



## **NativityMiguel Coalition Stronger Than Ever:**

### **35 Faith-Based Schools Join Forces to Better Serve America's Urban Poor Children**

Believing they are “stronger together,” 35 faith-based schools across the nation have reinvented the NativityMiguel organization so that they may thrive in education of America’s urban, poor children as a mission-aligned force.

For more than 40 years, NativityMiguel schools have made a unique impact in communities across the country by providing a quality, faith-based education for students from low-income families. Then, in spring 2012, the NativityMiguel Network, an organization founded to support the needs of schools, suddenly dissolved, leaving the schools without a meaningful, formal association with other mission-aligned schools and like-minded leaders. Barely skipping a beat, the schools themselves picked up the cause and re-formed the organization with a new name, NativityMiguel Coalition, and a new structure driven by the member schools.

“We maintain the same mission and hold each other accountable to the same Core Beliefs that lead to strong educational outcomes,” says Terry Shields, the Coalition’s new Director and the organization’s former Vice President for Mission and Programming. “These independent, faith-based schools face similar challenges and thrive on the ideas, expertise and best-practice-sharing that comes with being part of a larger group.”

There are currently 35 member schools founding the Coalition and they are educating over 2,700 students and supporting 5,100 graduates. Based on 2012-13 data, 87% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, 45% are African-American and 36% are Hispanic. The schools are located in 15 states, the District of Columbia, and one Canadian province.

“Nothing is more important to the future of our Church and our nation than ensuring every child has access to a high-quality education. It is their birthright and our responsibility,” says Tim Scully, C.S.C., Hackett Family Director, Institute for Educational Initiatives, and Co-founder of the Alliance for Catholic Education at the University of Notre Dame. “The work of the NativityMiguel Coalition is an example of the innovative and mission-driven commitment needed to create a better future for the hundreds of thousands of students in this country who face socio-economic hardship, and for the parents who struggle to secure equal opportunity for their children to attend great schools. The Coalition’s work is a matter of justice. It must be expanded, and wherever possible, replicated.”

David Card, President of Escuela de Guadalupe in Denver, CO, chaired the steering committee to re-launch the Coalition.

“This Coalition is critical to private, independent, faith-based schools that are trying to blaze a trail in their area,” he says. “We believe we are stronger together and our association has always provided

value to us. The Coalition offers an alternative model for traditional parochial schools that have struggled to remain viable today, particularly in urban settings.”

According to Shields, the Coalition maintains three primary objectives:

- Ensure that member schools are delivering a mission-aligned, faith-based education with excellent outcomes.
- Compel, equip and inspire member schools with the expertise to support immediate and long-term growth.
- Promote practices within the Coalition to inform and spur excellence in other faith-based schools.

He adds that the Coalition also helps to hold member schools accountable to high standards. “Member schools push each other to keep their expectations high,” he says. “There is built-in peer-to-peer accountability.”

In service to the member schools, the Coalition’s leadership will study what is working in member schools; coordinate two national conferences annually; develop a regional structure with regional programming; share best practice through technology and a dynamic knowledge platform; be accessible to advise and support school leaders on strategic priorities; and connect expertise and research of institutional partners with member schools.

The Coalition’s first Leadership Conference was held October 27 and 28, 2014 in Philadelphia in partnership with St. Joseph’s University.

“One of the most innovative sectors of Catholic education has been the focused mission of NativityMiguel schools to transform the opportunity of America's most distressed urban communities,” says Daniel Joyce S.J., Executive Director of the ACESJU Education Fellow Program at Saint Joseph's University. “I am delighted that these school leaders have come together in a unified effort toward this important mission.”

“How do you deliver a high-quality, private, faith-based education to an impoverished population that often feels such an education is inaccessible to them?” Shields explains. “It is possible and it can be effective, but also very demanding, and you can’t push that rock uphill all by yourself for very long. Schools that become part of a larger movement that is succeeding immediately gain support and resources for their cause.”



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