Running head: CSS FULL REPORT

Catholic School Standards Study Report and Findings

Lorraine A. Ozar, Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill,

Teresa Barton, Elizabeth Calteaux, Cristina Hunter, Shiya Yi

CSS FULL REPORT

School effectiveness has become a major focus for all sectors of PK-12 education: public, charter, and private. External standards play a prominent and often pre-eminent role in these discussions and in subsequent demonstrations of school effectiveness. Catholic schools, which constitute 43% of private schools (CAPE, 2016), are not exempt from discussions of either effectiveness or standards. Until recently, however, standards have almost exclusively been academic in nature and applied to the public school sector. As such, they fail to address key elements of Catholic schools related to their mission to educate the whole child in a school environment that integrates academic excellence and faith formation.

Partially in response to increased competition, the need for appropriate accountability, and a desire for greater clarity of mission and identity, the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (NSBECS) were published in 2012. The goal was for the NSBECS to serve as both a guide and a tool for Catholic school effectiveness and sustainability. They would not only be inclusive of research-based school effectiveness criteria in general, but they would additionally apply criteria unique to Catholic school mission and identity. The publication of these effectiveness standards sought to give the entire Catholic community a common framework for Catholic schools focused on Catholic identity and agreed-upon criteria for Catholic school excellence, providing a powerful national vision to strengthen Catholic school advocacy and accountability.

According to the NSBECS, the Catholic identity of a school must be measured not only by its religious education and faith formation, but also by the nature and quality of its overall school culture. This is a culture informed and shaped by practices manifested in its curriculum and instruction, board recruitment and formation, human resource policies, transparency of program and student evaluation, careful and competent stewardship of resources, financial

planning, and collaboration across all sectors. Thus, the NSBECS give stakeholders in Catholic education a basis for prioritizing resources and making decisions, and for holding themselves accountable. The NSBECS posit that adhering to these standards and benchmarks with fidelity will result in highly effective Catholic schools, in which the standards and benchmarks working together seamlessly are owned, understood, and operationalized. Stakeholders can see them, acknowledge them, measure them, and build the capacity to implement them. Thus, the standards serve as a blueprint for assessment, accountability, accreditation, and action. Namely, those actions are transforming Catholic schools into highly effective, sustainable educational institutions, grounded in Catholic school culture.

This vision of the power and promise of NSBECS is borne out by both a comprehensive review of the literature on school effectiveness and how standards and benchmarks can lead to effective schools, and by the results of the 2015-2017 Catholic School Standards (CSS) Study, conducted by co-principal investigators Lorraine A. Ozar, Ph.D. and Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, Ph.D.

Review of Literature

To understand the critical role NSBECS can play in Catholic School effectiveness, a comprehensive review of the literature sought to disclose how effectiveness is defined by the larger education community, and further, how standards and benchmarks can lead to effective schools. This literature review, conducted in 2015, served to ground and inform the proposed CSS Longitudinal Study by examining research (primarily over the last 10 years in the United States) about standards-based school effectiveness and improvement in the public domain, and then in relation to PK-12 Catholic schools. It was intended to determine what researchers and

practitioners have already learned with a focus on a number of questions relevant to the proposed

study:

- What is the relationship of external standards to school effectiveness?

- When schools use standards to drive change and improvement, are there identifiable

  characteristics or conditions in the school community and/or in the methods of

  implementation of standards that contribute to stronger positive results?

- Are there frameworks and/or standards schools use to measure multidimensional school

  effectiveness beyond academic achievement alone?

- Have there been prior studies of Catholic school effectiveness?

- What could a longitudinal study of the impact of NSBECS contribute to school

  effectiveness research?

Pertinent Highlights from the Literature Review

Historically, researchers and policy makers have categorized school effectiveness

research into three major strands: 1) school effects research, 2) effective schools research, and 3)

school improvement research (Fitz- Gibbon, 1996; Morley & Rassool, 1999; Normand, 2008;

Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). The first, school effects research, focuses

on academic achievement, while the second, effective schools research, is concerned with the

processes schools utilize to become effective, paying particular attention to schools that are

unique, offering a set of characteristics for other schools to follow. Researchers within the

effective schools paradigm are thus interested in how these effective schools have implemented

various models to ensure success in specific contexts (Teddlie et al., 2000). Finally, the third,

school improvement research focuses on how schools change; but in addition to researching

improvements in student's overall grades, school improvement research also focuses on

curriculum development, school organization, learning, and teaching practices (Normand, 2008). After this review, it became clear that, on the whole, school effectiveness literature has been primarily concerned with students' academic achievement. In developing the NSBECS we conceptualized effectiveness more in line with the third approach, the school improvement research paradigm.

In general, we have seen that high quality academic standards lead to increased student achievement. The foundation of the standards-based reform movement rests on a recognition among leading educators, researchers, and policymakers that clearly defined standards have the capacity to drive a school's actions (Finn, Julian, & Petrilli, 2006; Vaughn, 2002). The educational system has evolved such that the process of defining expectations, while not sufficient to improve educational outcomes on its own, is a critical starting point to producing desired results.

Research concerning implementation of standards in school improvement efforts is significant as it provides guidance for schools, informing school leaders of the variables they should target to increase their success. The research reviewed for the current study highlighted three factors that schools can incorporate into their practices which have enabled standards-based reform efforts to be successful.

Factor 1: Leadership and Internal Management. Mobilizing a school to meet high expectations set by challenging standards is no easy task, and it begins with strong leadership. If schools are to set high expectations for students, these must carry throughout the system, with teachers modeling high expectations for students and administrators modeling high expectations for teachers (Au & Valencia, 2010). Furthermore, in a standards-driven school, school leaders

are responsible for ensuring that classroom activity is aligned to external standards rather than to teachers' personal standards only.

Factor 2: Frequent Measurement and Data-based Decision Making. Collecting, analyzing, and using data regarding performance against standards is essential to enabling schools to meet those standards. While punitive accountability measures associated with high-stakes tests may threaten struggling schools, these tests can serve formative purposes as well: successful schools value the large quantity of data they provide for planning instruction and professional development sessions (Stecher & Borko, 2002). Schools that meet the expectations set by external standards monitor their progress internally more often than they are evaluated externally.

Factor 3: Educators' Buy-in and Self-efficacy. Implementation is the necessary link between standards and results. The people responsible for implementation at a school must exhibit shared goals and a shared sense of accountability to attain those goals (Murphy, 2013). In fact, the cohesion of the professional learning community appears to be an even bigger driver of student achievement than any particular program or initiative (Au & Valencia, 2010). This supports the importance of school leadership in aligning individual educators' expectations and personal accountability with externally imposed expectations (Knapp & Feldman, 2012).

We found that academic or curricular standards have had a significant effect on educational outcomes in the past few decades. When these standards are established, set high, and clearly defined, schools tend to achieve better results. There are factors that promote the ability of academic standards to positively impact a school's practices and their students' outcomes, and an understanding of these factors can help more schools to successfully meet standards in the future. Inherent in their effect on outcomes is the impact of standards on

educational practices. The ability of existing academic standards to influence how a school functions and what it teaches indicates that implementing standards for school effectiveness is a promising path.

We have also found that school effectiveness measures and standards-based reform often over-emphasize academic achievement, failing to delve deeper into what exactly quality education looks like. The NSBECS aim to reach beyond academic and curricula standards to provide schools a roadmap to faith-based education that is academically, spiritually, and operationally rigorous. In particular, the authors believe that the evidence supporting the use of standards when combined with strong internal management and leadership creates a critically important systemic factor to which Catholic school leaders should recognize and respond. It is by this implementation of standards that the school will maintain consistent, setting high expectations and protecting individual schools' autonomy.

In sum, the literature examined showed that: (1) school effectiveness research is a significant area of study and includes various methods and types; (2) implementing standards can lead to more effective schools; (3) the presence of several definable conditions increase the likelihood of successful implementation of standards with positive results; (4) although the majority of standards-based school effectiveness research focuses on student academic achievement, growing evidence suggests that a more holistic approach to school effectiveness is warranted; and (5) there is no existing research on the use of comprehensive standards in Catholic schools. The authors conclude that studying the use and impact of the NSBECS can contribute not only to Catholic schools but to all sectors of education, because the NSBECS, by design, incorporate holistic measures of total school effectiveness, which includes student achievement. The NSBECS can be a vehicle for Catholic education to lead the way in the next

8

wave of school effectiveness standards and research. The complete Review of Literature for the

CSS Study is available at the Catholic School Standards Project (CSSP) website,

www.caholicschoolstandards.org.

Purpose of the Catholic School Standards Study (CSS Study)

During the five years since publication and dissemination, the NSBECS have become

widely embraced by hundreds of Catholic schools, scores of dioceses, numerous university

centers and schools of education, funders, and accrediting groups across the country. Rubrics and

guidelines have been developed and continue to expand to help Catholic educators at all levels

use the Standards and Benchmarks for school performance reviews, school improvement

processes, and strategic planning. While acceptance and usage appear strong and widespread,

implementation of NSBECS remains largely idiosyncratic and results undocumented.

For the NSBECS to function fully as a valid, reliable, data-generating framework for PK-

12 Catholic school accountability and improvement, we first must determine if, in fact, the

adoption and implementation of NSBECS with fidelity will result in highly effective Catholic

schools. This statement constitutes the underlying hypothesis of the proposed Catholic School

Standards (CSS) Longitudinal Study. In other words, this research asks: What are the effects of

implementing the NSBECS with fidelity on measures of school effectiveness? Accepted

indicators and measures of effectiveness are high student achievement; sustained healthy

enrollment; stable finances; consistent, mission-driven, sustained leadership; a vibrant learning

community of teachers, staff and parents; robust marketing and advancement efforts; well-

informed and satisfied stakeholders; clear, consistent and sustained planning for change and

growth.

CSS FULL REPORT

The first step in determining the effectiveness of the NSBECS required generating accurate information about who is using the NSBECS and in what ways. This has been the work of the CSS Study Phase 1. Phase 1 featured two surveys that collected the baseline data necessary for more in-depth analyses during the planned Phase 2 (in-depth interview) and future Phase 3 (on-site observations). Phase 1 data served to provide reliable information about the current use of the NSBECS to inform current implementation by schools, dioceses and other stakeholders. Additionally, these data helped identify a representative set of users (schools, (arch)dioceses, accrediting and other agencies) who might engage in a full longitudinal study of the effects of implementing the NSBECS.

Initiated in January 2015, Phase 1 was executed over two years, featuring two national surveys. The overall goal of Phase 1 of the CSS Study was to provide the first descriptive analysis of the scope, contexts and methods associated with the implementation of the NSBECS by Catholic schools and dioceses at the national level. Survey 1 identified NSBECS adopters (schools, school networks, accrediting agencies, donor organizations, and others) and provided descriptive data regarding the perceived reasons for adoption; examples of the utility of information generated by adoption; and evaluative commentary regarding adoption. Based on the information provided by Survey 1, a second survey was administered to those entities identified as adopters of NSBECS. Survey 2 provided data for a more sophisticated analysis of how stakeholder groups are adopting and implementing NSBECS and further identified the context and cultural perspectives underlying successful adoption, as well as significant outcomes experienced by adopters.

As a result of Survey 1, researchers learned that stakeholders in Catholic education agree that the NSBECS serve the purpose intended: to provide agreed-upon, reliable criteria that the

Catholic educational community can use to hold itself accountable for PK-12 schools that are excellent and Catholic, and to make data-based decisions focused on planning and continuous improvement. The standards and benchmarks, and the tools developed to support their implementation, are in fact being used widely and with self-reported positive impact on practice. The website, among other sources, is seen as a valuable source of information for implementation.

The next step was to dig deeper: to go beyond initial self-reported perceptions and construct a richer descriptive picture of what is actually happening in the schools and dioceses where implementation is going on and impacting practice. Ultimately, the desired effect of gathering and analyzing data on the NSBECS would be to inform future strategies for improving and expanding the use of NSBECS, in order to create and sustain highly effective Catholic schools in more predictable, replicable ways. To achieve this long-term goal, two overarching questions need answering: (1) Do the NSBECS in fact get positive results for schools that use them? And (2) Does the way they are used affect those results?

While survey data alone cannot answer these questions fully (subsequent phases of research following the current CSS Study are needed, e.g. a full longitudinal study), it could add significantly to knowledge and understanding regarding current implementation of the NSBECS. In Survey 1, researchers gathered valuable data about who is using the NSBECS and what that use looks like in broad terms. Survey 2 asked those who self-reported in Survey 1 that they are using the NSBECS to describe exactly how, with whom, and to what effect the NSBECS are being implemented.

Using a mixed methods approach, Survey 2 allowed participants to describe in their own words what they did to implement NSBECS, whom they involved, what processes they used, and

what constitutes success - followed up with drop-down choice questions - designed to provide the information needed to identify the important factors associated with NSBECS implementation outcomes defined as successful. The identified key factors will guide the development and improvement of implementation strategies and resources that can be used by stakeholders to improve Catholic schools.

Methods

The Phase 1 Survey 1 (2015) focused on the scope of the implementation of the NSBECS with a focus on who has been adopting and implementing the NSBECS and why. Phase 1 Survey 2 (2016) centered on learning more about the circumstances of implementation: how stakeholder groups are adopting and implementing the NSBECS. Survey 2 further concentrated on identifying and describing the context, perspectives and processes underlying successful adoption.

Participants

The purpose of Survey 1 was to establish and verify for stakeholders in K-12 education, accurate information and a descriptive analysis of who is adopting and implementing the NSBECS and why. To meet this objective the research team first constructed an extensive database of entities to be surveyed including those working with and in Catholic schools, those engaged in training and professional development, those working in financial oversight of Catholic schools, and those engaged in accreditation or assessment of Catholic schools. Those identified became the targeted participants for Survey 1.

The target population for Survey 1 was all key leaders who manage Catholic education at the (arch)diocesan level (including Secretaries, Superintendents, and Catholic education directors), as well as other leaders of entities identified as adopters, including accrediting and

CSS FULL REPORT

other agencies. Based on the pool of early adopters identified by Survey 1, Phase 1 Survey 2

focused on stakeholder groups such as governing boards, canonical leaders, school leaders,

teachers, parents, staff, donors and other agency decision makers who volunteered to participate

in the follow-up Survey 2

Survey 1 participants. Survey 1 was sent to 1,141 individuals and 939 were completed

(response rate: 82%), yielding 908 valid cases. All NCEA regions were represented, with the

most respondents coming from the Great Lakes, and the fewest from New England.

Table 1

Participants' Locations by NCEA Categories

	Frequency	Percent
New England	32	3.5
Mideast	130	14.3
Southeast	174	19.2
Great Lakes	248	27.3
Plains	105	11.6
West/Far West	190	20.9
US Territories	4	.4

Unsurprisingly, most participants work in or with schools; primarily, these individuals

included principals, presidents, school administrators and superintendents/secretaries. The next

largest group of participants were those who provide training and professional development for

schools, most notably university practitioners and diocesan office staff.

Table 2

Survey 1 Participants' Primary Work with K-12 Catholic Schools

	Frequency	Percent
Providing education/training for school personnel	104	11.5
Providing financial/resource support for schools	41	4.5
Assessment External	34	3.7
Working with/for schools	700	77.1

Survey 2 participants. Survey 2 was distributed to a subsample of those who responded to Phase 1 Survey 1, the baseline study. Following Survey 1, there were 289 individuals who self-identified as users of the NSBECS who agreed to be contacted for further research. Of these, 116 (40%) participated and provided valid responses to Survey 2. The respondents were an experienced group - 87% have been professionally associated with Catholic schools for eleven years or more.

Table 3

Years Professionally Associated with K-12 Catholic Schools among Survey 2 Participants

Years Associated	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	5	4.3%
6-10 years	10	8.6%
11-15 years	14	12.1%
16-20 years	15	12.9%
21 years or more	72	62.1%

A majority of Survey 2 respondents describe their primary work with Catholic schools as working with/for schools followed by providing education/training for school personnel. Of the respondents who indicated their primary work involved "providing education/training for school personnel," 53% indicated they were Catholic schools' office personnel and 35%

CSS FULL REPORT

indicated they were university personnel. Of the respondents who indicated their primary work involved working with/for schools, most described their role as principal/president or superintendent/secretary (see Table 5 below).

Table 4

Survey 1 Participants' Primary Work with K-12 Catholic Schools

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Providing Education/Training for School Personnel	17	14.7%
Providing Financial/Resource Support for Schools	3	2.6%
Involved in Assessment for Schools	4	3.4%
Working with/for Schools	92	79.3%

Table 5

Roles among Participants Working with/for Schools

Designation	Frequency	Percent within Category (n=92)	Percent of Whole Sample (N=116)
Superintendent/Secretary	32	34.8%	27.6%
Associate Superintendent	8	8.7%	6.9%
Catholic Schools Office Personnel	5	5.4%	4.3%
Principal/President	40	43.5%	34.5%
School Administrator	6	6.5%	5.2%
Religious Congregation Office Staff	1	1.1%	0.9%

Because the majority of participants work directly with or for K-12 Catholic schools, the researchers concluded that the participating users would provide the current research with reliable observations and responses that are based on authentic experiences in Catholic K-12 schools.

CSS FULL REPORT

Geographical regions and states. The Survey 2 sample covered a wide range of U.S. states and territories: 33 states and 2 territories in total. At the state level, California, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin had the highest number of respondents: 12, 11, 10 and 9 separately. Together, these four states made up 36% of the entire pool of respondents. To facilitate clear description, researchers further categorized participants' locations by the seven NCEA regions: New England, Mideast, Great Lakes, Plains, Southeast, West/Far West and Other Territories. The largest group of respondents came from Great Lakes, followed by the West/Far West region.

Table 6

Location of Survey 2 participants by NCEA region

	Frequency	Percent
New England	4	3.4
Mideast	17	14.7
Great Lakes	34	29.3
Plains	13	11.2
Southeast	21	18.1
West/Far West	25	21.6
Other Territories	2	1.7

The profile of respondents in Survey 2 is quite similar to the profile of those who participated in Survey 1. Hence, although the Survey 2 sample is much smaller than for Survey 1, the similarity of demographic profile gives the researchers confidence that Survey 2 data is representative of the relative populations.

Data Collection Procedures

The team constructed an inclusive national survey with built-in logic sequences that delivered targeted questions to different respondent groups based on their answers. Surveys 1

and 2 were built and distributed through Qualtrics, an online survey tool that enables recipients

to access the survey by clicking an individual link from their email. From June to October 2015,

1,141 survey links were sent out and 939 were completed (response rate: 82%), yielding 908

valid cases for Survey 1 analysis. Among these, 289 agreed to be contacted for the follow-up

Phase I Survey 2 study. Following the same delivery method as Survey 1, researchers reached

out to the 289 participants for Survey 2; two more people were added to the sample after signing

up at NCEA 2016 meeting. From May 2016 to July 2016, 291 survey links were sent out and 122

were completed (response rate: 42%), yielding 116 valid cases for Survey 2.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to describe the basic features of the sample. In

Phase I Survey 1, researchers identified all adopters (schools, school networks, accrediting

agencies, donor organizations, and others) and stakeholders involved by observing the frequency

and distribution of response categories to each question. Descriptive statistics also summarized

respondents' perceived reasons for adoption. For those who reported that they "know and use"

the standards, cross tabulations and significance tests were performed to display the multivariate

frequency distribution of categorical variables and detect the significance of association between

two variables. To measure the magnitude of associations, Pearson's chi-squared and Goodman

and Kruskal's gamma were calculated.

Frequency tables and distribution graphs continued to serve as an important means of

data analysis for the data generated by Phase I Survey 2. Having narrowed the sample to those

who are identified as stakeholder groups across early adopter entities and agreed to participate in

the follow-up survey, descriptive statistics allowed the research team to 1) systematically

organize and summarize the context and process of NSBECS adoption and implementation and

CSS FULL REPORT

2) examine representative users' perspectives of successful adoption and implementation of the

NSBECS. Qualitative thematic analysis was employed to facilitate examination and

interpretation of responses to open-ended questions. For instance, respondents were asked to list

the steps they employed for adoption and implementation and to identify the stakeholders

involved in each step of the implementation. This mixed-methods approach enabled researchers

to produce more sophisticated results from the Phase I Survey 2 and, in the long run, offer rich

data-driven guidance for the design of ensuing phases as well as guidance to other researchers.

Survey 1 Results

Based on the responses to Survey 1, seventy-eight percent of stakeholders across the

country know about the NSBECS and the overwhelming majority of those who know about the

NSBECS also use them (79%). Those who know about and use the standards became the focus

for analysis of Survey 1 data (n=557).

Table 7

Participants' Reported Use of the NSBECS

Use of NSBECS	Frequency
No	116
Yes	557
I don't know	44
Not Applicable/ Do not know about NSBECS	191

Next, the researchers examined why and how participants use the NSBECS. Some users

were required to implement the standards (for example, by a superintendent), and others adopted

them by choice. However, desire to use the standards did not differ significantly by this

requirement; virtually all users responded that they would continue to use the NSBECS if not

required.

Areas of Use

For those who reported that they know about and use the standards, most popular areas of use were Accreditation, Planning, and Accountability followed by Professional Development, Guidelines and School-wide Assessment. Areas of use varied somewhat by work role. Accreditation, Planning and Accountability were the top three uses for the group that included principals, presidents, and school administrators, while superintendents chose Planning, Guidelines and Accountability as the top three areas of use. Training and PD personnel chose Planning, Professional Development and Guidelines as the top three.

Level of Implementation

Out of those who know about the standards, 40% reported partial implementation and 30% report full implementation for a combined total of 70% reporting some level of implementation. The extent of implementation reported differed for the principals/presidents/administrators with 35% reporting partial implementation, while 51% of the other two groups – superintendents/secretaries and training/PD – reported partial implementation.

All users reported using the NSBECS across all four Domains of the Standards. Users were asked to rate the extent of their use of the standards for each domain, and overall reported their use for Catholic Identity and Academic Excellence as extensive more often than other domains. High ratings for partial use were assigned to Governance and Operational Vitality. When examining use by work role, superintendents/secretaries and professional development personal reported extensive use for Operational Vitality more often than principals/presidents/administrators. Finally, across domains, the length of adoption is positively

associated with the extent of using the Standards. Earlier adopters (who began to use the

Standards before 2014) tend to use the NSBECS more extensively than recent adopters.

Perceived Impact

Out of the Survey 1 participants who reported using the NSBECS, 54% reported a small

amount of impact, while 37% reported a lot of impact and 7% reported extensive impact. This

raised the question of whether the length of time since adoption is related to the extent of use of

the NSBECS and their perceived impact on users' practices. Data analysis indicated that length

of adoption is positively related to the reported extent of use, as well as to impact on practice for

all groups ($p < .05$) except in one case. For superintendents/secretaries, the relationship between

length of adoption and extent of use is not significant.

Level of Understanding/Knowledge

Participants' ratings of their understanding of the Standards are positively associated with

the extent of adoption and implementation of the NSBECS. Because the association measures are

symmetric, there are two interpretations: (1) the more a person understands the NSBECS, the

more he/she would use them; and (2) the more a person uses the NSBECS the more she/he

would understand them. Also, respondents' level of understanding of the NSBECS is positively

associated with their ratings of the NSBECS' impact on practices. That is, respondents who

reported greater understanding of the Standards tend to give higher ratings of the Standards'

impact on their practices. The better NSBECS are understood, the more they are used; and the

more they are used (across more programs and/or for longer periods of time), the greater the

perceived impact.

Principals, presidents, and school administrators learned about NSBECS from

supervisors, accrediting agencies and professional networks; they learned how to use NSBECS

from supervisors, accrediting agencies and the CSSP website. Superintendents learned about

NSBECS from national conferences, professional networks, and publications; they learned how

to use them from conferences, the CSSP website, and accrediting agencies.

Comments by respondents express enthusiastic satisfaction with NSBECS; they are seen

as a useful framework for assessing Catholic school effectiveness, focusing on mission and

Catholic identity, and generally calling Catholic schools to greater excellence. They are

regularly referred to as a road map, a guiding vision, and a unifying assessment framework.

In sum, Survey 1 provided solid evidence that relevant stakeholders are using the

NSBECS for the purposes intended - namely, to provide agreed-upon, reliable criteria that the

Catholic educational community can use to hold itself accountable for PK-12 schools that are

excellent and Catholic. They are using them across all Domains and they perceive more

significant impact on practice the more they are understood and used. Important sources of

knowledge about and learning how to use NSBECS are conferences, networks, supervisors,

accrediting agencies, and the CSSP website.

Survey 2 Results

Primary Purposes and Areas of Use

In Survey 2, each participant was directed to identify only one primary purpose for

implementing the NSBECS and then to respond to the remaining survey questions as they apply

to their designated area of use. The top four areas of use - accreditation, accountability,

guidelines/references, and planning - account for 83% of participants' purposes for adopting and

implementing the NSBECS.

Table 8

Primary Purpose for which Survey 2 Participants Adopted and Implemented the NSBECS

	Frequency	Percent
Accountability	18	15.5%
Accreditation	40	34.5%
Planning	17	14.7%
Professional Development/ Training	11	9.5%
Guidelines/ References	21	18.1%
Assessment	4	3.4%
Course Design	2	1.7%
Other	3	2.6%

These four represent the same top areas of use reported by the sub-population containing superintendents, principals, and presidents in Survey 1. Responses were remarkably consistent across areas of use, with a few notable exceptions that will be highlighted as the overall findings are summarized.

Steps in Implementation

In an open-ended question, participants identified the major steps (up to 10) they used for implementation of the NSBECS at their institution/diocese. Analysis revealed that regardless which primary purpose they identified, the first four steps in various order included participants becoming familiar with the standards (*introduce/study)*; comparing the NSBECS to other standards or looking to see how other organizations' standards fit with the NSBECS for the purposes of accreditation (*align/accreditation*); using surveys or rating scales to determine current school functioning in relation to the standards (*self-assessment*); and creating goals or plans related to the standards (*planning*). Monitoring the school's progress related to the standards, and reporting progress to stakeholders (*monitoring*) was a frequently cited next step.

Table 9

Top Five Themes Reported in Users' Initial Implementation Steps

1. Introduce/Study	Becoming familiar with the standards
2. Align - Accreditation	Comparing the NSBECS to other standards and/or evaluating the NSBECS for accreditation purposes
3. Self-Assessment	Using surveys or rating scales to determine current school functioning in relation to the standards
4. Planning	Creating goals or plans related to the standards
5. Monitoring	Monitoring the school's progress related to the standards and reporting progress to stakeholders

Stakeholder involvement. Those reported to be most involved in Step 1 were the superintendent and principal almost equally (53% and 58% respectively). In Step 2, principals' involvement exceeded superintendents' (62% to 53%), and in step 3, principals and teachers were most involved (59% and 46%) while superintendents' rates of involvement decreased (35%). Board members were involved at every step, as were teachers, principal, and superintendent, although the superintendent's involvement decreased as implementation continued. Parents were more involved in the first few steps (being informed and taking surveys) and then not very involved in later steps; similarly, accreditation agencies and university personnel were more likely to be involved at the beginning of implementation and then less or not at all as the process continued. Interestingly, parishioners, alums, and students were more often involved than the researchers anticipated, although their involvement was not extensive.

Overall Success

When asked to evaluate the overall success of their NSBECS implementation process, 17% (n=20) of respondents rated their process as "highly successful," with an additional 49%

(n=57) reporting "successful" implementation. Together, this group (referred to in following analyses as the "most successful" users), comprises 66% of respondents. A further 29% (n=34) of respondents believed their implementation process was "somewhat successful," and only one respondent identified their process as "not successful." In other words, two-thirds of respondents reported that they see "positive" or "strong positive" outcomes from their implementation of the NSBECS, while less than 1% reported that they do not see any positive outcomes. Interestingly, while those implementing NSBECS for Accreditation comprise 34% of respondents, they constitute 60% of respondents who rate their implementation as highly successful. (Later in this paper researchers will go into greater depth analyzing responses of the "most successful" users.)

Implementation Practices

Respondents in Survey 2 were asked to rate the extent to which each of nine practices contributed to their implementation process. The nine practices, common in implementation theory and research and framed to the CSS Study, are: 1) demonstrated personal commitment of the leader to implementing the standards, 2) established faculty and staff buy-in, 3) established parent and community buy-in, 4) provided training/PD to faculty and staff, 5) used data/evidence to measure outcomes and make decisions, 6) provided regular feedback to personnel involved, 7) fostered respectful engagement of relevant stakeholders, 8) communicated progress to stakeholders, and 9) received commitment from (arch)diocesan leaders. Among those practices that respondents reported made a *major* contribution to implementation, the number one practice overall and for those working in the areas of Accountability, Accreditation, and Guidelines, was "demonstrated personal commitment of the leader." For those working in Planning, this was the number 2 major contributing practice (tied with commitment from (arch)diocesan leaders). The second major implementation practice reported overall and for three of the top four uses

CSS FULL REPORT

(Accountability, Accreditation, and Planning), was "received commitment from (arch)diocesan leaders." Only those who implemented the NSBECS in the area of Guidelines/References did not cite this practice among their top five.

 "Established faculty/staff buy-in" appeared in the top practices for all four areas of use and was the 3rd most frequently reported practice overall; "Used data/evidence" (4th overall), ranked number one among those implementing for Planning. "Provided training/PD" (5th overall) contributed strongly to implementation for users in the Accountability and Guidelines/References groups. "Fostered respectful engagement of relevant stakeholders" factored among the top five majorly contributing practices in the areas Accountability, Accreditation, and Planning. The practice reported to have contributed least to implementation was "established parent and community buy-in." Judging from other data gathered in Survey 2, parent/community involvement has not factored significantly into NSBECS implementation thus far; when it occurs, it most often takes the form of parent surveys and information meetings and/or communication.
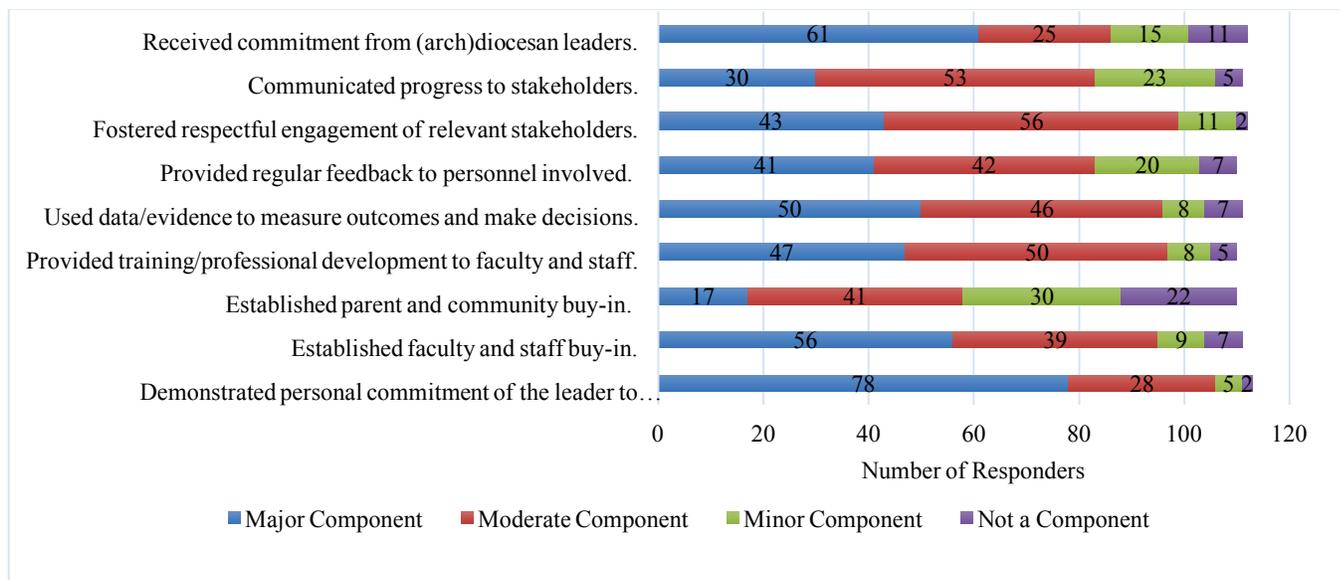

Figure 1. *Practices Involved in Implementation among Survey 2 Participants*

Outcomes by Domain

Survey data indicate that users experienced significant outcomes related to the implementation of NCBESCS for all the major purposes (Accountability, Accreditation, Planning, and Guidelines) and across all four NSBECS Domains.

In Domain 1: Mission and Catholic Identity, the leading outcome experienced overall was "school community demonstrates a deeper understanding of mission" (61%). Also among the top four outcomes reported in this domain were "school mission has greater centrality in the life and practice of the school community," "newly expressed commitment to Catholic identity is included in the mission" (this was the top reported outcome for those in the Guidelines group) and "the school community is more meaningfully engaged as a faith community."

CSS FULL REPORT

Table 10

Outcomes Reported in Domain 1 – Mission and Catholic Identity

	Frequency	Percent of whole sample (N=116)
Not focused on this domain.	6	5.2%
Newly expressed commitment to Catholic identity is included in the mission.	51	44.0%
School community demonstrates a deeper understanding of mission.	71	61.2%
School mission has greater centrality in the life and practice of the school community.	54	46.6%
More of the faculty integrate Catholic social teachings and Catholic worldview into lessons and units.	46	39.7%
The school community is more meaningfully engaged as a faith community.	50	43.1%
Other – Please speify	9	7.8%
No outcomes related to implementation in this domain.	3	2.6%

In Domain 2: Governance and Leadership, the top outcome experienced was "The governing body and leadership team increased commitment to continuous improvement" (60%). This is significant as one of the foundational operating principles underlying the NSBECS is that they spark and sustain continuous improvement. In addition, when respondents were asked to identify their top three significant outcomes across all domains, this same outcome came out on top. Not only did 60% of all respondents experience this outcome in their NSBECS implementation, almost 28% ranked it as among the most significant. The other leading outcomes experienced in this domain were "governing body and leadership team demonstrate

increased fidelity to mission," "collaboration between governing body and leadership team has

increased," and "clarity of roles among governance board members has improved".

Table 11

Outcomes Reported in Domain 2 – Governance and Leadership

	Frequency	Percent of whole sample (N=116)
Not focused on this domain.	5	4.3%
The governing body and leadership team demonstrate increased fidelity to mission.	52	44.8%
The governing body and leadership team increased commitment to continuous improvement.	69	59.5%
Clarity of roles among governance board members has improved.	39	33.6%
Representation of diversity of stakeholders among board membership has improved.	24	20.7%
The governing board and leadership team demonstrate increased commitment to on-going training and self-evaluation.	34	29.3%
Collaboration between governing body and leadership team has increased.	41	35.3%
Other-Please specify	7	6.0%
No outcomes related to implementation in this domain.	10	8.6%

In Domain 3: Academic Excellence, the leading outcomes respondents experienced

included "collaboration among faculty members about teaching and learning has improved," "the

practice of sharing school-wide data with stakeholders has increased," "faculty knowledge and

skills related to effective classroom instruction has improved," and "faculty has increased or

improved the use of formative assessment to modify curriculum and instructional practices."

Improved collaboration among faculty members about teaching and learning also appeared in the

second place among those outcomes identified as most significant across all domains (20%).

Table 12

Outcomes Reported in Domain 3 – Academic Excellence

	Frequency	Percent of whole sample (N=116)
Not focused on this domain.	4	3.4%
Curriculum is newly aligned to appropriate standards (diocesan, state or national).	49	42.2%
Collaboration among faculty members about teaching and learning has improved.	71	61.2%
Faculty knowledge and skills related to effective classroom instruction has improved.	60	51.7%
Faculty knowledge and skills related to cultural sensitivity has improved.	29	25.0%
Faculty has increased or improved the use of formative assessments to modify curriculum and instructional practices.	53	45.7%
The practice of sharing school-wide and student data with stakeholders has increased or improved.	63	54.3%
Families are more intentionally engaged as partners in their child's education.	26	22.4%
Other-Please specify	13	11.2%
No outcomes related to the implementation in this domain.	5	4.3%

Finally, in Domain 4: Operational Vitality, participants reported the number one outcome

overall as "planning for operations (facilities, technology, finances) is more intentionally linked

CSS FULL REPORT

to mission." Other significant implementation outcomes in this Domain, experienced across all

four areas of use included: "all planning is now focused on continuous school improvement,"

"regular review and updating of operational plans has improved," and "communication,

marketing, and advancement strategies more effectively incorporate best practices."

Table 13

Outcomes Reported in Domain 4 – Operational Vitality

	Frequency	Percent of whole sample (N=116)
Not focused on this domain.	3	2.6%
Planning for operations (facilities, technology, and finances) is more intentionally linked to mission.	52	44.8%
Regular review and updating of operational plans has improved.	50	43.1%
Enrollment and retention have improved.	34	29.3%
Financial planning more effectively incorporates best practices.	46	39.7%
All planning is now focused on continuous school improvement.	50	43.1%
Human resource management more effectively incorporates best practices.	26	22.4%
Communication, marketing, and advancement strategies more effectively incorporate best practices.	49	42.2%
Other – Please specify	11	9.5%
No outcomes related to the implementation in this domain.	11	9.5%

Several themes emerged related to outcomes of implementing the NSBECS: users

reported that implementing NSBECS has led to ongoing improvement, increased commitment to

mission, increased collaboration, and improved use of best practices. Overall, results indicate that when schools and dioceses use the NSBECS, they report positive outcomes.

Practices Related to Implementation

Respondents reported extensive use of the rubrics and surveys provided on the Catholic School Standards Project website, both to determine the school's status at the outset of implementation and to monitor progress during implementation. For those working in Guidelines and Planning, many also used self-created rubrics, surveys, or checklists. Data collection to monitor success occurs at least once per year for 83% of those implementing for Accountability, and for 73% of those implementing for Accreditation. For those who primarily adopted the standards for Guidelines/References, 43% collect data at least once per year, as do 39% of those working on Planning.

Participants who indicated that establishing buy-in at the school level was a significant component of their implementation process were asked how faculty and staff were persuaded to adopt and implement the standards, and 53% (n=62) reported "administrator and/or diocesan presentations were made about the Standards," 47% (n=55) reported "accreditation protocols were adopted which required the use of the Standards," and 39% (n=45) reported "key staff learned about the Standards and influenced others." These strategies appeared as key across all areas of use.

When asked to report how parents/community were involved in the implementation process, 49% (n=57) of respondents reported "surveys were sent to parents/community," and 36% (n=42) reported "explanation of the NSBECS and their use was given to parents/community." Only 20% (n=23) reported that parents/community were invited to participate in focus groups and/or to serve on implementation committees. Seven respondents

reported that "No attempt was made to involve parents/community" and a full 20% (n=23)

believed the question was not applicable to their implementation process. It would appear that

currently, parent involvement does not hold a prominent place in schools' implementation of the

NSBECS, and when it occurs, participation consists largely of informing parents about the

NSBECS and asking for input through surveys.

When asked what format, if any, was used for professional development/training as a

component of the NSBECS implementation process, respondents most often cited "school

leadership supported peer/group training within school" (42%).   Other frequently used formats

were "participants attended training at off-site conferences/workshops" (29%),

"professional/consultant provided one-day or less training on site" (23%), and "participants

engaged in self-training through online sources" (14%).

When asked what topics, if any, were used for professional development/training as a

component of the NSBECS implementation process, respondents most often cited "school

improvement planning" (52%), "developing a common understanding of the NSBECS" (50%),

and "using the benchmark rubrics to assess school performance" (47%). This was true across all

areas of use. Data collection appeared most frequently as a topic for professional development

for those working in Accountability (44%) and those working in Accreditation (52%).

Interestingly, a noticeable number of those working in the area of Guidelines reported "not

applicable" when asked about PD/training formats (38%) and topics (52%), suggesting that

training occurs less frequently as part of the implementation process in for those in the

Guidelines/References group. This finding seems to run counter to the earlier reported finding

that respondents working in Guidelines rated PD/training among the top three practices that

contributed to successful implementation.

Overall, respondents report high use (and in the case of rubrics high usefulness) of benchmark rubrics, worksheets and surveys found on the CSSP website. Fewer than 2% of respondents report that they "do not plan to continue using the NSBECS." When the overwhelming percent of respondents who plan to continue using the NSBECS (93% yes, 5% missing) were asked to describe planned changes or expansions to their current implementation processes, the majority of responders (about 60% of those who responded, n=18) described actions related to planning or monitoring implementation of the NSBECS. An additional 23% described plans to provide additional training or professional development to those involved. These most prevalent themes suggest that the next steps for most participants are related to building sustainable, long-term implementation.

When asked to identify resources which would assist their school/organization in the further implementation of the NSBECS, 70% of respondents (n=81) chose "tools for assessment data collection based on benchmark rubrics", 69% (n=80) chose "examples of assessment protocols for each standard," and 62% (n=72) chose "training webinars for school leaders" and "for teachers" (56%, n=65)." Most participants (72%) have used the NSBECS for planning in some way; almost half (47%) have used the NSBECS for marketing, 35% for public relations, and 28% for development (fund/friend raising).

When asked if their organization faced any challenges while implementing the NSBECS, 55% of respondents reported "no," 40% reported "yes," and the final 5% of responses were designated as missing. The 40% who said they faced challenges reported lack of time as the top challenge (85%), followed by lack of sufficient personnel (46%), and insufficient resources to support data collection and analysis (41%).

Practices and Outcomes Associated with the Successful Users of NSBECS

The majority (66%) of respondents (who overwhelmingly represent those who work in schools) self-reported their implementation experiences to be "Highly Successful" (we see strong positive outcomes) or "Successful" (we see positive outcomes). This is a unique majority (referred to in this analysis as the "most successful" users) and it may be useful for stakeholders and practitioners to review the implementation practices they identified and examine the steps they acknowledged as important as we work to establish a better understanding of how adoption and implementation of the NBECS works in the field. Equally important are the outcomes this group reported following adoption and implementation. Given the reported successes of this group and the data they have generated, we expect to provide recommendations for the adoption and implementation of the NSBECS by new constituencies in the future and recognize the different resources that might be refined and created.

Components of implementation practices. The group of "most successful" users reported implementation practices that may serve as a model for others. Practices were selected and rated as a major, moderate, or minor component, or not a component. Although all that were listed were noted as important, four practices were cited most often by respondents as a major component - one that is most important to success.

The components most often reported by the most successful users included "a demonstrated personal commitment of the leader to implementing the standards," "receiving commitment from the (arch)diocesan leaders," "establishing faculty and staff buy-in," "used data/evidence to measure outcomes and make decisions," and "Provided training /professional development to faculty and staff." These data suggest that key components for success include

committed leadership at the local and diocesan levels and achieving buy-in from faculty and staff
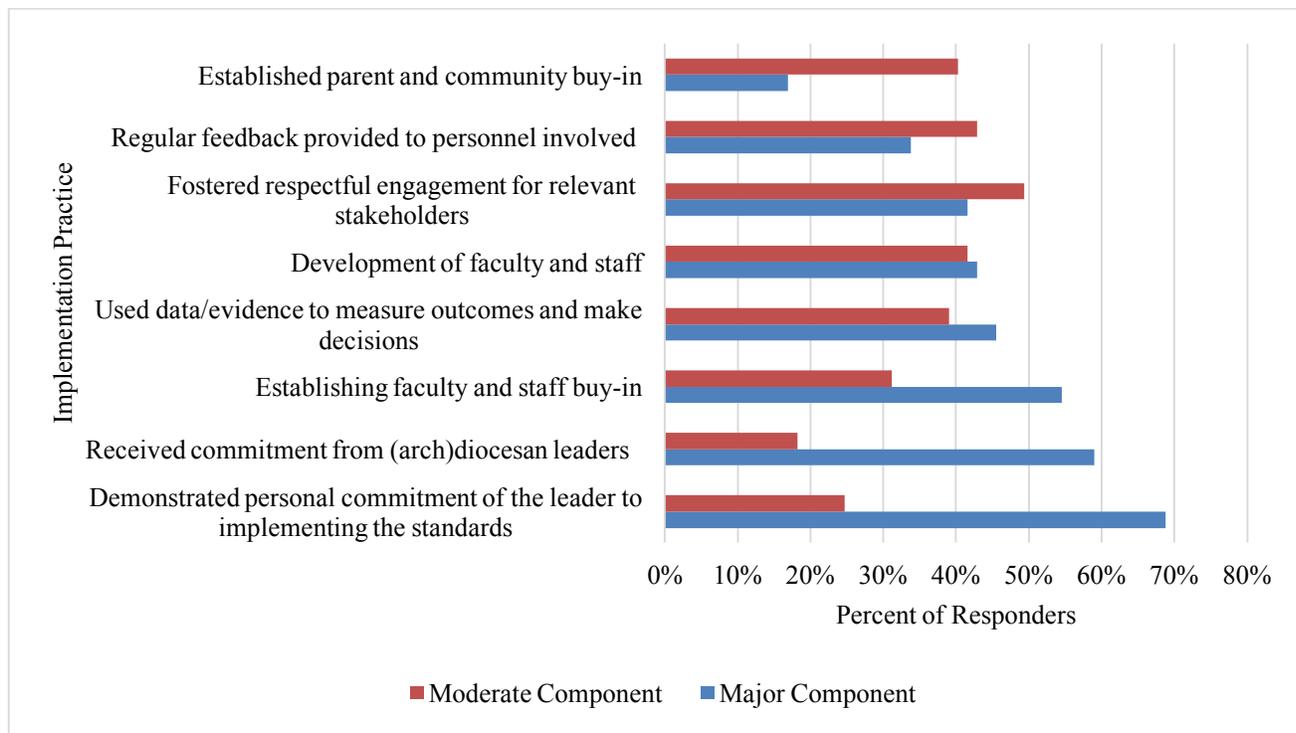
involved in implementation (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. *Components of Implementation Reported by Survey 2 Participants*

Achieving buy-in from faculty and staff.   As noted above, "establishing buy-in from

faculty and staff" was chosen by 55% as a major component and 31% as a moderate component.

The researchers then explored how successful users achieved this buy in. Users in the "most

successful" group reported action steps related to buy-in; the three most frequently reported

action steps were "administrator and/or diocesan presentations were made about the Standards"

(61%), followed by "accreditation protocols were adopted which required the use of the

Standards" (53%) and "diocese adopted the Standards and required adoption and implementation

for all schools" (43%). Note this affirms the results regarding components of practice, shared

above, where it is noted that commitment from diocesan leaders is a major component for those

experiencing successful adoption and implementation.

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Resources/Tools of Choice.   Successful adopters also reported the resource/ tools (provided on the NSBECS website) that were implemented at the outset of the process and during the process as they monitored progress.   At the outset of the process, successful users, who chose to assess the school's current status frequently reported three tools provided on the website and used by their teams. Most frequently selected were the "benchmarks and rubrics" (70%) followed by "surveys for faculty and staff" (46%), and "surveys for parents and stakeholder groups" (44%). As their work progressed, successful users reported using similar tools to monitor their progress. Again, most of these users (62%) reported using the benchmarks and rubrics for progress monitoring. Other popular tools included the surveys for faculty and staff (39%). Additionally, 39% of the most successful users employed "self-created rubrics, survey or checklists" to monitor progress. In sum, most of the successful users accessed and used the tools provided by the "Resources" pages on the CSS website. More research is needed to better understand how these tools and the data they generate are used at both the local and diocesan levels.

Stakeholders involved in the implementation of the NSBECS. Who was involved in the adoption of the NSBECS and at what step in the process? The "most successful" users implemented the standards by intentionally including different stakeholders at different steps in the process. Over the first four steps listed by respondents, the four stakeholders most frequently reported were the superintendents, principals, teachers and board members. The superintendents and principals were the most frequently cited as key participants in steps one and two. Yet the principal is named by 65% of respondents as critical to step two while only 48% cite the superintendent. In steps 3 and 4, no one stakeholder is cited more frequently than the others, with the exception of the principal, who is designated by over half of respondents at these steps. It

appears that the superintendent is viewed as important to steps one and two; after that, the

principal is viewed by most as important to the process, followed by teachers, governing board

leaders and the superintendent. These responses suggest the need to stress the critical role the

superintendent and central office play when working with principals focused on the adoption and

implementation of the NSBECS. Equally important is the role of the principal; school leaders

must be certain to provide appropriate preparation and training of principals for implementation,

as principals appear to be critical leaders in the first steps of implementation. See Figure 3
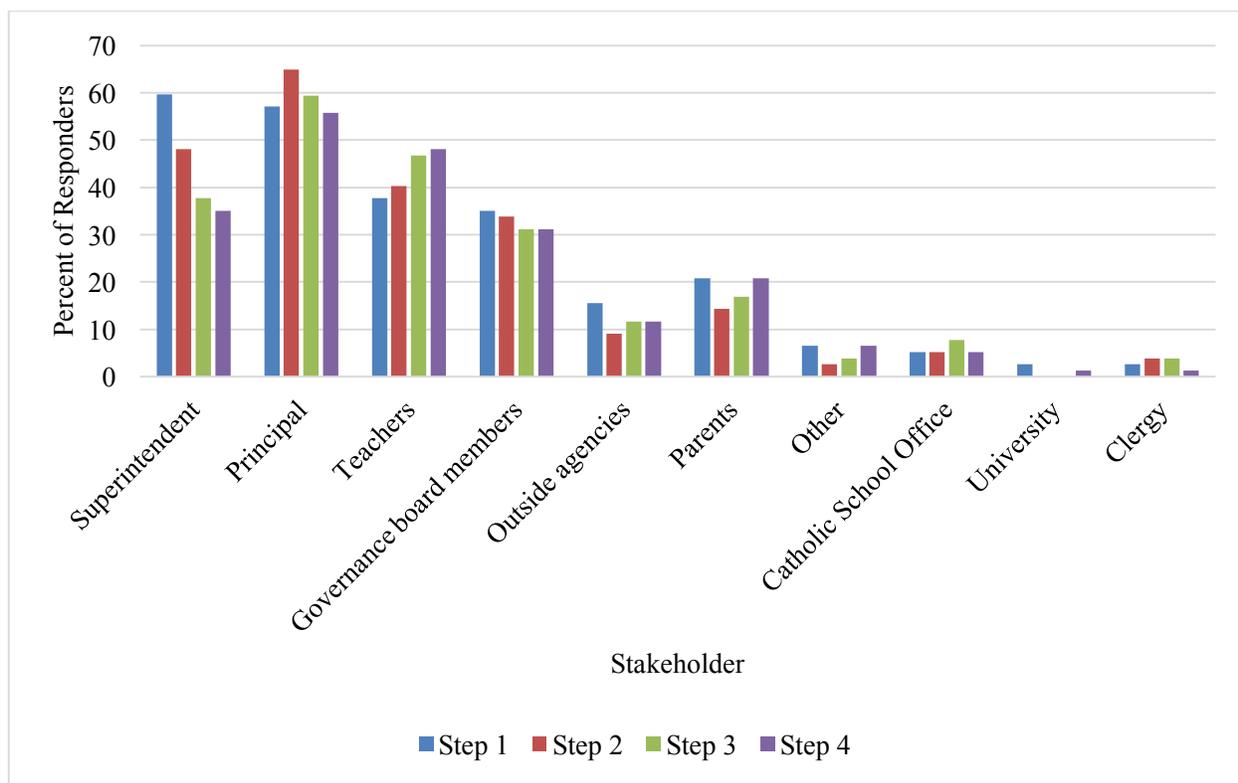
below.

Figure 3. *Stakeholders Involved in First Four Steps of Implementation*

Areas of use and steps adopted.   All participants were asked to describe the action

steps taken to implement the standards. These open-ended responses were coded and carefully

analyzed and summarized so that future users might understand the most important steps taken

and who was involved in the process. Further, as noted in the analysis of the data, school leaders adopted the NSBECS for different reasons, with the vast majority choosing Accountability, Accreditation, Reference/Guidelines or Planning. The researchers analyzed the steps reported by users in each of the top four "area of use" groups in order to provide better understanding of how to manage the implementation process for different areas of use and increase the probability of successful implementation.

Accountability. For those adopting the standards to work on accountability (n=18) the first step cited by 39% was "Introduce/Study." Others engaged in self-assessment (22%) and provided professional development first (17%). Behaviors cited for step 2 were similar to step one, but with a smaller total number of responses. 'Planning' stood out at step 3 with 28% reporting this behavior. Finally, three themes were each cited by 17% as important to step 4: "Incorporate/align: Accreditation", "Planning" and "Monitoring."

Accreditation. The majority of the "most successful" users used the standards for Accreditation (n=40). Participants who adopted and implemented the standards for the purposes of accreditation were similar to others in step one. Over 42% reported "introduce/study" as the first step, while 23% chose "incorporate/align: accreditation;" both of these themes were also cited most often in Step 2. In step 3, 20% chose "introduce/study" and in step 4, 18% engaged in activities related to "planning." Because accreditation was this group's primary purpose for adoption, they included actions related to incorporating and aligning the NSBECS and their work with the appropriate accreditation standards in steps 1 and 2 more often than other groups. This is an area that needs further investigation as more accrediting bodies are using the NSBECS, and there seems to be variance in the ways that the NSBECS are adopted and utilized by these accrediting agencies.

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Guidelines/Reference. For the users who primarily use the Standards for guidelines or

reference (n=21), their first two steps included activities related to introducing or studying the

standards more often than any other theme (62% in step 1 and 38% in step 2). "Promoting buy-

in" was the second most popular theme in step 1 for this group of users (14%). "Monitoring"

comprised 14% activities reported for step 3 and "planning" received 14% in step 4. All other

themes were reported by less than 10% of users in that group.

Planning. Initial steps taken by those whose primary purpose was planning (n=17) were

varied. In step 1, 41% described activities related to "introduce/study," 17% began with

"promoting buy-in", and unsurprisingly, 24% began with activities related to "planning."

Planning was the most popular theme in step 2 (29%), with "introduce/study," "promoting buy-

in," "PD/training," and "self-assessment" each described in 12% of responses at this step. In

steps 3 and 4, "planning" continued to appear in 24% of responses, and "self-assessment"

increased to 29% in step 3.

Outcomes by domains. As with the overall sample, this group of "most successful"

users reported the occurrence of school-wide outcomes associated with the adoption and use of

the NSBECS within the four different domains. And as noted previously, the standards were

implemented across all four domains with Domain I and Domain III chosen most frequently as

areas of focus. Importantly, this group of most successful users consistently reported "mission"

related outcomes across all four domains. This is significant because the NSBECS are premised

on the shared mission of Catholic education informed by defining characteristics set forth by the

Church.

Domain I – Catholic Identity. In Domain I, three outcomes stand out as the top choices

for most successful users. "School community demonstrates a deeper understanding of mission"

is reported as by 69% of successful users, while 56% reported "school mission has greater centrality in the life and practice of the school community" and 48% reported "the school community is more meaningfully engaged as a faith community." For those whose work involves strengthening mission-focused schools, the NSBECS have led to encouraging outcomes.

Domain II – Governance and Leadership. Two outcomes stand out for the users in this domain and speak to the occurrence of a new level of commitment on the part of the governance boards and school leaders. First, 69% of the most successful users reported that "the governing body and leadership team demonstrate increased commitment to continuous improvement," while 49% reported that "the governing body and leadership team demonstrate increased fidelity to mission." Both outcomes describe increased commitment to mission and the work of planning and building out the future for these schools, and both outcomes are closely aligned with the most often selected outcomes in Domain I and Domain IV.

Domain III – Academic Excellence. Three outcomes in this Domain were reported by more than 50% of the most successful users. Over 63% reported that "collaboration among faculty members about teaching and learning has improved." This outcome is further substantiated by the fact that 58% reported that "the practice of sharing school-wide and student data with stakeholders has increased or improved," and 57% noted that "faculty knowledge and skills related to effective classroom instruction has improved." Improvement in faculty collaboration is crucial to the success of the academic program in all schools. These reported outcomes suggest a new way of looking at curriculum and instruction for NSBECS users, in which collaboration contributes to growth and continuous improvement is a frequently occurring

outcome. And as noted previously, "board and leadership teams' commitment to continuous improvement" is also a frequently reported outcome.

Domain IV. – Operational Vitality. This is the domain that was reported to be used the least in the findings of Phase 1 research, yet the outcomes for the most successful users are very encouraging. Three outcomes in Domain IV were reported by more than 45% of respondents. Over 53% cited the fact that "planning for operations (facilities, technology, finances) is more intentionally linked to mission" and 47% reported that "communication, marketing, and advancement strategies more effectively incorporate best practices." Most interestingly, 46% reported "all planning is now focused on continuous school improvement," which is similar to the outcomes reported in Domains I and III.

Finally, when the most successful users chose their three most important outcomes across all domains, Domains I and II stood out. The outcome most frequently cited as most important was in Domain II: "the governing body and leadership team demonstrate increased commitment to continuous improvement" (34%). This was followed by two outcomes in Domain I: "school mission has greater centrality in the life and practice of the school community" (21%) and "the school community demonstrates a deeper understanding of mission" (20%).

Clearly, those who self-report a "highly successful" or "successful" adoption of the NSBECS have experienced foundational shifting in their approach to and understanding of what it means to be an effective mission centered school. Participants report that school leaders, governing bodies, and the larger school community have experienced these outcomes. This shift in understanding - and its articulation into policy - is key to successful systemic school change and growth. New approaches to planning can now be built upon a renewed and shared understanding of the mission of Catholic education and how that might be envisioned by a

school community and its leadership, informed by accountability and growth measures provided by the NSBECS.

Descriptions of Success and Advice

Descriptions of success. While it is valuable to know that the majority of participants reported successful implementation, success can look very different from one school community or organization to the next. So, in order to better understand the diversity of the positive outcomes reported, participants were asked to describe what successful implementation means for them in an open-ended format.

The investigators analyzed the sixty-five respondents (out of the total population for Survey 2 of 116) who provided descriptions of success, and identified eight recurring themes: unity, accountability, continued improvement, focus/direction, catholic identity, self-assessment, implementation/action, and understanding. These themes encompassed the majority of responses and allowed the investigators to make comparisons and analyze patterns in responses. Some responses described more than one theme. *Unity* refers to the school community coming closer together, feeling more unified, and/or improving feelings of buy-in and ownership. *Accountability* includes descriptions of success related to expectations, external review processes, or improvements in management and oversight. *Continued improvement* refers to on-going growth, progress, or improvement planning. *Focus/direction* defines successful implementation as having a framework, touchstone, or clear idea of where one is heading. *Catholic identity* refers to a focus on Catholicity or becoming more in tune with the larger Catholic community. *Self-assessment* defines success as the use of ratings, rubrics and/or surveys to identify gaps and overlaps in various areas of school functioning. *Implementation/action* refers to success as having an on-going action plan or doing the work of implementation over time.

Understanding refers to increasing awareness, familiarity, and/or knowledge related to the

NSBECS within the school community.

Of the themes described above, the one that arose most often was focus/direction; in the

full sample of users, this theme was found in 29% of responses. A primary purpose for creating

standards is to provide a framework which guides the focus of one's efforts, which may explain

the popularity of this definition of success. Other common themes included unity (26%),

continued improvement (22%) and Catholic identity (22%). The same top four themes were

found among the subsample of users who described their implementation as successful or highly

successful, with *focus/direction* and *unity* each found in 34% of this group's responses. This

suggests that most participants, regardless of their primary purpose for using NSBECS, felt

success in their implementation because 1) they attained a clearer direction for their work, and/or

2) they felt that their school community became more unified and/or more in tune with the larger

Catholic community, or 3) simply because they are seeing progress over time.

When analysis was based on the primary purpose for which users adopted and

implemented the NSBECS, definitions of success varied somewhat. For users whose primary

purpose was accreditation, the most common themes were unity (25%) and continued

improvement (22%). Among those who adopted the standards for guidelines/reference, the most

common theme was Catholic identity (38%), followed by focus/direction (24%). For those

whose primary purpose was accountability, the most common themes for success were unity and

- perhaps unsurprisingly - accountability (17% each). Accountability was not one of the most

common themes in the full sample, but users who adopted the standards for accountability

purposes tended to define success in those terms. Among users whose primary purpose was

planning, definitions of success most often involved continued improvement and focus/direction
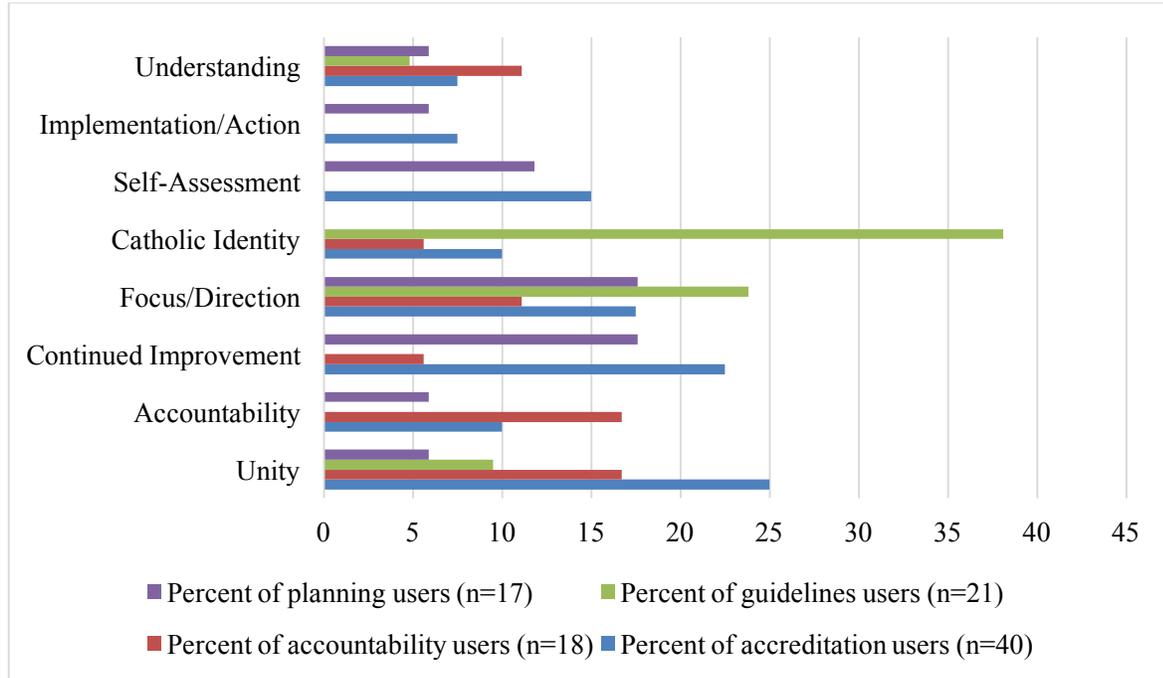
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(18% each).

Figure 4. *Definitions of Success by Participants' Primary Purpose for Adopting the NSBECS*

Advice for Others. Participants reflected on their implementation of the NSBECS

throughout the survey. At the end, they were also asked to provide advice to those who might

implement the NSBECS in the future. Because the current study surveyed those who were

among the first to implement the NSBECS in their schools or organizations, their advice –

whether based on what they did well or what they wish they had done differently – may help

inform the practice of those who use these standards in the future.

The investigators analyzed the sixty-six respondents' statements of advice and identified

seven themes: persist/commit, have patience, promote engagement, use for improvement,

provide support, planning, and clear understanding. The majority of responses included

statements related to these themes, and because many participants gave multiple statements of

advice, more than one theme was identified in many of the responses. *Persist/commit* includes

advice such as "stick with it" and don't give up." *Have patience* includes advice related to taking

one's time with the process and moving at a realistic pace. *Promote engagement* encompasses advice related to educating and communicating with stakeholders, promoting buy-in and ownership, or involving stakeholders in the process. *Use for improvement* includes responses that advised others to use the NSBECS to improve their school, curriculum, or staff competency. *Provide support* includes responses that stress the importance of professional development, training, and providing those involved with tools and resources. *Planning* includes advice related to goal setting and data gathering/utilization. Finally, *clear understanding* refers to becoming familiar with the standards and the importance of understanding what one is doing throughout the process.

The themes that were found most frequently in participants' responses were have patience (27%), promote engagement (26%), and provide support (26%). Among respondents who described their implementation of the NSBECS as successful or highly successful, the most common theme was promote engagement (32%), followed by clear understanding (27%) and have patience (24%). This suggests that promoting engagement and ownership among stakeholders was considered especially important among users who described their own implementation as "most successful," and that these participants recommended having a clear understanding of the NSBECS and the implementation process before beginning more often than the full sample of users. Having patience and taking the process slowly was a common piece of advice regardless of level of success.

The advice that users provided to their peers varied based on the primary purpose for which the users adopted and implemented the NSBECS. For users whose primary purpose was accreditation, the most common area of advice was to promote engagement (23%). This suggests that for schools engaging in an accreditation process using the NSBECS, it was important to

have all stakeholders involved in the process. Among those who adopted the standards for guidelines/reference, have patience, promote engagement, and planning were equally common is users' responses (19% each). For those whose primary purpose was accountability, the theme most often found in their advice was provide support (28%). This suggests that users believe that when accountability is increased, it is important to provide sufficient support so that staff can meet those expectations. Finally, among users whose primary purpose was planning, the most common themes for advice were have patience and use for improvement (24% each). Have patience was the most common theme found in the full sample.
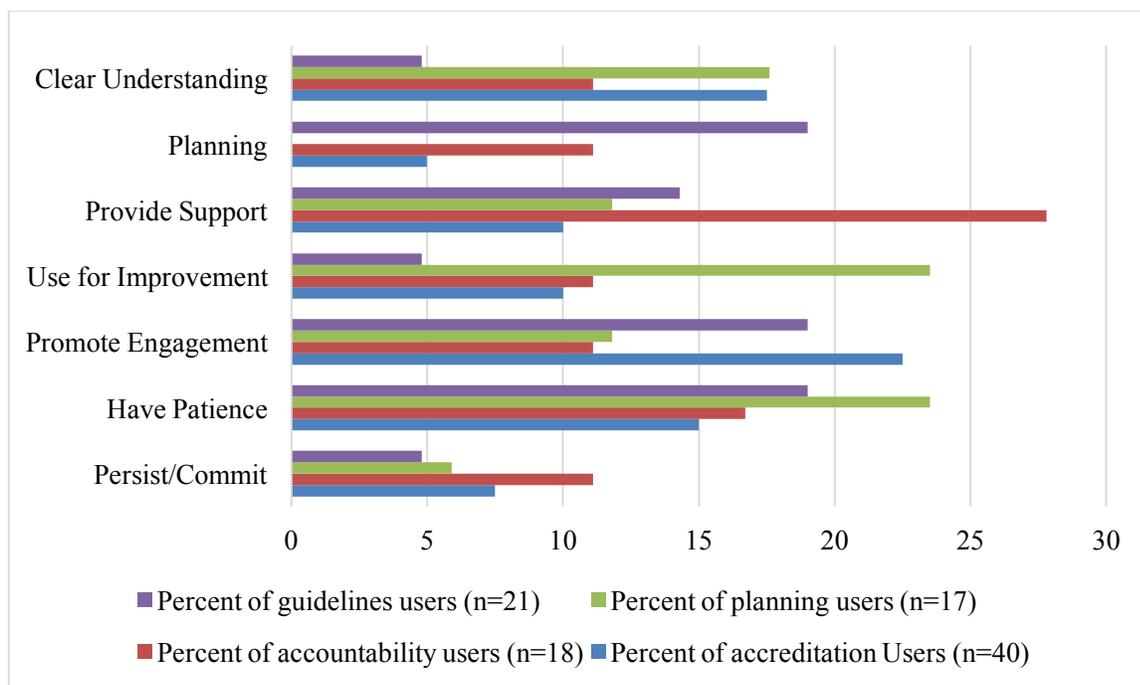

Figure 4. *Themes for Advice by Participants' Primary Purpose for Adopting the NSBECS*

Advice by Definition of Success. Participants described successful implementation in a number of different ways. Because different advice may be more appropriate for different desired outcomes, the researchers examined the advice provided by each theme for definition of success. In general, the most common pieces of advice were consistent across definitions of success; however, some connections were observed between themes for success and popular

pieces of advice. The most popular theme for descriptions of success was focus/direction; among

these users, the most common areas of advice were to promote engagement and provide support.

For users whose description of success involved unity, the most popular piece of advice was to

promote engagement. This seems logically consistent for users who define success at least in part

by unity within the school community. For users who described success in terms of Catholic

identity, the most popular area of advice was promote engagement followed by have patience

and planning. This may indicate a long-term vision of success among these users, and suggests

that stakeholder involvement is particularly important among users who may see success in

terms of Catholic community-building. While self-assessment was not one of the most common

themes for success, half of users who included this theme in their definition provided advice that

was coded as use for improvement; this may indicate a connection between assessment and

improvement planning, as proposed by the NSBECS rubrics.

Table 14

Advice Themes Reported by NSBECS Users

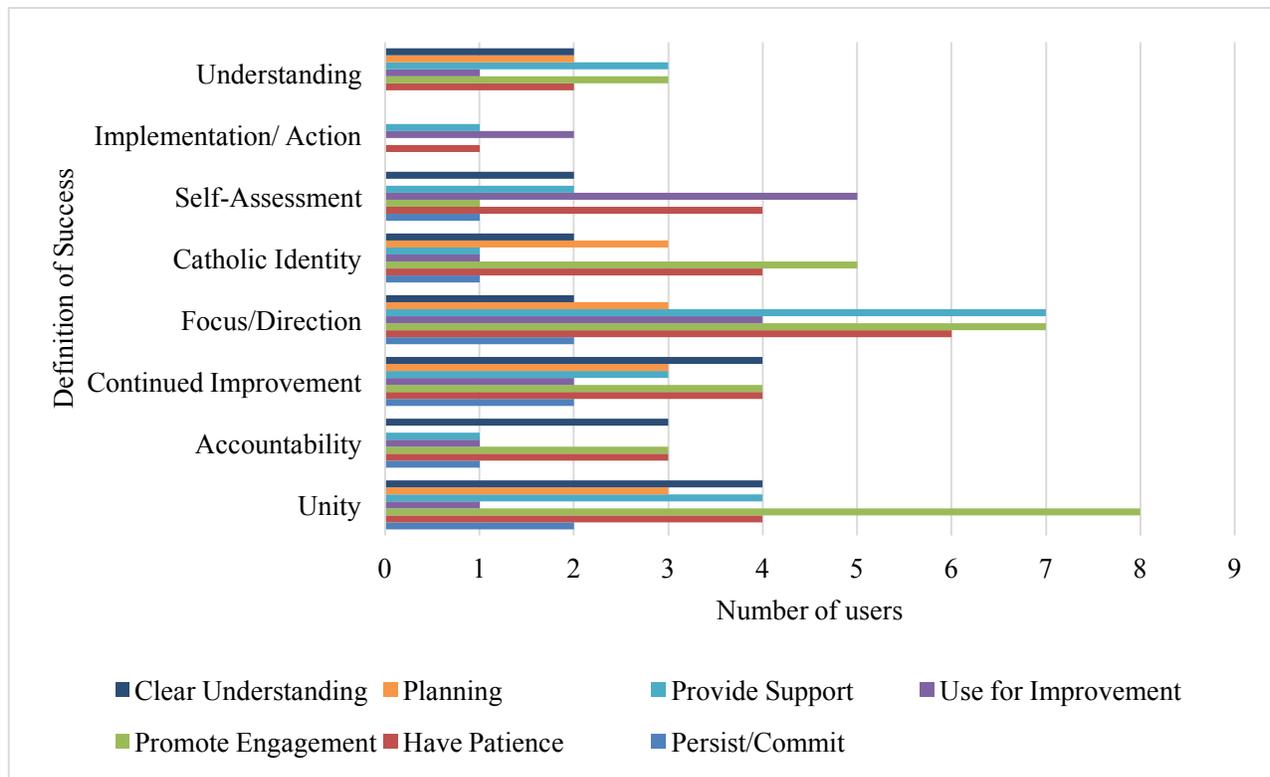|	Frequency	Percent of respondents (n=66)
Persist/Commit	8	12%
Have Patience	18	27%
Promote Engagement	17	26%
Use for Improvement	12	18%
Provide Support	17	26%
Planning	11	17%
Clear Understanding	15	23%
No Code Applies	10	15%

Figure 5. *Advice Themes by Definition of Success among NSBECS Users*

Discussion

The review of the literature set forth to examine a number of questions, including two that are worthy of review in light of the data regarding practices reported by users in Survey 2:

- When schools use standards to drive change and improvement, are there identifiable characteristics or conditions in the school community and/or in the methods of implementation of standards that contribute to stronger positive results?

- Are there frameworks and/or standards schools use to measure multidimensional school effectiveness beyond academic achievement alone?

As this review noted, there were three dominant strands of "standards" research in education and it was the third strand - the improvement paradigm - that most appropriately

related to the current research, as the NSBECS' conceptualization of effectiveness was most aligned with this paradigm. Standards in school improvement efforts are significant as they provide guidance and inform school leaders of the variables they should target to increase their success. The same variables or factors described in the literature were found to be important components of the most successful users' adoption and implementation of the NSBECS,

Factor 1: Leadership and Internal Management

As discussed in the literature, a school's capacity to meet the demands of standards begins with effective leadership. In the current research, the "most successful" respondents in Survey 2 also reported most often that a major component of practice was "a demonstrated personal commitment of the leader to implementing the standards," followed by "received commitment from the (arch)diocesan leaders." Further, when asked who was involved in the first and second steps of the adoption process, the superintendents and principals were the most frequently cited in steps one and two, with the majority citing the superintendent and the principal as involved in the first step of the process. The principal and board members were included most often in step 2. These results suggest that leadership plays a key role in the success of standards implementation, and at least in Catholic schools, this appears to be a collaborative effort between the principal and superintendent.

Factor 2: Frequent Measurement and Data-based Decision Making

Collecting, analyzing, and using data regarding performance against standards is essential to their success. Additionally, the literature suggests that schools that meet the expectations set by external standards need to monitor their progress internally more often than they are evaluated externally. The Survey 2 results demonstrate the same to be true for the respondents who reported "successful" experiences implementing NSBECS. When asked what resources/tools

were used for implementation, respondents noted that, at the outset, the benchmarks and rubric

measures were used for assessment accompanied by the surveys for faculty and staff and the

surveys for parents and stakeholder groups. Additionally, they reported the wide usage of these

same measures for monitoring progress throughout the adoption and implementation. The most

successful users of the NSBECS appeared to recognize the need for self-assessment to make

data-based decisions as they work to improve their schools' effectiveness.

Factor 3: Educators' Buy-In and Self-Efficacy

Implementation is the necessary link between standards and results. The people

responsible for implementation at a school must exhibit shared goals and a shared sense of

accountability to attain those goals (Murphy, 2013). To establish the necessary link between the

NSBECS and positive results, the "most successful" respondents in Survey 2 frequently reported

that a major component of practice was "establishing buy-in from faculty and staff." It was

recognized as a critical practice for success by principals and superintendents and as a result they

reported engaging in presentations and explanations of the standards at the start of the process.

The leadership worked to establish buy-in and a shared sense of mission-driven outcomes by also

sharing accreditation and diocesan expectations for effective schools.

Further outcomes reinforce this commitment to a shared buy-in. In fact it was found in

Survey 2 that when examining the use of the standards across all four domains, there was a

consistent and persistent reference to "mission" related outcomes among the most successful

users. This is important because the NSBECS are premised on the shared mission of Catholic

education. In fact, the top three outcomes reported by successful users as "most important" were

"the governing body and leadership team demonstrate increased commitment to continuous

improvement," followed by "school mission has greater centrality in the life and practice of the

school community," and thirdly "the school community demonstrates a deeper understanding of mission."

In summary, implementing the NSBECS has contributed to strong positive outcomes for a variety of Catholic schools and organizations, and the most successful users approached implementation with practices similar to those found in other successful school communities engaged in the implementation of other national standards, as described in the literature. These results further support the importance of the adoption of standards for all schools that seek to be effective schools, and in particular the adoption of the NSBECS for all Catholic schools seeking to be effective Catholic schools. Based on the responses provided, users have experienced success with the NSBECS as a catalyst for moving their organizations forward and as an agent of cohesion. Especially in the early stages of implementation, success may not necessarily be an end result but a clear path for ongoing improvement.

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