, ought to be acquired (Poston, 1978). The second set of library standards came out in 1945, which described qualitative standards for library materials, and it was followed in 1960 with an updated list of standards (Poston, 1978). Adams (1965) described the changing role of the library media specialist on the idea of a strong collection; a librarian's role in the 1960's was to ensure students had access to a wide range of books, and while each classroom had a stock of books, Adams argued that supplementary materials must be warehoused centrally, and the most logical warehouse for the material was the school

library. Adams described solely print materials, however, in her work, and the struggle to warehouse more of them centrally. Until 1969, the library standards covered books, and wanted schools to have non-print materials, but they did not expect one collection to hold both the book and audio-visual media. In 1969, however, the National Education Association's Department of Audiovisual Instruction and the American Association of School Librarians of the ALA created the first set of standards jointly (Poston, 1978). This report pointed out, for the first time, that not all children learn in the same way and at the same pace, and also that the library should be the central repository for *all* media (Poston, 1978).

In the 1970's, as a result of the report, the big controversy in school libraries was the idea of being in charge of audio-visual materials at all. McBride (1970) described the average school librarian as a being interested in media, but not overly so, at least, not until the patrons started to be more interested in being able to find films, tapes, slides, and the equipment to use them. The student interest drove librarians to pursue the idea of joint collections. Meanwhile, Gilman (1970), wrote about whether these new standards would destroy the successful media programs already at schools because a librarian is simply too busy to run both the library and the media parts of the school. As time continued, however, school libraries did, in fact, become "school media centers," and standards focused on material warehousing for a wide variety of items, and started describing the librarian's job as one that helped users to find the right materials to develop in students a love of inquiry (Poston, 1978). That said, now that students are relatively recently starting to make media of their own, one wonders whether Gilman's

concerns about destroying the thriving media programs of the 1970's might have resulted in fewer students learning how to make media during the 1970's and 1980's.

In 1988, *Information Power*, the national guidelines for school library media professionals came in print and described consulting as being an important role of the school librarian (Van Deusen, 229).

Buzzeo (2007) describes the traditional role of the librarian in literacy education as a silent one: librarians buy and tend the books and audio-visual materials and sometimes do a booktalk to sell the books, but other than that, the school librarian really did not participate in teaching students to read. While "warehousing" is still an important role of the library media specialists, or teacher-librarians of today, that role is changing. Today's school librarian is more than a manager of a warehouse; she is a consultant. She helps students find the *correct* book, she helps teachers to design lessons and meet standards and, at the same time, she tries to instill a love of reading in each student (Buzzeo 2007).

How a librarian instills a love for reading and supports the students is changing, however. Corbett (2011) describes the new focus on digital content since so much information is available online and at no cost, or subscriptions to virtual materials that libraries pay to use only when students access them. By focusing on digital opportunities, Corbett believes that libraries can widen the range of materials available to students and thus the library can better support the reading program. Bleidt (2011) described a more attractive and accessible library would include more quiet places for reading and writing as well as more places for students to collaborate. These "talking" and "working" spaces would mean removing bookshelves to provide space for the

students to work, further eroding the notion of the "warehouse" concept. These places for discussion of ideas would fit squarely in with the Freirean model, as students find and discuss their own knowledge, thus creating new knowledge.

The Catholic Librarian.

Librarians who are Catholic find themselves subject to different rules depending on the context in which they operate. A Catholic who serves in a secular library does not herself have to become a secular individual. According to Walsh (2007), the literature shows that Catholics who are also librarians see being Catholic as a significant part of who they are as people. As such, it is nearly impossible to divorce one's faith. This is perfectly acceptable, because according to *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II spoke of spirituality being present in work. Walsh (2007) argues that Catholics can continue to practice their faith by simply being open and present to the patron in front of them and serving their needs to the best of their abilities. So, too, must Catholics respect building a balanced collection as a legitimate interest of a library serving the public. By focusing on serving others, the Catholic librarian can continue to be fully Catholic and fully a librarian.

In Catholic institutions, however, it is different. As Wilcox (1988) points out, it is appropriate that secular libraries remain neutral, though Catholic libraries are not. They are, by their very natures, different. Thus, Catholic collections may have some limitations, but they also broaden some other areas of the collection that might not be found in secular libraries. A Catholic university's goal, according to Swetland of Mount St. Mary's University as quoted by Winters (2010) is to produce good people: in other words, business people who have scruples, teachers who don't "teach to the test," or

politicians who don't blow in the wind. In other words, academics are important, but so, too, is developing the human person. This is no different than the Catholic librarian in a K-12 school who attempts to serve the whole person. Thus, while standardized tests may dictate the addition of certain materials to the school library, a school librarian may serve other needs such as including movies in the collection so that students who cannot afford to rent videos have a way to access films.

Accelerated Reader. Today's librarians, in addition to grappling with the idea of how many bookshelves to remove, are also struggling with the issues surrounding school reading programs like Accelerated Reader. Accelerated Reader (AR), a popular leveled reading program, is produced by Renaissance Learning. Students' reading level is determined and matched with appropriate books, leveled by the AR program based on a proprietary system that takes into account reading ability and assigns a number of points to each book based on length. Students take comprehension-based quizzes after reading a book and are assigned a number of points for successfully completing the quizzes. In some libraries in schools using AR, the books are labeled based on reading level so that students can easily find the right AR book for them; the average library probably has 90% of the fiction books labeled as "AR books" indicating a test is available for that title, and around 10-15% of the non-fiction may be labeled (Cregar, 2011).

How teachers use the program is part of the difficulty of AR for the school librarian. Some teachers allow only AR books to be taken out and what's more, the books students select must be at the correct AR level for them (Cregar, 2011). Some students want the books with the highest number of points, so they choose a *Harry Potter* book, which assigns many points for successful completion because of the length

(Cregar, 2011). Meanwhile, a shorter, more complex book like *The Scarlet Letter*, is assigned fewer points because it's shorter (Cregar, 2011). Meanwhile, some students really are interested in certain books and aren't allowed to read them because they do not have enough points or it is "too easy" or "too hard" for the student. Librarians have an ethical quandary: by labelling the books for easy access so students can make an informed decision about what books to read, they broadcast the reading level of each student to the entire class when he or she goes to select a book. Adams (2011) has serious concerns about this setup affecting the privacy of each student.

Thus, librarians may be conflicted about what types of books to buy (long AR books? Only AR books?) and they might also have trouble determining how to arrange the shelves to facilitate students finding the "right" book as determined by their reading ability. While it might be easier to *find* the "right" book (as determined by the teacher), it would be difficult to shelve and arrange the books in AR order when someone was looking for a specific book because they actually wanted to read it by choice. Houston (2008) researched schools in Kentucky to find out how many schools had changed their classification system to put books into AR order. As it turned out, there was a significant relationship between whether a certified librarian existed in a school and the likelihood that the books would be shelved according to AR order (Houston, 2008). The schools with certified librarians were much less likely to shelve in AR order, and these schools were also more likely to serve a low-income population of rural Kentucky (Houston, 2008).

Meanwhile, however, some schools, like Pittsburg Community Middle School in Pittsburg, Kansas, have significantly increased their test scores in reading and the school

librarian credits the increase to the use of Accelerated Reader (Pfeiffer, 2011). While Pfeiffer indicates she does still use reviews first to decide what to purchase for the collection, the existence of an AR test does factor into her decision. She finds that by focusing on having a wide variety of materials at every AR level students do not get bored and learn to love reading.

Thus, conflicting goals of reader interest and standardized test score achievement may interrupt the traditional library and reading education processes in schools.

The Common Core Standards. Today, in addition to focusing on standardized testing, new standards have been adopted by every U.S. state and territory save five (Alaska, Minnesota, Nebraska, Puerto Rico, Texas, and Virginia are the current holdouts) (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013). The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) developed the Common Core Standards in 2009. Educators' input was solicited, but also political input went into the standards (Loertscher 2010). Under the Common Core, schools are free to choose *what* they teach, but common goals such as having elementary students reading 50% fiction and 50% non-fiction and secondary students reading 70% non-fiction are designed to help increase the academic rigor of all schools, nationwide.

For school librarians, this change will affect collection development as well as best practices. At first glance, the Common Core completely leaves out librarians, and a school board not reading the specifics of the standards might think it emphasizes only four areas: English/Language Arts and Mathematics, however, each state provides guidance on how other subject areas such as Science, Social Studies, Business, and Art,

can meet the Common Core requirements in their subject areas. In Wisconsin, for example, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has a website designed to help teachers learn how to incorporate literacy and mathematics into each subject area (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013). Library Media, however, which used to have its own set of standards in Wisconsin, seems absent; however, the library standards have been infused into the English/Language Arts skills. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has published "Crosswalk of the Common Core Standards and Standards for the 21st Century Learner" to help match the Common Core to the latest version of the "library standards" to show how this has been done (Morris, 2012).

The Common Core Standards again will prompt librarians to consider new ways to arrange library materials. One of the Common Core goals is to encourage students to read a wide variety of perspectives of a topic. This brings up the importance of "Clustering," which means one could display all media (print and non-print) on a given topic in the same place. Harris (2013) argues that with the new cataloguing possibilities offered with Resource Description Framework (RDF), it will be possible to link materials in the catalog and not have to reshelve the entire library. Another concern for library media specialists is to acquire more non-fiction materials to meet the increased demands. Finally, because of the intense collaboration now necessary in order to infuse English/Language Arts in subjects like art and music that might not have regularly written research papers in the past, the school librarian can support the classroom teacher and collaborate so that students can find a wide range of materials.

Finally, it is necessary to evaluate Accelerated Reader in light of the Common Core. While AR does contain some non-fiction works, it is primarily focused on fiction, and it also focuses its tests on reading *comprehension* (Cregar, 2011). The Common Core assumes the students understand what they read, and moves beyond comprehension to focus on *point of view* (Aronson and Bartle, 2012). As a result, students would be focusing more on *who* is telling the story and *how* it is told and whether there might be other perspectives. Thus, the librarian who knows many other books, movies, and internet sites on a variety of subjects is best positioned to help find those alternate perspectives (Morris, 2012). This suggests that AR with its reliance on testing comprehension and encouragement to select long fiction books may not quite fit into the new standards.

Conclusion

Thus, many factors go into the success or failure of a given school in terms of reading instruction in the urban middle school classroom. Since Catholic schools start from a premise that each child is unique, rather than equal, it may help to foster an environment in which each child gets the help he or she needs, in line with culturally-relevant pedagogy, assuming that the school develops around the needs of its learners and the teachers have opportunities to discuss race. Catholic urban schools, despite their different philosophy, may grapple with institutional racism, however, suggesting that whether its philosophy is better or worse, it still may suffer from the same issues inside that urban public schools do. Finally, whatever the school philosophy, the individual teacher in the classroom may make the most difference in student success. As a result,

research in Catholic schools may be applicable to public, private, and other religious schools as well.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

After completing the research for this project, I decided that Saint Anne's Middle School would be an appropriate school to profile. As its website boasted that more of its students were proficient or advanced than the average of not only the Milwaukee Public Schools, but the State of Wisconsin average on the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE), I wanted to try to document what it was doing so that I, and other educators, could learn more. In so doing, I would provide the necessary information to help librarians effect change in reading programs in their schools so that they could best support students to achieve higher gains in standardized test scores.

Setting

Saint Anne's Middle School, the school in this study, is independent in that, while it is a Catholic school, it directly answers to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, without a parish in-between for governance. Because it is on the site of the old St. Wenceslaus church and parish and uses the former church space as a chapel, it therefore looks like it is attached to a church, but there is in fact no Catholic church on the property. It is a Catholic, urban middle school for girls in grades 5-8. The majority of the students in the 2012-2013 academic year, as every year, were Latinas. This segregation-by-selection is because the school is located in a predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhood, the school is bilingual and all students are required to take Spanish. For non-native speakers, this class is more like a regular Spanish class in which reading, writing and speaking are emphasized. For native speakers, however, it looks more like a traditional reading and

language arts class, however, the language being spoken, read, and written is Spanish, rather than English.

Because the school is modeled on the Ignatius Model of education, it includes an extended school day, which includes a mandatory after-school program, and graduate support services to assure the school's graduates do well after completing middle school. Because the after-school enrichment program is a required part of the school day, it lengthens the school day until 6:10 p.m. Students end the traditional school day by having a snack in the cafeteria, and then have twenty minutes of silent reading. The after-school program involves one study hall and one activity period. It meets Monday through Thursday, with Friday being a short day, where students are dismissed at 3:15. The school principal's office is at the back of the school administrative offices on the first floor nearest the main street entrance to the school. There is a school secretary that also serves as a receptionist, an assistant principal, and a business manager in the suite as well. In addition, the teachers' lounge, a large, spacious room, is in the suite. The school has a second set of administrative offices on the second floor for the school president and development, and there are offices for the after school program and graduate support as well. As in other locations throughout the school, religious pictures are scattered throughout the administrative offices, including Sister Jacqueline[6]'s office.

Sister Jacqueline, the principal, has a long background in the neighborhood and does not see all that much difference in one of the local non-profit schools, Ignatius Jesuit, and SAMS. With her background in the neighborhood, she has not seem much

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[6] While the school is addressed with its real name, all people named in the story are addressed by a pseudonym.

difference in the three schools in that all three serve the same demographic, but Guadalupe was not very stable during the years she worked there, so there were times when teachers did not get paid. She found the financial instability of the school affected the kids and they were regularly scared their school would close. Students did not have such fears at Ignatius Jesuit or at SAMS. She also found the after-school study hall and activities were a positive difference in SAMS and Ignatius Jesuit, though the specific philosophies differed as each was run by a different religious order. SAMS, unlike Ignatius Jesuit[7], however, is a Choice school, and thus has to take all students who apply, assuming there is space. Sometimes they have students who struggle so much with learning they wonder if another school would be better suited, but as long as the parents are happy with them, the student remains in the school. One specific strength of SAMS, according to Sister Jacqueline, is its board, which has term limits, and is well-organized. The SAMS board does not micromanage and really works to serve the school.

With regard to curriculum, design and implementation is an ongoing process. There are state standards, and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee has religion standards and exit expectations. They also are an accredited school through WRISA (Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools) and the process helps them with their long-range planning. They must develop a seven-year plan based on ten standards. When it is time for the WRISA observers to visit again, the school takes a year to do a self-study and sets goals for seven years. They are lucky to be an SSND school as well because there is a

[7] Saint Ignatius Middle School is currently discerning whether it will become a Choice school. Parents of boys at Saint Anne's Primary School would like the security of knowing their children can continue to Ignatius Jesuit, and this "feeder opportunity" as well as the increased financial security is prompting them to consider becoming a Choice school.

review of all of the SSND sponsored organizations as well, and this review helps them to see where they might have trouble before the accreditors visit. They used to have some help from the Ignatius-Miguel Network, but since it has closed, it is no longer a clearing house for the schools. There is a movement to start it again in some form to help the schools gather and share data, but at this point, Sister Jacqueline believes it might be easier for someone looking to start a Ignatius-Miguel School to come and visit the successful schools and ask questions, rather than pooling resources online and requiring schools to pay a fee to join.

SAMS students primarily come from Milwaukee Public Schools and some Catholic schools. They come from the various neighborhood schools, which were a lengthy list as there are many elementary schools in the neighborhood. SAMS is an in-demand school; while historically, some parents could wait to send their daughters in sixth-grade, today, 50 students applied for the 40 Choice slots in fifth-grade and they regularly have a waiting list. Each classroom caps at 20 students and there are only 2 classrooms per grade. As a result, there is unlikely to be room in sixth-grade for new students, though sometimes a small number can join the school if some fifth-graders choose other schools or move away. Sister Jacqueline wants to serve even more students, but if they have too many students, she believes it will be impossible to serve each student's individual needs. At the elementary school, which opened in the fall of 2012, there are currently 28 students in Kindergarten and 31 in first-grade, and they planned for 40 per grade. For next year, the second year the school will be open, there are few openings.

With the waiting lists for school entrance, Sister Jacqueline rarely has discipline problems. If students have academic challenges, the school can work with them; if they have behavior challenges, they often can be brought back into line because they know other students would love to take their place at the school. She rarely asks students to leave due to behavior issues, and could only remember one time when she did so. Thus, while the students are typical, while in the school they are well-behaved, and generally have a strong desire to do well in school, according to Sister Jacqueline, as verified by several teachers.

The Researcher

I was not completely unfamiliar with SAMS before I started the project. I earned my B.A., M.A. and secondary English teaching certification from Mount Mary College, the women's college in Milwaukee sponsored by the S.S.N.D. When I was midway through my Master's program in Education, Sister Patricia Ann Preston, who taught Spanish, approached me because she heard a teacher was leaving SAMS, and invited me to go meet with the principal, who at that time was another Preston student who had studied at Mount Mary. This was the second time that Preston had vouched for me in the Spanish-speaking community in the near-South Side. I had also worked in an alternative high school sponsored by the Spanish Center on the strength of her recommendation. As before, because I was "sent" by Sister Patricia Ann, it was a foregone conclusion that I would be hired at the school, assuming the teacher would leave the school as she planned. She eventually did, and I got a seventh-grade homeroom and a mix of courses including social studies, math, Language Arts, and religion to teach all ages. I taught at the school from January of 2001-May of 2003, when I left to teach in California, which was a new

challenge. I ended my career as a classroom teacher in January of 2004 as I had a significantly harder time connecting with students at the large public middle school in California.

Today, I use my classroom experiences to augment my research in education and library science, and since I have been separated from SAMS for ten years, I believed I could maintain the type of objectivity necessary to carry out the project. While visiting the school, I had access to anything I wished, but one of the teachers assured me that visiting classrooms and observing was not unusual, and she invited observers in all the time; that I had a previous connection to the school made no difference to her. I remembered, vaguely, myself that donors and volunteers were constantly touring the school, and as a result students and staff alike got used to visitors quickly.

The Participants

- **Sister Jacqueline, the school principal,** holds a teaching license for grades 1-8, a Master's degree and certification in reading and bilingual education, both of which are K-12 licenses, and principal certification. She has worked in the Latino community of Milwaukee for many years. She worked at a local non-profit school, a K-8 school, for eight years. In addition, she worked at Saint Ignatius Middle School starting in 1993 and was part of the committee that originally planned SAMS. She spent 11 years at Ignatius, and then trained as a spiritual mentor, hoping to provide support for Latina mothers. In 2004, she started as a teacher at SAMS, asking to use half of the day to visit with the mothers of students at the school. While she enjoyed making connections to the mothers that year, unfortunately, the music teacher resigned during the summer, and since she

had a background in music, she ended up picking up the music classes as well. She still tries to connect with the parents, but it has grown increasingly difficult as her teaching load and later administrative load increased. She was the school president from December-June of 2008, and became the principal starting in 2008.

- **Amy, the Graduate Support Specialist,** holds a B.A. from St. Norbert College and majored in English and Spanish. When she graduated in 2004, she specifically looked for an opportunity to work in the Spanish-speaking community. She originally applied to be the Development Assistant and another person applied to be the Graduate Support Specialist. After meeting both of them, the then-school president asked if they would be willing to switch to the other position since he believed each was better suited to the other position. After two years in the position, Amy completed a Master's in Psychology and became a licensed school counselor. Nine years later, she believes the position has become her ministry and true calling.
- **Sister Donna, the school librarian,** is a member of the School Sister of Notre Dame community, and has a background in school technology. She held an elementary school principal license which has expired, but has a "life license" as an elementary teacher (grades 1-8) with a specialty in Social Studies. She hesitates to call herself the school librarian. When the school began, a librarian with proper library training was in place at SAMS, and Sister Donna was just coming to the Milwaukee area after being a school administrator in Sturgeon Bay. She took some time to brush up on her technology skills, and looked for a full-

time computer-related position in the area Catholic schools; she ended up splitting her time at three Catholic schools, including a half-day on Fridays at Saint Ignatius Middle School. The first principal at SAMS asked her to come over in the afternoons and next thing she knew, she was offered four days per week at SAMS to take charge of technology. She has been the technology expert and librarian ever since.

Teachers:

- **Annette,** the first-year at SAMS teacher, taught Science at a Catholic high school for a number of years before coming to SAMS. She is also certified in reading.
- **Sister Joanne**, who has a fifth-grade homeroom, is a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame community and enjoys working with the fifth-graders. She taught in other schools before coming to SAMS.
- **Natalie,** the teacher who has taught at SAMS the longest, has taught all grades, but primarily works with the seventh- and eighth-graders.
- **Valaria,** the Spanish teacher, works with all ages. Initially, she was the only teacher who taught Spanish, but today she teaches one group from each grade level and two other teachers help her with the other students.

Alumna:

- **Ofelia** attended SAMS from 2001-2005. She graduated from a charter high school and is attending a major state university studying the arts. Her sister is Vanessa.
- **Elizabeth** attended SAMS from 1999-2003. She graduated from one of the more academically rigorous Catholic schools in Milwaukee and earned a degree in the

sciences from a major Catholic university. She has younger siblings attending the school currently.

- **Gabriela** attended SAMS from 2000-2004. She graduated from one of the more academically rigorous Catholic schools in Milwaukee. She has been studying at a technical college for five years; she has earned an associate's degree and a technical certificate, and is working in the medical field.
- **Janesa** attended SAMS from 1999-2003. She graduated from one of the more academically rigorous Catholic high schools in Milwaukee and earned an elementary education degree from the state university.
- **Maureen** attended SAMS from 1999-2003. She graduated from a major Catholic high school and is the mother of a young daughter with a full-time secretarial position.
- **Nanci** attended SAMS from 2004-2008. She graduated from an academically rigorous Catholic high school and is now studying at a major Catholic university in Minnesota studying business.
- **Teresa** attended SAMS from 2003-2006. She graduated from an academically rigorous Catholic high school and is now studying at a major Catholic university studying psychology and Spanish.
- **Vanessa** attended SAMS from 1999-2003. She graduated from a charter high school. She is pursuing a degree in history from a major state university after studying marine biology and art at other institutions. She is Ofelia's sister.

Procedures

I began by designing the study and applying for and receiving IRB approval of the procedures detailed as follows.

During the spring semester, I visited the school on seven dates in February and March of 2013. While I observed classroom instruction and interviewed those who worked at the school, I did not work directly with the students except to see how they reacted to the teachers. Therefore, this research was a mixed-methods project, combining quantitative data such as test scores with qualitative data, such as teacher interviews. As an observer, I used a "checklist" with the data to determine whether certain "good teaching practices" were present (and the quality of those interactions). I also used data provided by the school, and semi-structured interviews or surveys with teachers, administrators, and graduates of the school, to discover as much as I could about the objective and subjective successes of the schools. This section further outlines the procedures.

Method (Case Study). When I recognized there would be several factors that may or may not have contributed to the success of the school as measured on a standardized test, I decided upon the case study method. The case study method is a research method that concerns itself with how or why some event or situation occurs focusing on contemporary events (Yin, 2009). Unlike an action research project, which is a common style of research that is appropriate to many inquiries that take place in a school setting, a researcher conducting the study is an observer, rather than a person who manipulates variables (Yin, 2009). Also, the case study is appropriate when the researcher wants to examine the real-life context of the problem and when the researcher

expects there will be more variables of interest than data points (Yin, 2009). While the specifics of the case study vary from researcher to researcher, Merriam (1988) has drawn several key characteristics: case studies are *particularistic*, which means they focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon; they are *descriptive*, which means that the final product will employ thick, rich description of the phenomenon being study; case studies are *heuristic* because they help the reader understand the phenomenon studied better; and finally, they are *inductive* because they explore data in context to form generalizations, concepts, or hypotheses. Because of the nature of my questions and the variety of data I wished to study, the case study method, therefore, was appropriate.

Interviews. I interviewed a variety of people so that I could get more information about the school from a variety of perspectives. The teachers were interviewed multiple times during the study and also observed as they teach Reading/Language Arts Classes in English or in Spanish. I also interviewed the school principal, the Director of Graduate Support, and the school librarian. Finally, I had some informal interviews with former students who are over the age of 18. Those who consented to be interviewed and observed signed a longer consent form that detailed the study and their ability to opt-out (Appendix A). Other participant groups signed a shorter consent (Appendix B).

The teacher interviews captured the participants' backgrounds and beliefs about teaching and working at the school. The interview questions for the various groups studied are listed in Appendix C.

Survey and/or Poll. When it became impractical to interview all teachers and the alumna, I changed from an interview to a survey format. The teachers who were not interviewed or observed were surveyed via paper survey asking the same questions listed

in the interview, or polled, when I asked in person. For the alumna, they answered questions from the interview form either via Facebook message to the researcher or an anonymous "survey monkey" version. The teacher survey or poll captured the participants' backgrounds and beliefs about teaching and working at the school. The student surveys captured their experiences as students and some general data about their lives after leaving the school. The interview questions for the various groups studied are listed in Appendix C, and cover the same ground the survey or poll did.

Test data. I explored the test data available since the school opened (1996-1997) until the last academic year (2011-2012), looking for trends, targeting English Language Arts and Reading data. The tests being used are Iowa Basics and The Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination. It did not include the current academic year (2012-2013), as those results will not be yet. The school had most of the ITBS results on a file because they were looking into their own statistics, but I pulled the original tests and recorded them, and then compared them to the school's data to ensure they matched the student test report data. The test data was used to uncover trends and to answer the question about whether students, in fact, did well on standardized test scores as measured by a more easily readable test score result.

Classroom observations. On several dates, I observed in the classrooms of the studied teachers. While observing, I recorded the lessons and took notes of what I observed. I specifically looked for criteria related to the PLATO measure studied by the MET project: intellectual challenge, modeling, strategy use and instruction, guided practice, classroom discourse, text-based instruction, behavior management, and time

management. Additionally, the original PLATO criteria included observing teachers to see whether they connected to prior knowledge, connected to personal and cultural experience, and accommodated for language learning. In my adapted version, I will look to see how and whether culturally-relevant materials are used and how (and whether) first language supports are in place for students for whom English is not the first language. I also observed to see how (and whether) the Catholic school philosophy was incorporated into the lessons. **Appendix D** shows the checklists that I used for this part of the project.

School and library observations. I explored other factors that might lead to success by observing teacher interactions with each other, and visiting the school library. While these observations will likely be subjective, they helped to paint the full picture for the reader.

Finally, to "flesh out" the project, I interviewed the Director of Graduate Support. Graduate support is integral to the NativityMiguel philosophy of an extended school day and support for students after they leave the school. Because Catholic schools often stress the philosophy matters most, collecting data about the day-to-day operations of the school and school philosophy should help the reader to compare this school to other schools.

In short, I explored test scores and other documentation to determine what successes SAMS has achieved. I also interviewed many adults: some teachers and some alumna, to help understand the subjective successes of the school. I also observed reading/language arts classes and Spanish classes so that I could get a better picture of the classroom experience. Because this will be a case study approach, I investigated many sources of data and put them together.

Data Analysis

First, I began with the most quantitative data I had: the test data. I looked for patterns in test data and then entered results into Excel to derive basic, descriptive statistics. Because teachers and librarians are the primary audience for this project, I used the types of data teachers typically use in their everyday lives: average, or mean, and median. I also broke out three-year students (typically students who arrive at sixth-grade, which is no longer as common as it once was) and four-year students separately to look for patterns. As I was exploring this data, a few other interesting things began to emerge, such as patterns about what areas of tests students typically do well with, and which areas they struggle. I documented those areas as well. With regard to the qualitative data, after I completed all of my observations, interviews, and data collection, I looked for patterns to see what commonalities occurred. I used the descriptive coding method to pick up strands in the data, and then used pattern coding to look for patterns among the various participants and the data I encountered. I described the data in thick, rich description.

Ethical Implications

Because I did not test the students myself, rather, I merely looked at the documentation provided as a result of the school's testing, a lot of the "traditional" ethical concerns did not apply to my study. Still, there was the chance of researcher bias, which may arise in several areas. This section details the pitfalls in the project.

The first possible area of bias is that I taught at the specific school being studied. While I have since distanced myself, two of the teachers in particular I studied worked with me at that time. Because they have stayed with the school so long, and they have

possibly been a significant reason for its success, observing them was critical in understanding the school.

My second major challenge was avoiding bias in the reporting of data. This was a particular challenge in this project because I needed to use my own judgment to determine whether evidence exists of the PLATO protocols. Because I was trained in the instruments as used by the Gates Foundation-funded MET (Measures of Effective Teaching) Study, I have some experience in observing teachers and using the instrument to record what I find. While I destroyed my specific rubrics at the completion of my role in the project as they themselves may be viewed as confidential, the instrument itself is described online, and it was that instrument I will be used to "gauge" the teachers. By using such an instrument, I hoped to avoid bias or vague descriptive terms to describe what I saw and heard. Because the PLATO protocols had not been applied to Catholic schools yet, I hoped that by using them to evaluate a known successful school (in terms of standardized test results), I could also determine whether a Catholic school can also use the protocols to help teachers improve their work with students.

Next, anonymity will be difficult with this project. While student names will not be compromised, nor will individuals who work there, there are few schools that could be described as bilingual and bicultural and serving middle school girls in the NativityMiguel model of education. In fact, this is the only such school in Milwaukee, and there are few like it in the country, much less this region of the country. Because parental school choice to sectarian schools may also be a factor, this automatically narrowed any vague descriptions I gave to Milwaukee and Cleveland, though states are continuing to discuss (if not implement) school choice programs that include religious

options. Unfortunately, there are no NativityMiguel schools in Cleveland. Thus, in consultation with the principal, I revealed the name of the school studied in the project, but not the individuals involved.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

For librarians who are not reading teachers, the task of supporting the Common Core Standards implementation may be daunting. This project is designed to help librarians and teachers alike improve reading scores by learning about how one school achieved standardized test success and high levels of high school graduation and post-secondary education attempts. It is also an opportunity to explore practical suggestions to help replicate SAMS' success. What's more, however, it will help schools reach beyond the test to create a culture that supports reading, which will help students to achieve throughout their lives.

Exploring reading instruction in a Catholic, urban Choice middle school for girls, involved exploring a wide variety of data. During my visits, I gathered a lot of data from a variety of sources. First, I explored the test data and looked for patterns. Next, I explored the high schools the students attended and whether they attempted post-graduate education. I surveyed or polled the teachers and two former teachers to get a sense for what a "typical" SAMS teacher might be like. I spoke to teachers, the school principal, the school librarian, the school graduate support specialist, and several alumna from the school regarding their experiences at the school to get an idea of what other components went into the school experience. Finally, I observed in some language arts and Spanish classes and visited the school library to get a sense for the whole curriculum and how it encourages reading and what, if anything, the library could do to better support the mission of the school. All of this data converged to create the results.

Questions and Answers

Do students score at or above grade level in reading and language arts? A qualified yes. Students exit the school testing at or above grade-level. They often enter reading and performing language arts tasks below-grade level, however, as measured by the ITBS.

Because the WKCE does not indicate grade level, it is difficult to take WKCE test scores at face value. As a result, the first question is to determine whether, in fact, the school is achieving test scores worthy of note on the ITBS because that test will be easier for teachers and librarians to use as a comparison. If the school is doing well, it is more likely that other schools will want to emulate some of the school's techniques. If the students are not reading at or above grade level or tend to score poorly on standardized tests in the Language Arts, it is unlikely that the school will be one that other schools want to follow.

The school boasted that 100% of its 8th graders tested as proficient or advanced on the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE) in 2011-2012. Nearly 97% of its students tested as proficient or advanced in Language Arts that same year. Because the WKCE is not a particularly helpful test in that it is unclear what "proficient" or "advanced" actually means, the school continues to take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) which breaks down student scores by grade equivalents and percentiles. The school is also starting to use Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing as a way to help target areas in need of remediation.

To give some sense for how well the students do, the following charts and tables describe the students' success in reading and language arts. Before really studying the school, I explored the test data available from the school's inception and looked for

patterns in the reading and language arts test scores. In analyzing the data, I skipped to the third graduating class (2000) and then the sixth graduating class (2003) because that class had had the full benefit of up to four years of instruction possible and took the ITBS all four years. Unfortunately, the classes of 2001 and 2002 did not take the ITBS and instead took the WKCE (2001) or Terra Nova[8] (2002). Because those were the only years when 8th graders took those tests alone, they were skipped. Because it was easiest to compare ITBS test data over time, I recorded and analyzed ITBS scores in Reading and Language Arts. I entered the data into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed each class's data as follows: average test score in reading and language arts, separated out by 4-year students (5-8) and 3-year students (6-8). I then determined the number of years gained by each student in reading and language arts from her arrival to her departure of the school if she was there a minimum of 3 years and graduated from the school and averaged the student growth. Finally, I determined how many students were below, roughly at, and above grade levels and broke out percentages for each class. In this way, it would be easier to see if a few outliers affected the group. In general, students exited at or above grade level regardless of the grade level they entered the school. It did not seem to matter whether a student spent three or four years at the school.

First, students typically exit scoring at or above grade level in reading (Table 1 and Figure 1). On average, students who spend four years in the school are more likely to score above grade level than those who spent only three years. In general, students who spent four years at the school improved more than those who spent three years,

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[8] A series of standardized achievement tests, published by McGraw-Hill, that is similar to the Iowa Basics and covers similar content.

however the amount of improvement was slight; generally students who spend four years at SAMS improve by only one grade level over their three-year counterparts (Table 2 and Figure 2). As a result, it might be that SAMS can improve test scores more quickly than other schools or that the students would have improved anyway, regardless of which school they attended.

With regard to language arts, students typically score at or above grade level as well, however, the difference between three-years and four-years at SAMS seems more significant (Table 3 and Figure 3). In some years, four-year students experienced a significant difference, as much as three years' improvement over their three-year counterparts (Table 4 and Figure 4). On average, however, the difference in reading gains is around two or three-years, suggesting the extra year gain at SAMS may have been important.

Table 1: Average and Median Reading Scores of 8th grade classes by year:

Class	Average Score—4 years	Median Score—4 Years	Average Score—3 Years	Median Score—3 Years
3	7.28	6.75	N/A	N/A
6	9	8.45	7.89	7.9
7	10.37	10.65	8.39	8.4
8	8.4	8.4	7.78	7.1
9	8.13	8.9	7.77	8.4
10	10.4	12	7.64	6.85
11	9.17	9.1	8.73	8.8
12	8.75	8.5	8.22	8.22
13	8.5	8.8	8.89	8.75

Figure 1: AVERAGE AND MEDIAN READING SCORES OF 8TH GRADE CLASSES BY YEAR:

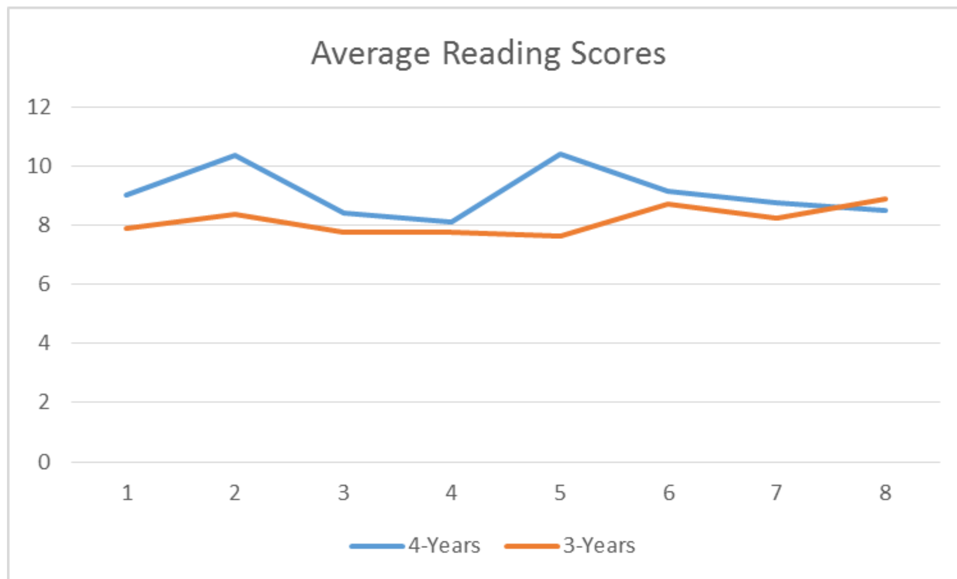


Table 2: Average and Median Reading Improvement (measured in years):

Class	Average Improvement—4 Years	Median Improvement—4 Years	Average Improvement—3 Years	Median Improvement—3 Years
3	2.24	1.85	N/A	N/A
6	3.88	3.6	3.12	3.4
7	5.36	5.3	2.84	2.7
8	3.42	3.55	2.7	2.7
9	4.25	4.45	2.19	2
10	4.66	5.1	2.08	2.05
11	3	3.05	2.6	2.75
12	3.36	3.15	2.29	2.2
13	3.63	3.7	2.4	2.3

Figure 2: AVERAGE AND MEDIAN READING IMPROVEMENT (MEASURED IN YEARS):

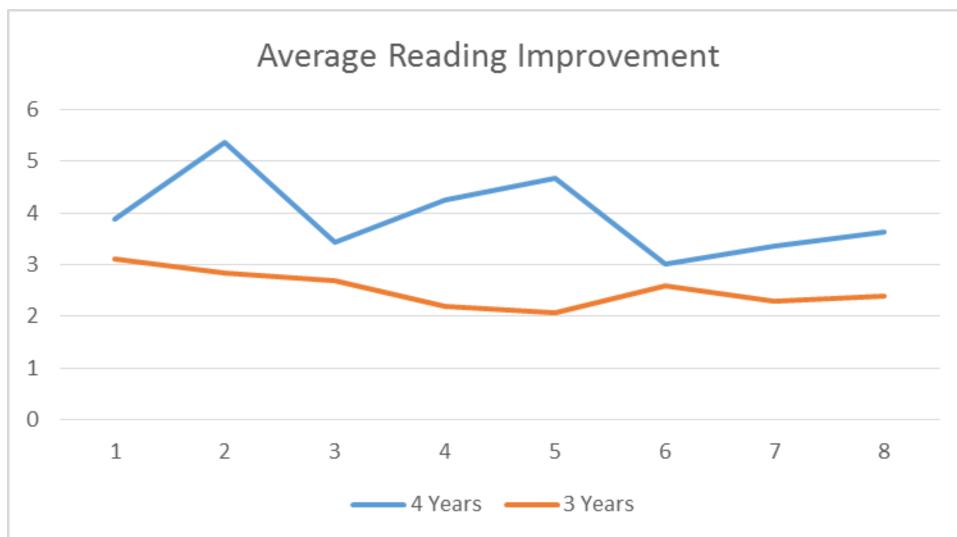


Table 3: Average and Median Language Arts Scores of 8th Graders by Year:

Class	Average Score—4 years	Median Score—4 Years	Score—3 Years	Median Score—3 Years
3	8.69	8.45	N/A	N/A
6	9.84	9.55	8.11	8.2
7	10.25	12.1	8.39	6.8
8	8.6	7.45	8.9	8.4
9	7.77	8.4	7.88	7.7
10	9.45	8.6	8.17	8
11	11.39	12.4	10.74	11
12	10.73	11.3	9.86	10
13	10.31	10.75	10.37	10.98

Figure 3: AVERAGE AND MEDIAN LANGUAGE ARTS SCORES OF 8TH GRADERS BY YEAR:

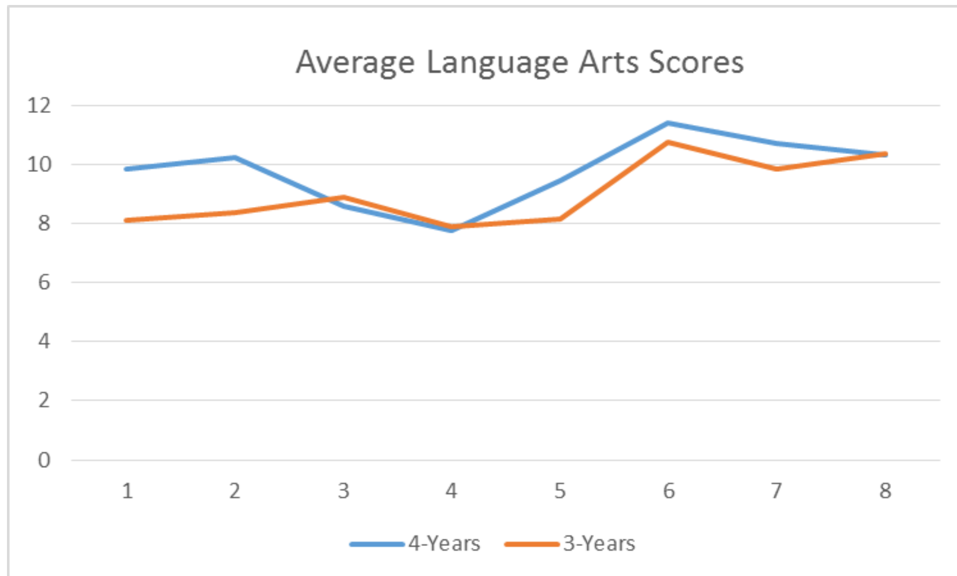
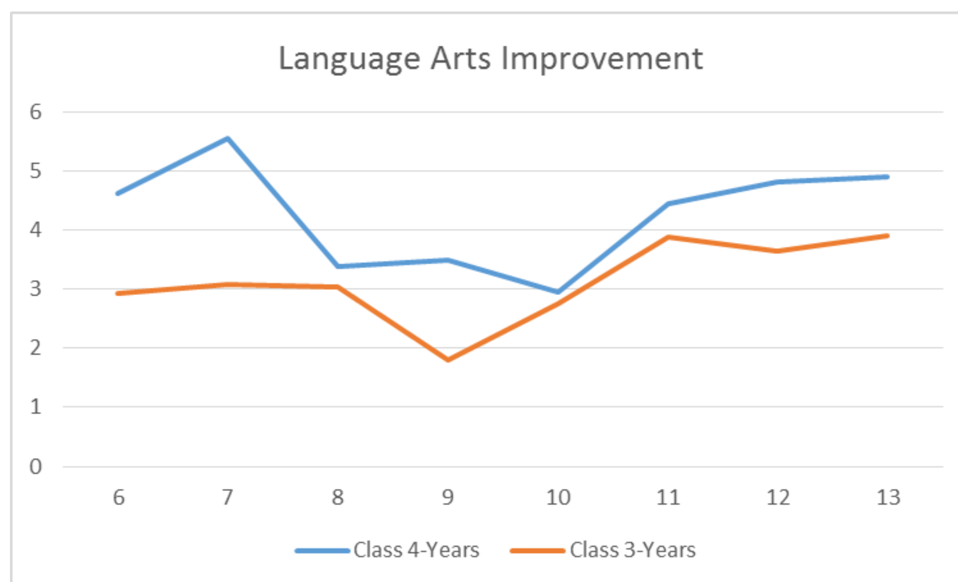


Table 4: Average and Median Language Arts Improvement (measured in years):

Class	Average Improvement—4 Years	Median Improvement—4 Years	Average Improvement—3 Years	Median Improvement—3 Years
3	3.78	3.95	N/A	N/A
6	4.61	4.25	2.93	3.2
7	5.55	5.7	3.07	3.2
8	3.39	3.1	3.04	3
9	3.49	3.45	1.79	1.5
10	2.94	2.7	2.76	2.85
11	4.45	4.9	3.88	4.05
12	4.81	5.15	3.65	3.75
13	4.91	4.7	3.9	3.8

Figure 4: AVERAGE AND MEDIAN LANGUAGE ARTS IMPROVEMENT (MEASURED IN YEARS):



The final charts explore the students' 8th grade test scores by grade level so that the reader can get an indication of how the students do overall (Tables 5-6 and Figures 5-6). Students who score below middle school level are indicated as "low," and those

scoring at the middle school level are described as "below." Students who score around grade level on exit are described as "at" and those scoring two years above grade level are indicated as "above." Finally, quite a few students scored at the junior or senior year of high school and may have scored beyond that had the test been able to measure beyond 12th grade; those students were indicated as "advanced." This data indicates that the majority of students score at or above grade level in both reading and language arts, though some students still exit SAMS scoring below grade level. As a result, some students might not see the significant gains.

Table 5: Reading Level of all 8th Graders:

	Low (0.0-5.0)	Below (5.1-7.5)	At (7.6-8.5)	Above (8.6-10.0)	Advanced (10.1+)
3	8%	50%	0%	33%	8%
6	15%	31%	27%	15%	12%
7	5%	16%	16%	16%	47%
8	4%	44%	16%	20%	16%
9	0%	21%	25%	33%	21%
10	4%	43%	18%	11%	25%
11	4%	11%	29%	36%	21%
12	7%	14%	29%	32%	18%
13	0%	33%	15%	33%	18%

Figure 5: READING LEVEL OF ALL 8TH GRADERS:

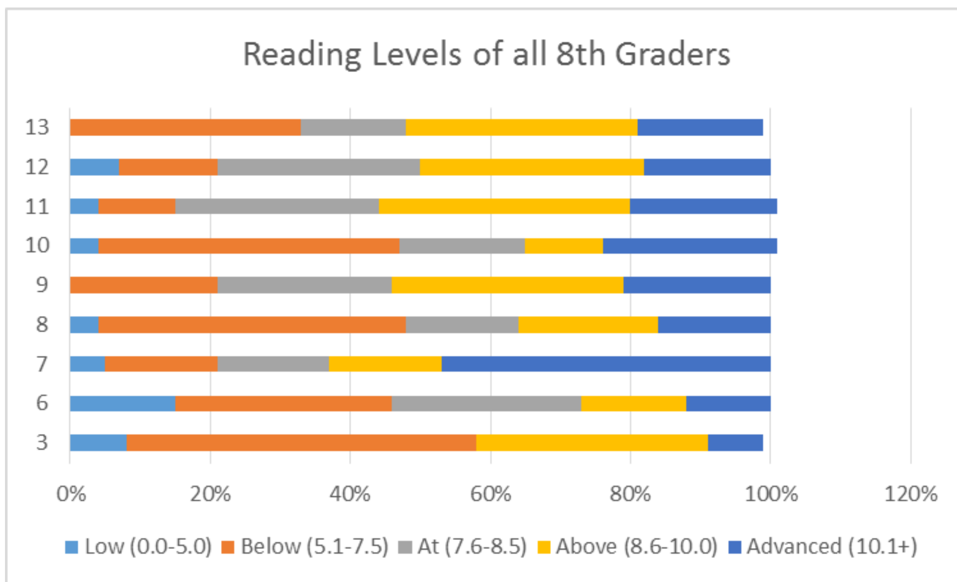
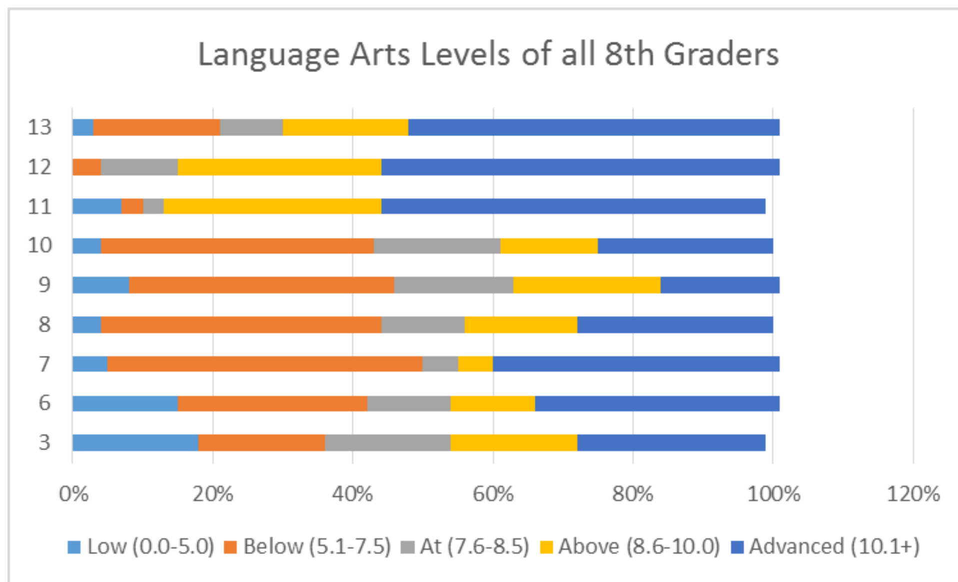


Table 6: Language Arts Level of all 8th Graders:

	Low (0.0-5.0)	Below (5.1-7.5)	At (7.6-8.5)	Above (8.6-10.0)	Advanced (10.1+)
3	18%	18%	18%	18%	27%
6	15%	27%	12%	12%	35%
7	5%	45%	5%	5%	41%
8	4%	40%	12%	16%	28%
9	8%	38%	17%	21%	17%
10	4%	39%	18%	14%	25%
11	7%	3%	3%	31%	55%
12	0%	4%	11%	29%	57%
13	3%	18%	9%	18%	53%

Figure 6: LANGUAGE ARTS LEVEL OF ALL 8TH GRADERS:



What factors of instruction at Saint Anne's Middle School might lead to high test scores? In observing the teaching in the classroom, visiting the library, and exploring the school environment, it seems several factors in the school might lead to high test scores. The major themes were that 1) the school celebrates gender, culture, and learning, and, 2) the Reading/Language Arts and Spanish classrooms provide meaningful opportunities to engage with text.

Celebration of gender, culture and learning. A variety of large bulletin boards and murals are scattered throughout the school. Some celebrate successful student work, and others encourage students to do great things, such as the murals depicting SAMS graduates pursuing the sciences. In addition to the displays that typically stay the same, teachers use the bulletin boards to display student work. Each bulletin board item during the time I visited the school shared assignments that practiced reading and writing, including the science display.

In addition to bright, encouraging hallways, each classroom had a wide variety of print resources such as books and posters. All classrooms had at least one religious picture, and many included colorful Latin-American crosses and depictions of Mary, the mother of Jesus as Our Lady of Guadalupe, both of which were a nod to the culture of the students. Most classrooms went beyond crosses and pictures to have strong statements about faith in action such as quotes by Gandhi. Finally, several classrooms made use of "word walls" with vocabulary words to help support the students' vocabulary development in English and in Spanish. For second-language learners, these posters and displays were opportunities to engage with both languages. Access to print, even signage along the walls, can help with reading achievement because it provides more

opportunities for students to decipher text; such opportunities are critical for reading success in lower grades (Smith, 1994). This is based on the idea that children who find reading print has *meaning* are more likely to read because it has a purpose (Fields & Spangler, 2000). While typically word walls and print-rich environments are part of lower elementary-school classroom, as Jiménez (1997) pointed out, middle school students who struggle with reading often need help with basic reading strategies and skills. Therefore, these opportunities are not childish, rather, they provide additional learning opportunities that some students need. Quotations regarding social justice supported reading development while also illustrating important principles of Catholic Social Justice Theory to the students on a regular basis. On top of that, by including religious imagery that celebrated European-inspired American Catholicism alongside the imagery of Mexican-American and Puerto-Rican Catholicism, both versions were equally valued and celebrated wordlessly. Thus, in addition to helping to bolster students' religious and spiritual development, classrooms bolstered students' vocabulary and reading.

Finally, at the time I was there, the assistant principal was serving in a part-time capacity because she had recently had a baby. She brought her infant son to work with her and he stayed in her office or was carried around the building with her. In another instance, a part-time math teacher brought his pre-school granddaughter in while he was teaching due to a childcare conflict. Everyone seemed genuinely pleased to see her. This strong support of working motherhood and family responsibilities carried a subtle message to the students about the importance of being both an educated, working woman *and* a mother and looking for working environments in which both were valued. Science

classes cover family planning that emphasizes abstinence, as did the Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer who talked to the 8th graders during the 2012-2013 school year. Thus, students get the message that babies and children are valuable, *but not yet*.

Classroom instruction. In order to determine to what degree teachers use the strategies found in MET—Plato in the classroom, I visited a variety of teachers' classrooms, observing a variety of levels and lessons in English as well as in Spanish. Teachers typically used a variety of methods, and generally explicitly stated the purpose of the lesson, which was always related to Reading/Language Arts instruction. Teachers typically connected the lesson to previous work, and referred to texts as they taught. They offered opportunities for guided practice, and engaged in extended discussions with their students by posing questions that required more than rote memorization. In short, teachers exhibited the characteristics of strong teachers as measured by the MET-PLATO instrument and could be described as "successful" urban teachers of English/Language Arts. This section describes what I encountered as I observed the teaching.

To set the stage for understanding what I observed in the classroom, it is necessary to describe a little bit about the school's schedule. Typically, students are arranged by ability level within grades with a "higher group" and a "lower group." In the past, this grouping was cross-grade because all students had the "Language Arts block" at the same time, but as the school grew and more teachers joined the staff with strengths in other academic areas, that type of schedule proved impossible. Spanish, too, has had to adjust as it can now break out students into three different classes per grade instead of having to combine seventh and eighth grades. Thus, there is ability grouping, but it is set up in such a way that it would be easy to move a student from one group to the next as

their grade's two or three classes meet at the same time. This also prevents issues with books being appropriate for seventh- and eighth-graders, but having sixth-graders also in the classroom, as was possible under the old Language Arts Block system. Spanish classes are all 50-minute periods; Language Arts classes are typically two 50-minute periods, one after the other, with the same teacher, so it functions as a 100-minute block. The fifth-grade is the exception, as two religious sisters share the responsibility for the fifth-grade; one teaching reading, and the other teaching language arts. The students switch rooms after 50 minutes and thus do not have one long "block." All teachers observed stated that the class was a typical one on the day I visited.

Seventh-grade Reading/Language Arts. On the date I observed Annette's classroom, I observed a "double-period" of seventh-grade Reading/Language Arts. Despite being a "lower" group, the students did a variety of tasks that would be expected of any student including checking spelling, a mini-review on selecting the proper tense, review and explanation of answers from a test, and an extended lesson on the "IEE" method of writing that included an example, guided practice, and discussion of the lesson. Vocabulary was being built within the lesson as spelling words were also treated as vocabulary words. The students typically were also reading a novel, but they had just finished *The Giver* (ATOS level of 5.7, interest level, middle grades[9]).

While the students were, Annette reported, by SAMS standards, hard to keep focused, generally the class remained on topic for most of the period, with all students engaged in the discussions and working on independent tasks where assigned. The only

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[9] When book titles are given, reading and interest levels, as measured by the Accelerated Reader program will also be given.

real issue came when several distractions occurred during the class: the telephone rang, the assistant principal came to get a student, and a student from another classroom came to get books she needed that Annette had borrowed and not yet returned. The students immediately quieted down whenever Annette began to teach again, needing only gentle reminders to quiet down in a few cases.

The "higher" seventh-graders were taught by Natalie. On the day I observed her lesson, the class returned tests, studied new vocabulary words, discussed the current book the students were reading (*The Outsiders,* ATOS level, 4.7, Interest Level, grades 9-12), and moved to the library to practice their skits, based on *Monster (*ATOS level, 5.1, interest level, grades 9-12), by Walter Dean Myers, the book the students had recently finished. While Natalie had a variety of tasks, the students knew when to be focused, and when it was permissible to chat for a bit during transitions. The questions Natalie asked her students during the novel study were of varying complexity, from simple plot questions through analysis. She also connected some of the vocabulary words to specific passages in the text so the students could see the words they had previously defined in "action" in the story.

Fifth-Grade Reading. Sister Joanne taught fifth-grade reading to all fifth graders. The class I observed, I could not easily tell which it was (higher or lower). As in the seventh-grade, students knew what was expected of them in terms of behavior, and when given opportunities to chat during a transition, they immediately stopped speaking when it was time to begin working again. Sister Joanne's lesson began with nearly 10 minutes of readaloud time, during which time students had access to stuffed animals, which were used as "fidget toys" to keep the students' attention on the story. Sister Joanne had

selected *The Eight Keys (ATOS* reading level, 3.8, interest level, middle school students). Most of the lesson was a review of a story from the basal reader that students had previously read, but not understood well enough to be tested on. Sister Joanne's review questions were at many levels, from basic comprehension questions through analysis. In addition, she reviewed author's purpose for students before they completed a workbook page on the topic.

Sixth- and Eighth-Grade Spanish. I observed Valaria's lesson for two different Spanish classes. For the sixth-grade class, the students focused on writing summaries of a particularly difficult lesson in their Spanish language reader. While the students were native speakers of Spanish, their vocabularies in Spanish and their reading/writing were not very strong, so Valaria focused on increasing vocabulary by explaining complicated words using simpler Spanish words and examples. She also deconstructed a harder vocabulary word by showing the easier vocabulary words inside it. The lesson used the computer lab and the program "Inspiration" to draw concept maps to help the students break down the reading to better understand it.

With the eighth graders, Valaria provided an opportunity for students to chat in Spanish, emphasizing the need to use formal Spanish vocabulary as they answered questions about their preferences in student-friendly topics such as school and home life. Unfortunately, some students tended to dominate the *charla*, though Valaria tried to encourage all students to participate. Students also reviewed punctuation (accents) in preparation for a test on accent marks by using individual dry-erase boards and markers. Valaria mentioned students had been studying accent marks since they arrived at the school, and this test would be the culmination of all the work they'd done over the years.

Valaria had planned to use the computer lab with an assignment based on a video on Puerto Rico, but needed to wait to see if the lab was full; she typically would bring her class to the lab even if another class was there if there was room, however, there was not space to do so on this day. In some cases, it seemed the students tried to dominate Valaria by making suggestions on getting the laptops or other ways to work on the computer project, but when she wanted them to settle down, they did so.

Time to read. Students have two fifteen-minute reading periods per day, Monday-Thursday, and one fifteen-minute reading period on Friday. Students read upon returning from lunch before resuming instruction, and in the after-school program before participating in the activities or study hall. To facilitate this task, students are required to have two books on them at all times, so they can never argue they finished the first, and so that reading will always be an option if they complete their schoolwork. Annette reported loving the specific timing of the sustained silent reading because the students have an opportunity to calm down from the excitement of mealtimes and recess, and can better focus when regular schoolwork resumes. Having time to read each day is critical in reading engagement (Gambrell, 2009).

Read-Alouds. I only observed one classroom participating in a teacher-led readaloud in reading/language arts class, led by Sister Joanne. Several alumna, however, mentioned that they remember vividly former teachers and volunteers reading aloud to them and that such readalouds helped them to choose books and lit a spark to encourage them to read more books. The research indicates that readalouds remain valuable for students in middle school (Richardson, 2000; Sanacore, 2000) and, what's more, the students enjoy hearing books read aloud by their teachers. Beers (1990) studied students

who could read, but did not if they could avoid it, and found that readalouds were one of the few reading activities they actually enjoyed and found motivating.

Accelerated Reader. The teachers voluntarily opted into Accelerated Reader as a way to encourage students to grow in reading; one teacher remembered holding out as long as she could, but when the others participated, she finally joined in. The school librarian reports that the school will be subscribing to the internet-based program, which will allow access to all quizzes and tests available starting in 2013-2014. All books in the library with Accelerated Reader tests available, which is most of the fiction, and a smattering of informational texts, are clearly labeled by AR number so that students can easily find a book that's on their level as determined by the program. Students must amass a certain amount of points as part of their reading grades, and are rewarded with ice cream and other prizes for strong quiz scores. A large bulletin board across from the library celebrates the students' exceptional Accelerated Reader achievements. However, it was interesting to learn how students remember the library in the pre- and post-Accelerated Reader era. Students who graduated from SAMS before Accelerated Reader really took hold remember visiting the library and finding books from the books the smaller library had to offer and focused on reading enjoyment. More recent graduates who had many more reading choices, in their discussion of the library, remembered it as the place to get Accelerated Reader books for tests. Accelerated Reader levels are not set in stone by the teachers, however, and students may be strongly encouraged to pick one book over another based on its reading level, however, it is possible to resist. One student mentioned her younger sister was avoiding the "system" by steadfastly checking out each of the books in her favorite series (which has ATOS levels of about 4.9, on

average, though some are higher and others lower, and earns her between 3-9 points per book). This student had practice, however, as she had been resisting Accelerated Reader suggestions at her public elementary school as well. Students who do not know how to be assertive about their reading choices may have trouble fighting the system, so to speak, or might not know how to select books when reading levels are not prominently displayed.

Other factors. Teachers were also surveyed or polled about the "magic ingredients" they believed the school had that contributed to its success. Seven teachers responded and, in addition, a volunteer who was also a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame community responded. While they had a variety of answers, the responses fell into several categories:

- Small class size which contributes to individual attention: 67%
- Teachers spend more time and go above and beyond: 56%
- Helpful Tutors and Support Staff: 44%
- High expectations and an intense curriculum: 44%
- Formal study hall and extended school day: 33%
- Family help: 22%
- Support of a religious environment and social values such as honesty and charity: 22%

Many teachers and volunteers commented specifically on the helpfulness of Sister Jacqueline, the school principal. While she has high expectations of them, one in particular noted, she does not ask teachers to do anything she has not done (or is not currently doing) herself as a teacher. Thus, teachers see the work at the school, from a

teacher perspective, is much more difficult than at other schools, however, they find that with smaller class sizes and the help of the tutors, support staff, and families, they can manage despite the more demanding expectations of teachers.

In general, Sister Jacqueline, herself, credits several factors for the high test scores and other measures of student success. She finds the extended school day and year helps students to succeed since they have more time in school. Summer school is now mandatory, and summer camps are encouraged. In general, students seem happy for the extra opportunities having extra school time gives them. In addition, Sister Jacqueline credits the teacher stability and talented teaching staff. She rarely has to hire new teachers, and when she does, teachers tend to stay for a long time. Thus, the teachers and families get to know each other. In addition, the school offers three different counselors: one from Title I (who can only see Title I students), one volunteer counselor, and the graduate support coordinator also is a counselor. Finally, many, many volunteers are available and the teachers have gotten very good at using volunteers as tutors and classroom volunteers.

SAMS also gets help for some students from the public schools via Title I funding. One teacher is there via Title I, which sometimes limits what she is able to do because her rules change. As an example, she cannot monitor students taking standardized tests, which is a new rule. They have enough students who qualify for Title I services they would be a Title I school but for the fact they are a private school, and thus, there are more rules attached to money. Milwaukee Public Schools is in charge of the funds allocation, and it constantly shifts. Sister Jacqueline believes the Archdiocese

of Milwaukee schools benefit strongly from the advocacy of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese with regard to Title I funding and other issues.

Thus, there are many factors that help SAMS to achieve success including advocacy from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, the extended school day and year, small class sizes, and teacher background. The teachers themselves also use proven methods of instruction in Reading/Language Arts and Spanish. The print-rich environment that celebrates students' culture, students having time to read and some read-alouds are other strengths. The presence of Accelerated Reader is a possible strength or weakness, however.

What factors affect a teacher's decision to teach at a Catholic "choice" school for girls? He or she will be a certified teacher, most likely born Catholic, and will pursue a teaching job at SAMS specifically, a position he or she might wait years to attain due to the low staff turnover rate. This section explores what teachers say about their background and also what the school principal looks for in her teaching staff.

Teacher survey results. Initially, all teachers were invited to take a "short survey," or a "long survey," depending upon whether they taught English or Spanish or not when interviewing the staff proved difficult due to the time it would take. Some teachers did not return the survey, and were asked the statistical questions (certification, religion, and how they arrived at the school) via e-mail or in person. Of the sixteen teachers (one of whom is the school principal, who teaches one class) and the school librarian, five returned long surveys, two returned short surveys, and eight answered the statistical questions. The one who did not respond, teaches only one class (mathematics) per day.

Teachers were surveyed on their background and reasons for coming to the school. Survey answers indicated that:

- All teachers and the school principal were certified teachers; almost all teachers held a general license for elementary/middle education, though some held specialty licenses such as Spanish or Reading education.
- The majority (80%) of teachers were born Catholic.
- While one teacher mentioned looking to teach at a Catholic school, and another was sent via the Urban Fellows program[10], every other teacher had a connection to the school or to Ignatius Jesuit, the Milwaukee Jesuit Middle School for boys that operates under the Ignatius-Miguel model. Some teachers tutored, knew other teachers at the school, or were members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame community. Teachers who already knew the school indicated a specific desire to leave what they were doing to teach at Saint Anne's Middle School. In several cases, teachers indicated they waited several years for an opening and were excited when one became available.

Principal expectations. Sister Jacqueline shared what she, as the principal, looks for in her teacher candidates. The list of teacher expectations when SAMS hires new teachers is significant. Sister Jacqueline looks beyond proper certification and successful teaching experiences (though both are important and expected). At SAMS, second-

[10] The Urban Education Fellows program, which works in conjunction with Mount Mary College and Alverno College, selects promising teachers with 4-year degrees and offers them a Master's Degree and on-the-job training in exchange for pursuing teaching coursework and a two-year commitment to teach in selected urban Catholic schools.

language speaking is a plus; while Spanish is preferred, learning any second language thoroughly helps teachers to really understand the struggles of their bilingual students. She also looks for experiences with other cultures, because it is difficult for teachers who come to the school with no experiences in other cultures. SAMS teachers must be willing to do more than the minimum, and should not be focused on pay scale, though the school pays a competitive salary. They should be passionate about education and kids; she does not expect teaching to be their *whole* lives, but because they stay one extra night a week to run an activity, they need to be happy to do so. She also looks for expertise in the teaching field and explores lesson plans, expecting teachers to show they have kept up with current educational practices and ideas. She also expects teachers to either be technologically literate, or willing to learn about new technology. Finally, teachers really need to understand the mission and charism of the SSND; some expect it to be the same as the Jesuits or other religious orders, and it is not. They have retreats for staff that helps them to understand the order better, but some familiarity with the SSND mission definitely helps teachers to be more successful. Currently, her teachers come from a variety of colleges, many of which were Catholic, but not exclusively. Typically, they had some sort of service-learning component in their college coursework. At the primary school, where she helped hire teachers as well, many came because the school is a dual-language immersion model, and they wanted to be part of that type of school. She has noticed that the teachers tend to pursue higher education on their own, and talk about their studies. Most, if not all, tend to hold Master's degrees or are in the process of obtaining them.

One weakness that Sister Jacqueline noted was that the teachers do not like to show what they know. They seem to get easily embarrassed and do not like to show what they know to other teachers. She would love the teachers to watch each other teach more often because she knows they are strong, but they might not believe it of themselves.

Thus, teachers at SAMS may have a wide variety of backgrounds personally, but the teaching staff is quite similar in that it shares (for the most part) a common religion and a call to teach at this *particular* school. In addition, the teachers have successful experiences in working with people from another culture and in learning another language so that they may more effectively serve the students at SAMS. They may, however, not trust themselves and their abilities.

How does the school library support reading development? The school library is, perhaps, an atypical one. The librarian is actually a technology expert and former school principal and teacher. By exploring the library space and interviewing the school librarian, I was able to uncover quite a bit about the library setup and how it functions. I also asked teachers how they use the library. Regrettably, the teachers usually use the computers more than they use the library, and typically just visit the library to pick up the students' books. Spanish teachers almost never use the resources in Spanish, either. There is a general perception the library just does not offer the depth and width of materials required and the Internet does.

Librarian interview. The school library is attached to the school computer lab; each is in a former classroom. Initially, they were in one room, with one row of computers in one half of the room and the books on the other half of the room, which made it difficult for teachers to use the library if a class was in the computer lab or vice-

versa. With the school renovation and addition in 2004, the library moved to more spacious quarters and the half of the room that used to hold books, now holds computers. Thus, two classes can use the computer lab at one time now, and do not need to worry about bothering students who are reading or trying to find books.

The library itself is neat and clean, with shelves of books all around the room. In the back of the room, in a free-standing case, the non-fiction books are kept, and from all appearances there are many more fiction than non-fiction titles. Almost every fiction book has a large Accelerated Reader sticker that indicates the grade level of the book, though all books are shelved in the traditional manner, so leveled books are not grouped together. Few information books sport Accelerated Reader stickers. Like all the classrooms, the library has religious posters and images. It also includes library posters including posters depicting award-winners. There are a few tables in the middle of the room for group work, and two computers at the back of the room, presumably for access to the electronic card catalog, but theoretically students could also type papers or research on the Internet using those machines. During the time I was there, I did not see students using the library much at all. It was so little-used that a teacher used it to act out and record skits for her reading class and did not seem to worry that she would encounter another class. The library does not seem to be as in-demand as the computer lab.

Sister Donna mentioned that the jobs of librarian and technology were separate. The first librarian selected Mandarin as the library system because of her familiarity with the product, and when she did not finish the year, Sister Donna ended up taking over the library position as well. She still uses Mandarin, and uses it to run reports about book popularity and keep circulation records. She intends to switch Mandarin to the online

“cloud” version of the product for ease of assistance by Mandarin staff, but also because it will be easier for SAMS and Saint Anne’s Primary School to have a common catalog. As it is, SAMS’ library provides all technical services for the Saint Anne’s Primary School library. Someday, the schools may be on the same campus, and therefore her long-term plans include the possibility that a single library may be in the future.

Sister Donna credits her staff of volunteers with helping her to run the school library. Today, she works limited time, having survived cancer, and, like many SSND community members is working well past the age most people retire. She has six volunteers, two of which have been with the library since the school began or shortly after. One is a former librarian and so she is able to catalog materials. Some label and cover books, and have done so for a long time. They have a “work system” where each volunteer has her own shelf and as things need to be done, the items needed for the job are placed on the shelves. Thus, the volunteers come and go when they please and are often there when Sister Donna is not. Therefore, the library remains organized and clean even when Sister Donna is not there. Even if the volunteers and Sister Donna are not there, teachers use the library on an as-needed basis, though all Reading classes come to the library once a week; half of the classes come on Monday, and the other half come on Wednesday.

Initially, the school library began with donations from other schools and did not have much of a budget to spend. Today, the library spending breaks down as follows: $1000/year for Accelerated Reader and $1000/year for Mandarin. She also has about $4,000/year budgeted in total, and so she spends around $2,000/year for books and supplies to prepare the books for circulation or book repair. Of that $2,000, she spends

about $300/year on magazines such as *Faces, Cobblestone,* and *American Girl,* some of which are from Ebsco. Other than *American Girl,* which has a dedicated fanbase, few magazines are circulated. She keeps back issues of some of them, and hopes students will use those issues if they should need them, and she intends to cancel many of the Ebsco print journals. They do not have Ebsco journals available online as they have not connected their library to Badgerlink the state of Wisconsin's subscriptions to online resources paid for by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction through tax dollars.[11] From conversations, it seems as though the teachers and librarian are unaware that they can connect to Badgerlink at school, possibly because they do not yet use many journal articles or virtual encyclopedias as research materials. As this is a common budget with the computers, she also must spend money for any software for the labs out of this budget. Today, she often keeps a list of books or items she would like to buy, but has not yet purchased ready to go because often grants will come in to supplement the library and computer budget and she will have a list ready to go when the funds arrive. In addition, if she finds she needs more than her budget, she simply asks for it, and has never been refused more money. Finally, the primary school is still taking donations, but typically they no longer see (or solicit) donations for the middle school library.

With regard to book selection, Sister Donna takes suggestions from the teachers; one in particular regularly reads *School Library Journal*, to which the library has a subscription, and makes suggestions from that. She also listens to the girls' opinions;

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[11] Badgerlink provides access to products from EBSCO, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Gale/Cengage Learning, HeritageMicrofilm, LearningExpress, ProQuest, TeachingBooks.net, and the Wisconsin Newspaper Assocaition. Small school libraries do not have to connect directly to Badgerlink, as public libraries provide connections to Badgerlink resources, but many schools connect directly so they can access the materials using a library card.

some will tell her about books they see at the public library and suggest she purchase them. In addition, her staff of volunteers often makes suggestions.

Books are de-selected, or weeded, regularly. She and her volunteers run reports to check the circulation dates of books when they do inventory at the end of the school year and remove books that do not circulate; last year, they got a scanner so it is much easier to check the circulation records more often. They rarely, if ever, remove a book for content issues because she finds the teachers, students, and volunteers choose books that suit the needs of the curriculum and the reading interests of students alike. Once in a while, the students will find a passage in a book that they suspect is objectionable, and she or a volunteer will read it; invariably she finds it appropriate for the middle school level, and did not remember a time she removed a book from circulation due to content.

Currently, about 1/4 of the collection is books in Spanish. She would like to have more, but a variety of difficulties have arisen over the years with the Spanish language collection. First, they did not get returned as often as the English language materials did in the early years, so a lot of books got lost that way. Second, it is difficult to find good translations of English books in Spanish or good books originally published in Spanish for the grades they serve. The primary building has more bilingual books. There seems to be less need for Spanish language books than there used to be, however, because there are fewer students who arrive at the school reading only Spanish, and the Spanish teachers do not seem to require many reports using Spanish-language materials.

Alums debated the value of adding more Spanish-language texts or culturally-relevant books to the library. While some thought it would be better to have more, one pointed out she probably would not have read the books anyway, if they were offered, in

English or Spanish, and that her sister specifically hated *Esperanza Rising* which should have been "relevant" because the title character is Mexican-American, but unlike Eperanza, neither she nor her sister were alive in the Great Depression and they did not ever work as farm workers (ATLOS level 5.3, interest level, grades 4-8). The alumna mentioned that stories about gangs were typically "culturally relevant" books, but she never would have picked them up. Thus, as Gambrell (2011) points out that having a wide range of reading materials is important, what themes or characters are important is open to debate, and Sister Donna's practice of taking teacher and student suggestions might serve as well as pursuing books simply because they feature Latinas.

Sister Donna has been concerned about the lack of library skills shown by some of the students. When she asks for help in shelving, few students are able to assist her. She hopes to add a library skills program and may add student volunteers as well, but she has not historically used their help.

In short, Sister Donna manages a clean and well-organized library with the help of many volunteers. She does not, however, do readalouds or provide book talks to students, and the teachers do not seem to use the library very often, except for students' Accelerated Reader and free-reading needs. It is unclear if this is because Sister Donna is not available every day or because the teachers would not use the library more if she were. The teachers are able to access the library with their classes whenever the school is open, however, and they might encounter some volunteers who can help them when they do.

What other successes have SAMS students achieved, and, what factors have led to today's successful students? The most striking success is high school graduation

and rates of post-secondary education attempts. While few students, as yet, have graduated from college, 83% of graduates attempt post-graduate study. This section explores the role of the Graduate Support Specialist and how she helps achieve these results, what types of post-graduate study the graduates attempt, and also explores some comments from the alums about their achievements.

Graduate Support Specialist interview. Amy describes her position has many different roles. First, she helps students and their parents to understand the high school application process. All students are expected to attend a college-preparatory high school after graduation, and many attend Catholic and charter schools, though a few attend Milwaukee Public Schools' International Baccalaureate high schools. She helps them fill out paperwork and, if necessary, secure funds to ensure they can afford the college preparatory high school they want to attend if they are unable to secure Choice funding.

At 3:30, when the students are beginning the after-school program, the graduates have the option to come back to SAMS for study hall where they can get tutored in all of their subjects and have access to counseling for college and help filling out the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) and college applications.

Amy also runs a mentor program in which 60-70 community women have joined. Each woman is paired with one student and provides extra social support to help students stay on the pathway to high school graduation and to college. To keep the students coming back, Amy offers summer mission trips to help reinforce the idea of service while allowing students to build up their resumes. Amy does keep in touch with as many students in high school as possible, which, she says, the high schools appreciate.

In short, her job is to help keep students on the path to high school completion and college after they graduate from SAMS. While it is not uncommon for some students to drop out and pursue a GED or HSED, SAMS boasts a 99% high school graduation rate and 84% of graduates enroll in college. By contrast, in 2011, Milwaukee Public Schools graduated 62.8% of their students from high school, and 87% of Wisconsin high school students graduated from high school (Richards, 2012). According to a report of 2005-2007 graduates, 13,257 students graduated from Milwaukee Public Schools, and of those graduates, 45.6% attempted college as of April 2008 (Carl, Goldrick-Rab, Lexmond, & Lindsey, 2009). Since high school graduation rates were around 62.8% during the 2005-2007 school years, only about 29% of Milwaukee Public Schools graduates attempted college (Borsuk 2009). While only 23% of SAMS grads have graduated from college, two students have earned Master's degrees and five students are currently pursuing Master's degrees.

College choices. While 84% of SAMS graduates choose to attend college, only 23% of the graduates have completed college. Of the 108 students graduated SAMS from 1999-2004, 80% attempted college or technical school. Of those who attempted college or technical school, 32, or 38% graduated and 20% are still enrolled. When exploring the types of colleges attempted, 35% attempted to start at a technical college where 60% dropped out along the way. Only 17% of those who studied at a technical college completed a degree (2 students completed Associate's Degrees, 2 successfully transferred to a public 4-year college, and 1 successfully transferred to a private university). However, 23% are still enrolled in technical school or the public or private university to which they transferred.

Students seem to have the greater success in traditional 4-year programs. Eleven students attempted to go directly to a 4-year college and 27% are still enrolled and 45% graduated. Twenty-nine students attempted a private university and of those students, 7% are still enrolled and 59% graduated with a four-year degree. Finally, students who study at an art school typically graduate. Of the five students who studied at art or culinary schools, one transferred to a public university (and is still enrolled), another is still enrolled in art school, and the remaining three graduated. Thus, it seems that students who pursue post-graduate studies tend to be more successful at traditional 4-year colleges, especially private schools, than technical colleges (See **Table 7**).

Table 7: Student pathways to higher education:

Type of School:	Tech School	Tech; Transfer to Public	Tech; Transfer to Private	Public	Private	Trade	Mix	MIAD/ MICA/AI
Drop out	15	2	1	3	10	3	2	
Still Enrolled	3	1	3	3	2		4	1
Graduate	2	2	1	5	17	2		3

In exploring the standardized test scores for the 27 college graduates, some patterns emerged: 51% of the graduates went to Pius XI high school, 22% went to Thomas More, and 11% went to Divine Savior/Holy Angels High School, a school for women. All three schools are Catholic college preparatory high schools with a strong reputation in the Milwaukee area. Three students attended different schools: one student graduated from a public high school, one student graduated from a charter school (ALAS), and one student graduated from St. Joan Antida, a Catholic high school for women. In looking at the standardized test scores, 78% of the college graduates' 8th grade test scores were at or above grade level in Reading and Language Arts, 11% of the students were at or above grade level in either Reading or Language Arts. The last three girls were below grade level in both areas. Each of the three lower-scoring students attended different high schools. Thus, as in many schools, the strongest students academically are the ones most likely to succeed in college. That said, a fair number of students who scored well on standardized tests did not, in fact, graduate from college, either. That SAMS grads' high school completion rates and rate of college attempts are significantly higher than the public schools suggests that regardless of the test scores, the students are achieving important things. The test scores will not help students to raise themselves out of poverty, but a high school diploma and college credits can.

Alumna. In conjunction with this project, I contacted several alumna through Facebook because it was the most direct way to contact urban youth. They asked their friends to contact me and, in the end, I had information from seven students, four from the class of 2003, one from the class of 2004, one from the class of 2005, and one from the class of 2006. Several themes emerged from what they had to say about the school.

One student who graduated from UW-Madison with a degree in Elementary Education, believed that attending the school helps Latinas to prosper in life because the school has connections with people in business and education, so if she ever needs help in any way, they can support her.

Several students talked about "finding themselves" through activities at SAMS. They credit the school with helping to develop them academically to prepare them for high school. They also mentioned the importance of spiritual and emotional development and that the school supported both.

While most students discussed the happy memories of having small class sizes, one student mentioned feeling bullied and picked on, and with a small class size, it was hard to find friends. Other students did not feel that it was an issue, however. The school currently has been, like many Wisconsin schools, training its students and teachers on bullying and bullying prevention, so possibly this is no longer an issue, but it was a troubling finding given how often students talked about the positives of the environment. Merrit (2008) found that some students can find urban Catholic high schools particularly cliquish, particularly when there are students representing many different socioeconomic statuses in the same school.

Discussion

In general, the environment at SAMS seemed to be one that encouraged academic, social, and spiritual development. Due to a variety of factors including small class sizes, increased teacher involvement, longer school days, and access to a wide variety of opportunities for personal growth, the school offers urban youth a chance to succeed academically where, statistically, they may not have done so without the school's

assistance. Despite the strong reading-friendly environment which includes many strategies such as a print-rich environment and culturally-supportive imagery throughout the school, some suggestions could improve the reading climate even further and then, perhaps, increase test scores, particularly for the students who are not self-motivated readers.

The presence of Accelerated Reader in the curriculum caused some concerns. While one might argue that it was helping students to read more, it seemed that students already had a lot of time to read during the day. With two sessions of sustained silent reading every day except Friday (when students had one session), it seemed that the students had ample time to read. According to Hiebert (2009), one reason that students do not like reading is because they do not get enough time to read in classrooms. In addition, with a school librarian who was responsive to student and teacher requests in terms of book selections, it would seem also that the students would have ample free-reading choices, which also increases reading motivation (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1993; Guthrie et al., 2007, Kim, 2004; Neuman & Celano, 2001). Therefore, the presence of Accelerated Reader seemed unnecessary.

In addition, Accelerated Reader tests assess a student on reading comprehension, not vocabulary, but teacher responses and test scores alike seemed to indicate that students at SAMS typically suffered more from struggling with vocabulary, and they found ways to compensate by reading in such a way they did not need to know each word to comprehend the text. As a result, Accelerated Reader might not be the appropriate curriculum for them, as it was testing the wrong reading skill. Perhaps teachers would do better by encouraging students to keep a “vocabulary journal” as they read and encounter

words they do not understand. Teachers could create vocabulary quizzes based on the words students encounter in free-reading texts so that all students can learn from one student's question.

No matter how many books are available, however, students need help in choosing books. Students can have books all over the classroom and in the library, but if no one invites them to read by getting them curious about what is inside, they will not truly engage in reading (Byrnes, 2000; Kim & White, 2008). Therefore, SAMS could do more to invite students to select texts based on reasons beyond Accelerated Reader level or points. One way to do this is to engage in readalouds in as many classes as possible, but especially in reading and Spanish courses. Students will develop reading fluency, and will also learn about books they like. Perhaps library times could be extended so that students could learn library skills and hear a readaloud and/or some "book talks" by the teacher, librarian, or volunteers to encourage the use of the library as more than a place to get a book and leave. Also, students would benefit from reader's workshop. Reader's workshop is a method with the goal of nurturing students' affective literacy learning while helping them to read better (Au, 1993). It is a learner-centered approach that encourages students to share what they read with others. While the typical model is one that encourages reader response answers such as getting students to talk about why they liked or did not like engaging with the text, a method which is actively discouraged in the Common Core in the pursuit of following an argument, it could be used as a way for teachers, volunteers, librarians, and peers to recommend books to each other and for teachers to gauge understanding. Teachers or others could have extra sustained silent reading time and call students to their desk to converse about what they are reading for a

few minutes while their colleagues read quietly or library volunteers could serve a similar role. The more teachers and others know about what students are reading and why they like what they read, the more they can make recommendations for free-reading to help students learn to find books that interest them.

Another shift is to encourage students to check out more informational texts (non-fiction books). As the Common Core suggests students should be reading 50% fiction to 50% non-fiction in the elementary years, and 70% non-fiction by the high school level, encouraging students to read biographies and books about animals, science, popular media, and history, might help students to meet that goal. As teachers, librarians, and volunteers learn more about students' interests, they can help them to find books that will help lovers of fiction try out some informational texts in the areas they already like. Also, adults can practice skill work for Common Core standardized tests by asking questions about the author's perspective on the topics read, whether the student is reading a fiction or non-fiction book.

In addition, teaching students to gauge reading levels on their own would be more valuable than assigning a sticker to indicate the reading level of the book. When students are in a bookstore or in a library, it is unlikely they will see Accelerated Reader stickers serving as a clue. By showing students how to pull a book from the shelf, and asking them to read quietly to themselves one or two paragraphs somewhere in the middle of the book to see whether they understand what is going on. If the text seems too difficult, or the writing style is boring, they can simply put the book back and try again. In this way, the library and classroom can teach a reading strategy that will apply in other libraries and bookstores. Evaluating books is a valuable skill, but because Common Core will

change testing to involve search strategies and assessment using an Internet-based system, the librarian should not stop with teaching how to choose a book. Formal instruction on how to search for information and evaluate what students find is critical, and without more formal library instruction in place in either the Reading/Language Arts classroom or the library, students will struggle with the changes to the tests.

In addition, rewarding students with ice cream and pizza sounds good, and maybe has some effect in the short-term, but since the research indicates that tangible rewards can often undermine the long-term goal, which is intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1992). But when rewards are used, they work best when they are tied to the goal teachers want to encourage (Deci, 1992; Marinak & Gambrell, 2008). As a result, bookmarks, books, gift certificates for Scholastic book order books, or gift cards for online or brick-and-mortar retailers, or maybe small notebooks and pens to record vocabulary words might be better rewards.

Finally, the school should explore accessing Badgerlink and incorporating formal Information Literacy classes into the curriculum. As the new Common Core tests will focus on students finding and using information, having the access to online journals appropriate for a middle school audience and practicing finding and using such journals will help to prepare students for real life and the tests that are coming.

Implications for Further Research

Because there were so many factors leading to school success, it could not cover all variables. While race was a factor of consideration in the literature review, and there was time to record observations about the environment, there was not time to specifically treat it as the focus of the study. In addition, few students were surveyed and were

selected by choice. Many more students indicated interest in talking about their experiences, but they did not have time to do so in reality (or they lost interest when they saw the specifics of the topics the researcher was asking).

Also, it would be interesting to find out why relatively few alumna have completed college or technical school by interviewing alums why they stay at or leave post-graduate study in hopes that colleges and technical colleges can do better at student retention. Also, as more classes become college age and have had enough time to complete a college program (4-5 years), it will be easier to tell whether the college graduate numbers are improving or not.

The thread brought up by one alumna about bullying would be another factor. SAMS, like many schools, is a product of its environment and schools are increasingly discussing bully policies and best practices. Is it doing as well as, worse than, or about the same as, the other Choice and public schools in the area?

Finally, it would be ideal to replicate this study in other Choice schools in the Milwaukee area, specifically in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, and then branching out into the other religious and non-sectarian schools. SAMS is the lone all girls' middle school, and Ignatius Jesuit, which does not yet take Choice funds, would be the natural schools to pair, but comparing both schools to parish schools and to schools serving different ethnic groups could better complete the study of best practices.

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Appendix A: Long Consent

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MILWAUKEE

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Teacher, Administrator, and Staff Version

THIS CONSENT FORM HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE IRB FOR A ONE YEAR PERIOD

1. General Information

Study title:

Discovering *Regalos:* A Case Study of Saint Anne's Middle School

Person in Charge of Study (Principal Investigator):

Nicole Jenks May, MLIS Student, School of Information Science (SOIS)

2. Study Description

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to.

Study description:

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors leading to the success of Saint Anne's Middle School as measured on standardized tests of Language Arts and Reading Scores. As such, in addition to exploring the data such as past test scores, it will be

necessary to talk to people associated with the school (past and present) to determine success of the program. These interviews include teachers, past and present, the school principal, the school librarian, the after-school coordinator, the graduate support coordinator, and the school president, in addition to four to seven students who are over the age of 18 and 3-6 parents of current or former students. Interviews will take between thirty minutes and an hour, but teachers, administrators, and the librarian may be interviewed multiple times over the course of the project, which is projected to take about six months.

3. Study Procedures

What will I be asked to do if I participate in the study?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to answer questions about your experience with Saint Anne's Middle School. You will be also asked about your background. The interviews will take place at Saint Anne's Middle School, or a mutually-agreed upon place in the case of those no longer associated with the school, including, but not limited to, a virtual environment, such as e-mail or chat. In the case of face-to-face interviews, they will be audio-recorded, and each interview will be limited to thirty minutes to an hour in length, or less, if the subject needs to break and come back at another time. With regard to virtual interviews, a transcript will be kept of the chat or the e-mails will be retained in their entirety. A record is being kept to ensure that the researcher's notes of the conversations are accurate. If you prefer not to be recorded, you can still participate.

4. Risks and Minimizing Risks

What risks will I face by participating in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research study.

5. Benefits

Will I receive any benefit from my participation in this study?

There are no benefits for you other than to further research.

6. Study Costs and Compensation

Will I be charged anything for participating in this study?

You will not be responsible for any of the costs from taking part in this research study.

Are subjects paid or given anything for being in the study?

You will not be compensated for taking part in this research study.

7. Confidentiality

What happens to the information collected?

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. We may decide to present what we find to others, or publish our results in scientific journals or at scientific conferences. Information that identifies you personally will not be released without your written permission. Only the PI and her thesis advisor, Dr. Laretta Henderson, will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

Information obtained during the study will be kept anonymously, with the "key" to the pseudonyms being stored in a password-encrypted file.

Data collected will be kept for seven years for future use, but will be destroyed sooner, if requested. If the data is to be used again, however, as part of a future project, participants will be contacted.

8. Alternatives

Are there alternatives to participating in the study?

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.

9. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

What happens if I decide not to be in this study?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. If you choose to withdraw, I will destroy all information collected about you or, at your option, will use the information collected to that point.

10. Questions

Who do I contact for questions about this study?

For more information about the study or the study procedures or treatments, or to withdraw from the study, contact:

Nicole Jenks May, UWM-SOIS

Home Address:

x(xxx)-xxx-xxxx or xxxx@xxx.edu

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject?

The Institutional Review Board may ask your name, but all complaints are kept in confidence.

Institutional Review Board

Human Research Protection Program

Department of University Safety and Assurances

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

x

x

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

11. Signatures

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered, and that you are 18 years of age or older.

____

Printed Name of Subject/ Legally Authorized Representative

____ ____________________

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative Date

IRB#: 13.084 Approval 09/20/2012

Research Subject's Consent to Audio/Video/Photo Recording:

It is okay to audiotape me while I am in this study and use my audiotaped data in the research.

Please initial: ____Yes ____No

Principal Investigator (or Designee)

I have given this research subject information on the study that is accurate and sufficient for the subject to fully understand the nature, risks and benefits of the study.

____ ____________________

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent Study Role

____ ____________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

IRB#: 13.084 Approval 09/20/2012

Appendix B: Short Consent

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

Consent to Participate in Research

Student and Parent Consent Form (English)

Study Title: Discovering *Regalos:* A Case Study of Saint Anne's Middle School

Person Responsible for Research: Nicole Jenks May

Study Description: The purpose of this research study is to try to learn why Saint Anne's Middle School has been so successful in Reading and Language Arts. Approximately 30 subjects will participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer some questions about your experiences with Saint Anne's Middle School. This will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour of your time.

Risks / Benefits: The risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. There will be no costs for participating. There are no benefits to you other than to further research.

Confidentiality: Your information collected for this study is completely confidential and no individual participant will ever be identified with his/her research information. Data from this study will be saved on password protected computer for seven years. Only the PI will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later

and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

Who do I contact for questions about the study: For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Nicole Jenks May at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxx@xxx.edu

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject? Contact the UWM IRB at xxx-xxx-xxxx or irbinfo@uwm.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

____

Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

____ ______________________

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative Date

IRB#: 13.084 Approval 09/20/2012

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Former Student Interview

1) Tell me a little about your background. What school or schools did you attend before and after SAMS? If you are in college or technical school, what did you/are you studying?

2) When did you attend Saint Anne's Middle School (SAMS)?

3) What classes, teachers, or events stand out in your memory?

4) Why did your parents bring you to SAMS?

5) From what you know of other middle schools, can you comment on how being a student at SAMS was different for you than the education received from your friends who went to other schools?

6) How did you use the SAMS library?

7) Do you have anything else to share about your memories of SAMS?

Current Teacher or Staff Member Initial Interview

1) Tell me a little about your background. What teaching certification do you have, if any, and how long have you been teaching?

2) What school year(s) did you begin teaching or working at Saint Anne's Middle School (SAMS)?

3) What classes did you teach/what homeroom did/do you have (if any)?

4) Did you lead any after-school activities? If so, what?

5) What initially brought you to teach or work at SAMS?

6) If you have taught or worked other places, can you comment on how teaching or working at SAMS is/was different for you than at other schools?

7) How do you use the library in your lessons?

8) What do you know about the free-reading students choose to do? Do you know if they read in the summer?

9) Do you have anything else to share about SAMS?

Teacher and Principal Interview Regarding Curriculum

(sometime after the first interview)

*This covers English and Spanish lessons; make sure to clarify if a teacher teaches both which she does for English and which she does for Spanish.

1) How do you select the materials used in the classroom?

2) With regard to trade books in particular, what types of stories do the students respond best to?

3) How do you decide who goes into what language arts or Spanish level? Do students typically move from one room to another during the course of the year, or not usually?

4) How do ESL students get placed for Language Arts? Do they have their own group, or are they mixed in with other groups?

5) Are you ever asked to teach materials you personally do not enjoy?

6) What materials, if any, do you use to teach vocabulary and/or spelling?

7) What materials, if any, do you use to teach grammar and punctuation?

8) What materials, if any, do you use to teach reading?

9) How would you describe how you teach reading?

10) How would you describe how you teach writing?

11) How would you describe you teach the other "language arts" such as spelling, vocabulary, and grammar?

12) How did you decide to teach this way (as in, is it how you were taught, how you have adapted, etc.)?

13) Have you changed teaching style(s) over the years? If so, why? If not, what made you decide what you do works well?

14) How do you use the library and its resources in language arts class?

15) Is there anything else about curriculum that you can think of?

Teacher Interview Following a Lesson Observation

1) Tell me a little about the goals of the lesson today. Do you think you accomplished what you intended to accomplish with the lesson? Why or why not?

2) Have you taught this lesson before (or one similar to it)? If so, tell me about your past experiences teaching this lesson with this year's class or with previous years' classes.

3) What goal(s) do you have for the next lesson?

Teacher and Principal Interview Regarding Curriculum

(sometime after the first interview)

*This covers English and Spanish lessons; make sure to clarify if a teacher teaches both which she does for English and which she does for Spanish.

1) How do you select the materials used in the classroom?

2) With regard to trade books in particular, what types of stories do the students respond best to?

3) How do you decide who goes into what language arts or Spanish level? Do students typically move from one room to another during the course of the year, or not usually?

4) How do ESL students get placed for Language Arts? Do they have their own group, or are they mixed in with other groups?

5) Are you ever asked to teach materials you personally do not enjoy?

6) What materials, if any, do you use to teach vocabulary and/or spelling?

7) What materials, if any, do you use to teach grammar and punctuation?

8) What materials, if any, do you use to teach reading?

9) How would you describe how you teach reading?

10) How would you describe how you teach writing?

11) How would you describe you teach the other “language arts” such as spelling, vocabulary, and grammar?

12) How did you decide to teach this way (as in, is it how you were taught, how you have adapted, etc.)?

13) Have you changed teaching style(s) over the years? If so, why? If not, what made you decide what you do works well?

14) How do you use the library and its resources in language arts class?

15) What materials (if any) are donated? Can you talk about how that has changed (if it has) since the school started?

16) Is there anything else about curriculum that you can think of?

Librarian Interview

(sometime after the first interview)

1) How do you select the materials in the library? About how much is your budget, and how is it allocated (computer, subscriptions, books (free-reading vs. school report specific)?

2) About what percentage of your materials are donated? Can you talk about how donations have or have not changed since the school opened? What sources usually provide donated materials historically and today?

3) How do you decide what to de-select or remove from the library? Is there a regular procedure in place to remove books that are worn out?

4) Are books removed for content or put away so the older girls may have access, but not the younger girls, or is everything pretty open?

5) With regard to trade books in particular, what types of stories do the students respond best to?

6) What types of materials do you have in Spanish?

7) What types of materials are used most for reports and projects?

8) Are you connected to BadgerLink? If so, about when did you connect? If not, have you considered doing so? What computer-based research tools do you have available for students?

9) How do teachers use the library for language arts and Spanish classes?

10) Are there formal information literacy courses (or book talks) where you or a volunteer formally trains students on how to use the library? Do you or another person make book recommendations?

11) About how many books are circulated per year? Is this about the same from year to year? What types of materials are in "hot demand"?

12) About how many people staff the library? How many are paid and how many are volunteers? How long have they worked/volunteered at SAMS?

13) What kinds of connections does this library have to other schools or libraries (public libraries, etc) to broaden the connection if you do not have enough materials in a certain area? (Do you still use IMS that Sister Mary used to like, or another "subscription" type service?)

14) Is there anything else about the school library that you can think of?

Appendix D: Teacher Observation Instrument

Teacher Pseudonym: ____

Date of Observation: _______________ Time of

Observation:__________

English Language Arts or Spanish? (Circle One)

Activities during Class (check all that are present):

- ☐ Teacher talk/lecture
- ☐ Short responses to teacher questions/recitation
- ☐ Small group/partner discussions
- ☐ Whole group discussion
- ☐ Student presentations
- ☐ Independent Work
- ☐ Teacher-Led Small Group

Instructional Techniques for Language Learning:

- ☐ Teacher switches to Spanish (or English in Spanish class) to clarify.
- ☐ Teacher provides differentiated assignments, instruction, or assessments
- ☐ Teacher uses referents or prompts such as charts or sentence starters
- ☐ Teacher makes easier or more familiar text available for students

Strategy Use and Instruction (Choose the appropriate level):

- ☐ 1—The teacher does not prompt or provide instruction about strategies or skills.
- ☐ 2—The teacher introduces or refers to a strategy or skill but does not provide explicit instruction (prompt).
- ☐ 3—Teacher provides explicit instruction about a strategy or skill including how or why to use it, but this might not be enough for the students to use the skill independently.
- ☐ 4—Teacher provides explicit instruction and it is possible to see (or infer) that students could use that skill independently.

Modeling (Choose the appropriate level):

- ☐ 1—The teacher does not visibly model.
- ☐ 2—The teacher partially demonstrates or enacts skills, strategies, or processes targeted in the lesson, but does not finish that demonstration, the model is only available to some students, or is otherwise unclear.
- ☐ 3—Teacher clearly, accurately, and completely models; the modeling is complete and available to most students.
- ☐ 4—Teacher clearly, accurately, and completely models, but also decomposes or draws attention to the specific features of the process. It is reasonable to infer that the modeling is sufficient to assist students in completing the task independently.

Classroom Discourse Opportunities (Choose the appropriate level):

- ☐ 1—Talk is teacher-directed (including lecture).

- ☐ 2—The talk is teacher-directed, but there are some opportunities for discussion about an ELA topic. (Recitation formats).
- ☐ 3—Teacher provides opportunities for an extended conversation about an ELA topic, but a few students might dominate. Teacher is still directing this discussion, and/or the discussion does not stay on track.
- ☐ 4—Teacher provides extended chances for conversations about an ELA topic between teacher and students or among students. The majority of the students participate; the focus is clear and stays on track even when student-led.

Classroom Discourse Uptake (Choose the appropriate level):

- ☐ 1—The teacher or students do not respond to student ideas.
- ☐ 2—The teacher responds briefly to student ideas (good job, etc.); the teacher responds, but does not ask for elaboration.
- ☐ 3—The teacher or students engage in a mixture of brief responses and limited uptake. Sometimes elaboration is asked for (by teacher and/or students), but other times, it is not.
- ☐ 4—Teacher and/or students consistently engage in uptake; expanding on student ideas or enabling students to further explain, clarify, and specify their thinking.