



CARDUS

EDUCATION SURVEY

A Cardus Research Study



There is a need for credible, ongoing research that examines the culture-shaping capability of Christian education in North America. In a major research study and public conversation, Cardus is seeking to explore questions about academic and spiritual outcomes, cultural influence, and teaching pedagogy within Christian education.

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# CARDUS

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## EDUCATION SURVEY

### Overview:

Cardus is commencing a study of Christian education (K-12) in North America. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study seeks to better understand the academic, spiritual, and cultural outcomes of Christian education. The Cardus Education Survey is a US\$1.1 million project, to be carried out over a two-year period and aimed at a series of scholarly articles, a book, and a major conference. The focus will be on Christian education as it is broadly understood (Catholic and Protestant, denominational, ecumenical and homeschools). This study will not only provide a research benchmark, but will also serve as catalyst for networking, identification of best practices, and ongoing conversation that will help shape the future of Christian education.



## Research Question:

Is there an alignment between the motivations for Christian education and the outcomes of Christian education—especially in the areas of academic excellence, spiritual formation, and cultural engagement?

## Operational Partners:

This project is being conducted in partnership with the University of Notre Dame and Redeemer University College.



## Funding Partners:

Three foundations are contributing to the Cardus Education Survey:

- The Richard & Helen DeVos Foundation
- The University of Notre Dame
- The Van Lunen Foundation
- The William Voortman Foundation



## Operational Working Group:

The core research team overseeing this study:



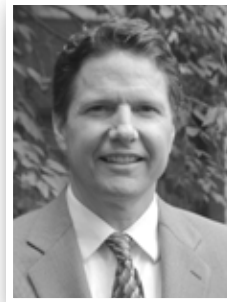
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## Advisory Group:

An Advisory Group has been formed to connect this project to other research on the subject in North America. The Advisory Group met in Chicago on March 27-28, 2009 and will reconvene in the fall of 2010 to receive the various research reports, to identify common themes and to guide the conclusions and recommendations that flow from the data. The Advisory Group consists of:

### DR. CHARLES GLENN

Dean, School of Education; Professor of Educational Policy and Fellow of the University Professors Program, Boston University

### ASHLEY ROGERS BERNER

Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia

### LEN STOB

Superintendent, Ontario Christian Schools

### DR. EDWIN HERNANDEZ

Foundation Research Director, RDV Corporation

### DAVID KINNAMAN

President and Strategic Leader, Barna Group

### JOSIAH BUNTING III

President, Lehrman American Studies Center at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute

### FATHER TIM SCULLY

Director, Institute for Educational Initiatives and Political Science Professor, University of Notre Dame

### FATHER WASHINGTON JARVIS

Headmaster Emeritus, Roxbury Latin School; Director, Educational Leadership and Ministry Program, Berkeley Divinity School at Yale

### JAN STUMP

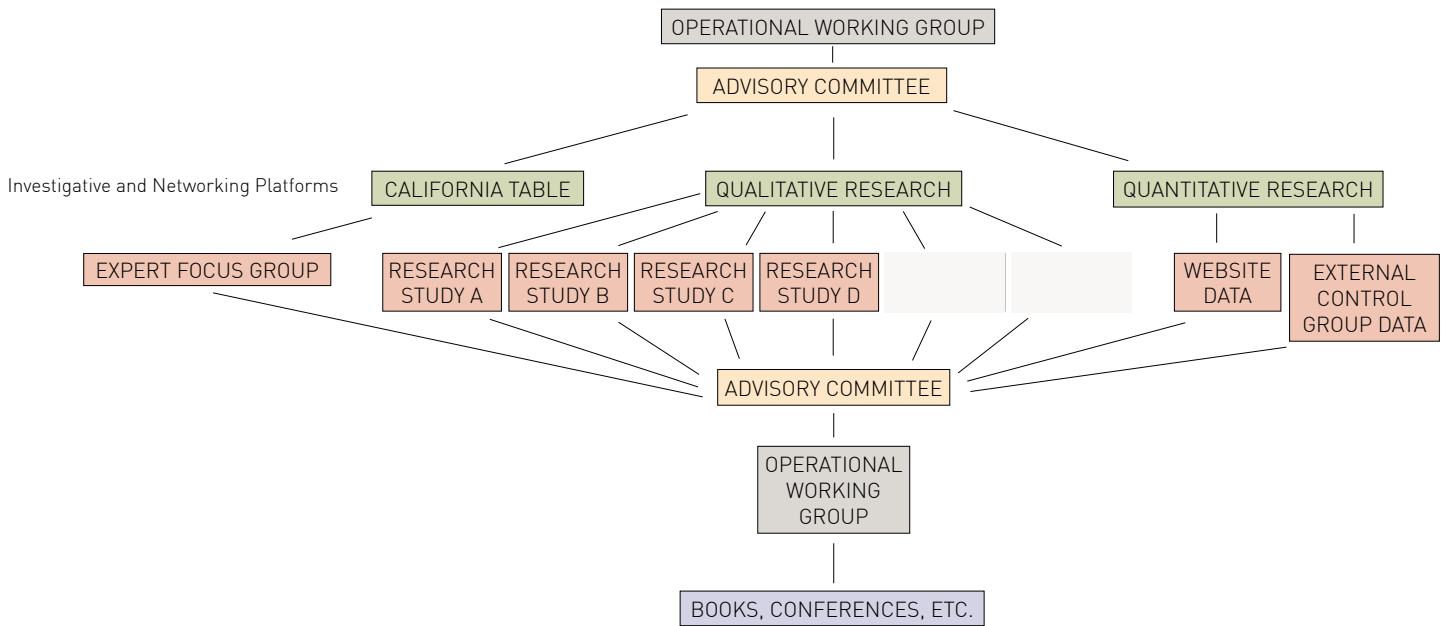
Director of Public Relations, Association of Christian Schools International

### DR. JEROME THAYER

Associate Research Director, Andrews University



## Organization:





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## **Research Project Summaries: Quantitative Study**

### **“The Alumni of Christian Schools: Quantitative Evidence of Christian School Graduates in North America”**

The goal of this study is to provide quantitative evidence on the life directions of graduates of Catholic and Protestant K-12 schools in the United States and Canada. The survey of graduates will focus on educational and occupational attainment, civic and political engagement, spiritual formation, marriage and family as well as social psychological outcomes in the young adult years.

#### **Primary Investigator**

This study will be led by primary investigator Dr. David Sikkink, Professor of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

#### **Summary**

This study investigates the diversity of Catholic and Protestant private schools in the US and Canada through surveys of administrators, teachers and graduates of Christian high schools. The goal is to understand differences in the effect of Christian schools on educational and occupational attainment, civic and political engagement, and spiritual outcomes over the life course.

#### **Methods**

The study focuses on a sample of alumni in Catholic and Protestant private schools, but takes seriously the particular school context. The proposed design will allow researchers to link detailed characteristics of schools with outcomes for alumni. The study will include web-based surveys of alumni, and will gather some family and church contextual data on each student through a parent



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survey. School data will be collected through an interview with a lead administrator of the school as well as with teachers at the sampled schools. A random sample of alumni in Catholic and Protestant schools in the mainland US and Canada will be selected through a random sample of religious schools. The research design emphasizes capturing a diversity of religious schools, and collecting useful data at the school level. The design targets about 300 Catholic and Protestant schools, and proposes to interview up to 20 graduates from each of three graduating classes (2003, 1997, 1991). The alumni and their parents will be invited to complete a web-based survey. School data will be collected through an interview with a lead administrator at the sampled schools, as well as an interview with teachers at the schools.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

The study will produce a rich dataset to investigate differences within the Christian school sector, including differences at the school level in mission, organization and pedagogy, as well as differences among recent graduates of Christian schools in educational, occupational, religious, spiritual, and family outcomes. This will provide the first in-depth understanding of Christian school variation in the United States and Canada.



## **Research Project Summaries: Qualitative Study #1**

### **“Christian school students’ cultural awareness of and engagement in their cultural context”**

The central question to be addressed by this study is how do Christian religious schools negotiate the boundaries of cultural awareness and engagement, and under what conditions and in what ways do they provide immersion in or, alternately, insularity from culture?

#### **Primary Investigator and Co-Investigator**

This study will be headed by primary investigator Dr. Harro Van Brummelen, Professor and Acting Dean, School of Education at Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia, Canada. The co-investigator will be Mr. Robert Koole, instructor of undergraduate and graduate courses in Trinity Western University’s School of Education.

#### **Summary**

The goal of the study will be to ascertain the ways and the extent to which Protestant and Catholic schools engage their students in cultural issues and concerns, and whether such engagement takes place within and/or outside the classroom, within or outside the formal curriculum, and deliberately by the school as a whole or just by individual teachers.

#### **Approach to Inquiry**

The main part of the study will involve interviews with the principal, one or two key teachers, and a small group of grade 12 students in each of 15-18 Christian secondary schools about cultural awareness and engagement. The schools will be chosen from representative private religious



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secondary schools, in Alberta, British Columbia, and Washington State, in schools affiliated with the Association of Christian Schools International, Christian Schools International, and the Catholic school sector. All schools in Alberta and British Columbia receive some government funding, and some in Alberta are fully-funded religiously-based alternative schools in the public school system.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

The study will provide an overview of what schools mean by their encouragement of cultural engagement, in writing, orally, and in practice. It also aims to establish whether such explicit and implicit definitions and their resulting praxis reveal a taxonomy of schools, at least at the secondary school level. It will also contribute to the current public debate in British Columbia and beyond about the values taught in religiously-based schools.



## **Research Project Summaries: Qualitative Study #2**

### **“Growing Thinking Christians: Outcomes of Christian Education”**

This study, using a mixed method design, will investigate the perceived influence of private K-12 Christian education on the academic achievement and spiritual formation of its graduates during their undergraduate university years.

#### **Principal Investigators**

The principal investigators are Dr. Patty LeBlanc, Associate Professor in the College of Education and Dr. Patty Slaughter, Associate Professor of Psychology at Southeastern University.

#### **Summary and Approach to Inquiry**

Approximately half of Southeastern University’s 3300 undergraduate students graduated from Christian secondary schools or were home educated within the past 4 years. After approval by the Institutional Review Board at Southeastern, the entire population of SEU students will be invited to take a web-based survey developed in association with The University of Notre Dame that will include, among other items, the following: demographic data [including ethnicity, high school GPA, SAT scores, college GPA, religious affiliation, level of involvement in Christian ministry and missions, type of high school they attended (public, private, private Christian, home school)], attitudes toward their academic preparation for college level work, spiritual values and connectedness, and cultural values and ideals. The data gathered will be analyzed with a view to comparing the results of those who have a secondary level Christian education with those that did not. Semi-structured one-hour face to face interviews of a stratified random sample of 250 Christian education graduates will then be conducted to gather their in-depth perspectives on how their Christian education has prepared



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them for academic success at the university level, to develop and live out their faith in their lives, to defend their faith and share it with others, to function and contribute in a diverse world. These questions will be refined once the results of the surveys are available. The interviewees will also be invited to reflect on how their Christian secondary education could have better supported their academic and spiritual development and thus have further enhanced their ability to contribute in society.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

The information gleaned from this study of Christian education outcomes will provide a thought-provoking overview of student beliefs and attitudes about the impact of Christian education on their worldview, cultural understanding, spiritual formation and academic achievement. Drawing together research from diverse sources, this study focuses on what Christian educators know about the influence of Christian education as well as those aspects that need to be studied further in order to forward ideas about best practices in Christian education. Despite the value society places on the kinds of learning addressed in this report, researchers still lack persuasive evidence about how well today's students are actually performing with regard to the key goals of Christian education. The researchers believe that the understandings gleaned from this study will help provide greater accountability for student achievement and Christian education outcomes.



## **Research Project Summaries: Qualitative Study #3**

### **“Race relations and racial integration in a private Christian school”**

This study will investigate to what extent different high-achieving urban secondary schools (evangelical, Catholic, public charter) create a racial climate characterized by mutual respect, and in what ways the strategies employed reflect the distinctive missions of these schools, and the worldviews upon which they are based.

#### **Principal Investigators**

Dr. Charles L. Glenn, Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Development at the School of Education at Boston University, and Dr. Cara Stillings Candal, Research Assistant Professor in the same department.

#### **Summary**

This is a study of racial climate in three racially-diverse and academically-oriented urban secondary schools in the same urban area: an evangelical Protestant school (member of both National Association of Independent Schools and Christian Schools International), a public charter school, and a Catholic school which is a member of the Cristo Rey network. All are fine schools; the interest of this thick description is to tease out what is distinctive about the religious schools, and in particular how their explicit religious character may affect the success of their goals of building strong relationships across racial lines. While it has frequently been noted that urban Catholic schools serve African-American youth especially well, there has been insufficient close-up study of how that occurs, and in addition the large evangelical Protestant sector has been little studied in an urban setting. By conducting parallel studies of three fine urban schools, two of



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which have explicitly religious characters, we expect to tease out the distinctive contribution of that character.

### **Approach to Inquiry**

A comparative case study approach will be employed. Four different data collection strategies will be used to conduct each case study: student and faculty surveys, student and faculty focus groups, individual interviews with students and faculty, and ethnographic observation.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

We anticipate that these different data collection strategies will allow the investigators to produce a rich, thick, description of the nature of race/cultural relationships in the two schools under study. The intended outcomes are (a) to inform practice in faith-based schools which are seeking to exemplify and witness to racial reconciliation, and (b) to answer critics who charge that faith-based schools are socially divisive.



## **Research Project Summaries: Qualitative Study #4**

### **“Stopping the Revolving Door: Role Stress and Educational Leader Retention”**

This investigation is a study of heads and principals of Christian schools. Situated in the research on current leadership models and on longevity and turnover rates of educational leaders this study seeks to determine the antecedents of longevity, turnover and vitality of heads of Christian schools and their effect on the schools' achieving their purposes.

#### **Primary investigator and Co-Investigators**

Primary investigator, Dr. Jack E. Beckman, Associate Professor at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, USA with co-investigators, Dr. James L. Drexler, Chair of the Teacher Education Program at Covenant College and Dr. Kevin J. Eames, Director of Institutional Research at Covenant College will conduct this study.

#### **Summary**

Through a broad survey of current heads of schools in organizations such as Christian Schools International (CSI), the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the Catholic school sector, the study is designed to gain information regarding head turnover rates in Christian schools, possible causes of these changes, related board and governance structures, and a variety of other factors that will offer a clearer picture of educational leadership in private religious schools. How does the leadership offered by principals and heads in such schools contribute to the schools achieving their purposes and what is the possible impact on academic, spiritual and cultural outcomes of Christian education in our times? Particularly, how does educational leadership tenure impact a) the roles, professional growth, and pedagogical knowledge and praxis of instructional practitioners, and b) the educational outcomes for students? The extant research on educational leadership addresses the



key role the leader performs and models in the professional learning community in terms of faith and learning initiatives, curricular strength and achievement, professional challenge and development of instructional faculty, and overall institutional atmosphere and culture. Each of these essential aspects is powerful influences upon student outcomes as they journey through the school experience.

### **Approach to Inquiry**

A survey instrument completed by selected participants will be followed by interviews with heads of schools. Particular attention will be given to educational leaders who have had comparatively long tenures and those who have experienced multiple administrative placements (extreme and/or critical cases). At least two case studies involving long-term tenure vs. intermittent tenure will be probed to identify exemplars and/or remarkable attributes.

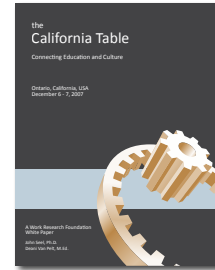
### **Anticipated Outcomes**

Quantitative outcomes should be valid to use as predictors of administrative turnover. Factor analyses will be performed to confirm the factor structure of role stress and burnout and the data should yield a logistic regression equation predicting factors leading to likely turnover. Qualitative outcomes should provide greater depth in understanding the factors leading to turnover and what strategies administrators employ to moderate the effects of role stress. An analysis of the integrated data should provide a holistic picture of the impact of role stress on leaders and the moderating effects of experience and burnout prevention strategies. Such insights should yield information for boards and governors hoping to recruit and retain talented educational leaders by facilitating a fulfilling work environment with relatively mild role stress.



## California Table

In December 2007, a group of 37 Christian educational and cultural leaders representing some of the diversity of the sector met in California for a symposium that explored some of the questions at the interface between Christian education and culture. The result of that symposium led to the publishing of a discussion paper ([www.cardus.ca/research/education](http://www.cardus.ca/research/education)) and ultimately to this study.



A similar meeting will be held in California on December 3-4 of 2009, at which time the major themes of this research project will be explored and developed.



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## Contact Cardus:

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A website will be set up to provide updates on this project as it develops:  
[www.carduseducationsurvey.com](http://www.carduseducationsurvey.com)

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