

Feasibility and Planning Study Presentation for The Diocese of Alexandria Avoyelles Parish

March 2008



Community Counselling Service

Fund Raising/Public Relations/Research

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

www.ccsfundraising.com

Goals and Objectives of the Study

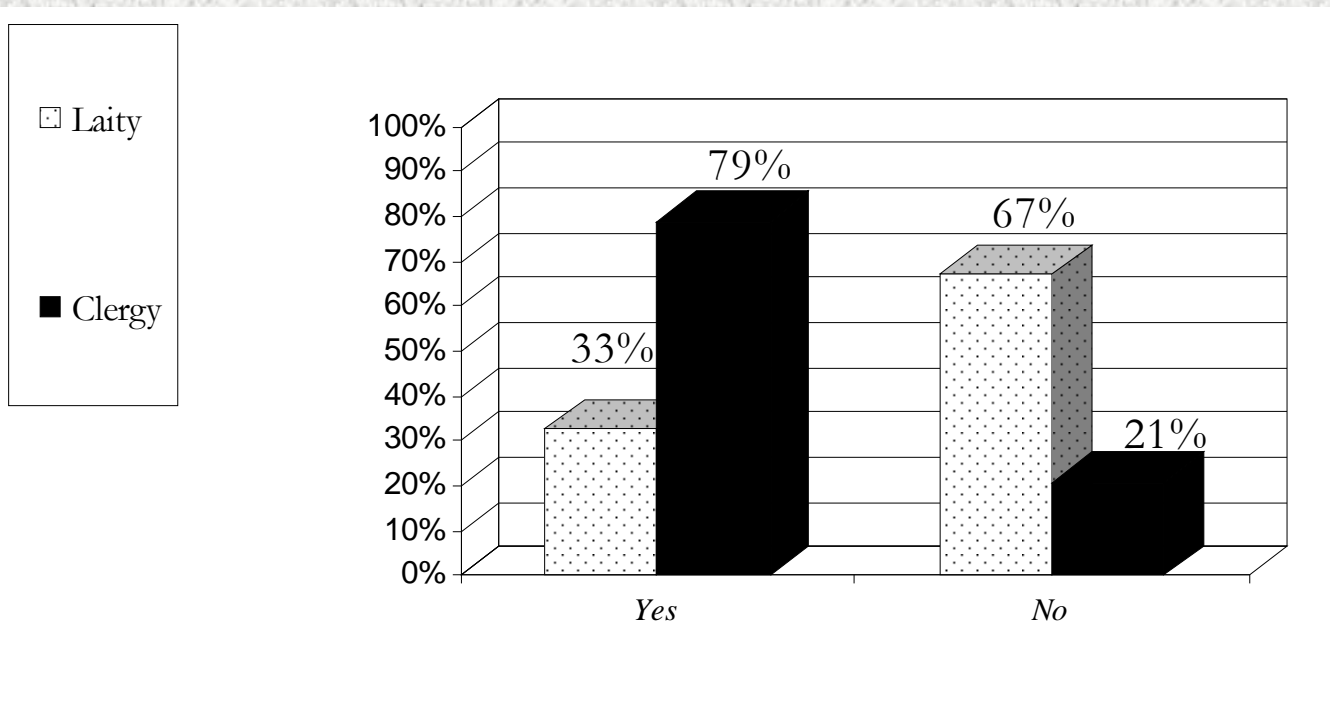
- Assess perceptions of the Diocese of Alexandria's proposed plans for strengthening Catholic education and formation, as suggested in the 2005 Catholic University of America planning study;
- Inform participants about the proposed plans and obtain additional feedback on options involving relocation and consolidation of schools, and choices for renovation and new construction of school facilities;
- Determine reactions to the proposed projects outlined in background information statements for Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes;
- Test proposed financial objectives of \$12 million among Avoyelles Parish participants,
- Identify, educate, and cultivate potential leaders and major donors;
- Test the willingness of participants to lead, organize, make visits and provide financial support;
- Identify potential issues and obstacles to success and determine solutions.



Findings

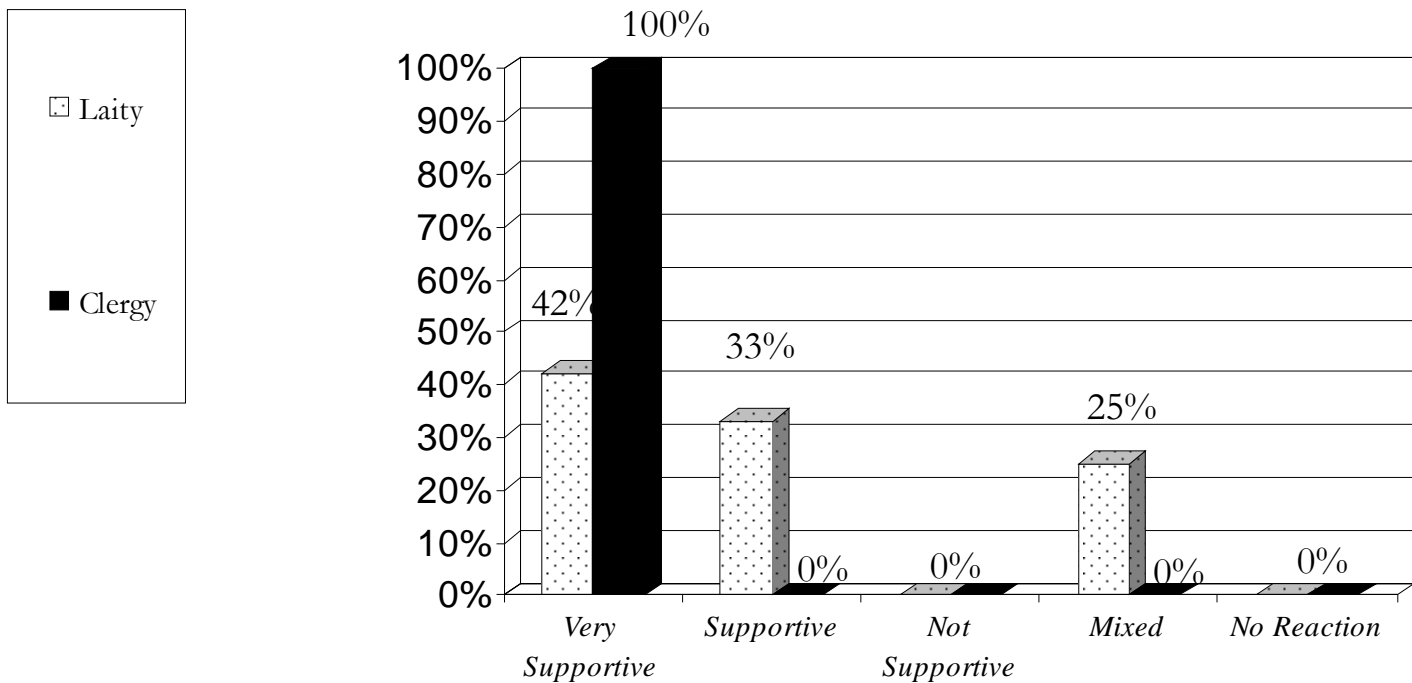
Prior to reading the preliminary background statement, did you participate in the Diocesan planning study for Catholic schools?

Avoyelles Parish



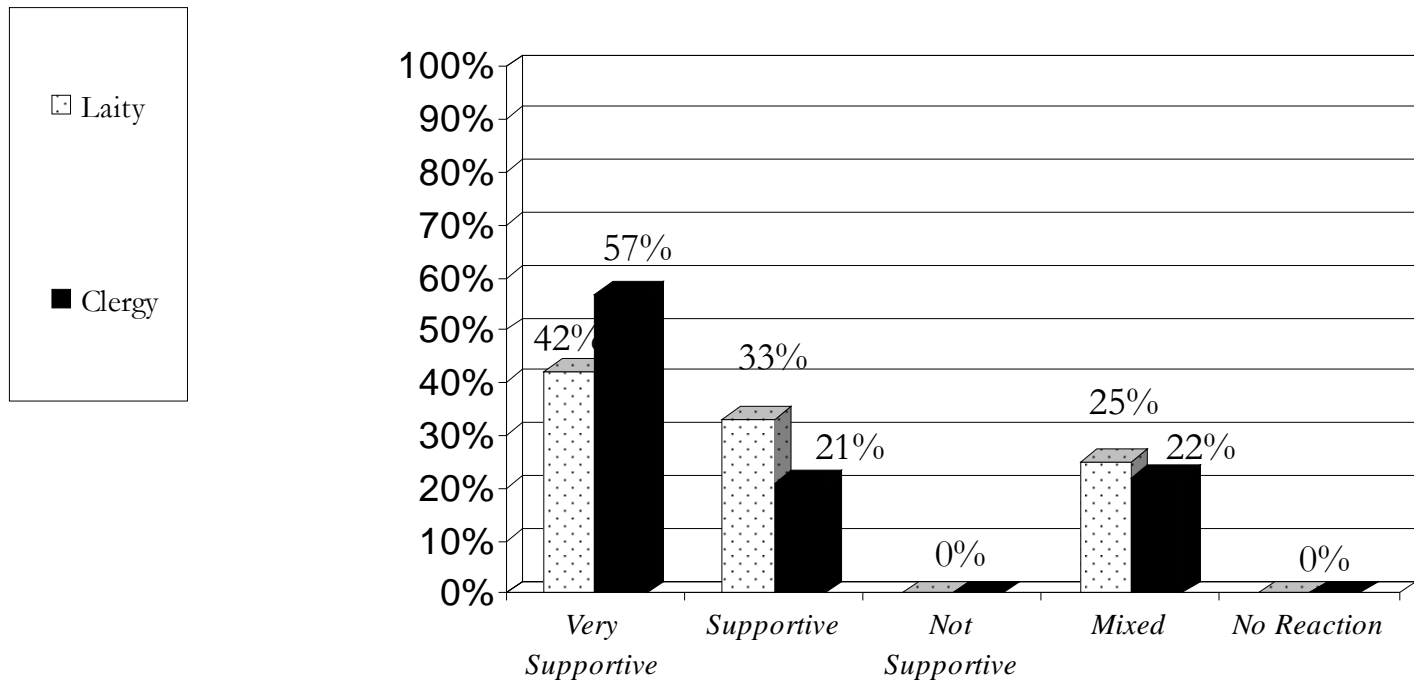
What is your overall reaction to the proposed plans for strengthening Catholic education and formation in the Diocese?

Avoyelles Parish



What is your overall reaction to the idea of conducting a major capital campaign effort to fund the proposed plans for Catholic education and formation?

Avoyelles Parish



Are you in favor of . . .

Avoyelles Parish

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Relocating St. Joseph High School to a more central location in Avoyelles Parish?			
Laity	75%	17%	8%
Clergy	71%	21%	8%
Parent Survey	66%	22%	12%
A campaign to raise funds for the construction of a new Diocesan high school in Avoyelles Parish?			
Laity	83%	8%	9%
Clergy	79%	21%	0%
Parent Survey	68%	17%	15%

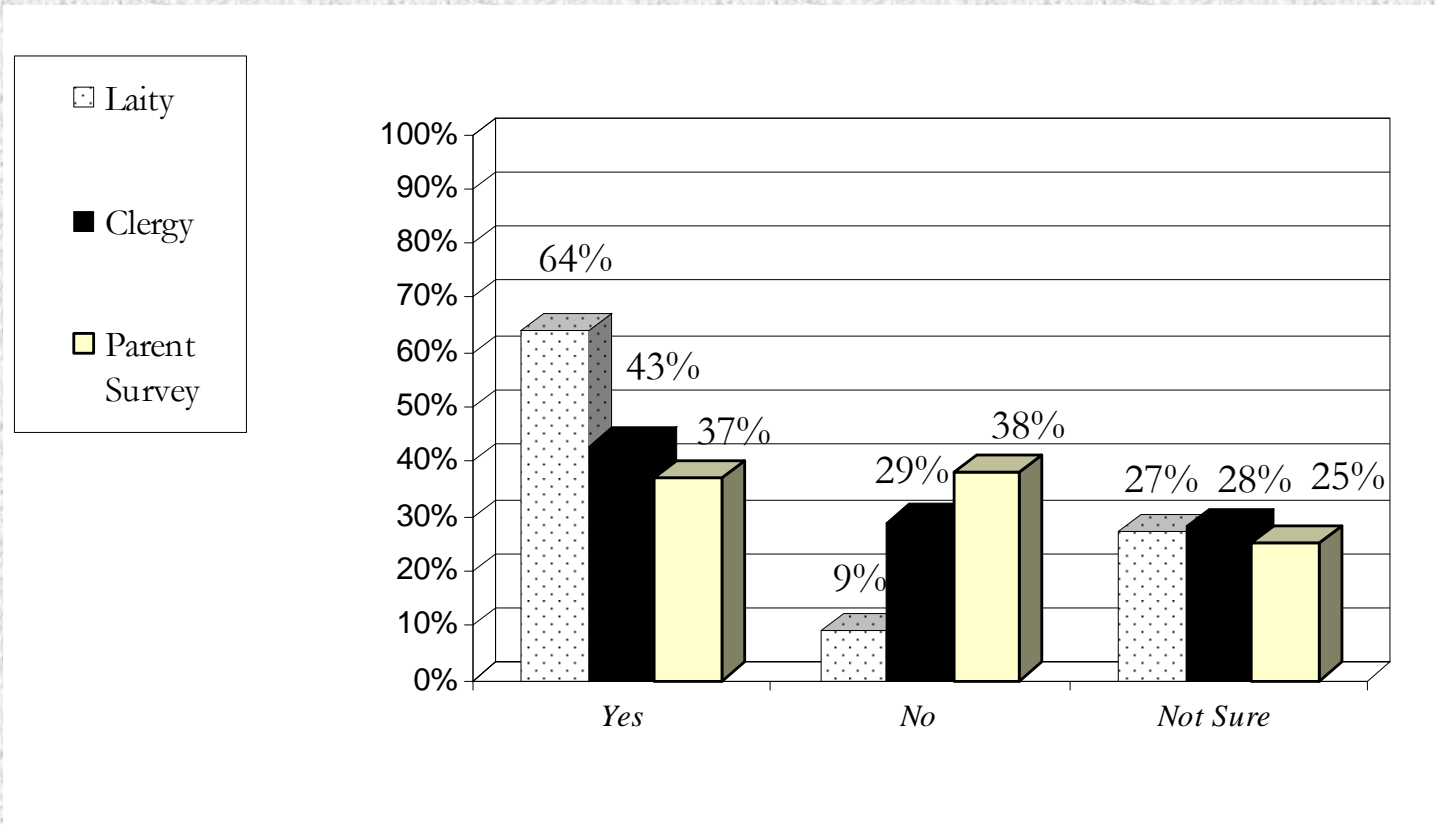
Are you in favor of . . .

Avoyelles Parish

	Yes	No	Not Sure
The continued operation of St. Joseph High School in Plaucheville?			
Laity	25%	63%	12%
Clergy	50%	42%	8%
A campaign effort that allocated a portion of the funds raised to an endowment for improving teacher salaries and benefits across the Diocese?			
Laity	100%	0%	0%
Clergy	77%	8%	15%

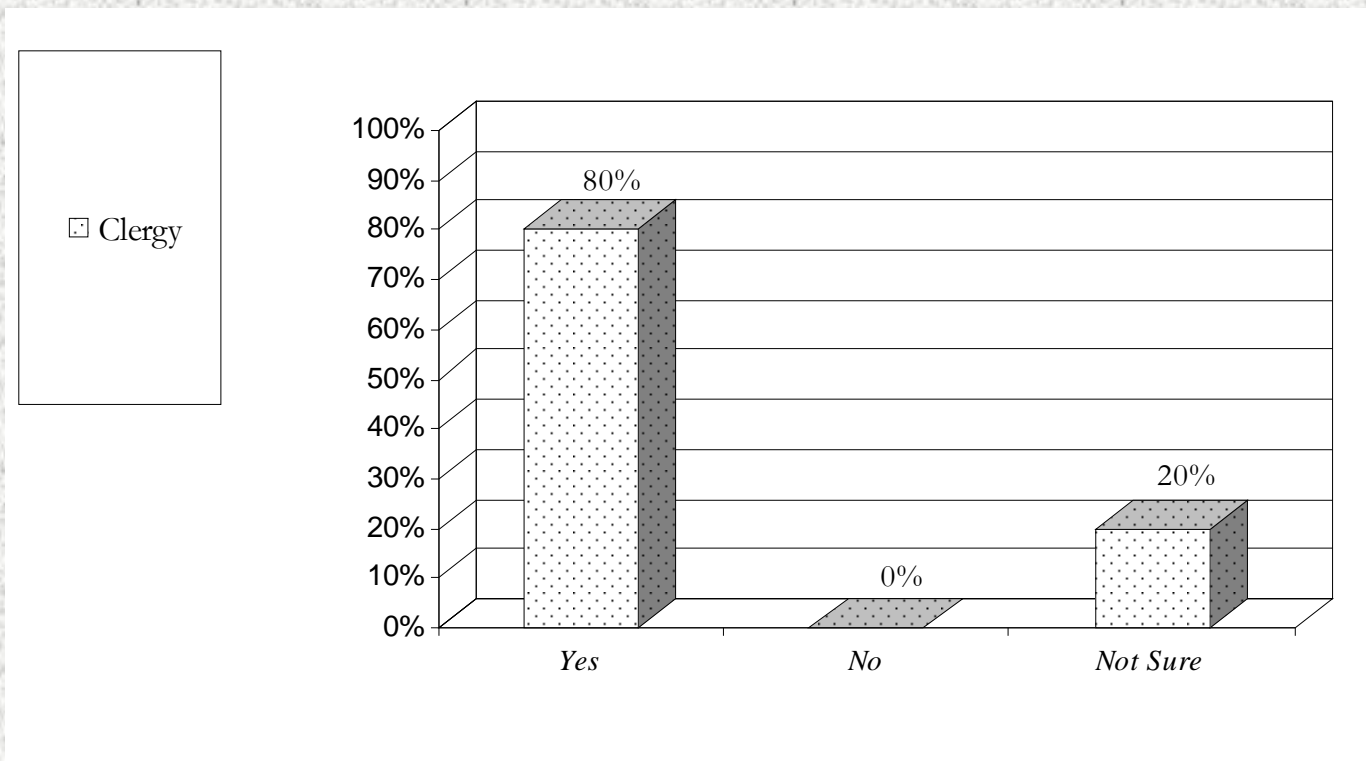
In order to provide quality Catholic education at a Diocesan high school in Avoyelles Parish, tuition is projected to be in the \$3,300 to \$3,600 range. Is this a realistic amount?

Avoyelles Parish



The proposed campaign would likely involve raising funds in each church parish in a phase-by-phase approach: Would you support this approach in your parish?

Avoyelles Parish



Laity

If a major capital campaign is undertaken, would you . . .

Avoyelles Parish

	Yes	No	Possibly
Accept a leadership position?	33%	42%	25%
Solicit a few prospects?	50%	33%	17%
Consider making a gift?	92%	0%	8%
Recommend that plans for a new Diocesan high school in Avoyelles parish more forward?	83%	8%	9%

Clergy

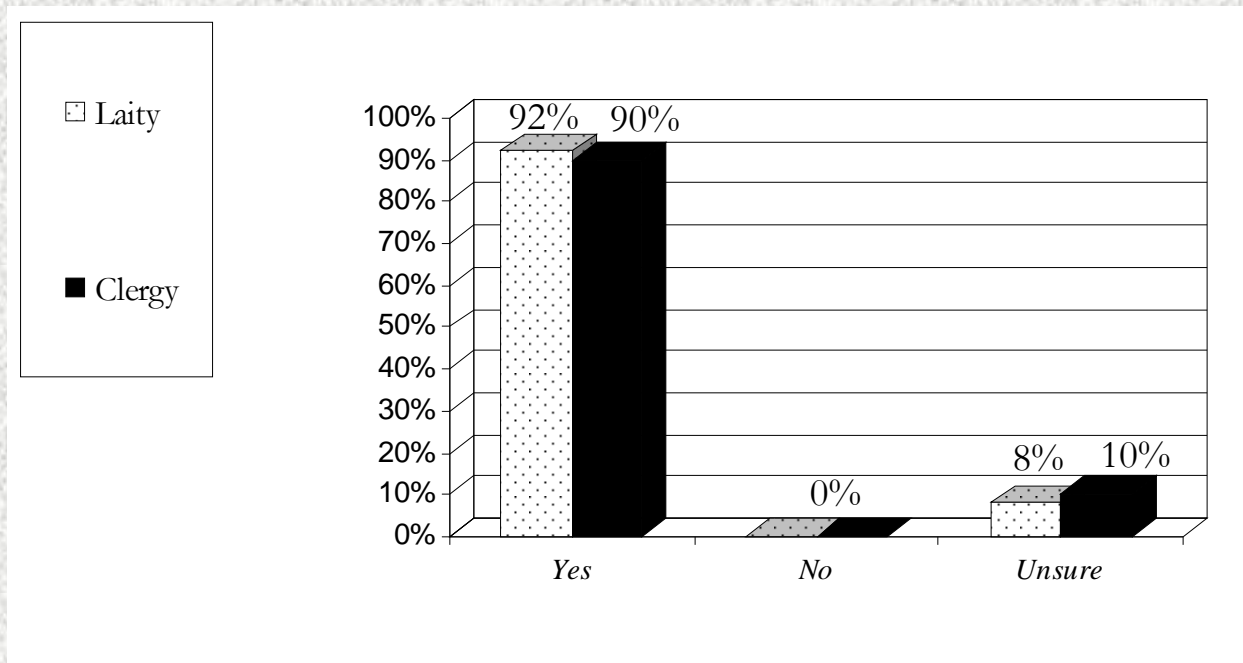
Would you . . .

Avoyelles Parish

	Yes	No	Possibly
Speak about a campaign for a new Diocesan high school from the pulpit?	100%	0%	0%
Organize a leadership committee of campaign volunteers in your church parish?	71%	29%	0%
Solicit a few prospects in your church parish as part of a major gift effort?	70%	20%	10%
Consider making a personal gift to the campaign?	90%	0%	10%
Recommend that plans for a new Diocesan high school in Avoyelles parish move forward?	93%	7%	0%

Would you consider a gift to the proposed campaign?

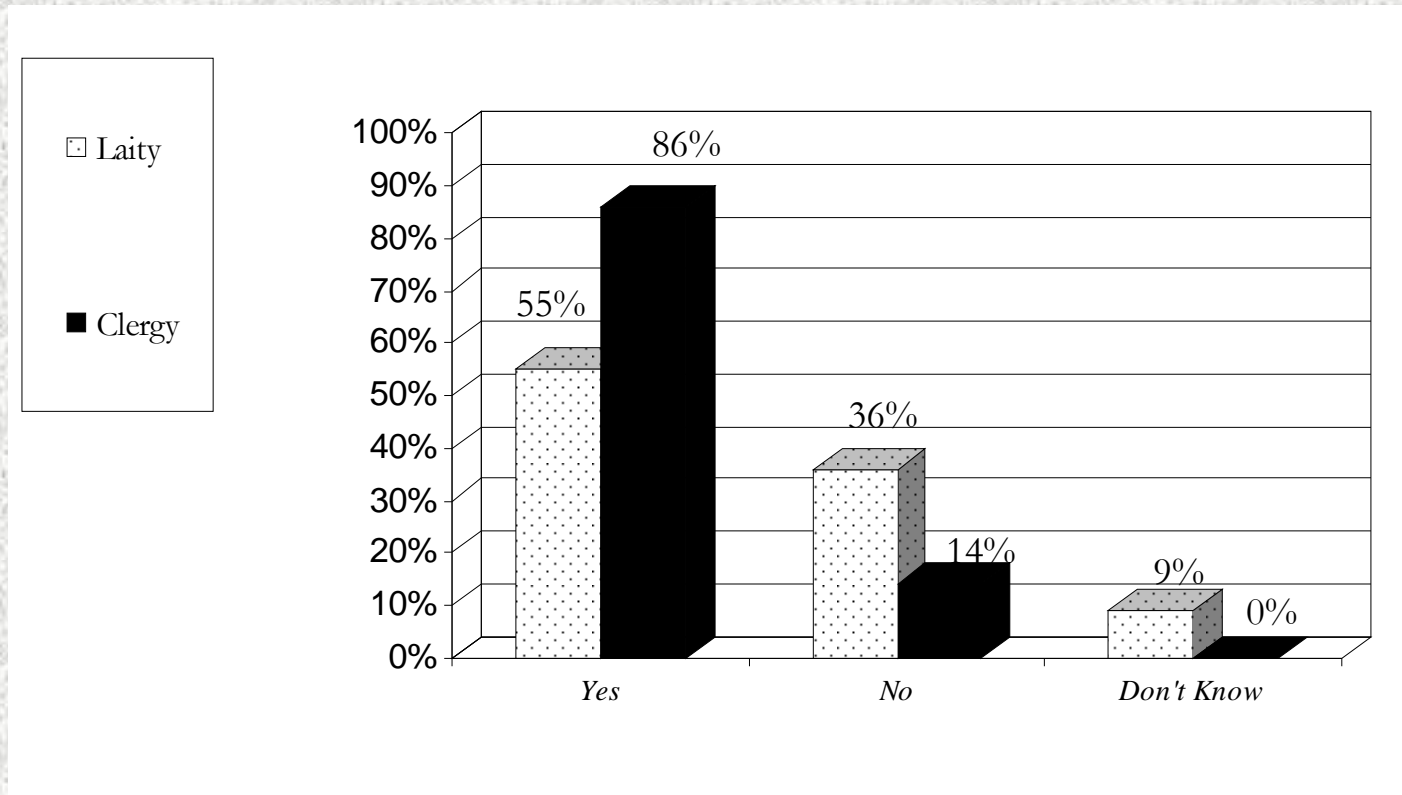
Avoyelles Parish



Of the five (5) interviewees who gave an indication, the range of estimated gifts was from \$238,000 to \$313,000, with an average estimated gift of \$47,600 to \$62,600.

Do you foresee any obstacles or issues that would prevent the Diocese from conducting a successful capital campaign at this time?

Avoyelles Parish



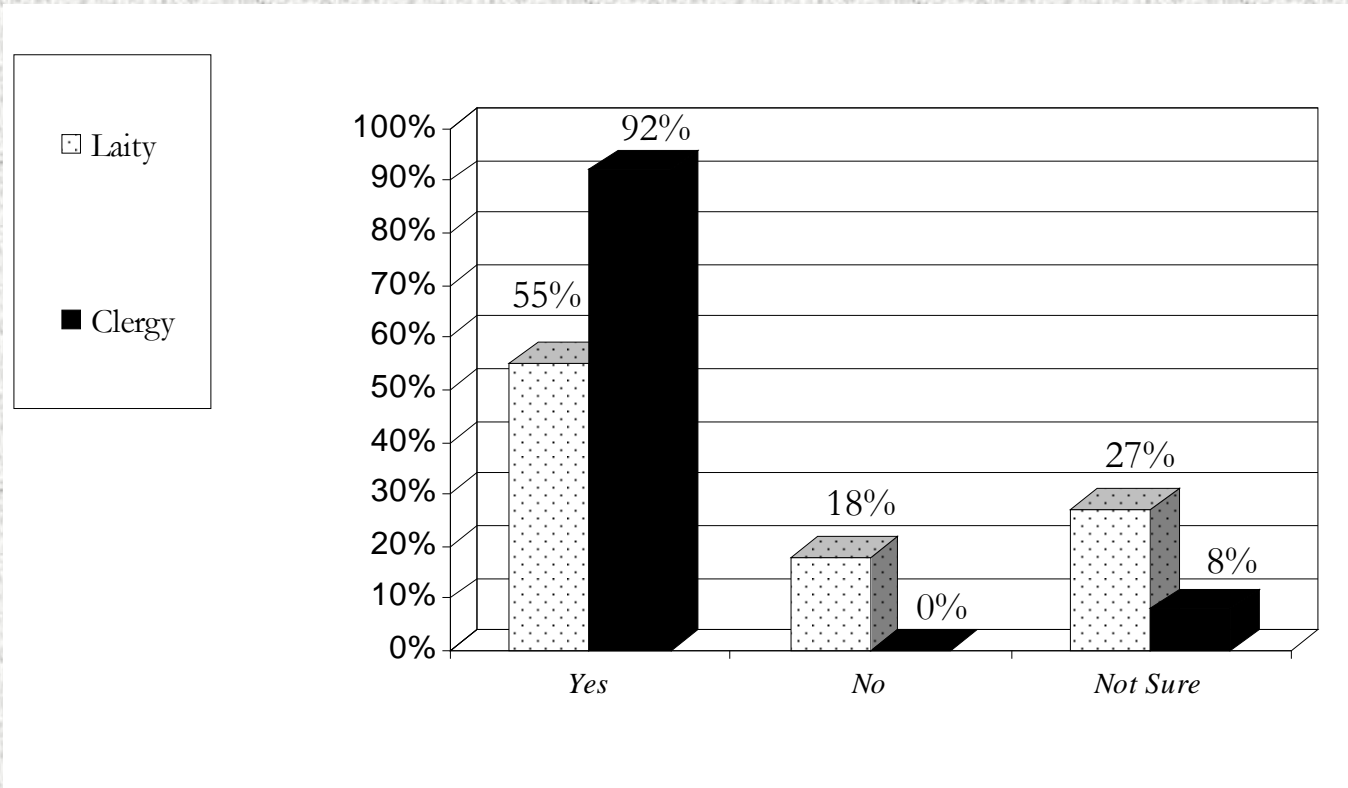
Obstacles or issues . . .

Avoyelles Parish

- "Being able to offer the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities that the public schools offer."
- "Bickering among the towns about the location and lack of charity among the people."
- "Change is always hard to come by. Resistance to a Diocesan school (what would be the advantages?)."
- "Negative attitude, pessimism."
- "Resistance from the people here."
- "The Avoyelles School Board will be opposed."
- "The goal may be too ambitious."
- "The issue of what is being taught (or not taught) in the schools."
- "The main issue is location. There is a group of people that would push for the school to be in Marksville, but that would not be the best option."
- "The mechanics of how it's done will be important."
- "The poverty of Avoyelles. The success of the charter school. The fact that a Catholic high school hasn't been pushed very strongly in the elementary schools."
- "Will get some resistance from Plaquemine."

Would you recommend that a \$12 million campaign be conducted?

Avoyelles Parish





Evaluation

Evaluation

Necessary elements for a successful campaign:

1. A detailed, persuasive case;
2. A group of strong, committed leaders and volunteers;
3. A sufficient pool of prospects available to the Diocese with the potential to make gifts at leadership and major gift levels;
4. An effective campaign plan and timetable;
5. Experienced professional staff to conduct the campaign.

Case for Support

- # Final decisions regarding school locations and consolidation need to be made.
- # Lack of detailed information on project costs evoked concern about support for campaigns, but the commitment to Catholic education is strong.
- # Addressing the need to improve teacher salaries and benefits is broadly endorsed, but not necessarily through an endowment effort.
- # Transparency and accountability for how the funds will be used is necessary to make a strong case.

Leadership & Volunteers

An organized volunteer network will be needed to conduct campaign activity in the church parishes. Pastoral support for a campaign will also be vitally important to educate and motivate all members of the church parish community.

Leadership & Volunteers

Among Avoyelles Parish clergy:

- ✓ One hundred percent (100%) would speak from the pulpit about a campaign for a new Diocesan high school
- ✓ Seventy-one percent (71%) would help organize a leadership committee
- ✓ Seventy percent (70%) would be willing to solicit a few prospects

Among Avoyelles Parish laity:

- ✓ Thirty-three percent (33%) of interviewees would be willing to consider a leadership role
- ✓ Fifty percent (50%) would be willing to solicit a few prospects
- ✓ Ninety-two percent (92%) would be willing to make a gift

Prospects for Giving

- # There is some consensus among respondents about those who are seen as being the best possible donors in each civil parish.
- # Initial gift indications are not sufficient to establish the momentum and impact needed for reaching the stated goal of \$12 million in Avoyelles Parish.

Campaign Readiness

The most common issues or obstacles to a campaign's success cited were:

- ❖ Territorial competitiveness between towns (in Avoyelles).
- ❖ Competing campaigns
- ❖ The current economic downturn
- ❖ The poverty and lack of jobs in Avoyelles Parish



Recommendations

Recommendations

- ❖ The Diocese of Alexandria should be encouraged by the very positive results of a multi-faceted feasibility study. CCS believes there is a willingness and a certain degree of readiness for campaign efforts to improve the quality of Catholic education in both Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes.
- ❖ At this time, however, CCS cannot recommend campaign efforts to raise \$12 million in Avoyelles Parish and \$6 million in Rapides Parish. Campaigns for lesser amounts could be organized if necessary decisions are made regarding project priorities in the Diocese.

Recommendations

- ❖ In Avoyelles Parish, both the parent surveys and personal interviews revealed a strong desire to have a new, relocated, Diocesan high school. However, there is not evidence that a campaign for \$12 million would be successful.
- ❖ CCS believes that a campaign for \$4 to \$6 million would be possible in Avoyelles Parish if an alternative plan for establishing a Diocesan high school can be devised.

Recommendations

- ❖ An option mentioned by a number of study participants was to use the vacant school building at St. Paul the Apostle in Mansura for the high school. Obviously, an evaluation of the building's suitability for renovation and expansion would be necessary.
- ❖ Another possibility would be to obtain construction cost estimates for a smaller building with lower student capacity, that could be expanded should the enrollment numbers rise.

Recommendations

Some key perceptions from the Avoyelles study group were:

- ❖ Diocesan control of and ultimate responsibility for the high school is necessary to achieve the broadest appeal among elementary feeder schools;
- ❖ A substantive effort to attract and maintain qualified administration and faculty must be made to demonstrate a commitment to offering quality education;
- ❖ A school with high academic standards, discipline, and religious instruction would be attractive, no matter where it was located;
- ❖ The importance of providing athletic programs in a new school cannot be overestimated.

Recommendations

- ❖ CCS remains committed to providing assistance to the Diocese in determining the best fund raising solutions in pursuit of their educational system goals. At this time, we believe that alternative considerations regarding school locations and capacity must be evaluated and major decisions made before specific campaign recommendations can be given. We are happy to continue as a partner in this process.