



Survey Results: Archdiocesan Task Force on the Ministerial Covenant

April, 2021

This report summarizes the findings of a survey created and administered by the Archdiocesan Task Force on the Ministerial Covenant for the second phase of their work. The goal of this phase was to assess, analyze, and summarize the understanding, convictions, beliefs, and opinions of a variety of archdiocesan stakeholders regarding the Ministerial Covenant and its use in employment decisions.

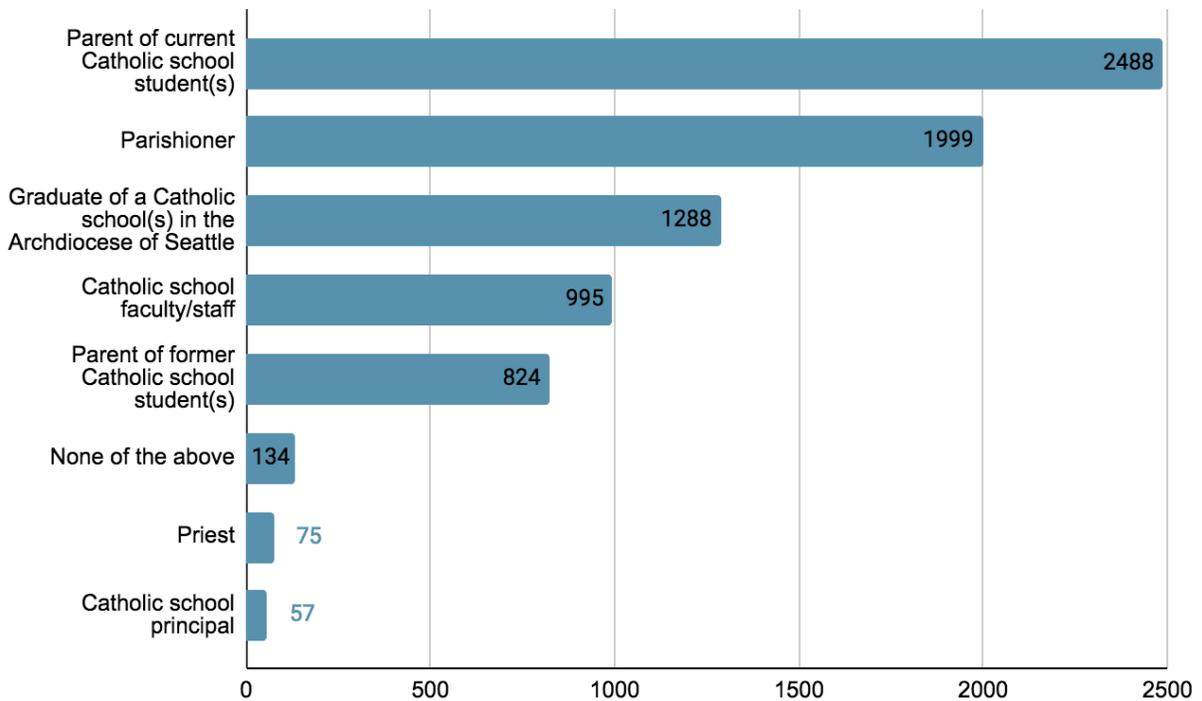
The survey was developed in consultation with researchers from Catapult Learning. The Task Force provided feedback for multiple iterations of the survey before it was launched in January, 2021. A link to the online survey was emailed directly to presidents and principals of schools with instructions to forward to their employees, school families, and alumni. It was also sent to pastors and parish leaders with an invitation to share with parishioners. A webpage was developed on the Office of Catholic Schools site to direct any other interested stakeholders to the survey.

The survey was available for a period of seven weeks, from January 7-February 25, 2021. In that time, 4,957 people accessed the survey. The fact that nearly 5,000 people volunteered to respond to an invitation to provide input on the Ministerial Covenant reflects a population eager to engage with current issues in Catholic schools. The high participation may also represent high public awareness and strong opinions about the Ministerial Covenant based on prior knowledge and experiences. Therefore, it is important to consider that the data may be impacted by self-selection bias, that is, people choosing to respond may have stronger opinions or more personal connections to the topic than those who did not opt to participate. Nevertheless, the large sample size affords the ability to make generalizable conclusions from the results.

Participant Information

Respondents were asked to identify their affiliation to the Archdiocese of Seattle from the following list (selecting all that applied). Those indicating no affiliation as a stakeholder of interest for this survey (“none of the above”) were exited from the survey, as they were deemed ineligible for participation.

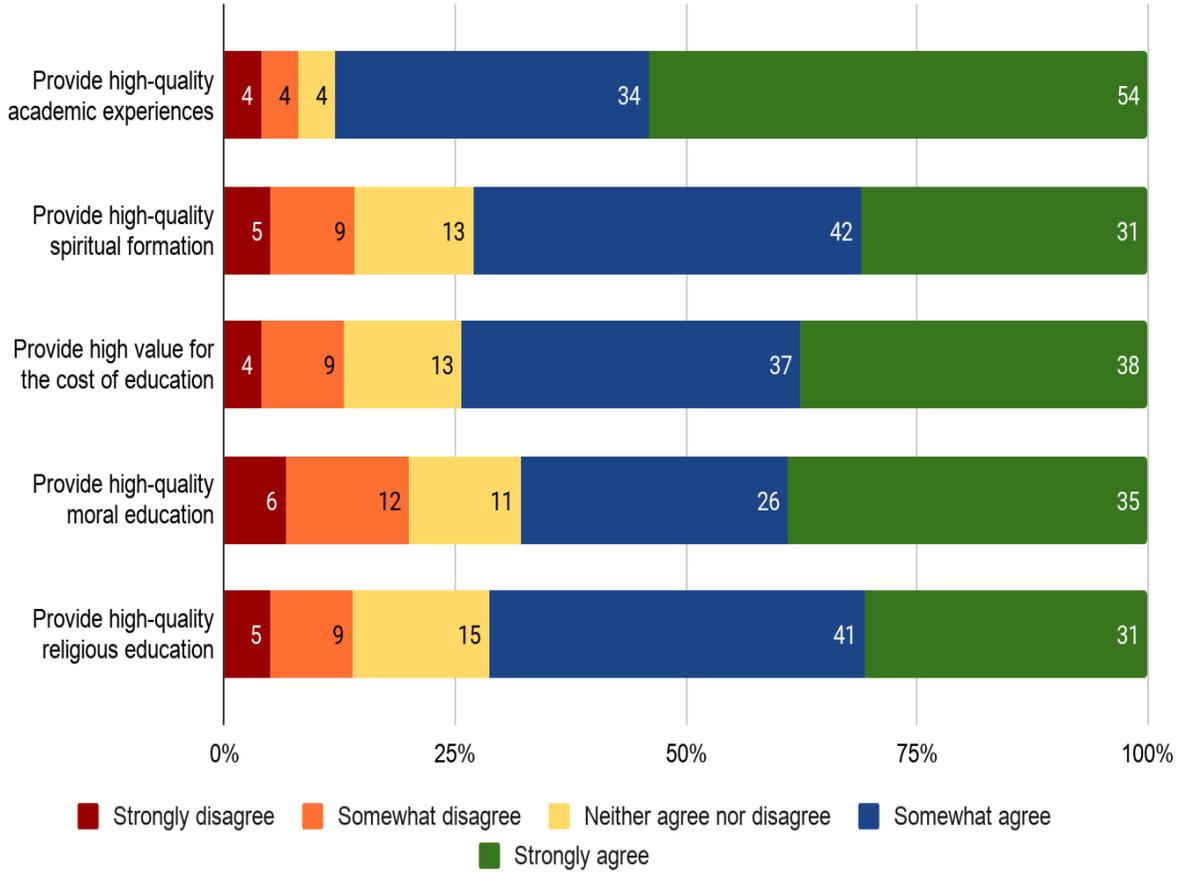
Current Catholic school parents were the largest group of respondents (2488). A large number of alumni/alumnae of Catholic schools participated (1288) as well as current faculty/staff members (995). The number of parishioners was also high (1999), but most of these respondents also belonged to other categories. Only 274 respondents selected parishioner only from this list of affiliations.



In response to demographic questions, the sample was 75% female, 80% Catholic, and predominantly middle-aged, with 37% between in their 40s, 24% in their 50s, and 19% in their 30s. Twelve percent were over age 60 and 8% were under age 30.

Impressions of Archdiocesan Catholic Schools

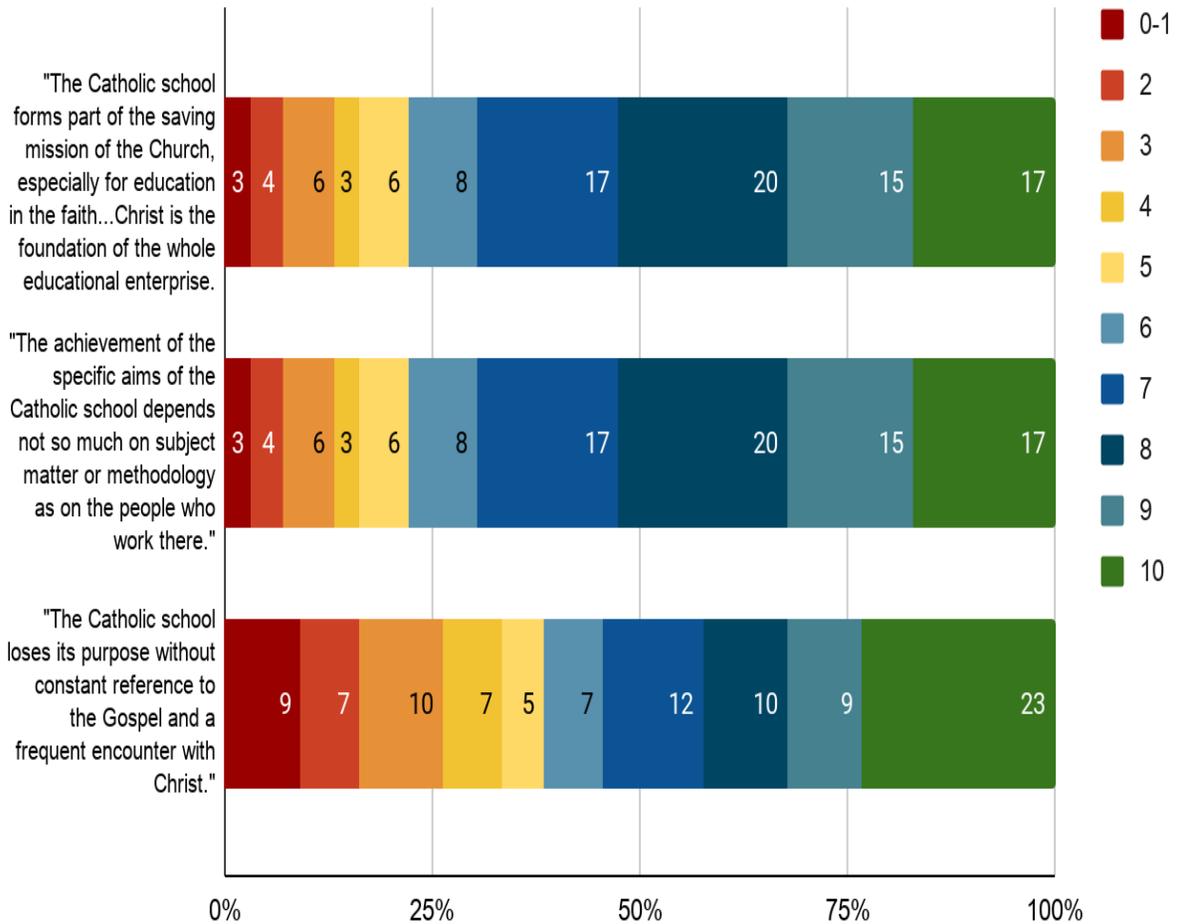
The survey asked stakeholders to rate their agreement with statements about the quality of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle. Results are displayed in the chart below, by percentage of responses for each rating.



As the chart shows, 88% at least somewhat or strongly agreed that the schools provide high-quality academic experiences. There was slightly less agreement for the other statements, but all were still over 70%. Moreover, when presented with the mission statement for Catholic schools, on a scale from 1-10, responses averaged **7.88** for ratings of the accuracy of the mission. This indicates overall favorable impressions of Catholic education in Seattle.

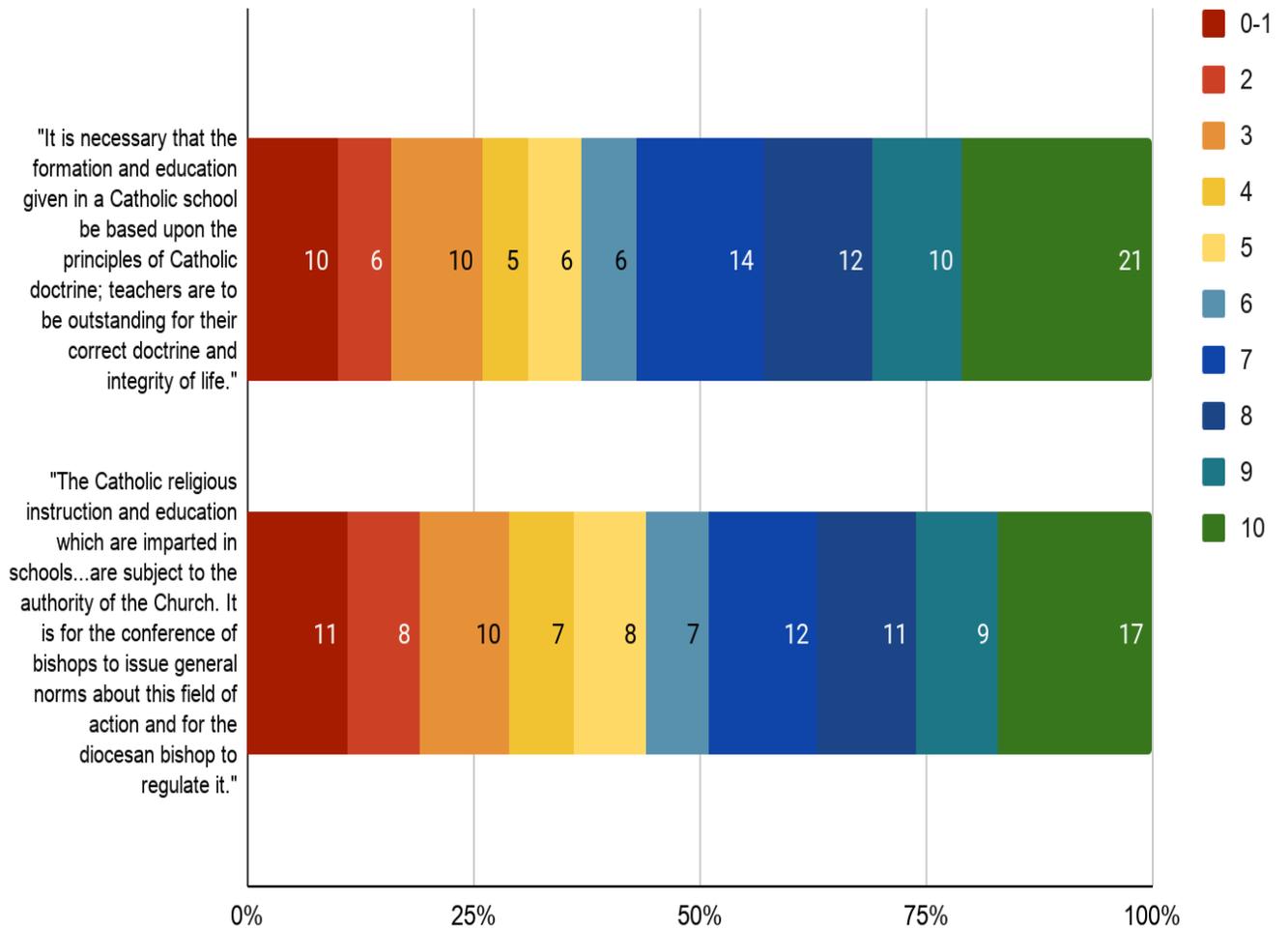
Official Church Teaching on Catholic Schools

The survey presented a few statements drawn from the Vatican document *The Catholic School*. Participants were asked to rate their personal agreement with each statement on a scale from 1-10. Percentages of responses in each numerical category are presented below.



The mean values for agreement ratings for these statements was **7.86**, **7.07**, and **6.23**, respectively. The chart shows a fair amount of variability in the responses, but mostly high ratings, as seen by the wider bands for higher ratings and the general skew to the right on the scale.

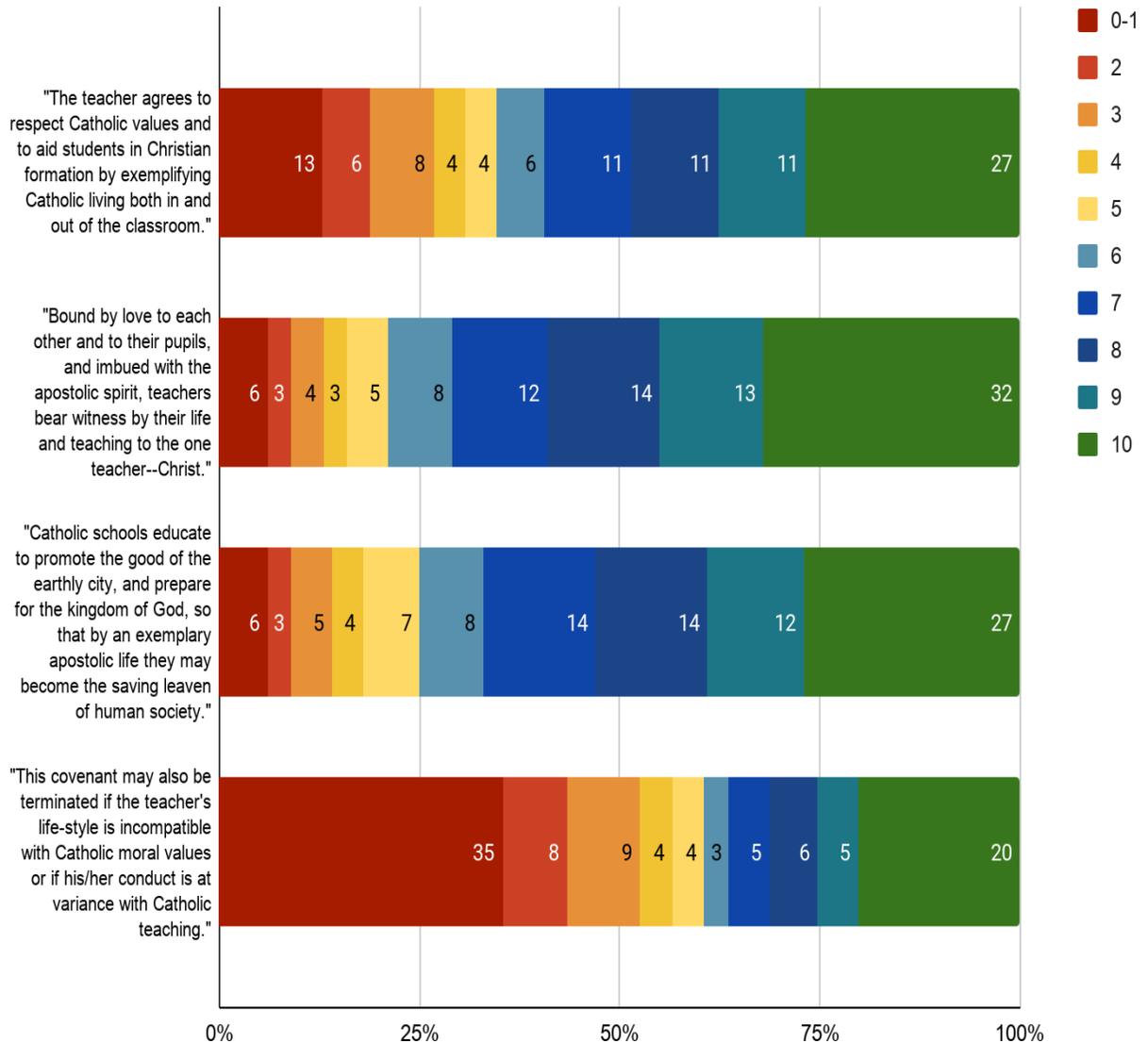
Similarly, participants were asked to rate their personal agreement with passages from the *Code of Canon Law* related to Catholic schools.



The mean responses for these two items were **6.23** and **5.82**, reflecting slightly lower personal agreement with Canon Law statements than with passages from the Vatican document referenced above.

The Ministerial Covenant

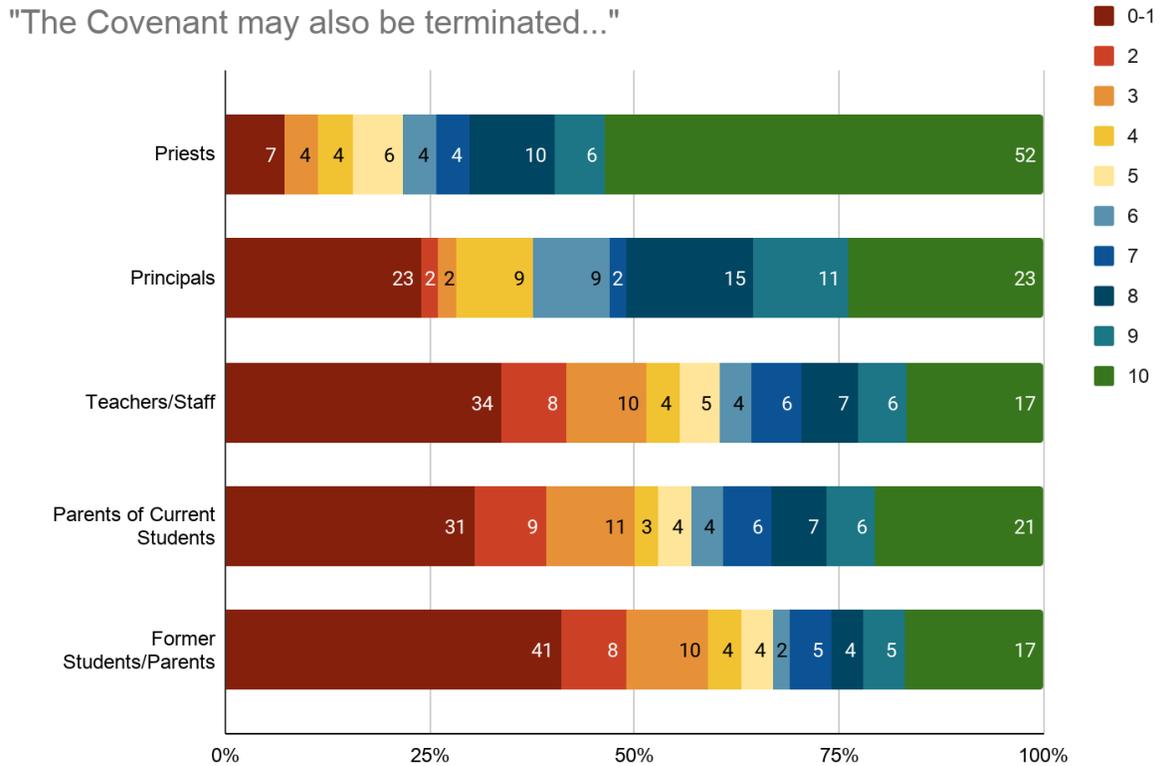
Passages from the Archdiocesan Ministerial Covenant were then presented in the survey, and again participants were asked to rate their personal agreement on a scale from 1-10. Note that instances of “teacher” in these passages were also in reference to principals and presidents of schools. Some words were omitted from passages for brevity in this display, but the meaning was retained.



Mean ratings for these four statements were **6.43**, **7.37**, **7.11**, and **4.41**, respectively. Of note is the large amount of low ratings for the fourth statement, related to the termination of the covenant due to teacher’s life-style or conduct. This question was explored further, by disaggregating results by participants and with questions assessing awareness of and agreement with the Ministerial Covenant statement about termination.

Looking more closely at the last item in the above section, participants were asked to rate their personal agreement with the statement “This Covenant may also be terminated if the teacher’s

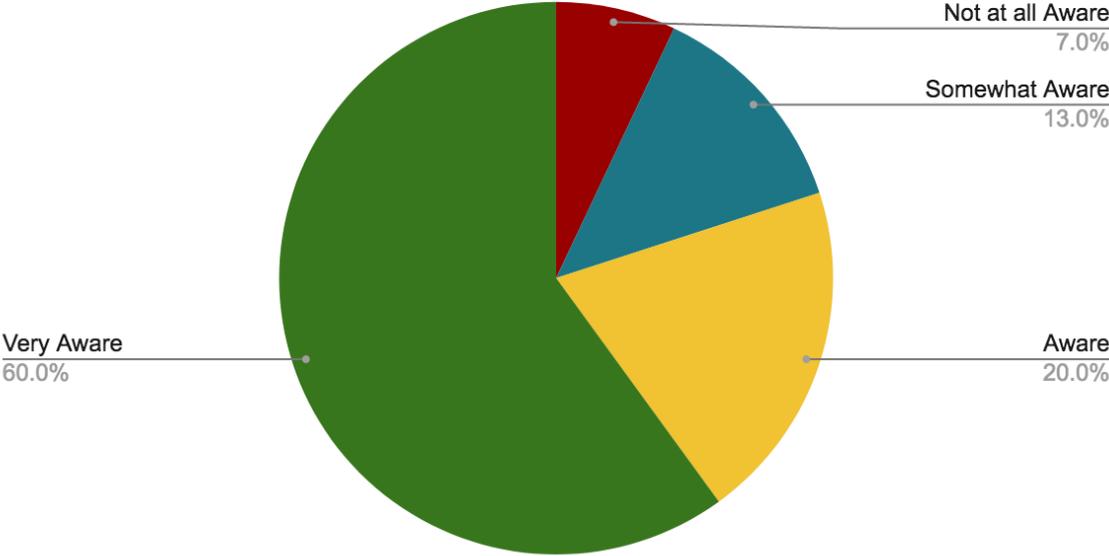
life-style is incompatible with Catholic moral values or if his/her conduct is at variance with Catholic teaching.” There was variability in agreement with this statement based on stakeholder groups. In the following chart, the responses to this question are disaggregated by priests, principals, teachers/staff, current parents, and alumni/alumni parents.



As the chart shows, priests had far higher rates of agreement with this statement than any other stakeholder group, and former students and their parents had the highest rates of disagreement. Note that the chart shows percentages, and the groups are not of equal size. For priests, 52% is 35 priests rating this statement at 10, and 7% represents just 5 priests rating 0-1 for their agreement. Likewise, for principals, 23% is 11 principals rating 0-1 agreement and also 11 principals rating agreement of 10.

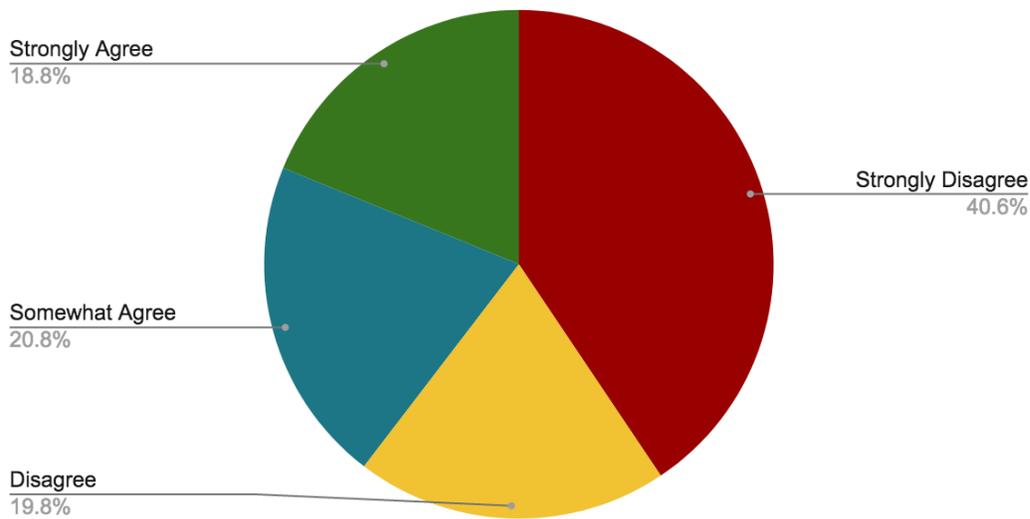
The survey then asked if respondents were aware of the Ministerial Covenant clause that teachers/presidents/principals can be terminated based on life-style or conduct.

Teachers can be terminated if "life-style" or "conduct" is at variance with Church teachings.



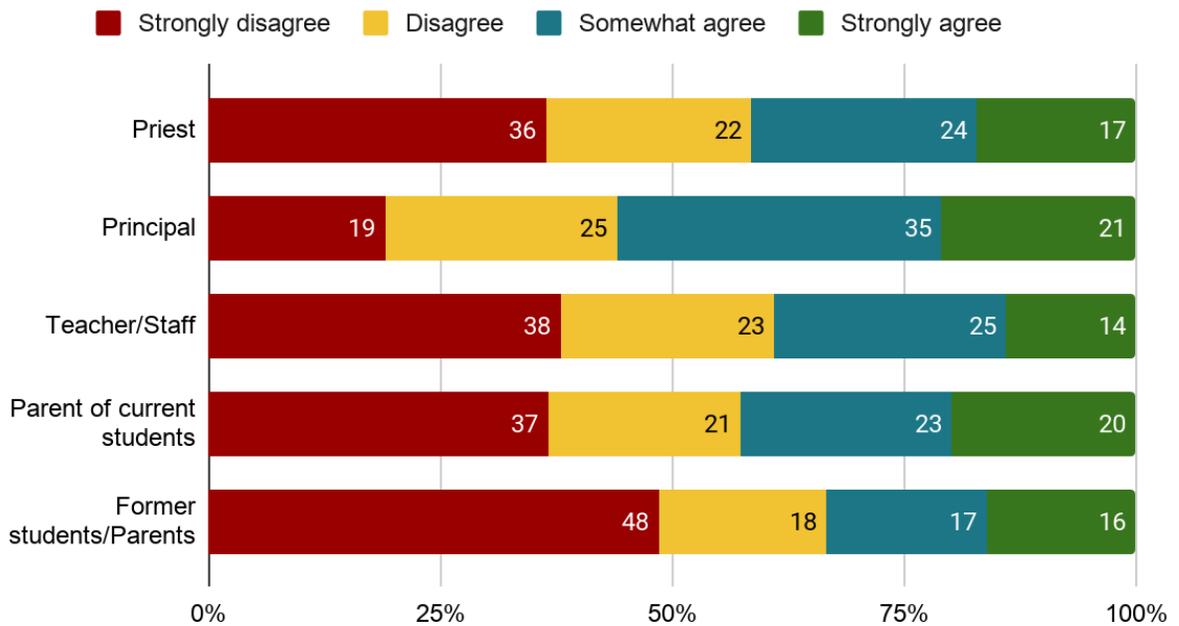
Participants reported high awareness of the termination statement in the Ministerial Covenant, with 93% being at least “somewhat aware” of this policy. Then they were asked if they agreed with this statement. Responses are shown in the chart below.

Teachers should be terminated if "life-style" or "conduct" is at variance with Church teachings.



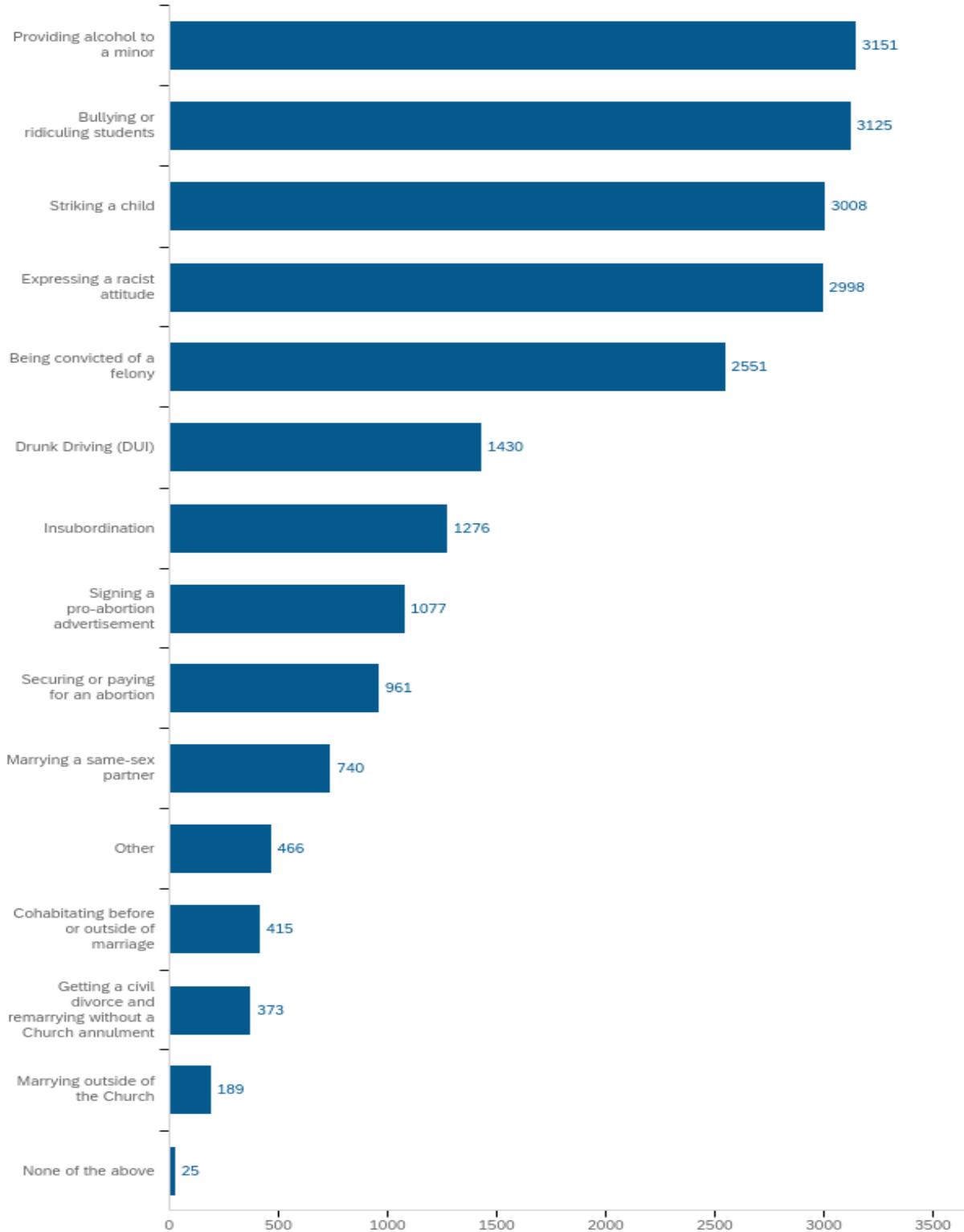
Responses show that a majority (61%) of participants “Disagree” (20%) or “Strongly disagree” (41%) with the policy of terminating teachers, as stated in the Ministerial Covenant. The chart below shows this data disaggregated by stakeholder groups.

Do you agree...?



Almost 50% of alumni and their parents strongly disagree with this statement in the Ministerial Covenant, whereas only 19% of principals strongly disagree.

Next, participants were presented with a list of actions that are at variance with Catholic teaching in different ways. They were asked to select which of the actions they would consider of such seriousness that they would violate or break the Ministerial Covenant, thereby rendering a person ineligible for employment in a Catholic school.



Responses indicate clear intolerance among respondents for actions that directly affect students, such as providing alcohol to minors, bullying students, striking a child, or expressing racism. Additional infractions provided by those selecting “other” included sexual abuse or harassment, drug use, and domestic violence, among other responses.

Items concerning teachers’ personal lives that less directly impacted students, such as marrying outside of the church, getting remarried after a civil divorce without an annulment, cohabitating before marriage, marrying a same-sex partner, and even having or paying for an abortion were less likely to be considered as serious enough to constitute a break of the Ministerial Covenant.

When looked at by stakeholder group, there were some differences. Alumni and their parents have racism as the most frequently cited issue and much smaller agreement with items from the bottom of the chart relating to personal lives. Priests have issues of abortion higher than any other stakeholder group and are far less concerned with drunk driving or felonies than others, for example.

Participant Comments

Finally, the survey included an optional open-ended question for participants to provide additional comments about the Archdiocesan Catholic schools or the Ministerial Covenant. Comments were limited to 400 characters in order to encourage succinct responses and enable efficient analysis.

A total of 1534 stakeholders provided a response to the optional open-ended question, representing 31% of survey completers. The comments were analyzed through qualitative coding procedures. The researcher made an initial pass through the data, reading to determine trends and possible themes. Then, a coding scheme was developed and each comment was read and coded in two stages. Stage One was an overall code for each comment based on whether the comment reflected an opinion in support of the Ministerial Covenant, against the Ministerial Covenant, or as a neutral or not related to the Ministerial Covenant. Stage Two included thematic coding based on the content of the comments. The tables below provide descriptions and frequency counts for each code.

Stage One Coding Frequencies

Code	Description	Example Comment	Frequency	Percent
Support	Opinion in support of Ministerial Covenant	“I think it is very important to uphold and retain the "Catholic moral values" clause for employees.”	201	13%
Against	Opinion against Ministerial Covenant	“No one should be terminated just because they don't follow Church law exactly. Everyone is human and makes choices, sometimes good sometimes bad. Isn't that why God gave us free will? The Church needs to evolve with the times.”	939	61%
Neutral	Neutral opinion or comment unrelated to Covenant	“The voices of the school community are not involved, sought, or taken into consideration when major decisions are being considered.”	394	26%

Each comment was assigned to only one code during Stage One coding. Results of this coding showed that most participants (61%) opting to make a comment expressed an opinion that was antithetical to the Ministerial Covenant in some way. About a quarter of the comments were deemed as not relevant to the Covenant (26%), and the remaining comments (13%) expressed opinions that were in agreement with the purpose and function of the Ministerial Covenant.

Stage Two Coding Frequencies

Code	Description	Example	Frequency
Same-sex	Positive reference to same-sex relationships or LGBTQ community	“I feel very strongly that God loves all his children; gay, straight, bi, and anything else. The Church is behind the times when it comes to accepting our gay brothers and sisters as also made in God's image. God doesn't make mistakes and they were born gay for a reason. It's time we accept them.”	519
Love	Loving neighbor, treating all with love	“As always, if the Church could focus less on sex organs, and more on love, charity, & community, the Church & the world would be better places.” “Love is love.”	152

Outdated	Church or policies are out of touch with modern times	“Embracing all regardless of who they choose to marry or divorce is what Christ would do. Let’s focus less on outdated Catholic doctrine and more on living like Jesus.”	147
Judge	People should not judge others	“For safety of children I believe there are certain behaviors that should not be tolerated. As for the rest, it is before God that these individuals must answer, not us. If God in his love forgives us. If Jesus died for our sins--we must be entrusted with the ability to grow and change.”	128
Inconsistent	Reference to Church teachings being enforced inconsistently	“Homosexual teachers have lost their jobs while heterosexual teachers who cohabit or are not sacramentally married are not questioned. The double standard feels obvious and unfair.”	118
Private	Employees’ personal lives should be kept private	“As long as a teacher is great to the students during any interactions, I could care less about what they do in their private lives.”	80
Legal	Breaking law is more problematic than violating Church teachings	“It is important to protect our students from illegal and endangering behaviors. However, we should take care to distinguish acts that are illegal by state law and those that happen outside the school and do not impact a person's ability to do their job.”	75
Abuse	Reference to Church sexual abuse	“How is it that the church will allow pedophile clergy to abuse children, but they won't allow an adult couple to share their love?”	69
More Cath	Desire for schools to be more Catholic	“Attending a catholic school with basically kids who have no Christian morals or guidance is hypocritical and should not be called a Catholic school. The school has become just a private school.”	52
Tradition	Need to follow Church traditions	“The secular community wants us to change our traditional moral values. Why are we even considering it? If you do not believe in the teachings of the Catholic Church you should not be teaching or sending your children there. Either we stand up for our principles, and get ready to die for our beliefs, or we are hypocrites.”	39

Thanks	Gratitude for opportunity to participate	“I had 18 years of catholic education and have provided my three children a catholic education and I have never been asked my opinion on doctrine. Thank you for developing this survey.”	37
Pope	Reference to Pope Francis’ comments	“‘If a person is gay and seeks the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?’ - Pope Francis”	32
Survey	Criticisms of the survey structure or content	“The survey seems manipulative and biased toward soliciting certain responses.”	31
COVID	Comments on schools’ approach to COVID protocols	“I’ll take this opportunity to express my intense desire that our kids need to back in school face-to-face full time. No excuses.”	17
Formation	Need for adult formation in schools	“The formation of educators in their Catholic faith is severely lacking. People are then shocked when lawsuits come up. These are completely avoidable if people are well formed.”	14
Anti-gay	Negative comments about LGBTQ people or those who support them	“Jesus taught us to love one another but he also said that a marriage is between a man and woman. Love one another but obey the rules He taught us.”	12

During Stage Two coding, comments could be (and very often were) assigned multiple codes, so the numbers reflected above add up to more than the total number of comments. The codes are presented in the table by order of frequency. By far, the most frequently assigned code was Same-sex, indicating that about a third of the comments (34%) mentioned support of same-sex relationships or care for LGBTQ people. Clearly, participants were responding to this survey with this issue in mind. In contrast, only 12 comments were coded as Anti-gay, meaning that they expressed sentiments directly against same-sex relationships or LGBTQ people.

Codes of Love, Outdated, Judge, and Inconsistent were all used more than 100 times, making them the next most frequently occurring themes. A smaller number of respondents made comments coded as More Cath (52) and Tradition (39). These codes were often co-occurring, and almost always were from statements that were coded as supporting the Ministerial Covenant in Stage One.

In summary, survey results revealed that stakeholders are generally aware of the Ministerial Covenant that applies to teachers, presidents, and principals of Catholic schools. They largely disagree with the fact that people can be terminated for actions at variance with Catholic teaching, particularly when those actions only relate to one's personal life and do not have a direct impact on students. A minority of participants expressed support for the Ministerial Covenant, along with a desire for Catholic schools to be "more Catholic" and uphold traditional Church teachings, while a much larger number of participants felt that the Church teachings are "outdated" and, in particular, desired greater acceptance for LGBTQ people.