

2026 PIM Catholic Schools AI Leadership Survey



Welcome and Thank You

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the entire Partners in Mission team, we are pleased to share the 2026 Catholic School AI Survey Report, the first of its kind across our industry. Bringing together insights from Catholic school leaders nationwide, this research offers a timely look at how our schools are discerning the opportunities, risks, and responsibilities of AI. We hope it provides meaningful perspective and context as you reflect, plan, and lead in this rapidly evolving moment.

This report is a proprietary resource prepared by Partners in Mission for its clients and the broader PIM community. We are deeply grateful to the many Catholic schools who participated and made this work possible. If colleagues would like access, please direct them **here** to download the report.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Catholic education. It is a privilege to walk alongside you in this important and defining work.

Lauren Fredette
Managing Partner

Jim McGibbon
Managing Partner

Mike Stutman
Partner

Overview and Context

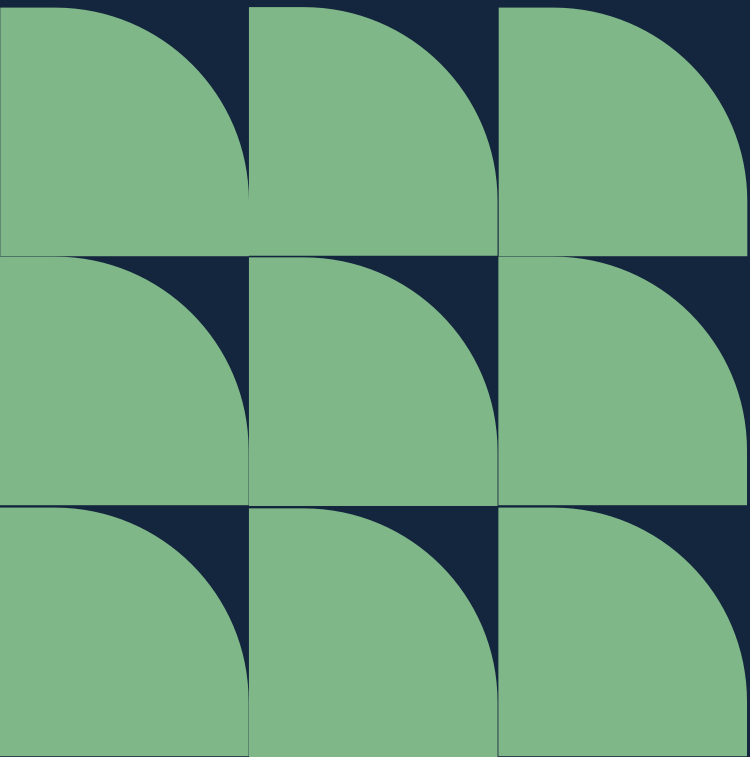


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Survey Background & Methodology

At Partners in Mission, helping Catholic schools flourish isn't just our work, it is our calling. This survey is a direct output of that ambition. In that spirit, the industry's first-ever Catholic School AI Industry Survey was undertaken to:

- ✔ Gain holistic visibility into industry perceptions, behaviors, opportunities, and challenges related to AI.
- ✔ Help leaders improve their ability to guide their organization and the students and families they serve in changing times.

41

Question survey was conducted online by Partners in Mission between 1/2/26 and 2/19/26.

202

Catholic school leaders from around the nation completed the survey, representing the wide diversity of schools that make up the industry.

We expect to conduct this survey on a periodic basis, creating data to compare trends and activity over time.

If you have suggestions to improve the survey moving forward, please contact team@partnersinmission.com.

Key Findings

- Leaders generally view AI as more of an opportunity than a threat, recognizing it as a strategic priority and a timely opportunity to differentiate Catholic education, drive efficiency, and strengthen human-centered formation/leadership.
- As one respondent commented, “it is an opportunity to leverage the most powerfully disruptive technology since the industrial revolution, to bring efficiencies and exponential growth in operational/educational areas of the school.”

- Despite broad recognition of AI’s strategic importance, traction remains uneven, with only a minority of schools reporting strong progress in key areas impacted by AI:
 - Organizational Alignment
 - Strategy
 - Brand Positioning
 - Talent + Technology
- The opportunity at hand is to balance the possibilities with prudence, ensuring that institutional and professional *mission is multiplied, not squandered*, in a Catholic-first, holistic manner.

Participant Overview

School grades

Grade 9 to 12	40%
Pre K to Grade 8	24%
Pre K to Grade 12	13%
Other (please specify)	11%
Grade 6 or 7 to 12	9%

School gender

Coed	85%
Girls Only	9%
Boys Only	5%

School size

401-800 Students	39%
50-400 Students	34%
801-1200 Students	13%
1200+ Students	8%
Other (please specify)	3%

What is your annual tuition

Less Than \$10,000 Per Year	29%
\$10,000-\$15,000 Per Year	29%
\$15,001-\$25,000 Per Year	26%
\$25,001+ Per Year	8%
Other (please specify)	5%

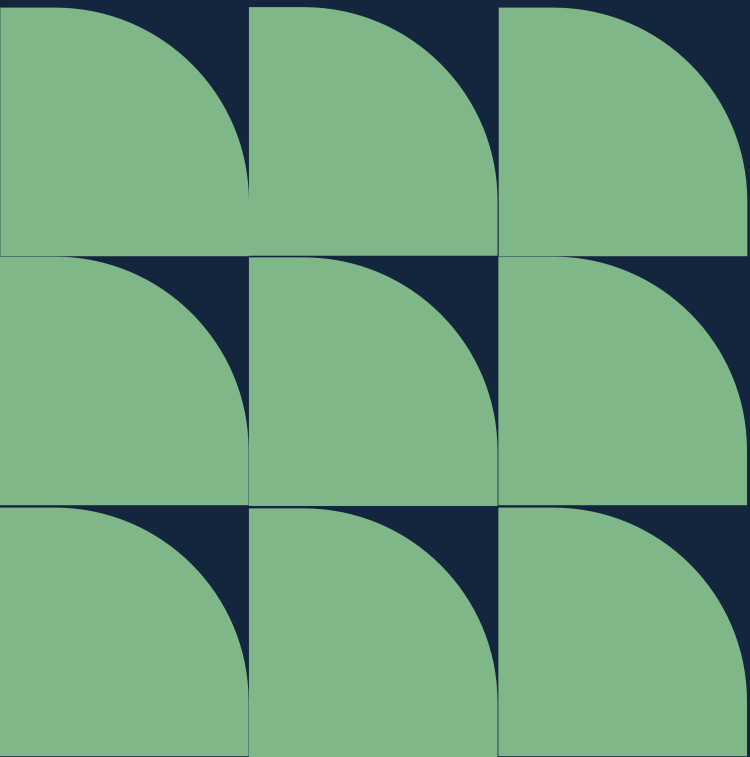
What is your school governance type?

Diocesan	56%
Religious Order Sponsored	21%
Independent	15%
Other (please specify)	6%

Are you a Classical Catholic School?

Yes	83%
No	17%

Survey participants reflect the diverse landscape of Catholic schools across the USA.



Strategic Importance of AI

AI seen more as opportunity than threat / risk

Overall, how does your school's leadership team currently view AI?

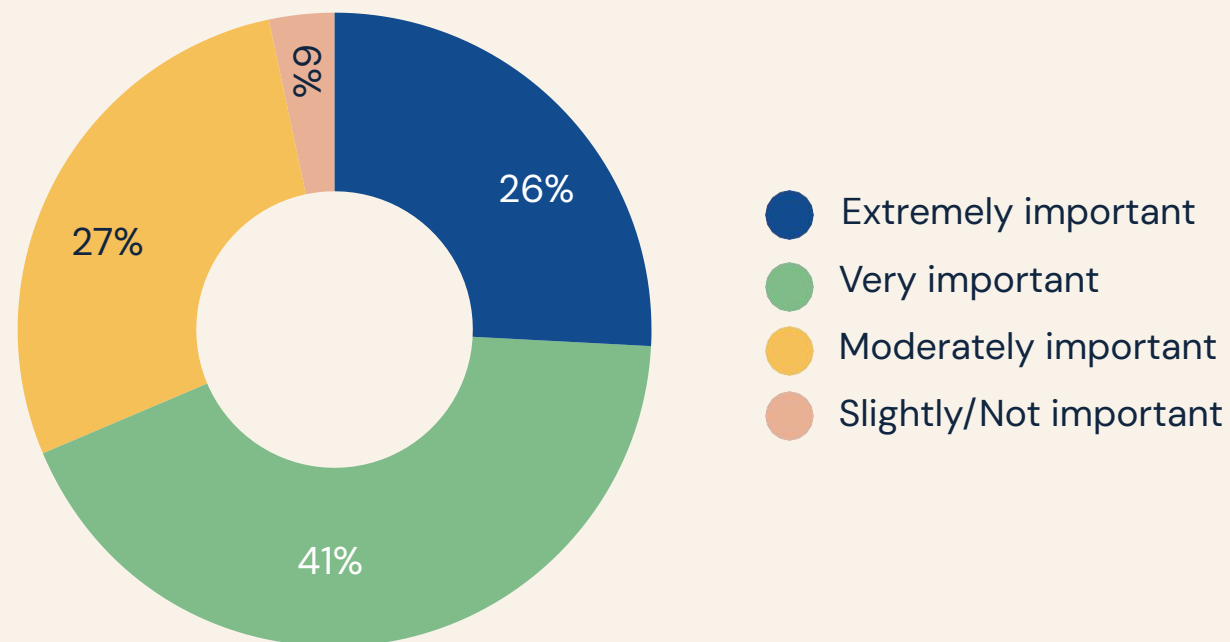


40% See AI as more opportunity than threat / risk.

While most leaders (52%) see both opportunity and risk, only few see more threat than opportunity.

AI seen as strategic priority in coming years

How important is AI as a strategic issue for your school leadership over the next 2-3 years?



2/3

See AI as an Extremely or Very Important strategic issue in next 2-3 years.

AI is a top strategic issue for the wide majority of Catholic schools. Only 6% consider it to be of low strategic importance.

Strategic importance of AI across functions

Looking ahead over the next 2-3 years, how important and urgent do you believe AI will be for your school in each of the following areas?

	Critical and urgent	Very important high urgency
Teaching + Learning	22%	44%
Enrollment + Marketing	23%	37%
Advancement + Engagement	23%	36%
Leadership + Talent	14%	34%
School Model, Brand + Value Proposition	12%	33%
Operations	12%	30%
Student Formation + Personal Vocation	9%	24%

AI is seen to be a priority across a variety of key areas of Catholic school operations.

Teaching + Learning is most impacted near term

Which one area will require the most leadership attention related to AI in the next 12-18 months?



64%

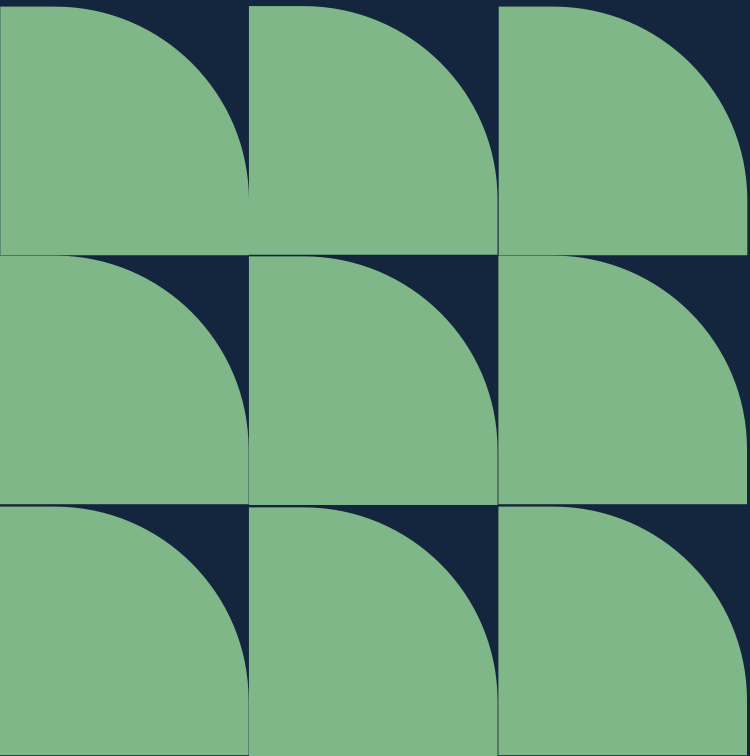
of leaders view Teaching + Learning as requiring the most attention related to AI in coming months.

AI strategy is emergent across functions

For each area below, how would you describe your school's current level of engagement with AI?

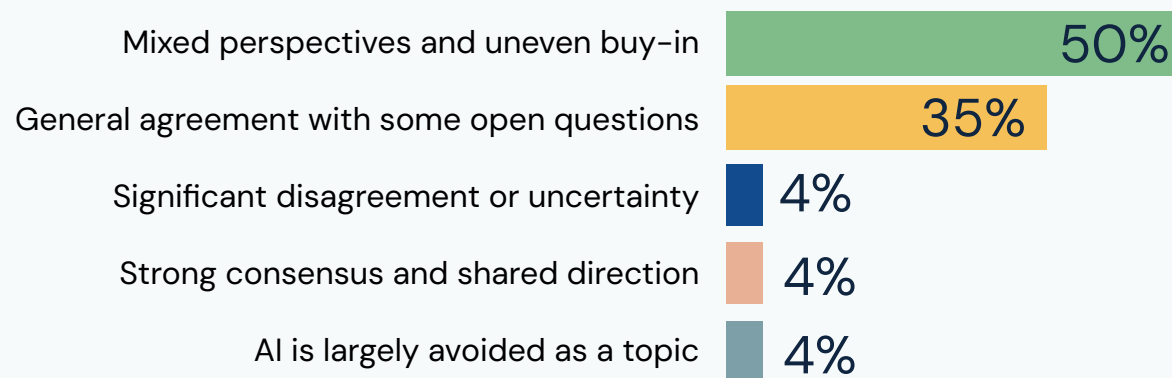
	Robust strategy, execution + iteration	Formal strategy + experiments	Structured discussions + experiments	Random discussions + some experiments	Not yet discussing + experimenting
School Model, Brand + Value Proposition	3%	7%	22%	48%	21%
Teaching + Learning	5%	11%	45%	35%	4%
Student Formation + Personal Vocation	1%	8%	20%	40%	31%
Operations	2%	9%	23%	39%	26%
Enrollment + Marketing	3%	11%	29%	44%	12%
Advancement + Engagement	3%	9%	21%	52%	14%
Governance + Leadership	3%	11%	22%	42%	22%

Stakeholder Views of AI



Many schools have mixed perspectives on AI

Which statement best reflects the internal dynamic around AI at your school?



4% of schools have strong consensus and shared direction related to AI approach.

A small majority of schools have some organizational disunity related to AI perspectives and buy in.

AI interest varies among stakeholders

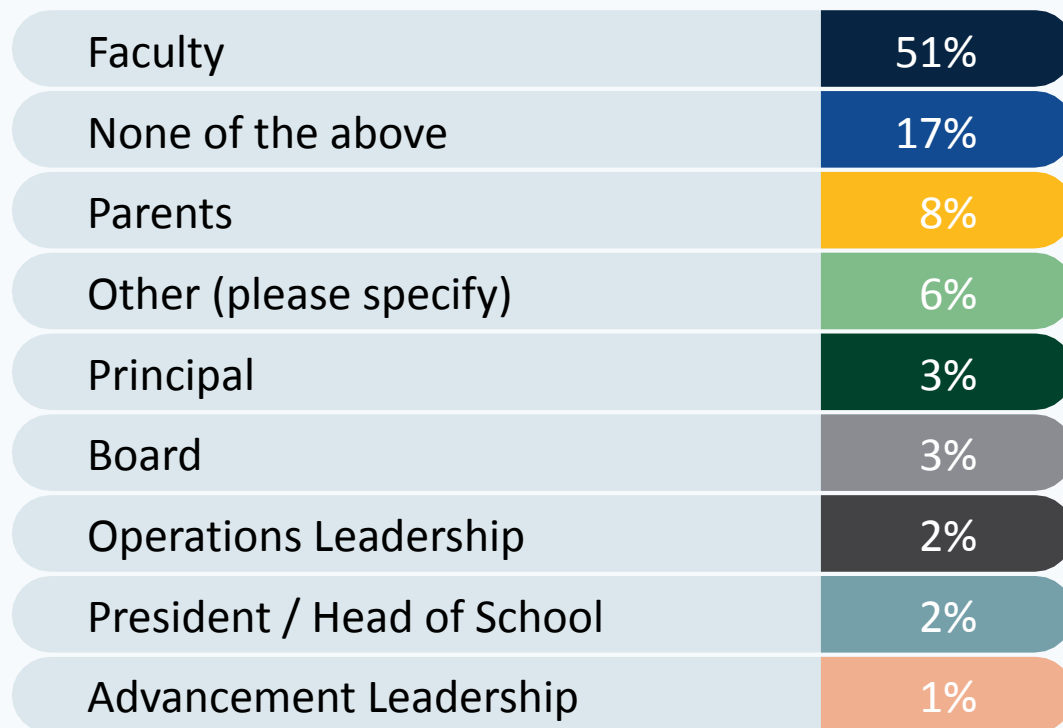
Who, if anyone, is most interested or excited to engage AI at your school?

Students	23%
Principal	14%
Faculty	14%
President / Head of School	14%
Advancement Leadership	11%
Other (please specify)	7%
None of the above	5%
Operations Leadership	4%
Enrollment Leadership	1%
Board	1%

While students show the most interest of any one stakeholder group, results exhibit a diverse array of engagement from across the institution with “adult” outweighing student interest by a wide margin.

Faculty exhibits most AI hesitation

Who, if anyone, is most hesitant or resistant to engaging AI at your school?



51% of schools cite Faculty as the stakeholder group most resistant to AI.

This data illuminates prior responses showing Teaching + Learning as the most critical area to address in the coming 12 to 18 months.

Conversely, students, the most interested stakeholder group, were virtually absent from responses to this question, with <.5% of schools citing them as most hesitant.

AI tensions center on academics and ethics

Where do you see the greatest differences of opinion or tension related to AI among the leadership of your school?

Academic integrity and student use	73%
Faculty readiness or resistance	43%
Ethical or mission concerns	38%
Risk tolerance	16%
Pace of adoption	14%
There is little to no tension	6%
Resource allocation	5%
Other (please specify)	5%
Cost implications	4%
Board-level uncertainty	1%

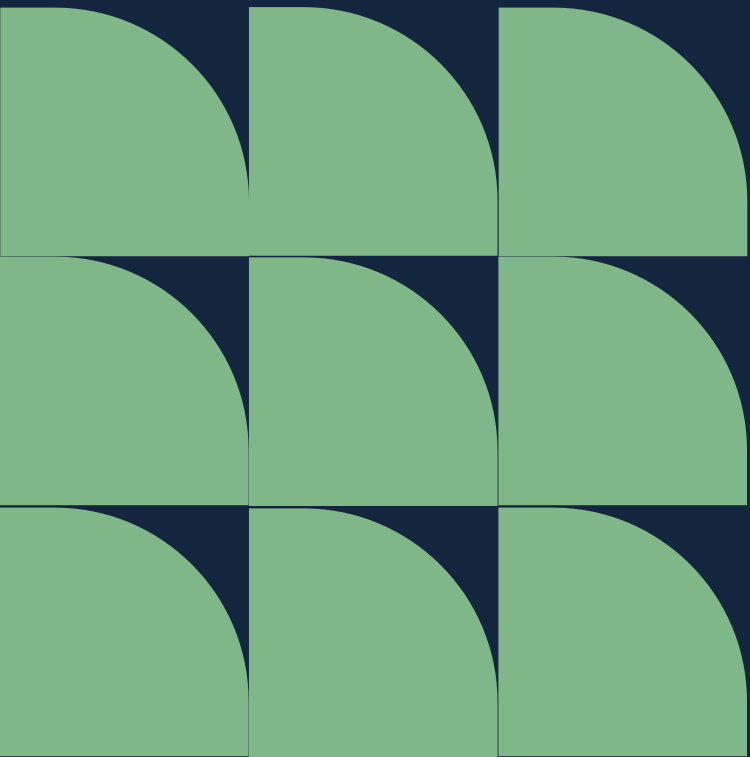
Nearly 3 in 4 schools cite academic integrity as a top area of tension related to AI adoption, signalling the need for clear policies and, potentially, new practices to eliminate, control, or dissuade usage.

Top AI risks center on students usage

What are the biggest risk areas of AI to your school? Select up to three.

Student overreliance on AI, reducing critical thinking and effort	67%
Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, misuse of AI tools)	65%
Teacher preparedness and lack of clear guidance or policies	34%
Misalignment with Catholic values, ethics, or moral formation	27%
Exposure to inappropriate, misleading, or harmful content	24%
Erosion of authentic relationships and human formation	23%
Cyberbullying, deepfakes, and online harassment	21%
Unclear long-term impact on student vocation and future readiness	13%
Data privacy and cybersecurity risks (student or school data)	12%
Reputational risk or legal liability for the school	3%
Unequal access to AI tools, widening gaps among students	2%

Student misuse and integrity risks dominate concerns, followed by faculty readiness and alignment with mission, highlighting the need for guidance, formation, and clear AI policies.



Brand + Messaging in an AI Era

AI seen to positively impact perception of Catholic education value in coming years

How do you believe AI will impact the perceived value of a Catholic school education over the next 5-10 years?

13%

Significantly
increase its
value

38%

Increase its
value

34%

No
significant
change

12%

Decrease
its value

1%

Significantly
decrease its
value

In your view, what is the greatest opportunity Catholic schools have in an AI-influenced world?

“ Commitment to the moral and ethical development of young people in an AI world that challenges this. Human dignity at the core of Catholic Values will need to be emphasized more in the future. ”

“ To operate more efficiently and focus our limited resources on the students. ”

“ Teaching kids to make responsible decisions with tools at their disposal, and more specifically tools that saturate the world beyond school (i.e. cell phones, AI, etc.), is the best way to prepare them for life. ”

“ Catholic schools are uniquely positioned to guide students in how technology should serve humanity, not replace it. ”

In your view, what is the greatest risk Catholic schools face in an AI-influenced world?

“We have a duty to ensure that we teach ethical and moral use of this technology. Getting this right is not just important, it is everything.”

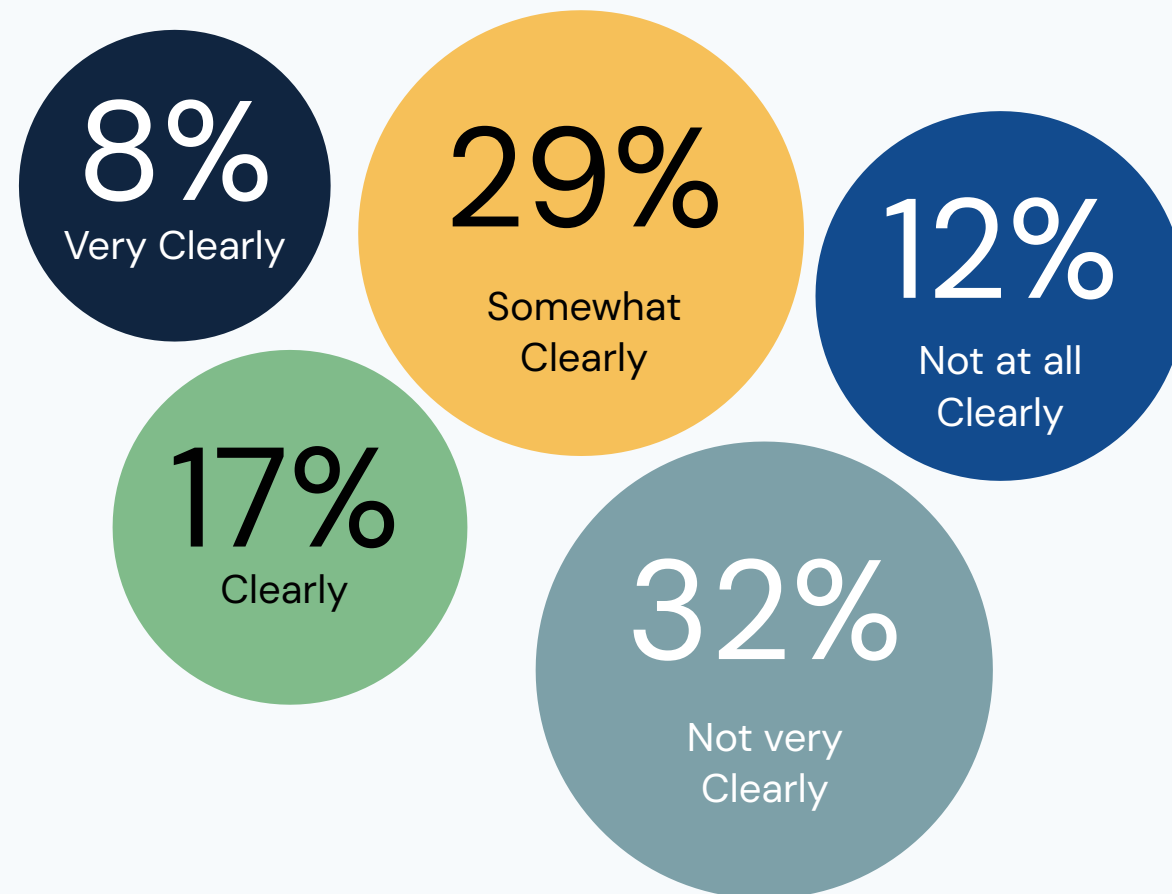
“Parents who believe strongly in AI being a part of every aspect of their children's school day. These families will be put off by Catholic schools not "adapting to the times," causing a decrease in enrollment.”

“Not properly teaching students what AI is and how best to use it. Also, not giving teachers adequate professional development on AI tools.”

“Sticking our heads in the sand thinking this is just going to go away while students are wandering aimlessly through this changing world without the proper Catholic Social Teaching lens to apply.”

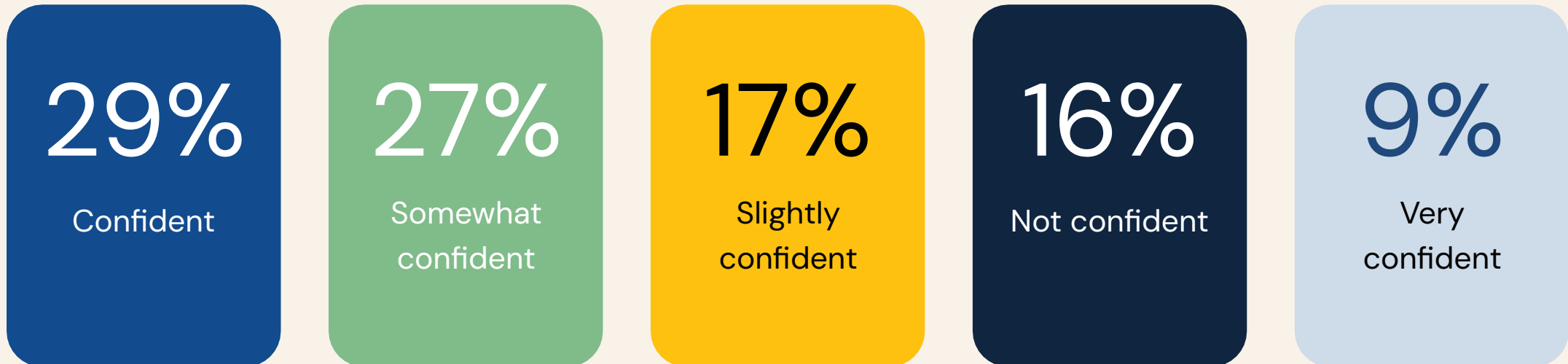
Schools lag at articulating the unique value of Catholic education in AI-influenced culture

How clearly does your school currently articulate what makes Catholic education distinct and valuable in an AI-influenced culture?



Brand and messaging needs updating for an AI-influenced world

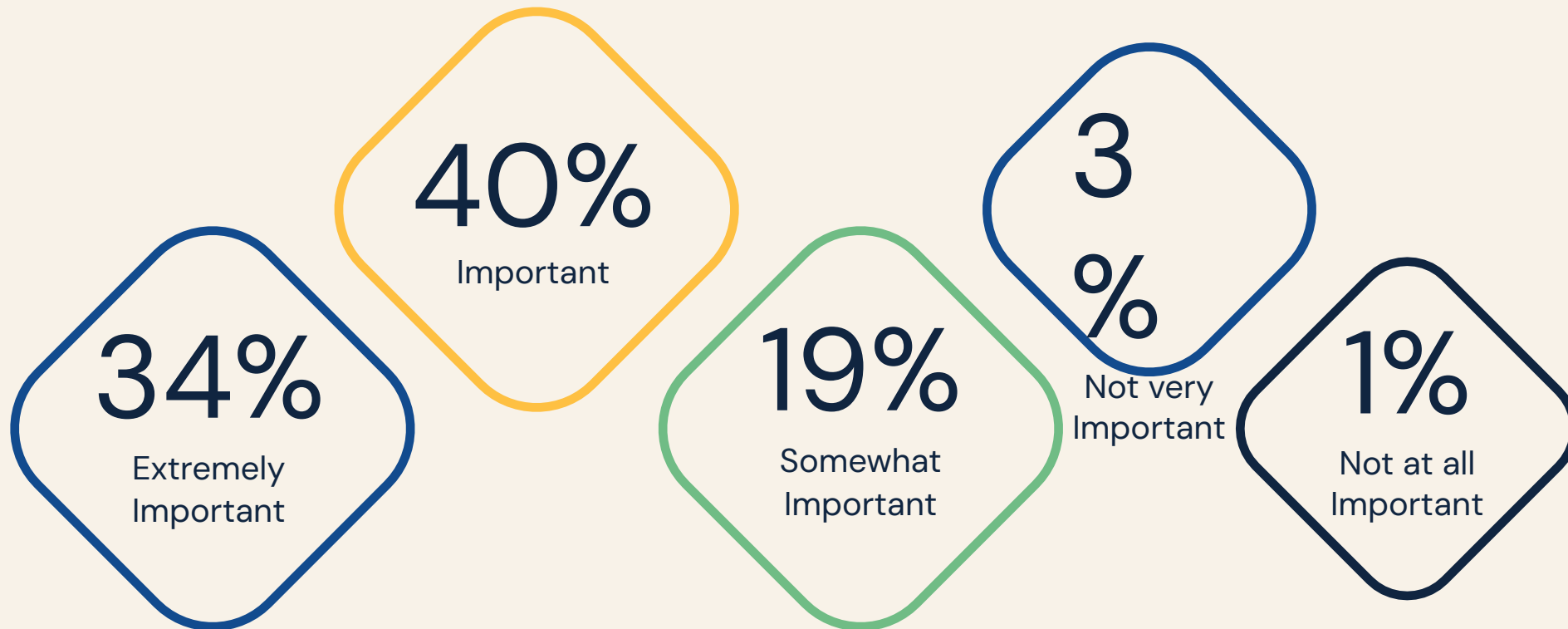
How confident are you that your school's brand and messaging resonate with families who are increasingly influenced by AI-enabled information and decision tools?



Despite the opportunity seen for Catholic schools to lead in an AI-influenced world, only 29% of leaders are fully confident that their school's brand and messaging resonate in this new landscape.

Leaders see need to update brand for AI era

How important is it for Catholic schools to intentionally update their brand and value proposition in light of AI?



Leaders see formation, faith and moral clarity as key differentiators for AI era

Which of the following do you believe most differentiates Catholic schools in an AI era? Select up to three.

Formation of character and virtue	61%
Faith-based worldview and moral clarity	61%
Strong relationships and community	46%
Emphasis on wisdom, not just skills	29%
Academic rigor	24%
Personalized attention and care	23%
Leadership and service formation	14%
None of the above	3%

60%+

of leaders see Catholic schools' greatest AI-era advantage as human formation and faith - far surpassing more commonly cited strengths such as personalized attention and academic rigor.

Schools are just beginning to explore updating messaging for AI era

Have you begun to adjust how you talk about your school's value in response to AI and broader cultural change?

11%

Yes, it is a big topic for us

28%

Yes, we are beginning to explore as a team

26%

Some occasional discussion on this topic

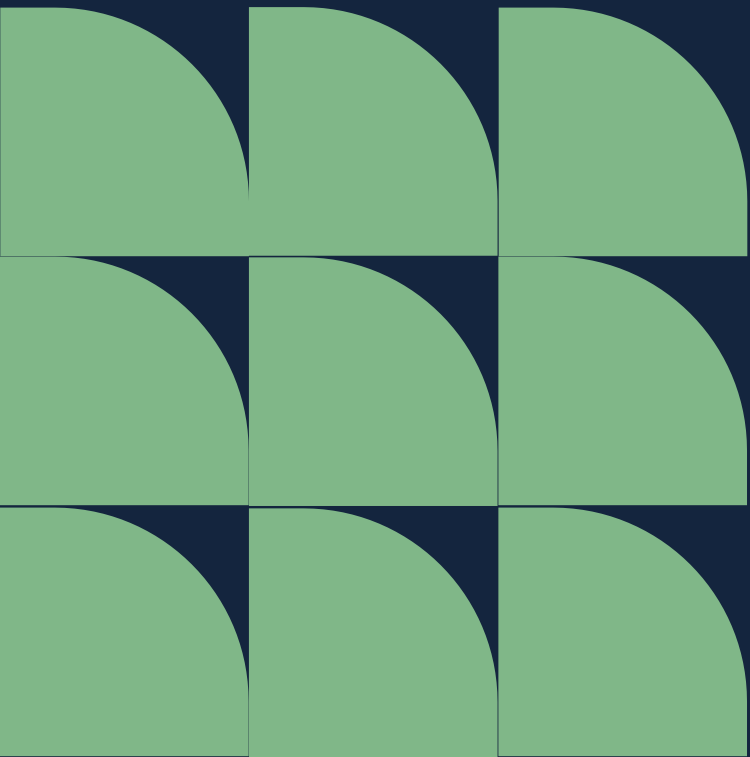
30%

Not yet

2%

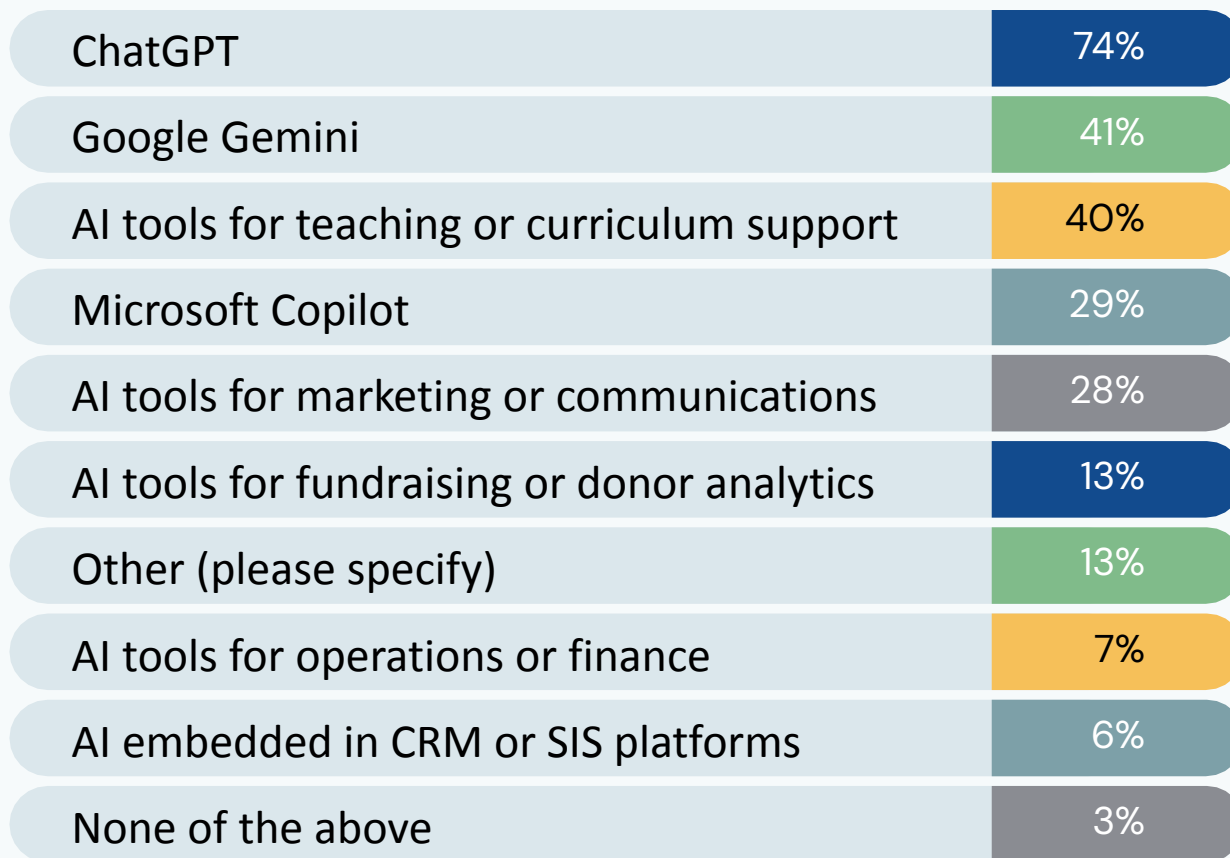
Unsure

AI Tools + Technologies



Schools using a variety of AI platforms

Which AI technologies or platforms are your school currently using or piloting?



74%

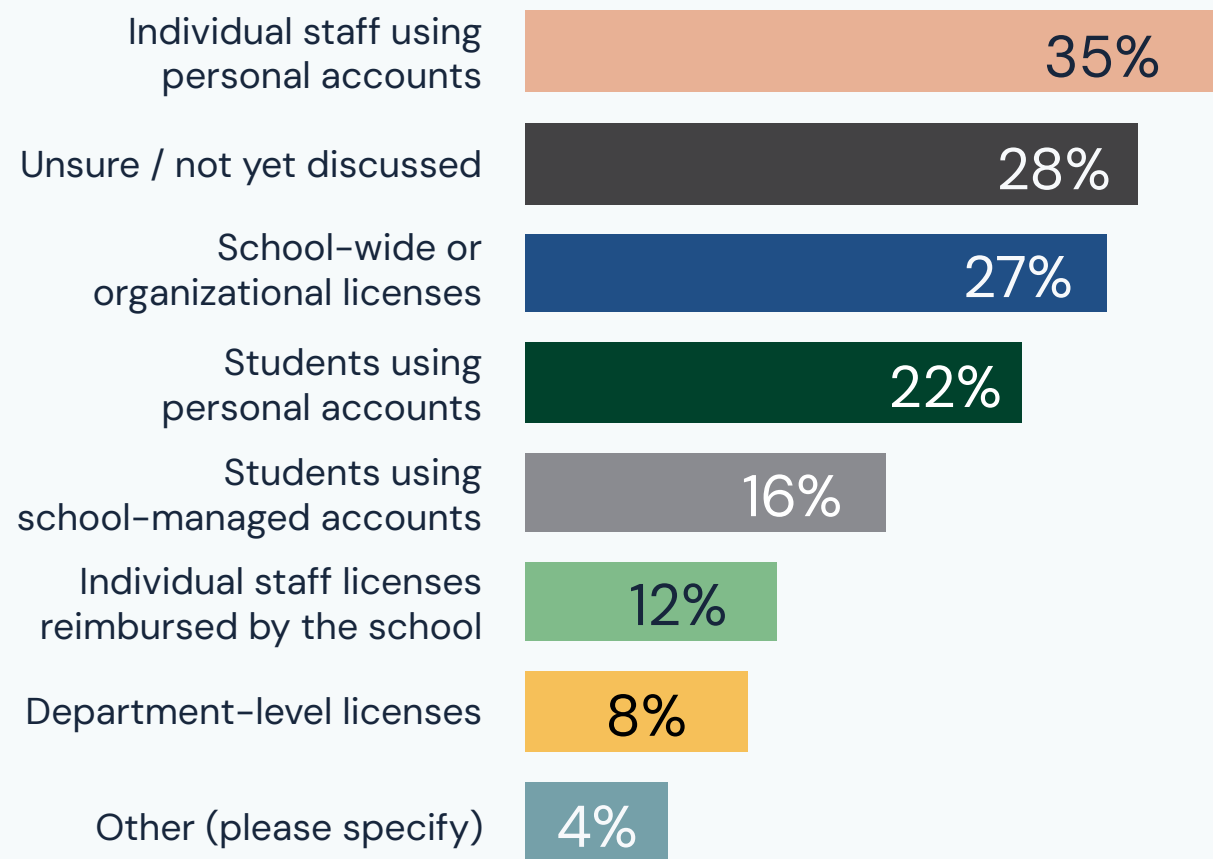
ChatGPT is the dominant tool used by schools at present.

Schools are currently using mega AI platforms (Gemini, ChatGPT, etc) more so than function-specific technologies.

Some limited use of Catholic-specific AI (e.g. MagisteriumAI) is noted.

AI governance / licensing is limited

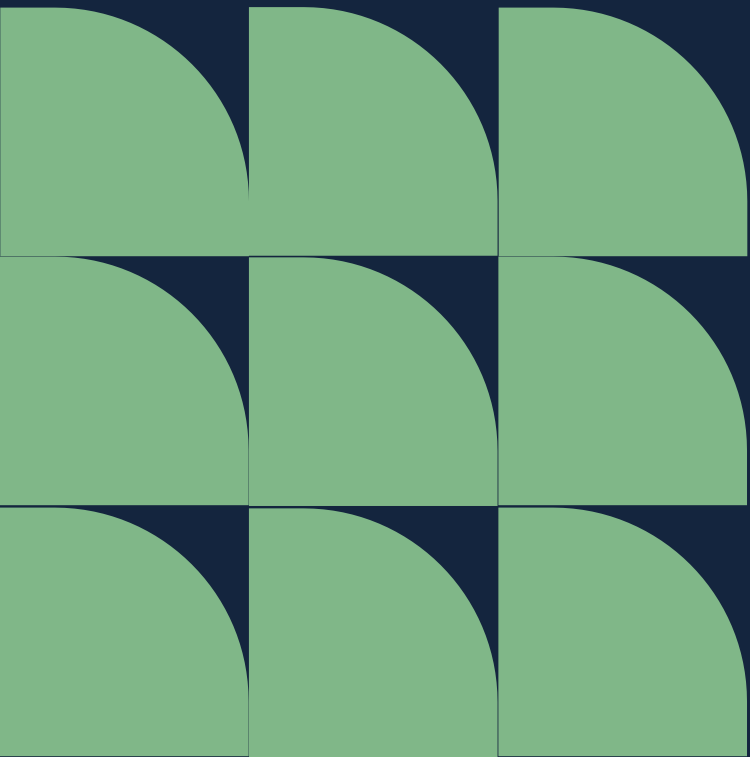
How are AI tools currently being accessed or licensed at your school?



Only about ¼ of schools have any enterprise AI tech licensing in place.

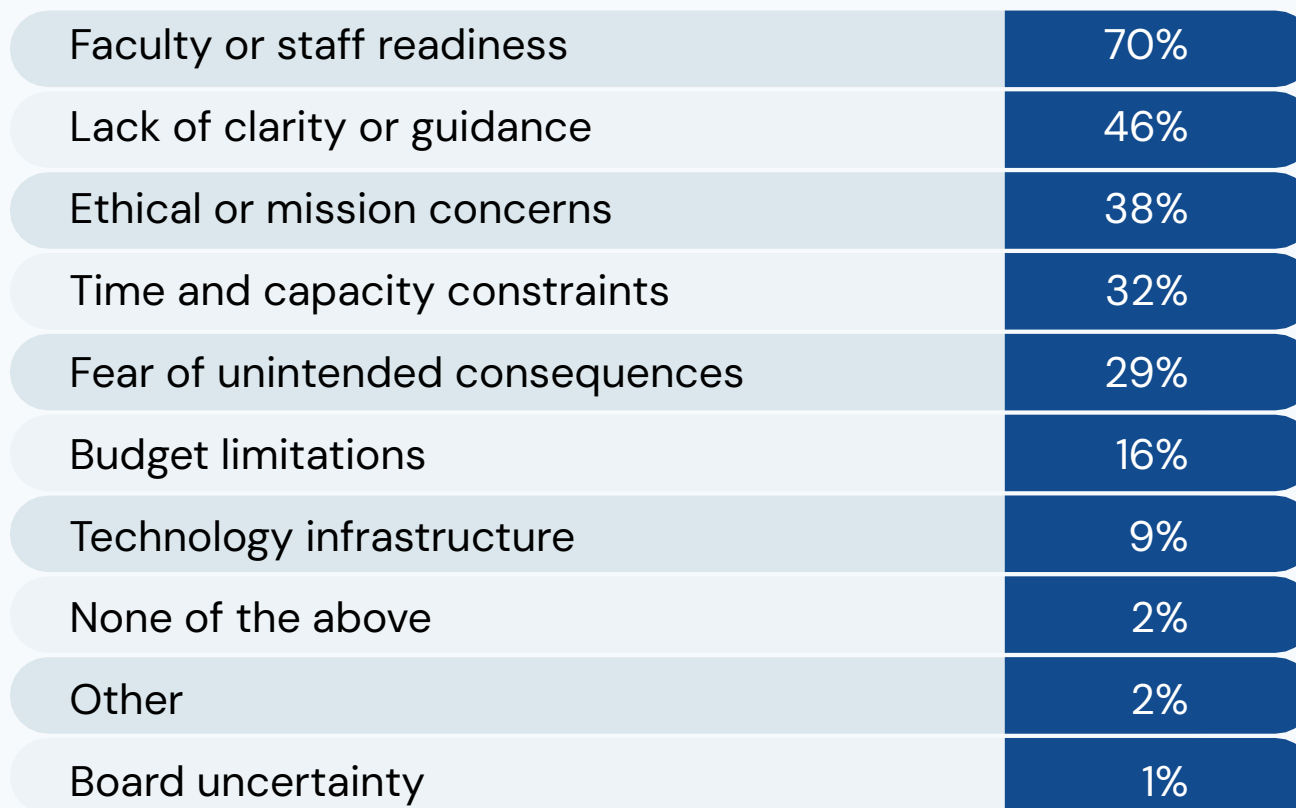
Most AI usage is via personal accounts, whether for students or faculty / staff.

AI Traction



Lack of preparation and clear guidance top list of barriers to making progress with AI

What are the primary barriers to making progress with AI at your school? Select up to three.



70%

Cite faculty or staff readiness as the biggest impediment to progress.

AI governance / licensing is limited

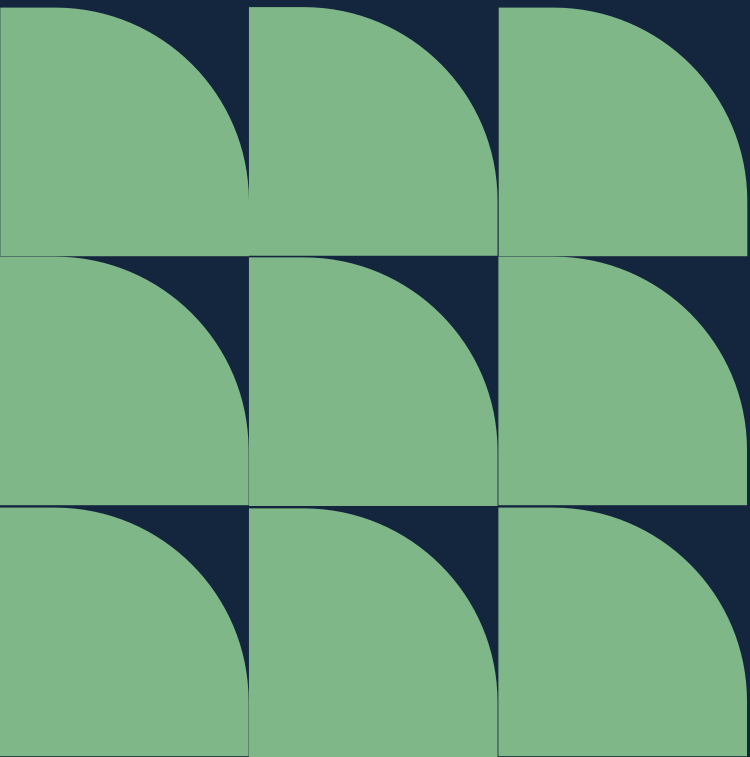
Which statements describe your school's current approach to education and strategy development around AI? Select up to three.

Informal individual exploration by staff or leaders	40%
Development of policies or guidelines for AI use	36%
No formal approach at this time	32%
Internal discussions without a formal plan or framework	29%
Pilot projects or limited experimentation in specific areas	19%
Coordinated, proactive leadership education and training	17%
Use of external resources or experts	13%
Schoolwide framework or roadmap guiding AI-related decisions	13%
Peer learning with other Catholic or independent schools	7%
Board-level discussion or governance oversight related to AI	3%
Other (please specify)	3%

36%

Roughly 1/3 of participants have an AI policy in place

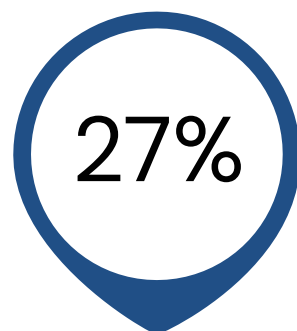
AI activity in schools today is largely exploratory, with informal efforts and prioritization outweighing structured implementation.



AI Competency in Leadership

AI awareness seen as very important attribute for effective school leadership

Looking ahead, how important will AI understanding be for effective Catholic school leadership?



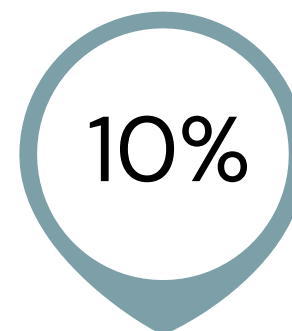
Essential



Very
Important



Moderately
Important



Slightly
Important



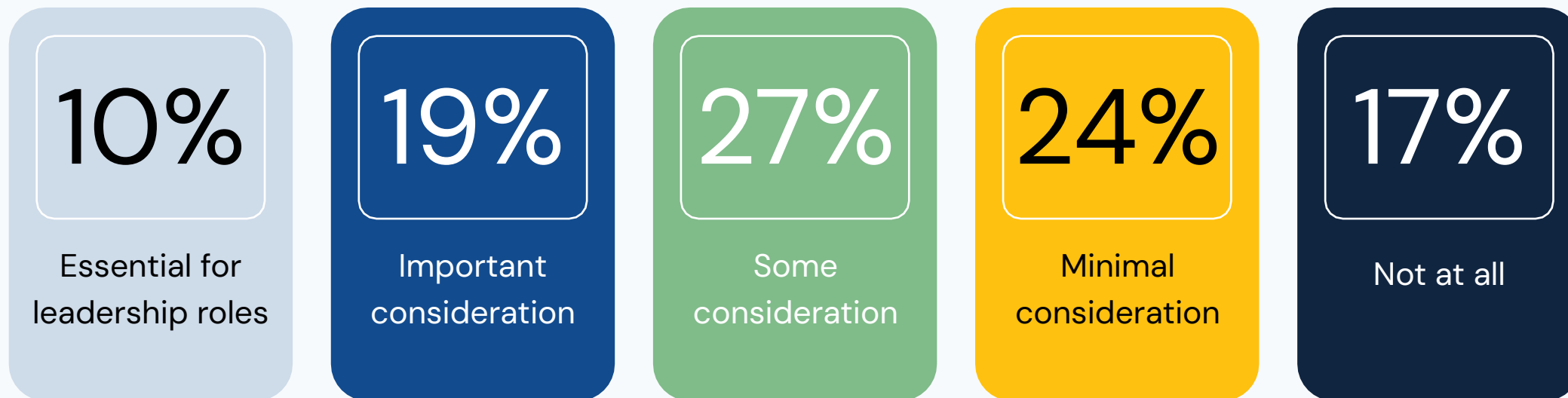
Not
Important

72%

See AI understanding as highly important Catholic school leadership attribute for AI era

Limited consideration of AI competency for current leadership roles

To what extent is AI literacy or awareness being considered as a competency in leadership roles at your school?



29%

Nearly 1/3 of schools see AI competency as important or essential consideration in current leadership roles

Limited consideration of AI competencies in current leader hiring

Is your school currently considering AI-related competencies in hiring or evaluating leaders?

53

It's relevant, but has not yet been discussed

7%

Yes, in limited roles

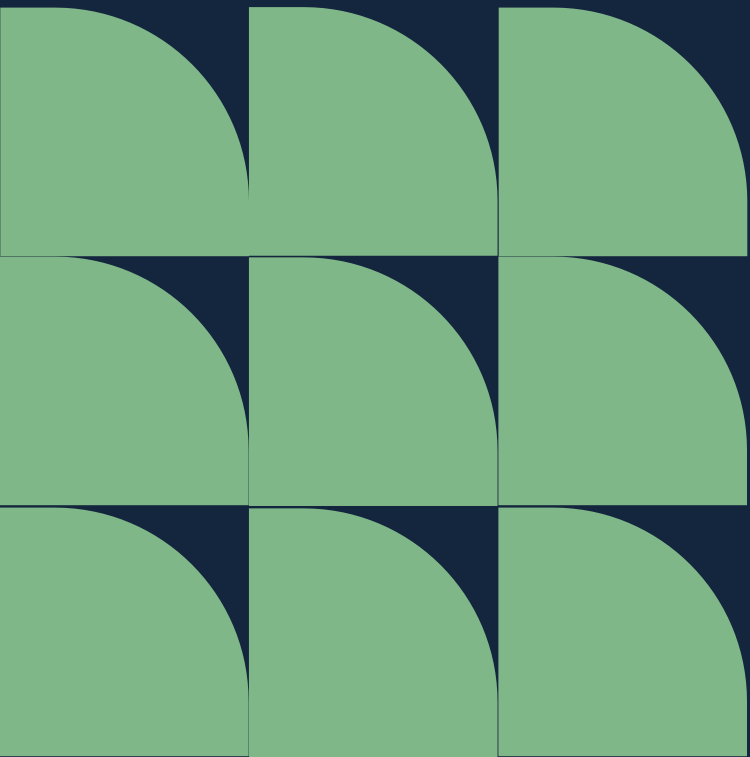
20% No, it's not relevant

15% We have had some informal discussion on the topic

2%

Yes, broadly across leadership roles

The vast majority of schools are not considering AI competencies in leadership hiring.



Implications

Implications

The survey points to the need for thoughtful, rapid, action getting schools on a path to leveraging AI to multiply mission in support of their specific institutional goals, needs, culture, and charism. Specifically, schools can take the following steps to progress.

Invest in faculty and staff formation to build confidence, competence, and consistency in AI use aligned with Catholic values.

Establish guardrails and policies grounded in prudence to mitigate risks around integrity, misuse, and mission drift.

Develop a unified AI strategy that integrates mission, academics, operations, and advancement rather than isolated experimentation.

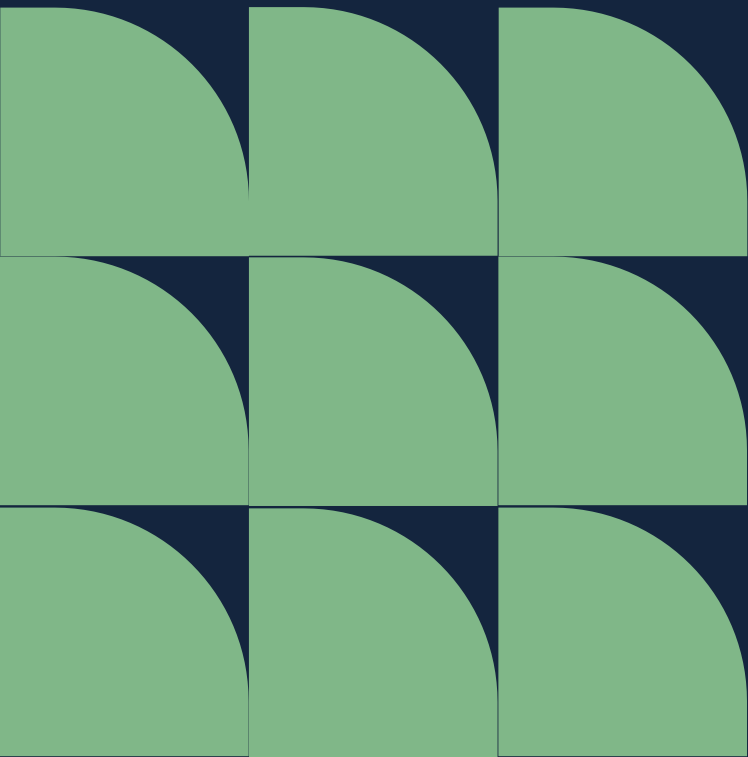
Move quickly from awareness to action by establishing clear leadership alignment, ownership, and near-term priorities across key domains.

Clarify brand positioning to articulate how human formation, virtue, and wisdom uniquely differentiate Catholic education in an AI era.

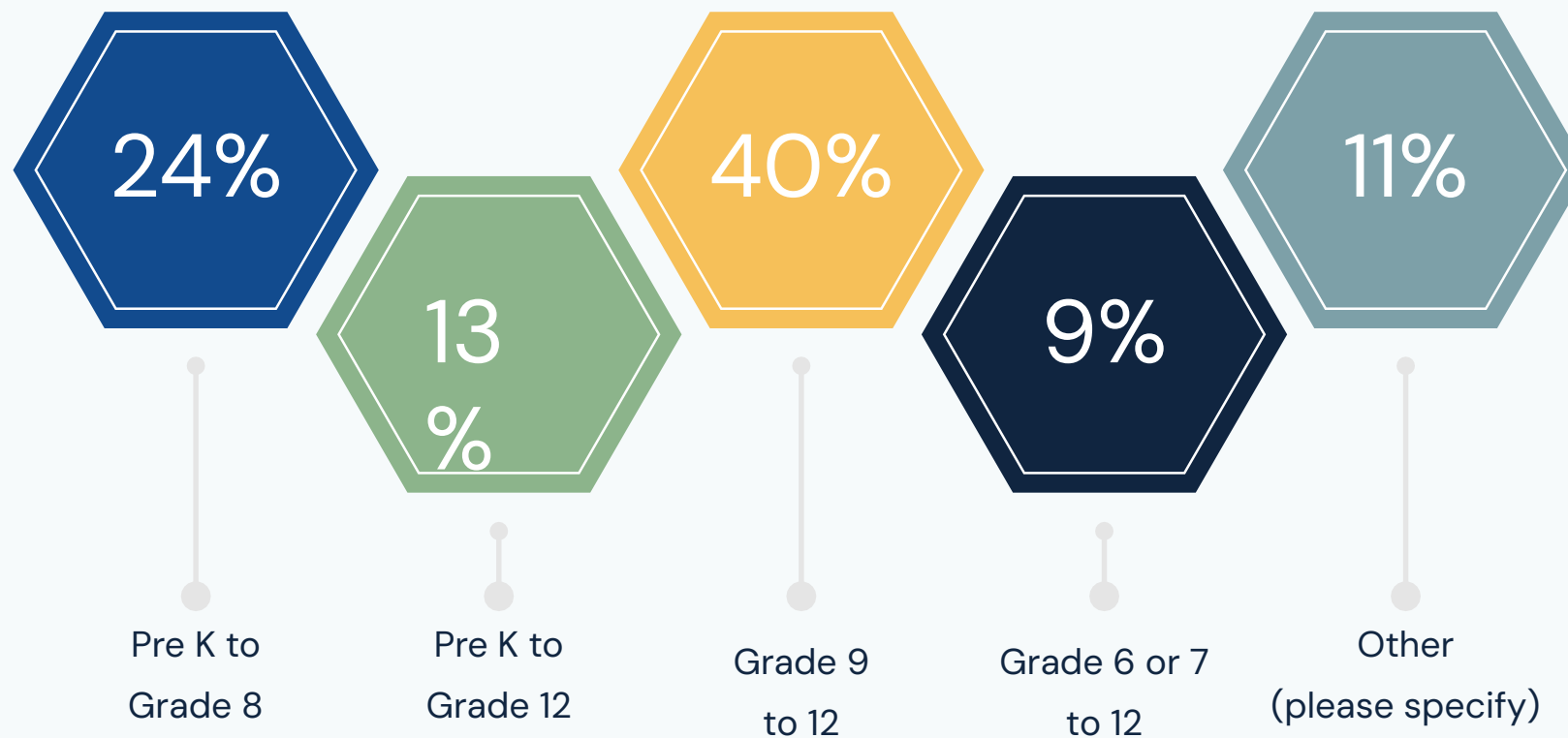
Pilot high-impact use cases that drive efficiency and effectiveness while reinforcing, not replacing, human-centered formation.

Using technology, including AI, with intention, adopting tools that extend capacity and support stronger donor conversations.

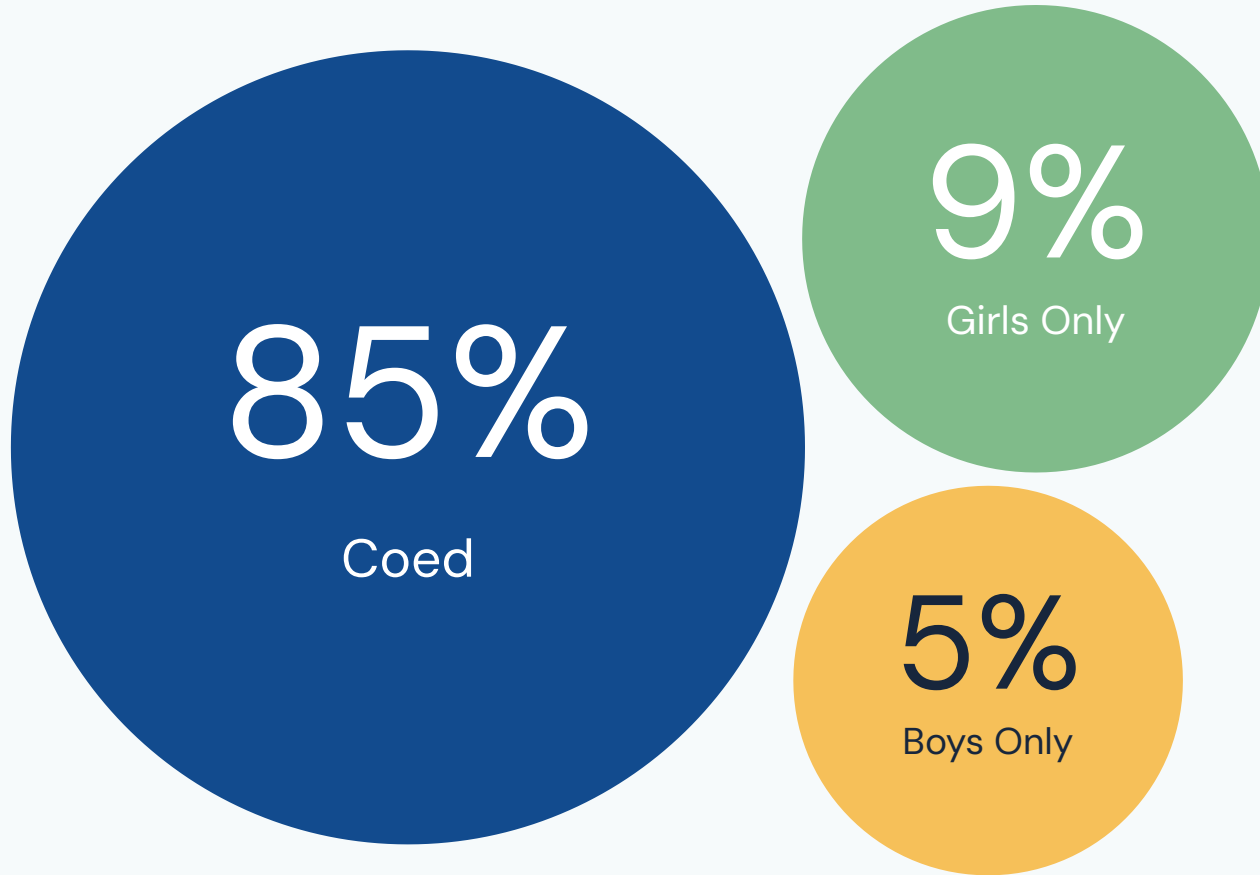
Participant Snapshot



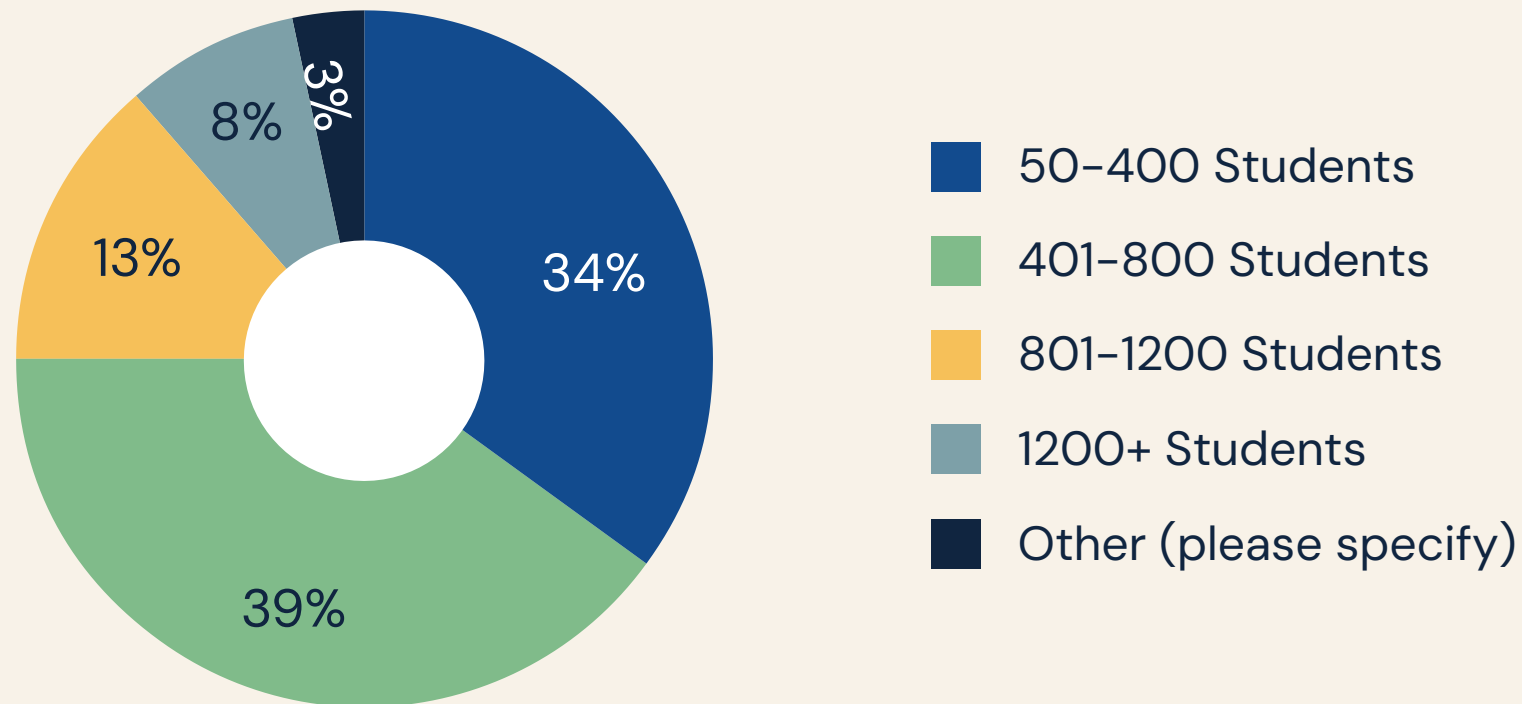
School Grades



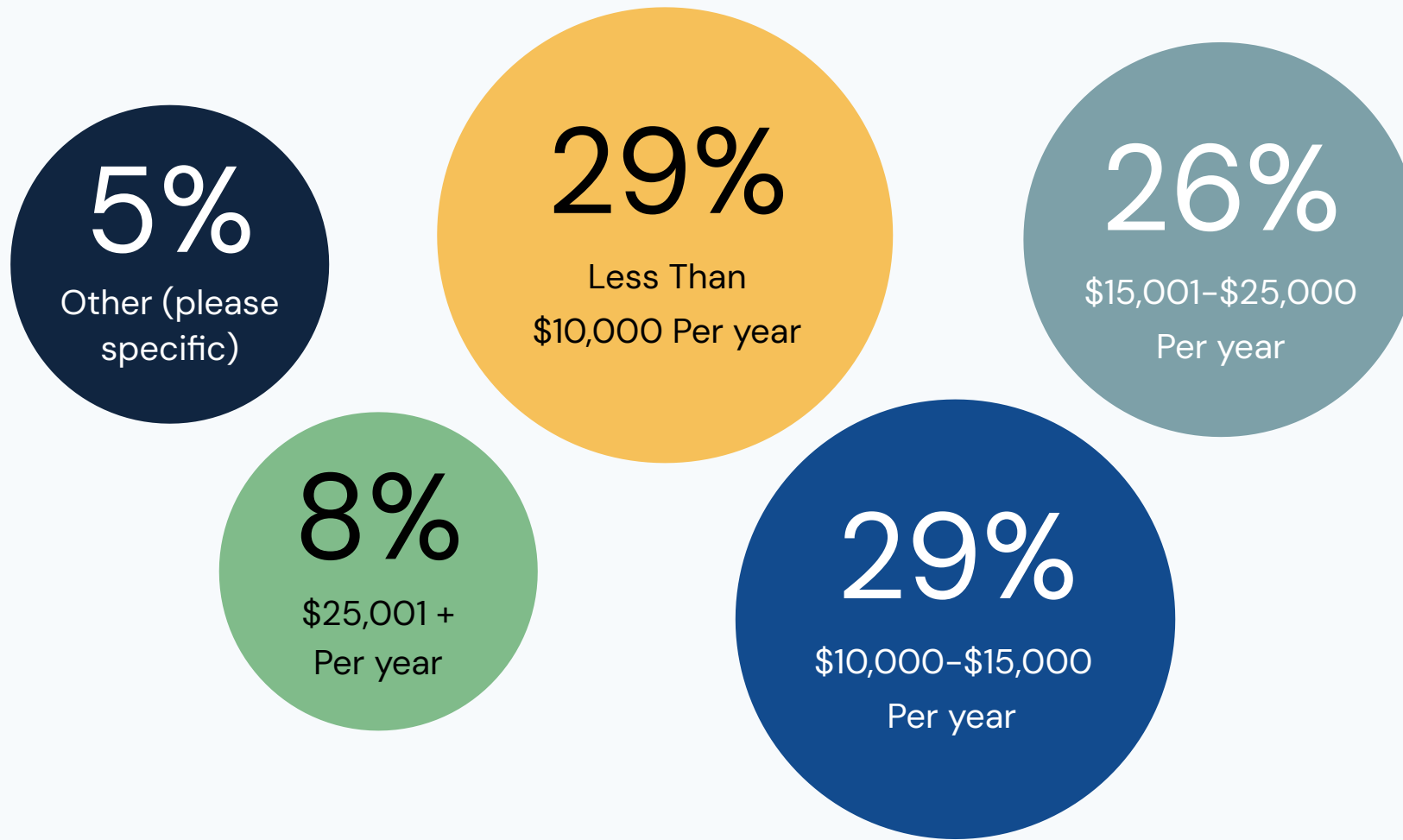
| School Gender



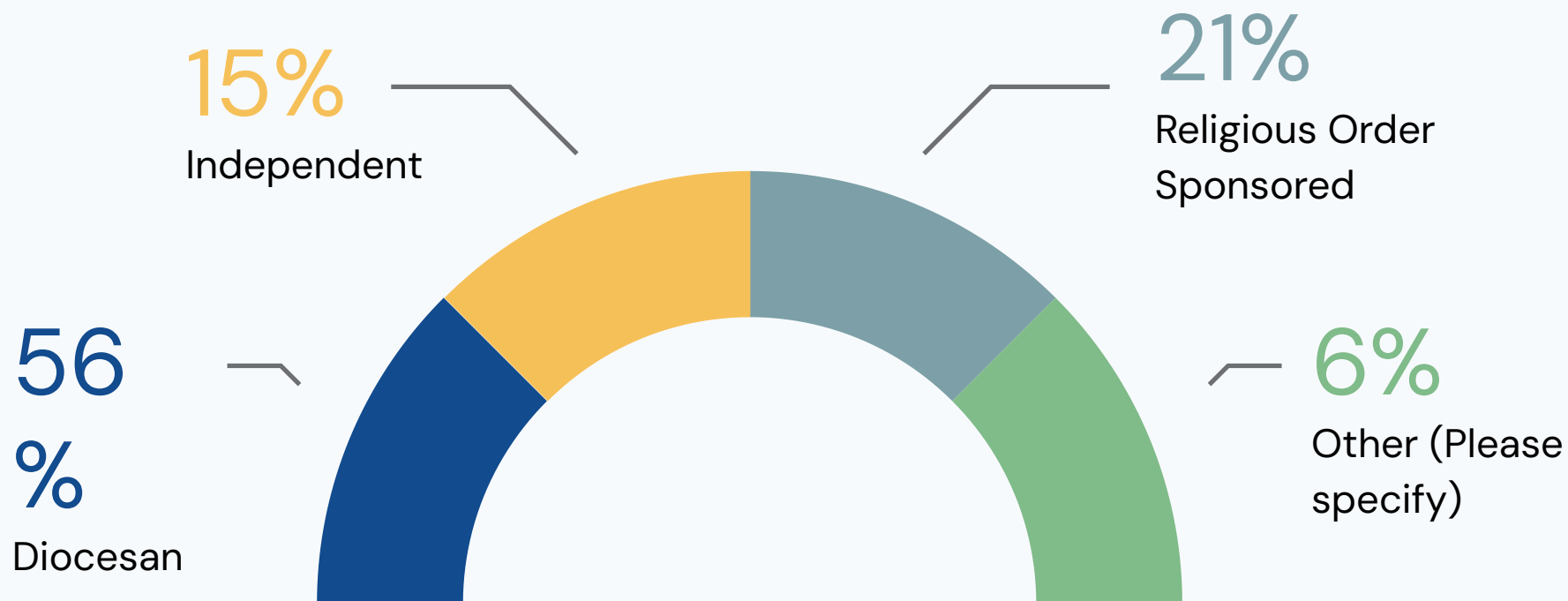
School Gender



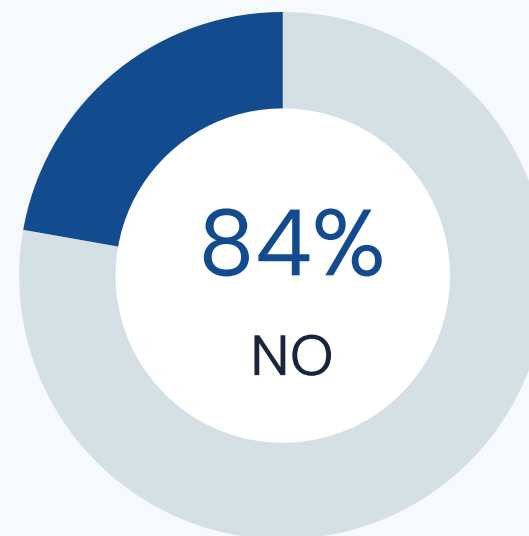
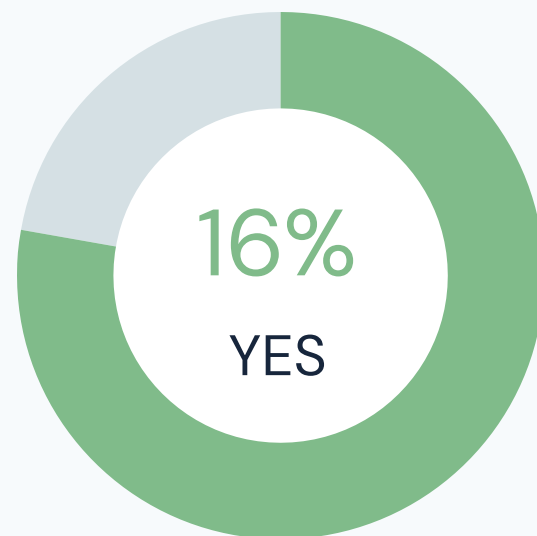
What is your annual tuition?



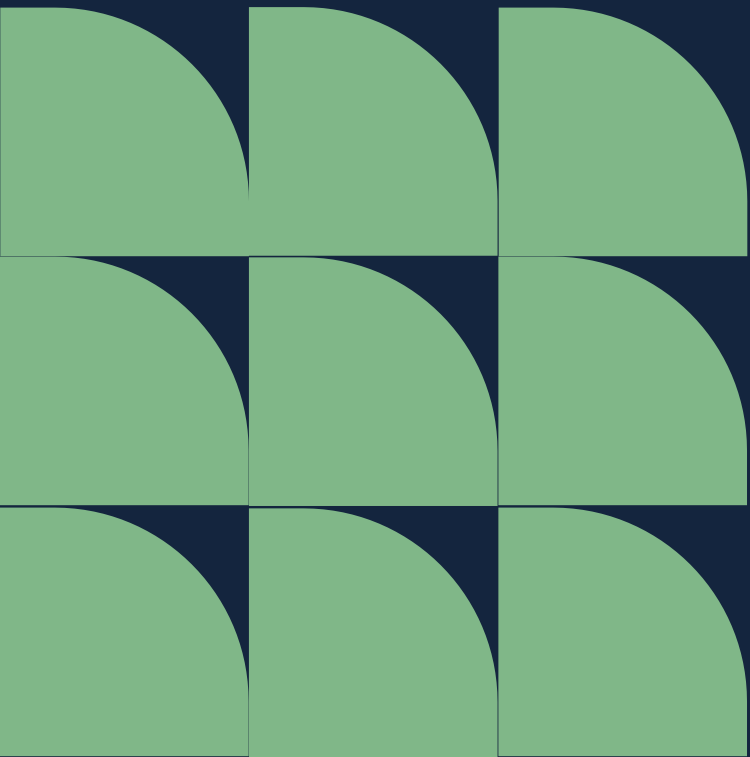
What is your school governance type?



Are you a Classical Catholic School?



About Partners in Mission



About Partners in Mission



What We Do

Partners in Mission empowers Catholic schools and organizations to build thriving communities of faith through expert guidance on advancement, enrollment, recruitment, and strategic growth.



Who We Serve

At Partners in Mission, we proudly serve Catholic organizations of all kinds – schools, parishes, dioceses, and institutions of higher education. Your mission and vision are at the heart of everything we do. No matter your starting point, our goal is to help you bring them to life.



Our Vision

To be the transformative force empowering Catholic schools and institutions to educate and evangelize effectively. We help you thrive as beacons of faith, academic rigor, and service for generations to come.



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