
LUC CHEC Leadership Conference, 2009

Catholic Higher Education Collaborative

Leadership Conference

Loyola University Chicago
October 1-3, 2009

Proposed Follow Up Actions

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Introduction to Proposed Follow-up Actions

In October, 2009, Loyola University Chicago hosted a conference entitled “Developing and Sustaining Leaders for Catholic Schools: How Can Catholic Higher Education Help?”. This conference was the second in a series of six conferences sponsored by nine Catholic colleges and universities informally referred to as CHEC (Catholic Higher Education Collaborative). The purpose of these conferences is to explore ways for Catholic institutions of higher education to collaborate in supporting Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the United States in this century.

The Loyola University Chicago conference consisted of a series of facilitated conversations sparked by focused input from a handful of presenters. Each conversation had a question, an outcome, and a product. Together, participants moved toward the identification of a small number of compelling initiatives that the assembled group agrees hold promise to impact Catholic school success, especially in the targeted area of leadership. In addition, each initiative offers opportunity for and in fact requires collaboration among Catholic institutions of higher education, diocesan offices of education, NCEA, PK-12 practitioners, networks and religious congregations, sponsors and funders, and bishops.

Working from the large group processing at the conference and from detailed notes provided by each of the nine table facilitators, the LUC team (David Prasse, Lorraine Ozar, Michael Boyle, and Michelle Lia) distilled the participants’ ideas into five proposed initiatives/areas of work:

1. Creation of Standards for *Essential Catholic Schools*
2. Re-design and Expansion of Higher Education Leadership Programs to meet the needs of the contemporary context
3. Design and Implementation of a Resource Cloud (open access web platform) to facilitate the exchange of information, data, research, and materials
4. Creation of a national agenda for expanding and disseminating research on Catholic education
5. Creation of a National Think Tank on Catholic Education

The attached documents offer a sketch of what each of these initiatives might encompass, based on input from the conference and the CHEC Steering Committee and synthesis by the LUC team. LUC is now posting the proposed actions on the conference web page www.luc.edu/ccse to invite the formation of collaborative implementation teams. As teams pursue their work, there may be some merging of initiatives where there is overlap.

LUC CHEC Leadership Conference, 2009

1. Standards for *Essential Catholic Schools*

What:

Develop a set of national standards describing agreed upon, non-negotiable characteristics of PK-12 *Essential Catholic Schools*.

Why:

According to Canon law, only the Ordinary can name a school as Catholic. Current experiences from across the country give ample evidence that those invested in the future of Catholic schools--from the Bishops to the parents--are increasingly frustrated and confused by the varied “definitions” applied to Catholic schools in different situations. This leads to market confusion among the primary consumers, namely parents and families.

A set of agreed upon standards for *Essential Catholic Schools*, endorsed by the Bishops, would help clarify the “brand” of “Catholic school” in contemporary United States in order to provide a framework for school improvement and to enhance public policy and advocacy efforts. Standards could serve as the basis of accreditation, provide a link to leadership and professional development programs created by institutions of higher education, and increase funders’ confidence in school capacity for sustainable improvement.

How, who, when:

- LUC coordinates writing the short book mentioned during the Leadership Conference, making a case for *Essential Catholic Schools Standards* --to secure buy-in from all constituencies and generate political will. (Fall, 2009 to Spring, 2010)
- LUC/CCSE convenes a steering committee to collect and analyze current standards and draft national standards. (10-12 members of Catholic institutions of higher education (CIHE), superintendents, network representatives, NCEA, USCCB, and Catholic school principals) (Jan-August, 2010)
- Approach Bishops for endorsement of the work of the steering committee

- Open a national conversation. Use key leaders to propose idea of *Essential Catholic Schools* and get on the agenda of:
 - USCCB Committee for Education
 - CACE Executive Committee
 - ACCU
 - Secondary School regional meetings
 - Principal Forums
 - NCEA Convention

- Refine draft through series of regional iterations (or electronic Delphi process) and the next CHEC meeting in fall, 2010 to include broader representation of members of Catholic IHE, superintendents, and school principals, along with other groups that might be able to specifically broaden racial and cultural diversity, and add differing expertise – such as the national leadership roundtable on Church leadership, pastors, local bishops, diocesan financial planners, etc (Fall/Winter 2010-2011)

- Seek final endorsement from Bishops

- Plan Summit to promulgate standards for *Essential Catholic Schools* at NCEA, 2011 meeting in New Orleans.

LUC CHEC Leadership Conference, 2009

2. Enhanced CIHE Leadership Programs

What:

Use a set of nationally developed standards for Catholic educational leaders (superintendents, principals and pastors) to re-design and expand Higher Education Leadership Programs to meet the needs of the contemporary context.

Why:

The development of a set of national leadership standards for principals, superintendents and other leaders in Catholic education, particularly pastors with schools, would help Catholic Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), specifically the colleges of education within them, design leadership programs and internship experiences to more fully prepare leaders for the contemporary context in which Catholic elementary and secondary schools operate. This context includes not only development of the technical skills of administration, but also knowledge and skills related to cultivating mission clarity, serving as a faith community leader, engaging in entrepreneurial activities, and effective financial management, strategic planning and working with boards. In addition, agreed upon leadership standards would provide a platform for CIHE to collaborate in the design and implementation of professional development programs and support initiatives for the leadership stakeholders in the nation's PK-12 Catholic schools, contributing to a sense of cohesion and focus among the various leadership programs.

Catholic Higher Ed is in a unique position to nurture and sustain PK-12 Catholic Schools leadership to meet contemporary needs --viewed more broadly than preparation of principals. Using the agreed upon leadership standards, CIHE can support school leadership in a variety of ways, targeted to differentiated needs including: Support veteran principals by helping them to renew their commitments, providing ongoing professional development and mentoring --ultimately reducing the isolation that exists amongst these leaders; Provide important leadership training to potential school leaders by assisting the Diocese in identifying those Catholic schools teachers who show promise and developing training programs to address their specific needs; Work with diocese to develop specific programs to address the profession development needs of qualified

public school administrators who would like to serve Catholic schools in leadership positions.

How, who, when:

1. Establish a small task force (10 -12 people) to include representatives from colleges and universities, superintendents, religious communities and practitioners to develop a nationally agreed upon set of standards for Catholic school leaders. Versions of standards already exist; what is needed is a national set of standards that all can agree upon.
2. Following the creation of standards, form a Task Force of CIHE members to collaboratively develop a curriculum based on the nationally agreed upon set of standards. Disseminate it to dioceses and regions. This program would have three distinct strands:
 - Preparation
 - Ongoing Professional Development
 - Consultation and Coaching

These programs could serve new and existing leaders as well as public school leaders moving over to serve in Catholic schools. Conversations and networking involved in creating curriculum of these strands would help everyone understand the nation wide offerings in order to strengthen programs, avoid duplication and make the best use of our human and fiscal resources.

These strands could address six skill areas critical to the administration of Catholic schools. The first skill area applies to all school leaders, both private and public: the remaining five are directed specifically to private and parochial school leadership.

- General administrative skills
- Cultivating mission clarity
- Serving as a faith community leader
- Engaging in entrepreneurial activities

- Effective financial management
- Strategic planning, including working with boards.

Ideas for a 5-step process to recruit new leaders and retain them:

1. CIHE collaborate with superintendents to develop a model for identifying new school leadership candidates
2. Bring teachers into a well defined program to develop them as leaders—informal and formal roles (fully fund this step as a recruitment tool)
3. Select those who commit to the formal leadership role for additional preparation, including a national program held in the summer
4. Provide coaching and consultation as they take over the role as principal
5. Provide ongoing professional development on specific issues

For steps 3, 4 and 5, establish partnership funding with CIHEs, dioceses, foundations and individuals.

LUC CHEC Leadership Conference, 2009

3. Resource Cloud

What:

Create an open-access web platform to support collaboration, information sharing, and knowledge generation among Catholic school educators.

Why:

Participants engaged in exploring and ensuring the excellence and sustainability of Catholic schools – including PK-12 teachers and administrators, CIHE professors and graduate students, CIHE administrators, pastors, seminarians, deacons, bishops, diocesan personnel, funders -- would benefit greatly from having the means to easily access and contribute to research, best practices, information about available resources, online tools developed for Catholic schools, and each other. All participants are both potential users and contributors.

The site would serve as a repository for white papers; research summaries; a speakers' bureau; research and school improvement templates and tools; a comprehensive list of CIHE leadership and certificate programs and professional development opportunities; best practices for sustainability of *Essential Catholic Schools*; chat rooms and discussion boards; work groups for creating curriculum and rubrics, links to data bases, and more. Sample topics named at the LUC CHEC conference include: ELL, Special Needs, Academic Success Models, Early Childhood Ed, Curriculum, Federal Funding Guidelines, Finding your school's Focus, Best Practices, Development Strategies, Survey Templates, Conducting Action Research, Single-gender classes, Single-gender schools, Technology integration, Rural schooling, National trends on changing demographics

How, who, when:

- CCSE forms a steering committee to explore the idea (7-9 members representing CIHE, NCEA, PK-12 practitioners, and technology experts). Considerations for the committee include: What's the platform? Where should it reside? Who will manage it for quality control and currency? Who will maintain and update the technology? How will it be funded? (Spring, 2010)
- Steering committee makes recommendations to NCEA and CIHEs. (Fall, 2010)
- Launch pilot (Spring, 2011)

Items from table discussions at LUC CHEC Leadership Conference, October 2009 for consideration by Task Force:

- NCEA is preferred host if capable. Request to NCEA to update their website to include the Cloud. We suggest that a technology expert may need to be added to maintain the logistics of the site.
- The decision making related to what content should be posted could be managed by an editorial board made up of representatives from each of the constituencies that this site would serve. The editorial board could meet virtually in order to keep the site content fresh and flowing.

LUC CHEC Leadership Conference, 2009

4. Expanded Research on Catholic Schools

What:

Create a national agenda to focus and expand research on Catholic schools in a systematic manner.

Why:

Schools need data to make informed decisions, guide instruction, identify best practices, report results, and tell their story. Precious little data about Catholic schools exist. What does exist is often randomly placed, not widely or consistently disseminated, and not easily accessible. There is a great need for more data and accurate data that can be analyzed and used to make decisions and inform practice. There is also a great need for more researchers in the field of Catholic education. Often, faculty at Catholic Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) do not have adequate incentives or support to engage in research on Catholic schools or sufficient avenues to collaborate. As the need for transparency increases and competition with other schools – public, charter, etc. – increases, research that makes a case for Catholic schools is increasingly needed.

How, Who, When:

- Form a task force to generate ideas around the key aspects of a national research agenda, e.g. creating incentives for faculty, identifying compelling research questions, how to disseminate data once we have it, etc. (SPRING, 2010)
- Engage CIHE members in an open conversation to refine and expand the task force's ideas. (FALL, 2010 at CACE)
- Generate action plans.

Ideas from the LUC CHEC Conference for consideration of the task force:

- Two models of research were proposed at the LUC CHEC Conference -
 - Model I
 - Research questions come from practitioners
 - Teams are created at a school site, involving the teacher, a CIHE faculty member, and a graduate student to pursue the questions

- Model II

- CIHE engaging in synthesizing research in response to specific questions raised at a national, regional, or diocesan level.
- CIHE researchers would...
 - Take existing studies and creates summaries targeted to specific audiences;
 - Identify new questions from the gaps that emerge

Publish Models I and II in appropriate journals

Some general, broad research topics that were suggested at the LUC CHEC Conference include but are not limited to Catholic school students, teachers and leaders/principals; the formation of leaders; homeschooling as it relates to Catholic education; the Latino/Latina population and Catholic schools; plpI and CIHE's role in PK-12 Catholic schools.

LUC CHEC Leadership Conference, 2009

5. Think Tank on Catholic Education

What:

Create a national Think Tank to promote broad thinking and reflecting, researching, and writing about the issues facing Catholic schools.

Why:

Catholic schools are facing many issues that transcend local boundaries. A national Think Tank would be a place where scholars and practitioners around the country and the world could study and generate creative solutions to these issues. The Think Tank would also be a vehicle for fellows to gather for a semester or a summer to share best practices and current research, engage in research, learn cutting-edge strategies, and disseminate ideas.

How, Who, When, and Where:

- Dr. John Convey, CUA, will form and chair a 5-7 person task force including representatives of CIHE, superintendents, funders, and practitioners. This task force will develop a position paper to describe the proposed national Think Tank, including its purpose, structure, financing, organization, location, etc.
- Circulate the position paper to CIHE and superintendents (possibly at CACE 2010)
- Write a proposal for funding.
- Seek funding from Catholic organizations and individual donors.

Ideas from LUC CHEC Conference for consideration by the task force include the following:

- A full-time director would be needed with minimal staff
- Funding needed to support fellows

- Faculty members could spend all or part of their sabbaticals there
- Principals and other practitioners could spend a short time there or be connected to the Think Tank via technology
- The Think Tank would maintain a web site and have a newsletter in addition to the publication of its fellows
- The Think Tank might serve as the site for the “Resource Cloud” mentioned in Initiative 4