

A Systems Approach to Developing Leadership Paths for Catholic Schools

A White Paper Developed by
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“To commit oneself to working in accordance with the aims of a Catholic School is to make a great act of faith in the necessity and influence of this apostolate. Only one who has this conviction and accepts Christ’s message, who has a love for and understands today’s young people, who appreciates what people’s real problems and difficulties are, will be led to contribute with courage and even audacity to the progress of this apostolate in building up a Catholic school, which puts its theory into practice, which renews itself according to its ideals and to present needs.”

-The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: The Catholic School

Advancing a Comprehensive Definition of Catholic School Leadership

Central to the mission of the Church is the work of Catholic schools, and central to the work of Catholic schools are Catholic school leaders. Catholic school leaders are called to be exceptional professional educators and ministers of the Church (Schuttloffel, 2013). The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Catholic Schools (NSBECS) state that “an

excellent Catholic school has a qualified leader/ leadership team empowered by the governing body to realize and implement the school’s mission and vision.”

The need for well-prepared leaders for Catholic schools is essential to sustaining Catholic education, and in order for educational institutions to be fruitful in their mission, effective leadership is key (Schuttloffel, 2013). The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2006) recognized the importance of

preparation programs which are specific to formation of the Catholic school leader.

We must provide a sufficient number of programs of the highest quality to recruit and prepare our future diocesan and local school administrators and teachers so that they are knowledgeable in matters of our faith, are professionally prepared, and are committed to the Church. These programs will require even more active involvement and cooperation by our Catholic colleges and universities in collaboration with the diocesan educational leadership. (p. 272)

While many Catholic colleges and universities have heeded this call and developed Catholic principal preparation programs, few have conceptualized the Bishops' call more broadly to prepare and support leaders in varying roles and stages within the Catholic school. Additionally, there is no set of agreed upon Catholic school leadership competencies to utilize within these programs in order to standardize the approach and ensure the programs are meeting the needs of Catholic schools today.

In order to address the shrinking pool of qualified candidates to lead Catholic schools, it can be argued that the definition of leadership should be broadened to provide for a more comprehensive approach to leadership development. Providing strategic and coherent development to teacher leaders, novice principals, veteran principals, those transitioning into retirement, and leaders at the diocesan level achieves two goals. First, it supports a model of distributed leadership. The job of a Catholic school principal is all-encompassing. Serving as instructional leader, faith leader, and operational director is close to impossible for one person to achieve alone. Distributed leadership allows the school to capitalize on the talents of others and intentionally tasking leadership roles to teachers maximizes the impact on the school. Secondly,

it keeps talented people engaged with Catholic schools and further committed to the mission of Catholic schools.

This paper will explore a comprehensive framework for the development of Catholic school leaders at all levels. Leadership should be more broadly conceptualized to include explicit leadership development at all levels: teacher leader, principalship, and executive Catholic school leadership. The complexities inherent in Catholic school leadership call for an explicit application of the distributive leadership approach to support the long term sustainability and stability of Catholic schools. Even if it were possible for an individual to possess the expertise necessary to support excellence in all areas of a thriving Catholic school, the limitations of time (there are only 24 hours in a day) would prevent that individual from being able to successfully drive that excellence single-handedly for any sustainable length of time. Successful Catholic school leaders build a leadership team, comprised of dedicated people with complementary skills and dispositions, to drive and support the school's growth from various angles. Often, talented and committed teachers are given the opportunity to serve their Catholic school by accepting additional tasks or stepping up to additional responsibilities without receiving any formal training on best practices for the role, let alone ongoing support as they learn the new role. In this way, leadership is developed through an individual's isolated experiences, rather than through a thoughtful, deliberate training process intended to prepare the individual for the complexities of leadership in a variety of settings. In order for the leadership team to be truly effective, each leader on the team should be provided with deliberate professional development, aligned with common Catholic school leadership competencies, to support their ongoing knowledge, skills, and dispositional development within their role on the team.



The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools (NSBECS) are a logical resource for the development of agreed upon Catholic school leadership competencies. The NSBECS were designed through a two-year collaboration among stakeholders from PK-12 Catholic schools, the Church, diocesan offices, universities, educational networks and partnerships, and funders (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2013). They present a holistic view of the policies and practices that should be in place in Catholic schools in the areas of Mission and Catholic Identity, Governance and Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Operational Vitality (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2013). The purpose was to develop a universal set of characteristics and criteria to define how “mission-driven, program effective, well-managed, and

continuous improvement while emphasizing and centralizing Catholic identity (Ozar, et al., 2017). The success of the NSBECS in guiding continuous improvement in Catholic schools provides the necessary evidence to support their use as a framework for the development of Catholic school leaders.

Identifying the Paths to Catholic School Leadership

The path to leadership is often conceptualized as a pipeline. In this metaphor (see Figure 1), a candidate progresses in a unidirectional fashion from one point of the leadership continuum to another. Sometimes, this model places a myopic focus on principalship development to the



Figure 1: Pipeline metaphor in Catholic school leadership

responsibly governed Catholic schools operate” and to guide school improvement efforts (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012, p. VI).

Since publication, the NSBECS have demonstrated a positive impact on Catholic schools that have implemented the standards (Ozar, Weitzel-O'Neill, Barton, Calteaux, Hunter & Yi, 2017). Two-thirds of survey respondents (116) who know and use the NSBECS in their schools indicated that they saw “positive” and “strong positive” outcomes as a result of implementation. Further, the standards have provided schools and leaders with focus and unity and have helped to drive

exclusion of other forms of leadership. This model can foster an undue presumption that the principalship is the desired outcome and does not seem to place value on the other forms of leadership that teachers can demonstrate. The reality is that some teachers do not wish to assume the principalship but would rather exercise their leadership at other levels within the school. This model also does not acknowledge leadership opportunities beyond the principalship, creating the impression that achieving the principalship is the beginning and the end of the line for leadership development. This should not be the case.

Traditional linear conceptualizations of leadership development, such as the pipeline metaphor, may not reflect the current realities found in Catholic schools. This metaphor does not seem to account for the many different access points to the stages of leadership. The pipeline metaphor suggests a unidirectional path with the implied focus on principalship development, rather than development of the full leadership continuum.

It might be more useful to conceptualize leadership development using the metaphor of a freeway interchange (Figure 2). This reflects the multiple entry points that can occur within the Catholic school setting. Considering these multiple access points helps to conceptualize the many different paths to leadership.

Within the Interchange Model of Leadership, the many routes to leadership can be visualized. For example, a talented middle school math teacher may be tapped by her principal to serve as an instructional coach for math within the building. Within this role, this teacher leader will be observing math classes, modeling lessons, providing feedback to teachers on instruction, identifying resources for teachers, and guiding math curriculum development for the school. This teacher leader may not aspire to become a principal, yet the opportunity for her to serve as teacher of teachers in her area of expertise capitalizes on her skill set. In essence, she is using her leadership skills to support the improvement efforts of the school.

On the other end of the leadership spectrum, one can envision the path to the executive leadership level of a Catholic school

Figure 2: Freeway interchange metaphor for Catholic school leadership path development



organization. There are many different and valid routes to that position, with each path requiring a specific form of preparation and development. On one path, one can envision an experienced principal seeking new challenges by exploring opportunities to “move up” into a new level of Catholic school leadership, possibly as a President or a leader in a Diocesan Office for Catholic Education. Yet, on another path, a veteran principal, nearing the end of her career but not quite ready to fully retire and leave education, seeks the opportunity to scale back her workload gradually by shifting from full time principal to a coaching role for principals. Her knowledge, skills, and dispositions make her an ideal mentoring companion to prospective or new principals on their journey.

Sowing the Seeds: Developing Teacher Leaders in Catholic Schools

Understanding that Catholic schools should be embracing the distributed leadership model, both schools and dioceses can tend to approach the idea of leadership recruitment “too late in the game.” The development of teacher talent is critical because it defines the quality of the pool from which most schools select candidates for aspiring leader programs. Moreover, most aspiring school leader programs “take all who come, are limited to knowledge and skill training, and lack research based assessment for choosing” school leaders (Gordon, 2012, p.5). The local building principal must become the “talent scout” and be on the “look out” for leadership potential in their staff members, even if these candidates choose not to become principals.

Teacher leadership is a complex, multifaceted construct whose unifying feature is educational improvement through active involvement. This may operate on various levels, ranging from management of schools and the facilitation of a professional learning culture to improving classroom teaching and learning in order to

boost students’ academic achievement (York-Barr and Duke, 2004).

Many of the skills that make excellent teacher leaders are the same skills that make excellent school leaders or principals. For example, a great teacher leader helps teachers set goals and work to meet those goals; a great teacher leader garners trust and respect; a great teacher leader leads with regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and a great teacher leader is seeking to be an agent of change for the whole school.

All of these attributes are compelling and empowering as long as they are recognized and put to good use. If the principal does not recognize the skills and dispositions of a teacher leader, then it is likely that that person will become frustrated with nowhere to go - no promotions or upward mobility except to become principal. It is crucial that these leaders are identified, empowered, given training and professional learning opportunities, and given some freedom to do what is needed within the realm of the school’s improvement plan. It is important to note that the elevation to teacher leadership benefits both the teacher leader and the school: the teacher leader uses her skills and expertise to support the school, and the school has the skills and expertise from someone other than the principal, freeing the principal up to focus on other initiatives.

The Creation of Specialized Teacher Leader Roles

The intentional use of teacher leaders can help in the realization of distributed leadership that can provide systems of continuous improvement within the school. From the perspective of professional development, Sinha et al. (2012) viewed teacher leadership as a “particular type of relationship” that “mobilizes others to improve practice” (p. 13). They argued that teacher leadership is a necessary catalyst



Specialized Roles of Teacher Leaders

- *Instructional Coach*
- *Reading Specialist*
- *Learning Specialist*
- *Director of Inclusion*
- *Interventionist*
- *Early Childhood Director*
- *Teacher Assistance Team Coordinator*

for school improvement and that it is essential to sustaining curriculum reform.

The main and most significant difference between a teacher leader and a principal is that a principal evaluates teachers while the teacher leader does not. So having a teacher leader provide mentoring and instructional coaching is a better model than having the ‘evaluator’ - principal - try to provide mentoring and coaching. This can certainly work, but it can be received better by teachers when it doesn’t come from the evaluator. In essence, the teacher leader straddles the line between teacher and leader/principal. When done well, the teacher leader can shapeshift from teacher to leader effortlessly. She can mentor and coach a teacher while also having a conversation with the principal about what trends she notices and therefore what professional learning is needed by the staff.

The teacher leader role can vary depending on the school’s needs and the teacher’s skills and dispositions. Often, the roles listed above are “blurred” based on the needs of the school. For example, the Teacher Assistance Team (TAT)

Coordinator might also be a skilled reading teacher, so while she may not be a certified reading specialist, her skills can support the teaching of reading and implementation of reading interventions in her school. There is no limit to the number of teacher leaders in any one school or the possible roles. Building principals should actively assess for teachers’ leadership skills and desire to serve in a leadership capacity. Often, the teacher can be the person to identify the void in leadership and develop a proposal for a leadership role to address the need. The key is for the building principal to have an openness to sharing administrative responsibilities and decision-making. Ultimately, supporting teachers in leadership roles will likely lead to retention of your most highly qualified teachers and a more effective Catholic school.

Developing Principals for Catholic Schools

Each stage of the principal development has its own unique needs. Just like in the classroom, approaches to professional learning must be differentiated to recognize the needs specified at each level (See Figure 3).

Pre-service Principal Candidates

Actively recruiting principal candidates, and supporting their development through high-quality pre-service programs is crucial to leadership development in Catholic schools. The analysis of state programs completed by The University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) (Anderson and Reynolds, 2015) contains some illustrative lessons for Catholic institutions of higher education (CIHE) in terms of pre-service programming for potential Catholic school leaders. Although the UCEA report specifically examines policies related to principal preparation programs for public

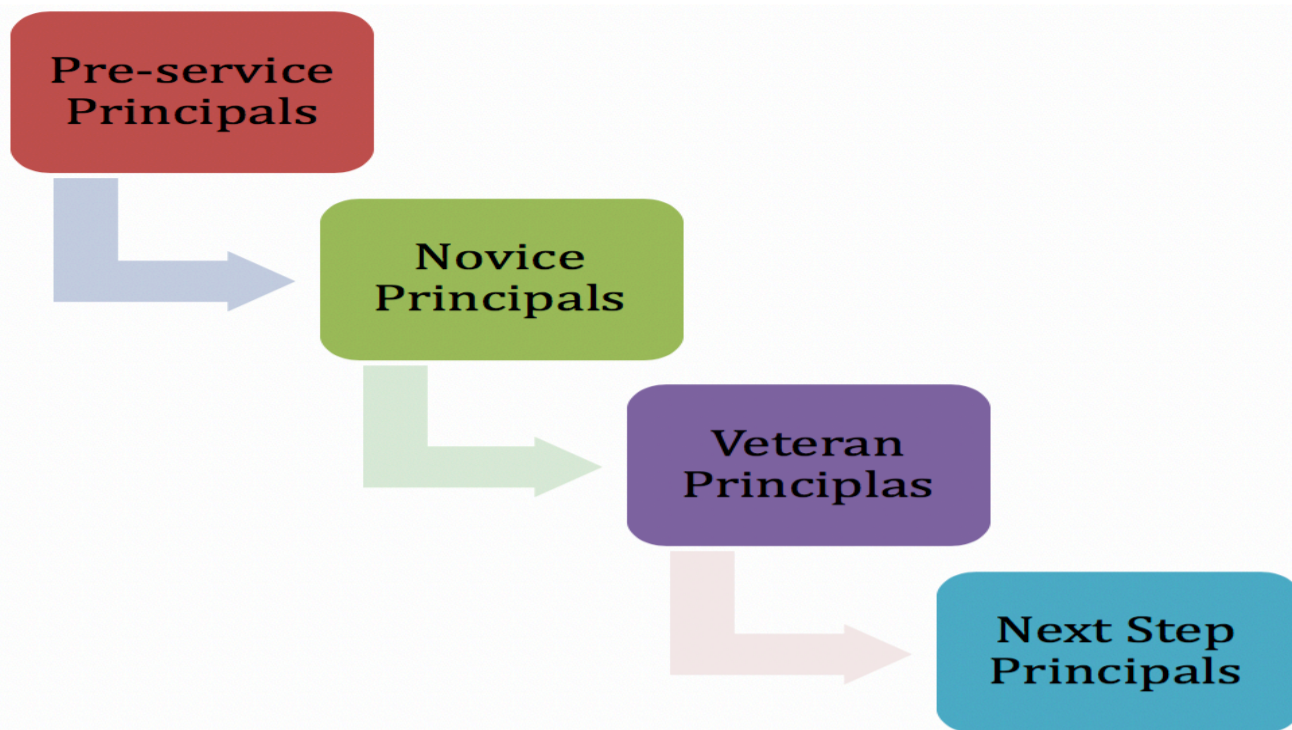


Figure 3: Continuum of Principal Development

schools, Boyle, Haller, and Hunt (2017) extrapolate and apply their findings to Catholic school principal preparation programs and offer an agenda for Catholic principal preparation programs.

Explicit Selection Process

Anderson and Reynolds (2015) suggested that principal preparation programs develop a plan for targeted recruitment. They also suggested that the selection process contain performance-based assessments. This model presents a challenge to CIHE to develop evidenced-based approaches to the recruitment and selection of qualified candidates for the Catholic school principalship. Use of both NSBECS and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) could offer a way to identify the critical variables related to being an effective Catholic school principal. By explicitly aligning a recruitment template with the domains (Catholic Identity, Governance and Leadership, Academic Excellence and Operational Vitality) of the NSBECS, potential protocols for recruitment could be created and implemented in partnership with diocesan offices of Catholic

education. These protocols can also help shape the selection process. Without intentionally addressing the critical skills needed to run an effective Catholic school in a direct fashion, principal preparation programs can only rely on the wish of attracting candidates and the hope that they can translate this knowledge and the dispositions within a standard instructional leadership preparation program (Boyle, Haller, and Hunt 2016).

Program Standards

As suggested earlier, the NSBECS can provide the promise of a standardized framework for the development of Catholic school principals. From the NSBECS and PSEL, a set of competencies can be identified that provide the basis of a universally agreed-upon set of Catholic school leadership standards that can be used in conjunction with national and/or state-based educational leadership frameworks. The NSBECS can help to articulate the unique set of skills required for the development of Catholic school principals that are equipped for the current realities of Catholic schools.

Clinically Rich Internship

Anderson and Reynolds (2015) called for internships that are deliberately structured with fieldwork that is tightly integrated with curriculum. The trainee should engage with core leadership responsibilities, and supervision should be conducted with an expert mentor. The development of effective Catholic school leaders calls for CIHE to ensure that internships not only focus on the instructional leadership skills, but also look at the spiritual leadership competencies as well as leadership for operational vitality. By creating an explicit focus on these critical skills for the preparation of Catholic school leaders (and articulating performance standards for in-service Catholic school principals), principal preparation programs can increase the intentionality with which they approach this issue. CIHE should identify a variety of field-based experiences to provide exposure to a wide range of subgroup populations for principal candidates. Interns should have directed experience in marketing, enrollment, and development as well as active, ongoing participation in the governance structures of the school. Finally, and most critically, how does the internship nurture the faith development of the principal candidate so that they are truly effective, faith-based leaders (Boyle, Haller, and Hunt 2016)?

CIHE-Diocesan Partnerships

In order to ensure that rigorous recruitment and selection of candidates occurs and that clinically rich internships are in place, new structures of collaboration must be developed and maintained between CIHE and diocesan offices of Catholic education. This would call for enhanced participation of the diocesan offices in the selection of candidates and innovative methods of collaboration that would increase the ability of the outreach of CIHE in service of Catholic school best practices in principal preparation and partnership development. A more explicit process of the internship would

require a stronger diocesan voice in the development of the internship experiences. A process of this nature places the diocese in the position of consumer of the principal preparation program. This also has the added benefit of providing ongoing in-service support to sitting principals through the exposure to emerging research and/or training on best practices. Through the ongoing collaboration of CIHE, dioceses, and Catholic schools, faculty and practitioners reciprocally benefit from sharing expertise. Further, that type of collaborative effort ensures that leadership support doesn't end with graduation, but continues across the development continuum.

Novice Principals

After finishing a principal preparation program, there are still a set of unique developmental needs for which the novice principal requires professional learning and support. Spillane and Lee (2014) argue that novice principals frequently battle with feelings of professional isolation and loneliness, have the struggle of dealing with the inherited practice and style of the previous principals, and have difficulty managing their time and priorities. Most new to the profession do not have a mentor, coach, or supervisor to help them navigate through the many hats that principals wear. In most Catholic schools, the pastor serves as the supervisor and often lacks the preparation or knowledge they need to help new principals (Boyle and Dosen, 2017). In other cases, new principals are assigned a mentor principal but the business of the job often times prevents either the novice principal or mentor from spending quality time together.

It is a faulty assumption that candidates, even the most stellar ones, who successfully complete a principal preparation program can effortlessly step into the role of Catholic school principal. The learning curve is steep. In order to maximize their success, the professional learning and faith development needs of novice



Professional Learning Needs for Novice Principals

- *Establishing basic routines for improvement goals to succeed*
- *Ensuring basic managerial functions executed effectively*
- *Establishing goals and expectations to improve teaching and learning*
- *Allocating resources strategically to support school improvement efforts*
- *Identifying sources of evidence on quality teaching*
- *Leading teacher learning and development*
- *Creating an orderly and safe environment*
- *Applying relevant knowledge*
- *Collaborating to solve complex problems*
- *Building relational trust*

principals should be explicitly addressed through programming from the Catholic School Office. The opportunity exists for new and innovative systems of cooperation between diocesan offices and CIHE. Again, using the NSBECS as the framework, specific areas of

focus can be assessed and used as the target for professional learning and coaching.

Faith Development Needs for Novice Principals

- *Living faith in a public manner*
- *Leading others in prayer*
- *Viewing leadership tasks from a Catholic worldview*
- *Leading faith formation activities for various stakeholder*

Veteran Principals

For veteran principals, the demands of the job are constantly changing and, with those changes, comes the need to stay current with new strategies or techniques for continuous improvement. This, along with the ongoing demands of running a building, can lead to fatigue, both physical and spiritual.

The strategies for principal development need to be about revitalizing and renewing. In the professional learning realm, one promising practice is the School Administration Manager (SAM) process. The overarching goal of the SAM process is to enable the principal to increase time to support instruction in the classroom and decrease time spent doing management tasks. The SAM is a school staff member whose role is to work with the principal to assist him or her in spending time on instructional leadership. The management issues are delegated to the First Responder who is empowered to make the necessary decisions to address the managerial tasks. With less time being devoted to addressing the managerial



Professional Learning Needs for Veteran Principals

- *Building capacity in teachers and teacher leaders*
- *Creating opportunities for intentional collaboration*
- *Pedagogical coach to teachers*
- *Creating a path to systemness*
- *Building external networks and partnerships*
- *Challenging the status quo*
- *Committing to continuous improvement for self*
- *Distinguishing between technical challenges and adaptive challenges*

tasks, principals can use that time to focus on increasing the quality of teaching and learning in the building by being more present to teachers and students. Studies have indicated that principals with SAMs report greater job

Faith Development Needs for Veteran Principals

- *Avoiding the challenge of their own spiritual stagnation*
- *Continuing the sense of “wonderment and awe”*

satisfaction (Goldring, W. Grisson, J. Neumen, C. Blisset, R. and Porter, A. 2015).

In addition to the professional learning needs of veteran principals, these individuals require faith development that is targeted to meet their individual needs. If principals are expected to support the spiritual formation of the school, they must attend to these needs themselves. Providing true spiritual retreat options can help to meet that need.

Next Step Principals

This category of principals can be divided into two main groups: those that are transitioning due to retirement or those that are taking a

Professional Learning Needs for Next Step Principals

- *Developing skills for inducting and mentoring novice principals*
- *Coaching to improve practice*
- *Support principals/candidates in their ability to establish and maintain relationships*

“break” for family reasons. Both groups have a demonstrated dedication to Catholic education and possess a great deal of institutional wisdom that can be lost when they leave their position. For those that are transitioning through retirement, there can be a sense of wanting to give back to Catholic education, but not on a daily basis. For those that are transitioning due to family circumstances, there can be a desire to want to stay connected to the field of Catholic education, but they may lack the time due to caring for family.



The next step principal can be a great resource to both the novice and veteran principal in a coaching or mentor framework in order to support the professional learning and faith development needs of those positions. In order to do that, these coaches or mentors need explicit training on effective methods of coaching. Next step principals can help to coach especially novice principals in “soft skills” such as relationship building and effective conflict resolution. They can also serve as advisors in issues of faith formation.

There are many times that these individuals are used in an ad hoc fashion. But to be most effective, there is a level of intentionality that is required. Specific job descriptions and defined responsibilities help provide focus to this level of support. Additionally, ongoing and dedicated professional learning opportunities for these individuals can keep them current with practices and the demands of the position.

It is important to develop strategies to keep next

Faith Development Needs for Next Step Principals

- *Serving the broader mission
Catholic Education for the greater
glory of God*
- *Challenge to continue to grow in
faith*
- *Develop the process of
accompaniment of others in their
faith journey*

step principals engaged, especially those that are leaving for family reasons. By keeping them engaged in the system, there is an increased chance to keep that level of talent in

the system when they are ready to return. By investing in ongoing professional learning, these individuals are “up to speed” when they return to the principalship.

The Case for Supporting the Development of Public School Administrators to Lead Catholic Schools

One channel that is used to address the need for Catholic school leadership is hiring experienced public school administrators to lead Catholic schools. Often, these individuals are earning retirement funds, and this allows them to work for a Catholic school salary. There is benefit in that the Catholic school gets a seasoned administrator that is most likely working for “mission” or the sense to “give back.”

However, there are specific areas that require development in order to increase the likelihood that they will be effective leaders within the Catholic school setting (see Figure 4). These four areas are the religious education curriculum, Church documents, Governance and Operational Vitality, and the integration of faith into professional life.

Religious Education Curriculum

Analysis of any of the leadership standards used for principal preparation suggest that the balance of these programs is focused on the instructional leadership aspect of the job. As such, the emphasis for public school leaders transitioning to Catholic school leaders is on the subject aspect of the curriculum. It can't be expected that these preparation programs should touch religious education curriculum. However, this is a critical dimension of the work of a Catholic school leader. Understanding the diocesan curriculum review process or understanding the curriculum framework from the USCCB is an important dimension that should be intentionally addressed. Even if the responsibility of the faith development

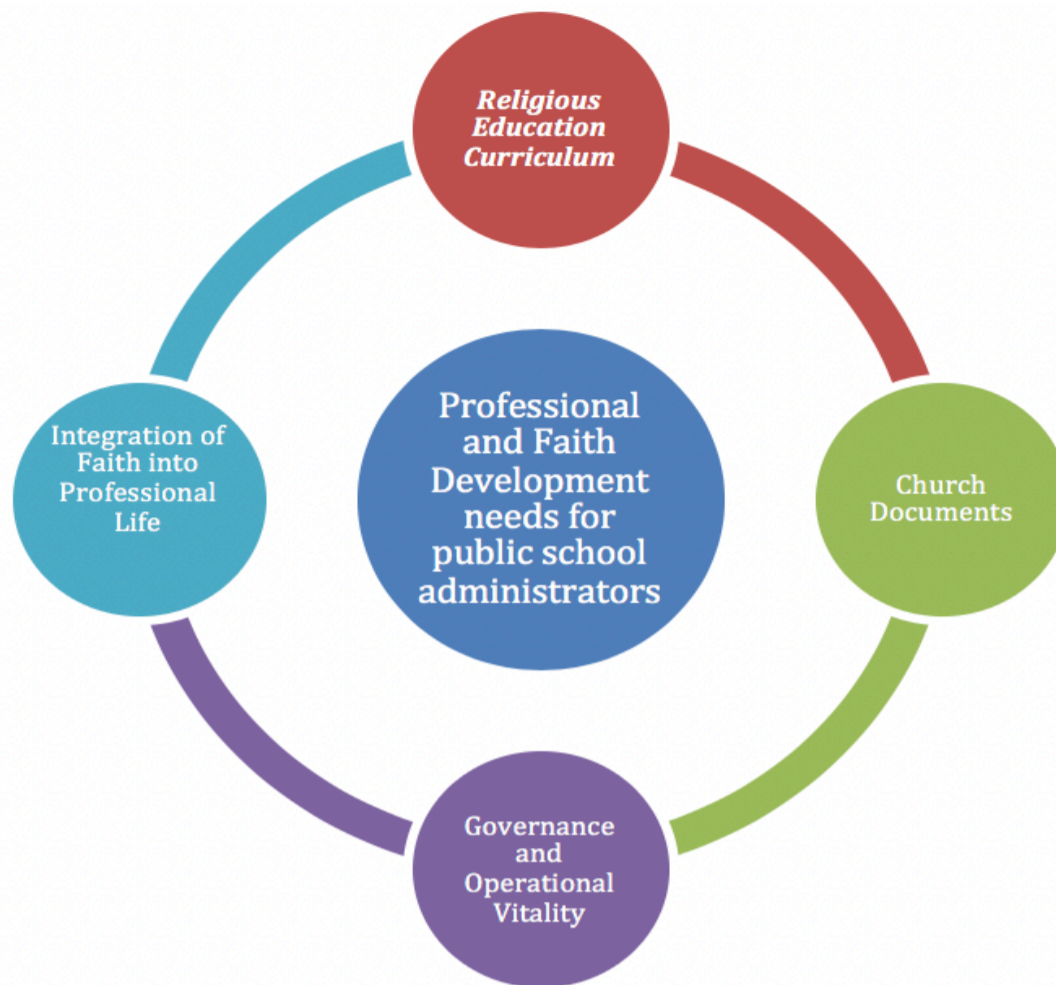


Figure 4: Development of Transitioning Public School Administrators

curriculum falls to other diocesan staff (i.e. Director of Religious Education), the Catholic school leader should have a strong understanding of what a comprehensive religious education curriculum is and how it is delivered in a rigorous manner.

Church Documents

The Church is rich with wisdom involving the dimensions of the Catholic school. Church documents can serve as the compass for the Catholic school leader. These documents are the foundation for the Catholic school, and it is imperative that the Catholic school leader have a strong command of these documents. This kind of learning is obviously absent in programs whose main emphasis is on preparing leaders for public institutions. In preparing leaders for Catholic school settings, it is important to have direct instruction in these documents.

Governance and Operational Vitality

Anecdotally, an area that many public school administrators struggle with when they make the transition to Catholic settings is understanding the unique context of the governance structures of the Catholic school. Understanding the relationship between the Catholic school to the parish and to the diocesan office for Catholic education can seem confusing. Additionally, there can be some difficulty in understanding the various school board structures that exist in the Catholic school. Public school administrators making this transition need assistance in learning how to navigate these various administrative structures.

Integration of Faith into Professional Life

Whereas the first three factors involved in the successful transition of public school administrators to Catholic settings are content-based, the last factor is more related to dispositions. A significant challenge for public school administrators making this transition is

learning to be become the faith leader and to live their faith in public spaces. In public school settings there can be an implicit message of developing the wall between expression of personal faith and the professional demands of the school setting. In the Catholic school setting, the opposite is encouraged. In essence, those that are starting leadership positions within Catholic school settings need to “undo” this “habit” of separation of Church and State and embrace expressing their faith in public spaces.

Developing Executive Leaders for Catholic School Organizations

Much of the literature on Catholic school leadership is devoted the development of the principal. Very little empirical evidence is devoted to the development of executive level leadership of Catholic Schools. Just as teacher leaders and Catholic school principals need development in explicit areas, leaders of large organizations of Catholic schools need the same kind of specific training and mentoring. Often, the typical succession path to the executive level is through the principalship. Indeed, there are skills and competencies honed and mastered in the principalship that can be translated to the executive level. However, there is often a steep learning curve that is associated with refining these skills and acquiring new skills for this level.

System-level Approaches to Fidelity of Mission-driven Leadership

While there are several skills and dispositions for mission-driven leadership that Catholic school principals can bring to executive Catholic school leadership, there is an added depth and complexity needed for this next level of leadership in Catholic schools. Executive Catholic School Leaders (ECSL) need to “own” the broader mission of Catholic education as opposed to the mission of a specific Catholic

school. They need to be able to speak to the “why” of Catholic education across the system, making the case to a wide array of audiences such as principals, teachers, parents, parishioners, government officials at both the local and state levels, community leaders, and foundations, among others. They share not only the historical accomplishments of the institution, but speak to its powerful positive influence in the present and its transformational vision for the future. In making the case, they work to build a sense of passion around and for Catholic education, seeking to nurture an ongoing, mutually beneficial relationship between the institution and those audiences.

Executive Catholic School Leaders are responsible not only to be the outward “face” of the institution, but also to be the overall leader of the internal operations as well. In this role, the executive Catholic school leader sets the tone for the system or school, keeping the focus and priorities on sustaining the Catholic identity while ensuring programmatic excellence and operational vitality. The executive Catholic school leader actively initiates and supports ongoing system-level formation for principals, teachers, and parents. In addition to dedicated formation efforts, the executive Catholic school leader reflects on ways “to step back” and keep Catholic identity at the heart of the work. This includes publicly modeling faith-sustaining behaviors such as keeping the Sabbath, integrating prayer throughout the day, using a restorative approach to conflict resolution and discipline (with adults as well as students), honoring Church traditions and the liturgical year, initiating and actively participating in service efforts, and daily reflective practices, just to name a few. It is important that the executive Catholic school leader “lives her/his faith out loud” so that this leader is practicing and modeling what principals, teachers, and parents are called to do as partners in providing Catholic education to students.



Understanding and Leading Large Scale System Change

The Executive Catholic School Leader needs to have the skills and dispositions necessary to be a leader of leaders, able to leverage the skills and talents of the leaders within the system, while simultaneously challenging those leaders to push through and grow beyond their current capacities. The executive Catholic school leader has to be able to motivate other leaders to become followers and get on board with the broader system level vision. In being a leader of leaders, the executive Catholic school leader is also responsible for providing spiritual formation opportunities for those leaders, helping to build their capacity to be faith-filled leaders providing formation to teachers, students, and parents.

The executive Catholic school leader must not only understand organizational change, but also be able to manage it on the system level. This includes being able to facilitate engagement among various stakeholder groups and ensuring that new stakeholders get enfolded into the engagement work. In essence, the executive Catholic school leader becomes the bridge builder, connecting diverse stakeholder groups with a unifying vision and goals for the institution and community. Often this work involves a delicate balance between honoring the traditions and history of the institution while simultaneously encouraging and managing the innovation process, ensuring the institution's relevance in the future. In essence, the executive Catholic school leader needs to take an entrepreneurial approach to Catholic education, always looking for new, creative ways to make connections - not only with students and families, but also with potential partners who might be interested in supporting Catholic education. One of the key roles for the executive Catholic school leader is to use her/his relationship building skills to create and leverage large scale partnerships to ensure the

sustainability and vitality of Catholic education on a broad scale.

Marketing

The Executive Catholic School Leader serves as the “face” of the institution, telling the story of Catholic education and how it benefits not only the students and families in a school, but society at large. In telling the story, the executive Catholic school leader clearly articulates the mission that drives the institution, and in some ways manages client expectations by identifying the institution's strengths and acknowledging its opportunities for growth. In addition to telling the story, the executive Catholic school leader must also be a listener and observer, able to recognize and understand the market perception of the institution. By being fully aware of the market perception, the executive Catholic school leader will be better able to adjust the institutional narrative in response to that perception. For example, if the institutional reputation is troubled, the executive Catholic school leader can speak to how the institution is responding to the issues, making course corrections, in order to better deliver on its mission. However, if the reputation is strong, the executive Catholic school leader can use that positive perception to help further bolster the narrative, seeking to expand support from partners or even add new partnerships for support of the mission.

Using Data to Drive System Improvement

The Executive Catholic Leader must have access to different types of data. Sometimes the main source of these data are the school's standardized test results. While this information is important since other stakeholders review it, it is also important to consider other benchmarks or goals like common assessments, fidelity to the written curriculum, use of essential instructional practices, implementation of professional learning techniques or goals,



and the social-emotional welfare of the students, parents, and teachers.

If the executive Catholic school leader was a principal, the critical question is always “how do teachers use data for instruction?” As a principal, regular walk-throughs are a great way to gather these additional data beyond standardized testing results. Seeing how teachers use the information from a universal screener or a formative assessment helps the leader to see how everyone in the school is using data for instruction. However, as an executive Catholic school leader, these data have to be derived from other sources. Instead of the focus on teachers, the emphasis has to be on how does the executive Catholic school leader support principals in using these approaches. Developing skills to support principals in data-informed instruction is a different skill set that is not part of the principal’s repertoire.

In addition to the use of data for instruction and curriculum, the Executive Catholic School Leader must use data for the purposes of enrollment and marketing. A critical skill is to track demographic data and predict enrollment trends across the system. Detecting shifts in various demographic trends can help to drive marketing strategies and develop various enrollment practices.

The executive Catholic school leader plays a critical role in ensuring that both Catholic identity and academic excellence are balanced priorities in the school improvement efforts. An ECSL understands that continuous attention must be paid to nurturing the institution’s Catholic identity. This requires thoughtful, deliberate attention to formation for all constituencies (principals, teachers, students, and parents). An executive Catholic school leader also understands that true Catholic identity demands that similar ongoing attention to continuous improvement in the arena of academic excellence. According to Church

documents, Catholic schools must be as good, or better, than their local public counterparts. The executive Catholic school leader is responsible for maintaining this balanced, ongoing attention within the improvement process.

Resource Management

The Executive Catholic School Leader plays a critical role in resource management. It is essential to understand Church governance structures and how they impact various operational elements of the institution, such as Human Resources, budgeting, facility management, and policy setting. With a clear understanding of these Church governance structures, the executive Catholic school leader can more effectively work to ensure the institution is adequately represented and appropriately considered within them. Like most non-profits, Catholic education cannot simply rely on “user” based funding for sustainability, so the executive Catholic school leader must identify and develop new funding sources to support the affordability of the institution’s mission. In order to succeed in this area, an executive Catholic school leader needs to know and be able to implement best practices in institutional advancement and development.

Recommended Systematic Practices for Leadership Pathways

The future of Catholic schools is dependent upon developing systems for continual leadership development. The Catholic school system cannot simply hope Catholic school educators will be motivated to pursue positions of leadership. Further, schools and parishes cannot solely rely on the diocesan office to identify and prepare leaders, just as diocesan offices cannot solely rely on Catholic colleges and universities. Rather there must be systems in place at all three levels and cooperation and coordination among the schools, dioceses, and

institutions of higher education. Only with comprehensive and aligned systems in place can we ensure that leaders will be continually identified, prepared as instructional and faith leaders, and supported through the various stages of their careers.

School level:

There are several factors regarding leadership development that should be considered at the school level:

Leader Identification

At the school level, the building leader serves as a talent scout to discover the hidden leadership potential that may exist within a school. One way to identify potential leaders is creating a system for peer observations. Having teachers observe each other is a powerful professional learning tool, and it is also a way for the building principal to recognize effective teaching. Through peer observations as well as principal observations, meaningful feedback improves teacher practice. A teacher leader is in part identified as a master teacher. Observing and providing feedback to teachers is a way to see them “in action” and to see their exemplary instruction as well as potential for leadership.

In order for teachers to maintain their excellent instruction and leadership skills, aligned, differentiated professional learning is crucial for continual development. The topics for this professional learning should result from the teachers’ reflection, feedback received during observation, and personal desire for improvement. This professional learning may occur locally at the school in the form of a Professional Learning Community or book study; it may occur with other schools in the vicariate or deanery; or it may occur in relationship with universities. Current leaders should remain aware of opportunities for the funding of this professional learning and budget for them.

Authentic Distributed Leadership Models

In order to develop true models of distributed leadership, it is important that systems are in place. Task forces rather than committees are crucial to be productive, encourage leaders to emerge, and have meaningful work to accomplish that the school needs. Potential teacher leaders should be assigned to work with the task forces that match their skills and abilities. All work must match the school improvement plan and the goals of the school. Additionally, the use of a School Administration Manager (SAM) can help to free up the building principal to be an instructional leader while the SAM handles other leadership tasks. This not only allows time and energy for the principal to observe, model, and provide feedback, but also creates a leadership opportunity for a teacher leader or rising assistant principal.

Fostering Faith Leadership

Too often, explicit development of the teacher as a faith leader is forgotten. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2015) emphasizes the duty of faith formation. “Faith formation that includes individual formation in prayer, sacramental life, Scripture, doctrine and knowledge of the nature and purpose of Catholic education would appear to be component parts of the formation of future leaders and teachers.”

It is important to provide opportunities to teachers as faith leaders of the school community. Many Catholic school leaders have limited experience of Catholic school, having not attending Catholic schools themselves. Therefore, experiences such as preparing Masses and leading community prayer and retreats may be completely new to them. Therefore, schools should develop systems to prepare teachers as faith leaders such as a routine for faculty prayer and rotating responsibility for leading prayer. Teachers should be educated and supported in planning



Masses and encouraged to develop class retreats.

Diocesan Level:

There are several factors regarding leadership development that should be considered at the Diocesan Offices of Catholic Education:

Leadership Candidate Identification

Diocesan Offices of Catholic Education should actively identify potential leaders that exhibit the desirable knowledge, skills, and dispositions. There is not a list of prescribed attributes or skills that a potential leader must possess. Most importantly, the person must be committed to the mission of Catholic schools and have a willingness to engage in continual formation. To this end, the development of identification protocols to standardize the process will help to discover non-traditional leadership candidates.

Once a leader identification protocol is developed, the diocese should consider who should be employing the protocol to find leaders. Naturally, diocesan offices should expect current Catholic school principals to consider their faculty and staff to identify future leaders. Further, pastors and parish staff should consider other parish and community members who may not currently be working in the Catholic education field. Diocesan offices should consider an online system so that pastors, parish staff, and Catholic school administrators may submit potential candidates to an online database and be continually reminded and prompted to do so.

It is critical that Diocesan Offices explicitly search for leadership candidates from under-represented groups. Catholic school faculty and leadership who are diverse align with the mission of Catholic schools as a global Church, providing multiple perspectives and better preparing our students to contribute and

collaborate meaningfully within society. This begins with searching for teacher candidates that are representative of many cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds and then continually encouraging their professional and spiritual development. Diocesan offices should consider utilizing the identification protocol with specific outreach to parishes whose members may be under-represented on school faculties.

Identifying potential leaders is not enough. There must be an invitation. Diocesan offices should coach principals and pastors on naming specific talents and attributes of potential leaders and developing leadership roles which align to the schools' needs and build off of the potential leaders' skill sets. Providing sample teacher leader job descriptions and models for distributed leadership would be beneficial. Diocesan offices should encourage the distributed leadership model through constructing budget models which include stipends for teacher leadership positions.

The Diocesan offices need to be systematic about identifying potential leaders among teachers and teacher leaders, while also being mindful of identifying Catholic school principals who would be well-suited for executive-level leadership. Similarly an identification protocol should be developed and executed by the diocesan office staff. Leadership positions within the diocese should be created that align to the goals of the system and the talents of potential executive leaders so that they can experience leadership at this level and continue to develop skills.

Development and Utilization of Leadership Competencies

The development of a leader identification protocol which names desirable knowledge, skills, and dispositions of future teacher leaders, principals, and executive Catholic school leaders is an entry point for the development of an agreed upon set of competencies for the

Catholic school principal and executive Catholic school leader. This common set of competencies would provide alignment in leadership roles and responsibilities to be utilized for formation of pre-service leaders and current leaders.

The NSBECS provide a useful framework to develop competencies for the principal and executive level leader. Within each category (Mission and Identity, Governance and Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Operational Vitality) specific skills can be identified which leaders would need to employ in order to achieve the standards. Suggested critical competencies for the principal and executive Catholic school leader, aligned to NSBECS, are listed in Appendix A and B.

These critical competencies could be used at all levels of leadership development. Diocesan offices could use these critical competencies as a reflection tool with potential leaders in professional development and networking opportunities. The competencies can be used to develop interview protocols for principal and executive-level leadership positions. The same competencies can be used to develop evaluation rubrics for principals and executive level Catholic school leaders. This alignment is powerful in articulating common expectations of effective leadership, especially considering pastors may be responsible for the evaluation of principals, many of whom do not have specific training in Catholic school leadership (Boyle and Dosen, 2017).

Leadership Audits

To ensure sufficient levels of leaders over time, Offices of Catholic Education should consider the development of tools to audit leadership needs over the next five years to help focus the organization in a more systematic manner. These leadership audits can promote a proactive stance as opposed to a reactive one when it comes to leadership development by estimating

the leadership needs over time. These audits should focus not only on principals but the status of teacher leaders and executive-level leadership across the diocese. In a sense, these audits can ensure that sufficient numbers of teacher leaders are being developed. Ultimately, it is from this pool that potential building and diocesan level leaders can be developed.

Professional Learning

Diocesan offices can use professional learning strategically to prepare future leaders and advance current leaders. As such, diocesan offices should be cautious about one-size fits all mandated professional development sessions. Opportunities should be aligned with the NSBECS and to the school's and leader's goals for improvement. Partnerships with the Schools of Education at Catholic institutions of higher education are advisable to ensure that professional development is high quality and responsive to the Catholic school context.

Diocesan offices should also develop professional learning activities specific to teacher leaders. Suggested practices include creating networking groups for teacher leaders in common positions, such as Directors of Inclusion. These leaders can gather multiple times per year to share best practices and participate in learning sessions targeted to their needs. This creates not only improved practice but cultivates collaboration and leadership skills.

Due to the urgent need for Catholic school principals, the development of a leadership academy specific to potential principals should be considered. Through a series of professional learning and networking opportunities, those considering pursuing the Catholic school principalship could learn more about the role, shadow principals in various settings, and reflect upon their career opportunities and goals. Creating a supportive environment

within a leadership academy will assist potential leaders in discernment.

Performance Coaching

As Gordon (2012) suggests, the leadership development efforts should be annually reviewed by the central office administration in terms of the output of the program related to quality and quantity. “An annual update compares the immediate and short-range needs of the district to the quantity of program graduates available.” (p. 5) As the leadership program continues, the quality of the program graduates becomes increasingly significant. As Gordon suggests, “Do the program alumni have the right stuff - the talent, knowledge, skills and experiences - to lead the district schools?” In addition to this, Offices of Catholic Education would ask, do the graduates have the faith dispositions to effectively lead Catholic schools?

Diocesan offices are in the unique position to be able to leverage resources to develop performance coaching programs to support aspiring and developing leaders. Performance coaching is a process in which a mentor, advisor, or supervisor provides structure and assistance for participants. Performance coaching differs from traditional approaches by structuring the coaching sessions around performance data collected using the individual’s development (Gordon, 2012). Critical for aspiring Catholic school leaders is to explicitly identify the critical competencies that Catholic principals must exhibit in addition to the instructional leadership skills fostered by most leadership programs.

Catholic Colleges and Universities:

Catholic colleges and universities can support diocesan offices of Catholic education in several ways.

Identification of Competencies

Effective leadership development programs should span the leadership continuum from aspiring leaders to those that have a good deal of leadership experience. These programs should focus on recognized leadership standards. Standards-based leadership development programs explicitly focus on the knowledge and skills that schools believe that their leaders should demonstrate. Further, it gives a common vocabulary about the desired leadership behaviors expected.

In order to ensure that leadership development programs explicitly prepare candidates for Catholic school settings, leadership competencies should reflect Catholic school standards like the NSBECS.

The benefit of having a common framework for principal preparation and ongoing development across university training sites has the potential to articulate and advance the unique discipline of the Catholic school principalship. The creation of a consensus-based set of principal competencies can focus efforts by CIHE programs to be intentional in the formation of Catholic school principals and to identify and develop evidence-based practices specifically for these types of training programs. Actual performance indicators tied to specific leadership competencies demonstrated by research and correlated with school improvement can be developed by CIHE to support this effort (Boyle, Haller and Hunt 2017).

Partnering with Diocesan Offices of Education

In order for leadership development for Catholic Schools to be most effective, an explicit relationship between Diocesan Offices of Catholic Education and Catholic Institutes of Higher Education must be fostered and maintained. Explicit relationships of this nature



can be used to enhance leadership program candidate selection and the continuous program improvement process.

To ensure that CIHE is preparing candidates with the real world skills and dispositions required to be a leader in the Catholic school setting, CIHE and diocesan offices need to work closely together. In essence, are the leadership development programs created and delivered by CIHE producing the graduates that are equipped to lead the schools of the Diocese?

Micro-credentialing

Teacher preparation programs are doing a much better job today of preparing educators to be teachers of all students. But it is still not possible to learn everything there is to know in four years before becoming certified as a teacher (or in two years in an alternative certification program). Certificates and skills-based professional learning can fill these gaps and support ongoing learning for educators. Instead of an 11-course Master's degree, these certificates may only have four courses that can be completed in a much shorter time than two or three years.

Research

One gift that CIHE can bring to the table to address leadership development is research. However, in order to investigate questions of this nature, there are several structures that should be developed. Currently, there is no clearinghouse of data about the credentialing requirements of Catholic school principals and other aspects of the job. Requirements for the position reportedly vary diocese to diocese. In order to systematically investigate this field, it would be critical to develop a central storehouse for this kind of data that is easily accessible to

both dioceses and CIHE. Additionally, an open access clearinghouse of this sort can help to collect data regarding the various principal preparation programs in CIHE to disseminate promising practices in training and development and to share *evidence-based approaches*. This could help facilitate further research into the area of Catholic school principal preparation. Exploring the coalition that exists in the Catholic Higher Education in Support of Catholic Schools (CHESCS) professional group as an avenue to develop this sort of collaboration in the service could help to advance this agenda.

Synthesis

Developing Catholic school leaders at all levels is critical to ensure the future of Catholic education. In order to do this, it is crucial to conceptualize leadership development beyond the idea of preparing more principals. True leadership development must be focused on the full continuum of leaders. This begins with the intentional development of teacher leaders so that they can be full components of distributed leadership approaches. The use of differentiated professional learning for the various development levels of the principalship is crucial to support the full range of learning needs. Finally, explicit development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the Executive Catholic School Leader is needed to facilitate the effective operation of large scale Catholic school organizations. With this shift in framework will come a need for new forms of collaboration between Offices of Catholic Schools and Catholic Institutions of Higher Education.

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Appendix A: NSBECS Critical Competencies for the Catholic School Principal

The effective Catholic school principal demonstrates leadership in the following domains:

Mission and Identity

- 1.1 Builds and maintains a school-community of faith*
- 1.2 Generates a positive Catholic culture and environment in the school*
- 1.3 Leads the community in worship, prayer and service*
- 1.4 Provides a high quality religious education program staffed by qualified teachers*
- 1.5 Collaborates with parents as the primary educator of their children*

Governance and Leadership

- 2.1 Promote innovation, change, and collaboration in achieving the Catholic educational mission*
- 2.2 Understands Catholic school governance structures; especially the role of the parish pastor, pastoral council, parish finance committee, school board, Catholic Schools Office, and state Department of Education*
- 2.3 Initiates, monitors, and evaluates the strategic planning process to fulfill the school's mission, actualize its vision, and position the school for the future*
- 2.4 Recruits, selects, supervises, and evaluates school personnel in light of mission*
- 2.5 Develops and maintain policies which are in accordance with the local Catholic diocese and which support the mission of the school*

Academic Excellence

- 3.1 Inspires and leads the school community toward educational excellence*
- 3.2 Ensures that Catholic teaching and religious values are infused throughout the educational program*
- 3.3 Utilizes data effectively to monitor and make changes in the instructional program*
- 3.4 Develops programs to address the unique learning needs of students*
- 3.5 Develop a professional learning community to support ongoing professional and faith development of faculty and staff*

Operational Vitality

- 4.1 Creates a comprehensive development plan that explores additional sources of revenue (e.g., alumni giving, grants)*
- 4.2 Develops enrollment management strategies to maintain and grow stable enrollment*
- 4.3 Creates innovative marketing strategies to promote the school and its mission to a variety of stakeholders*
- 4.4 Works with a variety of sources (local Catholic diocese, local educational agencies, and other government agencies) to access available public funds*
- 4.5 Demonstrates effective stewardship of school resources*



Appendix B: NSBECS Critical Competencies for the Executive Catholic School Leadership

The effective Executive Catholic Leader demonstrates leadership in the following domains:

Mission and Identity

- 1.1 Ensures the fidelity of Catholic mission throughout the system*
- 1.2 Serves as a model for leading the community in worship, prayer and service*
- 1.3 Oversees processes to develop and deliver high quality religious education staffed by qualified teachers.*
- 1.4 Guarantees the system collaborates with parents as primary educator of their children*

Governance and Leadership

- 2.1 Lead efforts in innovation and collaboration in achieving the Catholic educational mission.*
- 2.2 Understands Catholic school governance structures; especially the role of the parish pastor, pastoral council, parish finance committee, school board, Catholic Schools Office, and state Department of Education*
- 2.3 Lead system strategic planning process to fulfill the diocesan mission actualize vision and position the diocese for the future.*
- 2.4 Empowers the system Recruits, selects, supervises, and evaluates school personnel in light of mission*
- 2.5 Develop and maintain system policies (diocesan, organization) that support the mission of Catholic education.*

Academic Excellence

- 3.1 Inspires and leads the system toward educational excellence*
- 3.2 Ensures fidelity to Catholic teaching and religious values across the system*
- 3.3 Utilizes data effectively to monitor the system and facilitates changes in the instructional program*
- 3.4 Designs and delivers professional development strategies that support continuous improvement at local levels.*
- 3.5 Creates approaches so that a Catholic education is available to those students with unique learning needs.*

Operational Vitality

- 4.1 Support local efforts to creates a comprehensive development plan that explores additional sources of revenue*
- 4.2 Oversee system-wide enrollment management strategies and grow enrollment*
- 4.3 Lead efforts to market system schools and to promote the mission to a wider range of stakeholders.*
- 4.4 Advocate with local, state and federal channels for the creation of rules and regulations that are favorable to Catholic schools*
- 4.6 Collaborates with various sources (foundations, governmental agencies, and national organizations) to access available funds*



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