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The Development of Faith Leadership in Novice Principals

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This article describes the Catholic School Principal Support Program (CSPSP), a mentoring program for first and second-year Catholic school principals in a large urban diocese, and identifies key challenges, impacts and influences on decision-making. Ten school leaders describe their work and provide the lens by which they reflect on their role as faith leaders. The challenges these principals face along with the various roles they play are discussed. Based on the perceptions and insights of their roles as faith leaders and how that role is situated within other leadership roles, this study seeks to better understand how faith leadership and its development impacts decisions in novice Catholic school leaders. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed with emergent themes identified. These themes include type of leadership training, personal beliefs, descriptions of their own faith life and development, perceptions of faith empowering other roles, the moral imperative of leadership, and understanding the faith development of their teachers. Differences in participant perceptions demonstrated how these leaders made decisions and were empowered in other areas of leadership.

School leaders assume a more critical role today than ever before; principals constitute a central position of authority and influence and are held accountable to provide evidence of school effectiveness and student learning outcomes. While earlier models of leadership emphasized a principal's managerial role, today's principals have countless roles and responsibilities that cut across all aspects of schools and involve multiple stakeholders. Research indicates a principal's actions can have a direct link to student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), thereby increasing attention to the role of the principal and the principal's impact on student learning. Principals are expected to lead and oversee a variety of functions. The role of the principal is all consuming, as he/she is expected to directly interact with all school stakeholders, collaborate with the many constituents in the schoolhouse, and serve as an expert in numerous areas outlined by leadership standards.

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National leadership standards clearly articulate the requisite knowledge, skills, and beliefs that principals must demonstrate in order to succeed. The National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP) suggests principals should lead across six distinct areas, including: (a) leading student and adult learning; (b) leading diverse communities; (c) leading 21st century learning; (d) leading continuous improvement; (e) leading use of knowledge and data; and (f) leading parent, family, and community engagement (NAESP, 2001). In much the same way, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC, 2008), developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers, provide a concise set of expectations for the knowledge, behavior and skills required for school leaders and connects these to effective school practices. The ISLLC Standards focus the principal's work on promoting the success of every student in the school, with each standard emphasizing a different aspect for achieving student success. These standards indicate the principal is expected to (a) develop and implement a clear vision for the school; (b) advocate, nurture, and sustain a culture and learning environment to support student growth; (c) manage and operate a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; (d) collaborate and respond to diverse community interests and needs; (e) act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner and (f) understand and respond to the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts. A recent report by the Wallace Foundation (2012) suggests five key responsibilities for the work of today's school leader or "leader of learning." The responsibilities include (a) shaping a vision of academic success for all students, (b) creating a climate hospitable to education; (c) cultivating leadership in others; (d) improving instruction; and (e) managing people, data, and processes for school improvement (Wallace Foundation, 2012). It is evident in this summary of national criterion that principals are called upon to serve in multiple roles that extend well beyond that of a managerial role.

The United States Catholic Conference defines the Catholic school principal role across three major areas: educational leader, spiritual leader, and managerial leader (Ciriello, 1994). As educational leader, the principal guides the vision, fosters leadership in others, and oversees all aspects of curriculum and instruction to provide proof of educational achievement. The spiritual leader role focuses on faith development and building the Christian community as well as facilitating the moral and ethical development of those in the school community. The spiritual leader is grounded in knowledge of the

history and philosophy of the Catholic Church. The role of managerial leader pertains to personnel management and institutional management. In addition, the principal oversees finance and development related to the school. The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) further defines the role of the Catholic school principal as multi-faceted with duties in four key areas: Catholic identity, academic excellence, school viability, and general administration (Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2002). Clearly, the responsibilities of the Catholic school principal are many. The responsibilities that Catholic principals must fulfill are echoed by Ozar (2010), who advocates, "you must be a strong leader and an excellent professional educator… The job is consuming…the school climate is created by the principal. Catholic school principals need to be committed faith-filled Catholics; they also need to be bright and generous" (pp. 115-116). The Catholic school leader assumes some unique responsibilities compared to their public school counterparts, with the role of spiritual leader added to the roles of educational leader and managerial leader.

Despite the various and multiple roles undertaken by Catholic school leaders, no standardized model is used to support and apprentice a principal in these key areas of leadership. There is no set of guidelines to suggest how principals should be mentored in the four main areas of their work (L. Simpson, personal communication, May 1, 2013). Current principal mentoring practices in Catholic schools have taken on a variety of forms, at times limited by available resources and funding. Peer mentoring involves a veteran principal being paired with a new principal. This model is dependent upon the success of the partnership of these individuals as well as trust and comfort established in the process. Additionally, the content of this mentoring depends on the individual needs and concerns addressed by the novice principal. Time must be set aside when both principals are available, thereby taking them away from their primary leadership responsibilities. A leadership academy provides an avenue for recruiting school leaders, inviting assistant principals and teacher leaders to participate in activities in preparation for a principalship. In this model the mentoring is provided prior to the principalship; the support may end once the individual begins the leadership position. The most commonly employed model to train principals for large Catholic school systems is through an induction program (K. Curatolo, personal communication, May 1, 2013). Such programs entail new principals meeting together on a regular basis to review policies and procedures, and discuss a range of broad topics. While the induction program helps familiarize new

principals with some aspects of the job, it does not offer the same level of individual support and coaching as a mentoring relationship (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003). Depending upon the available resources, if no formal mentoring procedures exist, the new principal might have to reach out to more experienced colleagues and ask for help on an as-needed basis.

While Catholic school principals are expected to lead efforts across all aspects of a school's operation and at the same time lead the school's mission and faith development, a range of programs exist to support their success (K. Curatolo, personal communication, May 1, 2013). An analysis of the four largest dioceses in the United States indicates a combination of the aforementioned models is often used. The process begins at the recruitment stage and follows the leader into the first few years of his/her tenure. Mentoring programs designed specifically for the Catholic leader would provide an opportunity for guiding novice principals in meeting challenges for their individual settings, with attention to each of the unique roles and its development. Examples of such programs imply that "…the substance of the mentoring relationship is best determined by the needs of the beginning principal" (Brock & Grady, 1996, p. 48).

The study presented in this article sought to better understand how faith leadership and its development impacts decisions made by novice Catholic school leaders. The article describes the Catholic School Principal Support Program (CSPSP), a mentoring program for first- and second-year Catholic school principals in a large urban diocese, and identifies key challenges, impacts and influences on novice leaders' decision-making. While this study does not address the efficacy of the CSPSP itself, the program provided access to new principals and the opportunity to collect real time data about their perceptions of leadership, their professional development, and the challenges associated with their multiple roles, and their roles as faith leaders. The analysis of survey responses and interview data presented in this article illuminates participants' perceptions of their roles as faith leaders and provides insights into how faith leadership is situated within other leadership roles for these Catholic school leaders.

The next section of this article provides a review of literature related to challenges and responsibilities of Catholic school principals. This is followed by the methods employed for this study, information about the participants and procedures used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Results of the study report a summary of the findings and analysis of the data. The Discussion section provides an interpretation of the findings in connection with

the hypotheses and research questions that led to the study. The Conclusions section follows and provides some considerations on this study's contribution to the field and implications for future research in this area.

Review of Literature

The challenges of the Catholic school principal are many, with the duties and responsibilities similar to a secular counterpart in the roles of educational leader and managerial leader, requiring one to work with all stakeholder groups in the school community. In addition, the Catholic school principal has the duty of serving as the faith leader or spiritual leader, guiding the faith development and faith life of all constituents within the school.

Faith Leadership Responsibilities of Catholic School Principals

Ciriello identifies the following responsibilities for faith leaders: (a) nurtures the faith development of faculty and staff through opportunities for spiritual growth; (b) ensures quality Catholic religious instruction of students; (c) provides opportunities for the school community to celebrate faith; and (d) supports and fosters consistent practices of Christian service (Ciriello, 1994). In much the same way, Drahmann's (1994) description of the principal as spiritual creator aligns with this faith leader role. It emphasizes leading the school community in prayer, while providing spiritual growth opportunities for faculty, students, and others to integrate Christian social principles into the curriculum and life of the school and link the school with the Church. This description also includes the principal's role in articulating the Catholic vision for the school.

Unique competencies for the role of the Catholic school principal have been divided into pastoral competencies such as leading the school in prayer and articulating a Catholic educational vision, and professional educational or managerial competencies, which may be expected of any school leader (Manno, 1985). These elements call for the integration of gospel values and Christian social principles in the curriculum, providing leadership in the kind of curriculum development that includes the integration of Christian values. Wallace (1995) explains that to fulfill the faith leadership role, principals must provide staff development opportunities and school experiences that reinforce the primary Catholic mission of the school, distinguishing between faith leadership and pastoral leadership. Pastoral leadership suggests responsibilities to develop the spiritual direction of community members.

Heft's (1991) description proposes the role of faith leader involves institutionalizing Catholic traditions and doctrinal emphases, while other definitions indicate that the Catholic school leader is called to be a spiritual leader in a faith-centered community. For Brownridge (2009) "this is a role of sacred trust and service in which the principal participates in building the Catholic community by nurturing the faith and the spiritual growth of students and staff" (p. 4). Brownbridge's framework divides the leader's work into supervision of students, staff and curriculum, school organization, and leadership within the school community. The principal has specific duties in relationship to the Catholic identity of the school and plays a crucial role in achieving the catechetical objectives of the parish. The National Directory for Catechesis provides national guidelines from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that clearly identifies the principal as the catechetical leader of the school (USCCB, 2005).

Numerous studies conducted over the past two decades revealed diverging interpretations of the role of the principal as faith leader (Ciriello, 1994; Drahmann, 1994; Harkins, 1993; Moore, 1999; Wallace, 1995). Surveys of Catholic school principals attempted to better understand their perceptions on level of preparedness and motivation for the role. Wallace's (1995) results demonstrate that 70% of principals rated themselves inadequately prepared in faith leadership, having little or no formal coursework or training. Moore's (1999) survey of elementary school principals focused on mission motivation or commitment to one's faith, spiritual satisfaction, and spiritual efficacy. Principals who reported high scores in all three areas engaged in more spiritual formation activities than principals who reported lower scores. In comparing religious and lay principals, findings indicate lay principals reported the lowest scores in spiritual satisfaction or satisfaction with their own faith. All principals studied reported strong faith commitment regarding their work in a Catholic school and placed a high value on religion in their lives (Moore, 1999). Belmonte and Cranston's study (2009) of the religious dimension of lay leadership found that faith leadership rests on the spiritual capital that a principal brings to the role, suggesting spiritual competence serves as a critical component. Spiritual capital is a concept that involves the quantification of the value to individuals, groups, and society of spiritual, moral, or psychological beliefs and practices. Spiritual competence can be operationalized through various means that measure an individual's religious and spiritual inclinations, such as frequency of church attendance and prayer, as well as one's belief in the transcendence. Harkins's survey (1993) of Catholic school

principals found the top three priority statements chosen by Catholic school principals about their work were as follows: there is a school-wide emphasis on Jesus; students know that the school cares about them; and, there is a school-wide emphasis on treating others with respect. Furthermore, when principals were asked to describe one personal characteristic that is essential in a good Catholic elementary school principal, the top five choices in order of importance included: commitment, faith, leadership, compassion, and dedication (Harkins, 1993).

Challenges and Opportunities for Principals

Research on large groups of principals has revealed perceptions of the challenges they face. O'Keefe's survey (1999) of 398 urban schools suggests that financial constraints, increased organizational complexity, racial diversity, religious pluralism, and staffing were key challenges. More recently, Notre Dame's study of 1,685 Catholic school principals nationwide indicates key challenges exist in financial management, marketing, Catholic identity, enrollment management, and long-range planning (Schmitt, 2012). These top five areas of need were narrowed to the most important two of enrollment management and financial management, "together capturing the most basic goal of survival: keeping a school open" (p. 1).

The roles and responsibilities of the Catholic school principal continue to expand as with their public school counterparts, with increasing emphasis on building enrollment, obtaining resources for scholarships, supporting instruction, and serving as the faith leader. The scope of the role of faith leader continues to expand at a challenging time for the Roman Catholic Church, with declining Mass attendance, families not practicing their faith, yet sending their children to a Catholic school, and other examples of disconnectedness with parish life. In light of these ever growing duties and responsibilities, it is critical that beginning Catholic principals have mentors who are knowledgeable, have experience, and can provide resources and support to meet these specialized and complex needs. In addition, it is important to consider how the role of faith leader is being fostered and developed along with all areas during these early stages of their leadership careers.

Mentoring and coaching new principals may serve as one solution for the challenges reported from their experiences and areas they perceive as deficient (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006; Daresh, 2001, 2004; Duncan & Stock, 2010; Gray, Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2007; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Malone, 2001; Saban & Wolfe, 2009). The importance and need for principal

mentoring has been established over the past decade as the role of the principal has continued to grow in complexity (Bloom et al., 2003; Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005; Bush & Chew, 1999; Gray et al., 2007; NAESP, 2003). Thirty-two states now require mentoring of new principals (Spiro, Mattis, & Mitgang, 2007; Villani, 2006; Yirci & Kocabas, 2010). While the content and focus of public school mentoring programs vary, there is agreement that new principals need help in areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, with connections to Goleman's (1995) model of emotional intelligence (Bloom et al., 2005). The most common foci in successful principal mentoring programs include: organizational support, time, and resources; clearly defined outcomes; beneficial pairing of mentor and novice principal; and a learner-centered focus. At the heart of the learning experience is the need for feedback and focused reflection (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Bush and Chew's (1999) research emphasizes the importance of developing human capital, with mentoring poised as a means for expanding leadership. Others have cited critical elements of successful mentoring experiences are the pairing of a mentor-mentee and the training and credibility of the mentor (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Bloom et al. (2003) suggest mentor coaches provide psychosocial support such as counseling and role modeling, while Lovely (2004) proposes mentoring guides the new leader in a way that principal preparation programs are not able to provide.

Novice Catholic school principals assume many duties in their roles as leaders. The faith leadership function is a complex one and requires a set of competencies to adequately prepare for these pastoral responsibilities. Principals also face numerous challenges as they begin their leadership careers; they are expected to be proficient in multiple areas while supporting and leading the school community and its stakeholders. This study seeks to fill the gap in understanding these challenges and identifying how they can be more adequately addressed. As a result, the following research questions were developed to guide the investigation:

1. What areas of the leadership role do first and second year principals perceive to be most challenging?
1. What role does that of faith leader play in the day-to-day functioning of first and second year principals?
1. What role does the Catholic mission play in the decision making processes of first and second year principals?

Method

This study utilized qualitative and quantitative measures to inform the research questions. A beginning and end of project survey was used to gauge participants' self-assessment in 17 areas of leadership. Monthly interviews conducted at school sites with individual principals, provided data on their perceptions of the challenges related to their multiple roles as school leaders. The participants in this study are described, and the instruments and procedures used to collect data are defined and explained.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited through the Catholic School Principal Support Program (CSPSP), a faculty-initiated partnership between a university and a large urban diocese to provide one-to-one mentoring and coaching to principals in their first two years of school leadership. Piloted in 2009-2010 and fully implemented during the 2011-2012 academic year, this model aligned with the six ISLLC standards for school leadership as well as the National Catholic Education Association's expectations for the role of the principal in a Catholic school.

Twenty-two new principals in a large urban diocese were invited to join the CSPSP via an electronic invitation. A description of the project was sent with the invitation to participate. Ten novice first and second year principals, heads of schools, or school leaders from nine different schools agreed to participate in the year-long project. The twelve who did not participate joined a mentoring project at another university. Eight females and two males comprised the participants, with four second-year and six first-year leaders in all. Table 1 presents demographic and enrollment information for the schools they serve. Three of the principals received leadership training in public institutions and seven were trained in Catholic universities. Nine of the participants had teaching experience in Catholic schools within the same diocese they were serving as principals; one participant had relocated from another diocese. Five participants served in prior roles as assistant principals, while five made the transition to the principalship directly from a teaching role. Schools in which principals served were located in urban and suburban sections of the diocese. There was a range in the size of the school enrollments and the diversity of the students they served. The number of Catholic students in each of the schools varied, thus impacting the faith development

role and the connections the principals made with Catholic and non-Catholic parents. Two of the schools fell below the general diocese criteria of a 200 student enrollment for a school to remain open. Three other schools in the study had enrollments over 200, but had been placed on a watch list emphasizing the need for enrollments to grow.

Table 1 *Student Demographics of Schools Participating in CSPSP*

	Student Enrollment	Asian%	African American %	Hispanic %	White %	Two or more races %	Non-Catholic %
School 1	135	0.0	13.0	73.0	7.0	7.0	7
School 2	461	0.7	0.0	0.2	92.8	5.9	1
School 3	618	2.4	1.3	8.7	78.2	9.4	11
School 4	377	5.3	2.7	5.8	74.8	11.4	15
School 5	259	5.8	8.1	8.5	59.5	18.1	10
School 6	262	0.0	0.0	85.1	8.4	6.5	6
School 7	295	13.6	1.3	3.4	75.3	6.4	9
School 8	426	1.2	0.7	12.9	83.6	1.6	2
School 9	150	1.3	14.0	68.7	15.3	0.7	12

Note. School 3 represents a PreK-12 building where two of the study participants were employed.

Procedures

Multiple sources of data were collected during the course of the year-long CSPSP. In addition to collecting basic information and student demographics for each school, participants completed two electronic surveys and a monthly interview over the period of ten months.

Surveys. Participants completed an electronic survey at the beginning of the project and end of the project. This survey was comprised of 23 items measured on a Likert scale with the response levels as follows: 1 = Not developed, 2 = At the beginning stages, 3 = Emerging with more frequency, 4 = Developed and 5 = Highly developed and a strength as well. Open-ended response questions were also included on the survey. The survey was developed by the researcher for gauging principals' self-perceptions in specific

areas of leadership. Leadership areas included on the survey were derived from National Association of Secondary School Principals Administrative Skills Assessment Instrument (NASSP, 2001) and included the following areas: setting instructional direction, teamwork, sensitivity, judgment, results orientation, organizational ability, leadership, educational values, stress tolerance, oral communication, written communication, development of others, understanding own strengths and weaknesses, conflict management, political astuteness, creativity, and faith leadership. Each leadership area was defined within the survey to provide clarity. The end-of-project survey additionally included items from the NCEA's Catholic Identity Assessment (McAtee, 2011) which utilizes two sets of statements with responses on a Likert scale: 1 = *not well*, 2 = *minimally well*, 3 = *somewhat well*, 4 = *well* and 5 = *very well*. The first set of statements asks respondents to rate the importance of specific behaviors related to faith identity, while the second set asks respondents how well they personally achieve these behavior or goals in their own faith. While the Catholic Identity Assessment items were not on the initial survey, they were added to the final survey based on responses shared during the monthly interviews. As principals continually raised concerns and questions about their faith leadership, this instrument provided a standardized set of questions to determine principals' self-assessment of their faith. The inclusion of these items was intended to offer clarity to this area of leadership that appeared central to other areas of leadership.

Interviews. Ten monthly interviews, conducted with each of the 10 participants, were audio-taped and transcribed by a graduate assistant at the university. Interviews were semi-structured to provide the opportunity to discuss leadership topics and open-ended to allow participants the opportunity to share individual needs or concerns. Each monthly interview included an agenda focused on a specific aspect of leadership such as curriculum development, teacher evaluation, budget management, marketing, professional development, and the role of faith leader. The interviews balanced a core set of questions related to Catholic school frameworks (Ciriello, 1994; Drahmann, 1994) with interview prompts developed in response to site-specific issues.

Results

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed by comparing group survey responses from the beginning of the year with responses to items on the end-of-year survey. Means were calculated to identify leadership areas of perceived growth. The survey was administered anonymously via an electronic link. As a result there were not any identifiers that enabled connecting a participant's beginning and end of year responses to determine individual perceptions of growth. Changes in perception in these leadership areas are reported by the group. Eight of the participants completed the beginning and ending surveys. Two participants began the surveys, but did not complete them. Results indicated certain leadership areas were perceived by these novice principals as "at the beginning" or "emerging" stages of development. These included setting instructional direction, results orientation, organizational ability, oral communication, political astuteness, creativity, and faith leader as principals perceived their own growth from the beginning to the end of the year. Principals perceived minimal growth, a mean score change of .50, from the beginning to the end of the year based on the self-assessments in the areas of setting instructional direction, sensitivity, judgment, organizational ability, educational values, written communication, and understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses. The areas principals perceived as showing measurable growth, with a change in mean score of .875, included teamwork, results orientation, stress tolerance, oral communication, the development of others, and faith leadership. Survey results from the end of the project indicated principals' perceived growth in 13 of the 17 leadership areas: no change in the areas of overall leadership, political astuteness, and creativity; and a decrease in the area of conflict management. Table 2 provides a comparison of results obtained at the beginning and end of the year for the six leadership areas that underwent the most change over the year long period.

Qualitative data were analyzed following the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) in which coding occurs in an iterative process; codes are applied, refined, and at times, discarded during the stages of analysis. Qualitative analysis was completed utilizing a framework described by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), in which the interpretive process is seen as a flexible interplay between data reduction and data complication. Member checking was completed at the beginning of the interview with a review of the previous meeting

Table 2 *Principals' Self-Assessment in Leadership Areas*

	At the beginning stages		Emerging with more frequency		Developed		Highly developed and a strength	
Leadership area	Beginning %	End %	Beginning %	End %	Beginning %	End %	Beginning %	End %
Teamwork	0	0	71	0	29	100	0	0
Faith leader	43	0	43	17	0	67	14	17
Result orientation	14	0	43	17	43	83	0	0
Stress tolerance	0	0	71	0	29	83	0	17
Oral communication	29	0	29	33	29	50	14	17
Development of others	0	0	86	33	14	67	0	0

notes. Principal interview transcripts were analyzed cyclically, including individual coding by the author, check coding, code refinement and development, discussion of emerging themes, and return to individual coding, all supported by memo writing. Emergent themes dictated further examination of data, as relationships to the varied roles of Catholic leaders became apparent.

The analysis took advantage of the researcher's perspective as former principal and current university faculty member, with ongoing analysis and member checking to triangulate, test, and validate conclusions and establish confirmability (Glesne & Peshkin, 1997). In comparing and contrasting opinions regarding codes and categories, main themes were identified and linked. The researcher used the Catholic school leadership framework as well as the school leadership framework to examine the principals' perceptions of the challenges they faced and areas they perceived as strengths and areas for growth.

Monthly interviews yielded additional rich and varied perspectives on the challenges of Catholic school leadership and the role of the faith leader within that position. The following themes emerged from analysis of interview and survey data: school culture and community building, modeling

faith and nurturing faith development in others, Catholic mission and vision, and leading learning. The themes are described in this section through participant quotes.

Culture and Community Building. School culture was discussed frequently as principals shared perceptions of their role in aligning school culture to the Catholic mission. They described the creation of a Catholic professional learning community showing respect, regard and value for all stakeholders. At times, the culture of the school was seen in opposition to the expectations of a Catholic school culture. As one principal remarked, "Changing the culture is one of the hardest things I work at as a leader—how we assess, how we greet people, how we handle special needs—it is all part of the school culture." References were made to creating a new culture or changing the existing culture, emphasizing the central role school culture played in improvements efforts. "I could spend all of this time creating a new curriculum but if there isn't a level of trust about this new culture, it would never be used." Principals recognized that changing a school's culture was an important foundation of school reform efforts.

Principals explained how their work allowed opportunities to build community, and this impacted their calling to the role, how it shaped and defined their leadership; serving as a faith leader linked goals and strategies they envisioned for their school communities. As one principal noted the " building of community" allowed work across various stakeholder groups:

> I hope we can exude our faith, our atmospheres based on Jesus. I hope students can show their talents academically. I hope teachers can support and build spiritual and faith connections in their teaching through differentiated instruction, and parents can support as well and all can have relationships based on respect.

Another principal recognized potential for community building, responding:

> One thing I am proud of is our faculty meetings and prayer services that we start off each faculty meeting with every week. I think this has brought us together as a faith community…I think that's one area that I have been able to provide leadership this year in terms of strengthening our community…and to see how it is trickling down into the classrooms, with classes having faith buddies and classroom prayer services.

Culture and community building efforts were evidenced on the survey results as principals perceived growth in Teamwork, with a change in mean score from 3.375 to 4.0 from the beginning to the end of the project. Three other leadership areas, Educational Values Development of Others, and Sensitivity, were perceived as growth areas with a change in mean scores from 3.75 to 4.25, 3.125 to 3.75, 3.5 to 4 respectively.

Modeling Faith and Nurturing Faith Development in Others. Principals described the faith leader role as central to their leadership and shared the responsibilities that accompany it. "I see my role as faith leader as essential to my role as principal and I think everything comes from there. I serve as a role model and as a resource." Another principal shared a similar sense of importance regarding this role:

> I see part of my role as faith leader as much as I can to model my own faith for the teachers and I see that their role as educators of the Catholic school, they need to be comfortable with sharing their faith, the students should see as well and so much as we can form a faith community of teachers, I think that just expands for the school as well.
>
> Next year I will be more active in my role as faith leader developing a bond between parish, parents and the school. I want to get parents more active in their church since our Mass attendance is low.

Yet another principal described her work as a calling, a vocation which shaped all that she did as a principal:

> Some of my friends think I'm crazy for working in a Catholic school because they see the price differences or they kind of see the wide range of responsibilities that fall under Catholic school principal and they don't really understand. And I think it all comes back to my faith and seeing this as an extension of my faith and where God has called me to be.

Principals specified goals for growing in the role of faith leader. They articulated goals for improvement, which focused on celebrations of faith and modeling the role of faith leader for others.

> I want to do more in this area-to do more like sharing a poem or prayer or a brief reflection about good teaching, just something spiritually nourishing to them…to talk with them about how their faith has come to them in their lives recently.

They shared frustrations in developing others' faith leadership. In helping teachers become models and leaders for student faith development, principals described difficulties in this area due to the personal nature of faith development. Regardless of Catholic schooling and backgrounds, teachers have differing experiences upon which their faith development has been built. A Catholic upbringing did not translate into teacher knowledge and understanding how to teach and model faith development in students. One principal described it this way:

> I have learned that I need to meet people where they are as a faith leader and to help them grow in their faith. Some people struggle with this and I need to recognize that they have different faith development. I will ask myself: How can I give people opportunities to explore their faith more? We aren't all coming from a place of deep faith.

Similarly, other principals shared these original assumptions that teachers with Catholic educational backgrounds would be skilled in teaching from a Gospel perspective; principals found this was not accurate and shared strategies they employed to fill this gap. This illustrated another way they perceived the role of faith leader and some of their own behaviors for strengthening that role. "I assumed that if they went to a Catholic school and were brought up Catholic they would know this stuff but it is not true." They shared ways to build faith knowledge in teachers, as one remarked, "I want to build their (teachers') faith identity—to start sharing their faith with one another in an appropriate way instead of mandating that 'You have to come to a prayer service'." Principals utilized help from others, as one principal shared: "[I] hired a campus minister who can help share the role of faith leader with me and help the staff grow in their spiritual life." In some cases, living out this faith life seemed an appropriate way to build faith in teachers as well as students. These practices involved continuous modeling, "Prayer buddies has been a nice way to connect the upper and lower grades and help the younger children see the older as role models." Principals instituted regular ways of encouraging all to share their faith together. As one principal explained, "We

implemented a prayer list so there is a week we all pray for a specific teacher. I have been creating prayer services for the beginning of faculty meetings to model this for the teachers." Others connected faith life as a guide for behavior within the school:

> School-wide behavioral expectations connect with our theme of Saints and Scholars. When we embrace the call from God, we use the gifts that He has given us, recognizing the gifts and talents that God has bestowed upon us and seeking to use them in the best way. Our theme for Catholic Schools Week is 'I want to walk as a Child of the Light'.

Novice principals perceived the faith leader role in numerous ways. Principals described what the role meant to them and how they wanted to improve upon it. They were able to share examples of their own behavior and strategies employed in serving in this role as a model, guide, and leader for others.

The results of the NCEA Catholic Identity Assessment further supported this perception of modeling their faith and nurturing it in others. Principals rated daily prayer, Mass attendance and receiving the sacraments as very important or important. Other areas of importance were active service in the parish community and promoting social justice and charity. Those areas identified as somewhat important included learning about Scripture, understanding Church documents related to Vatican II, being ecumenical, and involvement with Catholic media outlets. When responding to how well they achieved these goal statements, the same items were assessed as somewhat or minimally well. There was consistency within the items on these two sets of statements. When principals ranked items as high in importance, it was consistent that they ranked high in their behaviors related to an item. The areas they ranked minimally important were also areas that they rated as low regarding their own behavior for an item.

Building upon these perceptions were the principals' perceived growth in the area of faith leadership. The calculated mean score in this leadership area went from a mean of 3.125 to 4 from the beginning to the end of the school year.

Catholic Mission and Decision-Making. While the Catholic mission falls under the principal's role as faith leader, certain aspects are situated in all three areas of the Catholic leader's role. Clearly, Catholic mission played a critical role in how principals contextualized their work. As one principal suggested, "Our mission is to expand the Catholic teaching to as

many children as we can," while another suggested it is the essential framework upon which her work is built, "The Catholic mission shapes us and makes us a Catholic school so it comes first. So it needs to be thought of before we do anything else." It was described as a lived mission:

> The Catholic mission is important that you live it and that is how I think I inspire, by trying to live the Catholic mission…no matter what the situation is, you treat them with respect and you are a model for them.

However, principals saw inconsistencies in the Catholic mission and what they were able to do to support students, "How do we serve or not serve students with special needs?" was a concern raised by one of the principals. She recognized a contradiction to the mission, "We really don't have support for students with special needs and this is contrary to the mission." Principals saw this as an area that needed to be changed as it challenged their conceptions of what the Catholic mission should be. "How is it serving students well for them to move from one (Catholic) school to the next with the same issues surfacing over time?"

Parents played a role in this definition of Catholic mission, at times identifying a consistent mission and other times not familiar with it at all. Additionally, the Catholic mission was shared with others in the community. Parents were involved in bringing the mission to life, and determining how it related to overall parish and school growth and development.

> There is a whole group on our school board who wants to tap into Catholic identity but there are so many different definitions about what that really means—this will be a big topic for next year as it is connected to our strategic plan.

Principals expressed frustration that Catholic mission was not important for families of other faiths, however, recognized these students could help grow the school's enrollment.

> Parents of other faiths want to come to our school but many don't understand that part of the purpose of the Catholic school is to be an outreach ministry to the church. We are here to serve our parishioners and are working hard to do so.

> We want children to continue learning their Catholicism in addition to the other reasons they want to come to our school.

Survey results further evidenced principal perceptions in Catholic mission and decision making. Perceptions of the leadership areas of judgment and stress tolerance showed growth in the calculated means from the beginning to the end of the year, with changes of 3.375 to 3.875 and 3.375 to 4.25 respectively.

Leading Learning

Principals described the instructional leader role as another important function in their leadership responsibilities, but with additional challenges connected to the role. They wanted to lead learning, serving as an important part of the instructional process. As one principal indicated, "We are looking at new strategies and practices ….as opposed to the old ones. We are cross-collaborating with different grade levels." Student learning was clearly a priority: "Parent-teachers conferences are important for the principal….to be aware of which students are achieving and which ones are struggling."

Improving instruction was a goal connected to this Leading Learning responsibility:

> I need to block out more time to be in classrooms. Part of my role is getting them excited about their role as educators…. Scheduling pre-conferences, observations and post conferences is a lot of time but needs to be done. In the last two weeks I have gotten into classrooms more than in the whole first semester.

Challenges in the Leading Learning role centered on available resources to support and improve student learning; "Curriculum mapping software needs to be added into the budget for next year." Time to get into classrooms, observe teachers and provide them with feedback was a priority and often did not get the amount of the principal's time and attention.

Building on the Leading Learning role were survey items that aligned with the area of responsibility. Four areas reflected positive changes in the calculated means in Setting Instructional Direction, 2.875 to 3.375, Result Orientation 3.125 to 3.75, Organizational ability 3.0 to 3.5 , Communication, both Oral, 3.125 to 3.875 and Written 3.875 to 4.375.

Data analysis for this study provided a clear pathway to the areas princi-

pals perceived as challenges and how they situated the faith leader role and Catholic mission within their leadership. In addition, they provided evidence of the desire to serve as the Learning Leader or instructional leader along with the other roles. Principals perceived growth in the majority of the leadership areas assessed over the course of their first year of leadership. However, they continually struggled with areas they did not have the time or training to efficient lead. The section that follows describes how the data analysis provides a response to the study's research questions.

Discussion

From the analysis of the principal interviews, memos and survey results four areas or themes emerged to describe the principals' perceptions of their roles. These include: community and culture building, modeling of faith and nurturing its development in others, the Catholic mission and leading learning. Using Ciriellos's (1994) framework for the Catholic school principal, challenges overlapped the three areas of responsibility that she has identified-managerial, faith and instructional leader. The role of the principal as faith leader was examined and consideration of how the Catholic mission is situated in their leadership was investigated. Finally, these roles competed with the principal's time and resources for leading learning.

Challenges

The data confirmed novice principals perceived challenges across all areas of their work and in their roles as educational leaders, faith or spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. On the initial survey, principals were asked what goals they had for their own growth and development relative to this project. Areas cited for improvement included time and stress management, delegation, improving presentations, and getting more comfortable in spiritual and religious aspects of their work. Common overlapping themes included time, level of preparedness for the position, lack of support, and growing or becoming comfortable in the role of principal. Challenges were identified in finance, fundraising, marketing and enrollment, and school culture.

Many of the challenges came from responsibilities outlined in the managerial role of the school leader. Principals described the difficulty in collecting tuition from families who couldn't afford it and spending much of their time on the fiscal and financial well-being of the schools. With limited or no background in fundraising, many felt ill-equipped to take over this role.

Marketing and enrollment issues weighed heavily as they expressed surprise at how much of these responsibilities were left to the principal. While work with school board, volunteers, and others who had marketing expertise provided some level of assistance, principals felt they needed to be involved in oversight of this work, despite feeling that they were not confident enough in their abilities to take the lead.

Role of Faith Leader

Principals developed their own definitions and conceptualizations for "faith leader" and "Catholic mission," and these conceptualizations formed their understanding of the terms and their significance within the leadership role. Principal training and background contributed to perceptions of the faith leader role and how it came to life within the principalship. The spiritual and cultural capital they brought the to position was critical (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Bush & Chew, 1999). References to developing prayer services or to nurturing a rich faith life were evident in those who expressed comfort and confidence in this role. Others who had less confidence in their abilities did not have a model to draw upon and reached out to those who might have more expertise.

A principal's description of one's faith life and its development factored into the role he/she played as a leader. Some of the principals saw the faith leader role as centrally situated within other aspects of the job. It gave them license, power, and the ability to do more. In contrast, others struggled to become proficient in this spiritual aspect of leadership. Personal faith development presented as another factor. Those who spoke openly and more freely about their faith integrated it within their work as school leaders; they were differentiated from those who appeared less comfortable as faith leaders trying to determine how this responsibility should be situated within multiple roles. Analysis and coding of the data allowed two distinct groups to emerge. One group consisted of five principals who clearly saw themselves as faith leaders who were principals. Consistent with Wallace's (1989) findings, these were spiritual people who happened to be principals. The faith leader role guided their work, and provided them with comfort when challenges arose. Five of the participants saw themselves as school leaders, with the role of faith leader as one of the many other duties and responsibilities they held. This distinction serves as an important one; those who saw themselves as first and foremost, a faith leader, used it as lens through which all other respon-

sibilities were framed. Within this primary faith role, principals were empowered to do more as it guided other areas of leadership, while overlapping additional roles they held. It provided them a moral purpose for the work to be done within the school (Fullan, 2003). That is, the faith leader principal was driven by this sense of moral purpose and was guided by this lens.

In contrast, the second group of principals saw themselves as school leaders who held the role of faith leader along with multiple roles and responsibilities. The second group perceived a distinct role of the faith leader and described the ways they felt ill-prepared to lead in this area. Some from this group described strategies to compensate for this lack of expertise as a faith leader. They reached out for resources in the form of teacher leaders, religious education staff, or campus ministers to assist in areas that they didn't perceive as strong. In some cases, this role was supported by another individual. While these principals wanted to excel and support others' faith life and development, it was not an area of strength or confidence in their leadership.

Principals clearly understood their roles in building culture in the school community (Seashore-Louis, 2011; Wallace Foundation, 2012). They had a clear vision for their schools (Barth, 1990) and understood that the development of a positive school culture led to student success in learning. However, the managerial role presented its own set of challenges for these principals. Areas of concern focused on finance and marketing of the school, enrollment management, and the politics of leading from the local and central office levels. Consistent with Wallace's key responsibilities for a school leader, the principals found challenges in the area of managing people, data and processes for school improvement. Supervision of staff and hiring new teachers presented additional areas for concern and request for support. Decision-making and specifics related to how principals reached decisions, those impacted by decisions, the involvement of others in the process, and the outcomes of decisions were all discussed and perceived as challenges.

Figure 1 presents a model for the pattern that emerged as novice principals discussed the areas of need for their own learning. Their self-assessment is illustrated as the initial step, Step 1, which leads to expectations about their performance in a given area of leadership, Step 2, such as educational leadership, faith leader, or managerial leader. If they perceived an area of weakness, such as in the evaluation of teachers, as they had never done this before, principals appeared readily able to identify and articulate what they needed for improvement. They shared targeted areas for help, Step 3, able to identify the professional learning they needed such as improving time management skills

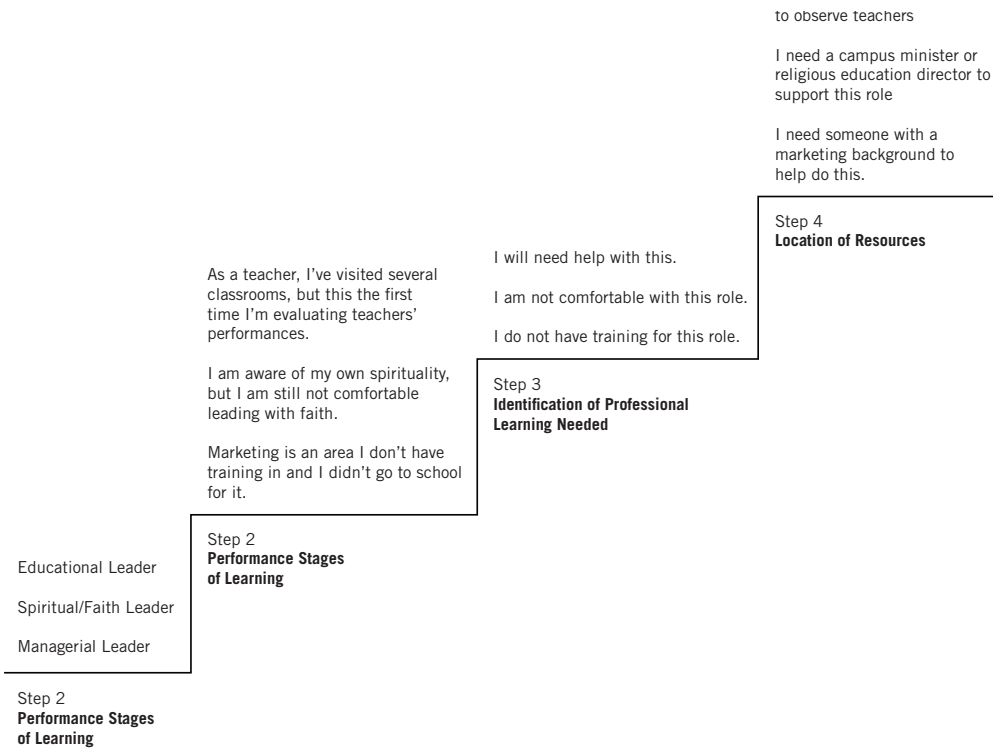

Figure 1. Model for novice principals identification of new learning.

or providing meaningful feedback to teachers. The result was openness about needs for support and guidance. The study participants expected this would be part of their role as Catholic school principals and readily sought help in this area and obtained necessary resources, as shown in Step 4.

The same process emerged with the faith leader role and the managerial leader roles, however, with different outcomes. Expectations about these roles seemed to impact what and where the principals sought out resources. The depth of the faith leader role was not as clear to principals. Some were confident in wanting to do more and learn more, while others didn't understand how to "wear" this role and expressed some discomfort and less confidence about how to develop it. Resources sought were not as targeted; principals were less certain about what they needed in this area. Principals were not able to clearly articulate what aspect of this role they needed help with or understand all that the role entailed. As a result, they often reached out to others to assist in this role or in some cases, assume this role. Likewise, in

some of the managerial functions, all principals did not perceive marketing and enrollment to be their responsibility. They did not expect this to be one of their duties as a principal; as a result, there was less familiarity with how to obtain resources for strengthening it. When principals were aware of an area being weak or had the expectation it would be due to this first experience, they sought out help with it. Principals' conceptual understanding of how these roles would develop and the steps needed for proficiency were not as clear. As a result, perceptions on how to grow these roles and further develop these skills were ambiguous. In some cases, principals felt less comfortable and were more inclined to share these duties with another individual. Faith leader roles were shared with others in the school and parish who seemed better equipped for the role, while some aspects of the managerial role were shared with school boards, parent volunteers, and others with the expertise in these areas.

Catholic Mission/Decision

Principals accurately defined and described their leadership roles in alignment with the three areas of leadership defined by Ciriello (1994). They were able to describe their work as educational leaders, and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, they also described and assessed their roles as spiritual and managerial leaders. Their own perceptions of strengths and weaknesses formed the sense of what they needed in each area to grow and develop. Based on these perceptions and self-assessments, they reached out for resources, professional learning, and help to continue to develop their leadership. Clearly, school systems with faith-based leaders must address the need for mentoring and coaching of Catholic school principals. While combining the roles and responsibilities of the principal of a school along with the multiple additional responsibilities in a Catholic school, it is critical that novice principals have support and resources to meet their unique and demanding responsibilities. All aspects of leadership are important to the principal's success; however, that of faith leader is situated centrally within the Catholic principal's work. Continued emphasis must be placed on aspects that contribute to the growth of the faith leader role, so that principal's knowledge and confidence in this area can be developed and nourished. There is a need to consider the stages of a principal's career and align the role of faith leader with the other aspects of the principal's position (Daresh, 2004).

Leading Learning

As educational leaders, principals in this study identified challenges in curriculum and instruction; they recognized the need to provide teachers with quality professional learning so that the schools could fulfill the expectation of academic excellence. Other challenges emerged in dealing with morale, stress, expectations of parents, relationships with stakeholders, and their own leadership formation and evolution. Principals understood the significance of serving as the instructional leader in their schools; however, they acknowledged the difficulties in fulfilling all of the responsibilities given to them. They struggled with serving as the leader in all areas while trying to learn and develop their skills at the same time. While sharing leadership in instructional or faith areas presented an option, there was some reluctance to step back from leading in the learning area.

The role of the novice Catholic principal is a complex one, with multiple responsibilities and duties across all areas of leadership. Principals were able to succinctly describe the challenges and conflicts associated with their work and the many roles connected with their positions as school leaders. Four themes emerged from the principals' perceptions and understanding of the challenges they face; principals understood how their roles were interrelated and struggled with managing all of them.

Implications

The results of this study have implications for practitioners and for those responsible for training, preparing, and supporting the work of Catholic school principals. Lessons can be learned for higher education, the development faith knowledge and consideration of the topics and types of professional learning and support offered to new principals. The pastor's role as well as the work of the central office and elements in the process of a leadership transition can all be informed by this work.

Higher education. The study results suggest implications for the preparation, induction, and mentoring of novice principals in Catholic schools. The partnering of dioceses with higher education and principal preparation programs can build upon the critical work of preparing principals for the realities of the job in an integrated framework. Coursework that provides the candidate with content knowledge as well as experiences in all roles of school leadership will ensure a strong foundation in faith, instructional, and mana-

gerial leadership. Each role must be embedded within the course content and in the practical experiences so that candidates have a clear understanding of what is expected. The faith leader roles and responsibilities will be useful if woven throughout the program so that candidates understand how central this will be to their future work. Programs must ensure a depth of content knowledge in faith development, with checkpoints along the way. Dioceses and universities can work together so that candidates from public universities have a clear pathway for learning about the expectations and responsibilities of the principal as the faith leader, and support their acquisition of content knowledge in this area. Leadership academies that combine the theoretical and practical perspectives can help candidates build skills that align with multiple their roles. Opportunities to shadow principals, complete field experiences and internships in multiple Catholic settings will provide those preparing for leadership positions with experiences in schools similar to those they plan to lead. Internships will be beneficial if they provide the candidate with the depth of responsibilities that grow over time. Similar to a student teacher preparing to take over the responsibility for all aspects of the classroom, the Catholic school leadership candidate should engage in increasing duties and responsibilities for leading a school.

Assessing and developing faith knowledge. Connected to enhancing principal preparation**,** the study provides clear evidence that principals want and need support in their faith knowledge and development. The NCEA Assessment provides a useful self-assessment tool for candidates' understanding of their faith development, strengths, and areas for growth. This clarity will encourage reflection about faith identity, leading them to connect to the faith leader role. Higher education programs can integrate practical experiences, so partnering with diocese and Catholic central offices becomes essential (Lovely, 2004). University programs may want to follow candidates into the workplace and extend their training into the first year of the principalship and beyond.

Professional learning. Professional learning must be targeted to help principals develop across all domains. Mentoring programs need to be embedded within the process of educating school leaders (Bush & Chew, 1999), and must continue throughout the leader's career. Mentoring programs should develop leaders who put students first, see when change is needed, and have the courage to deal with the opposition to implement such change (Gray et al., 2007). Novice principals need the time and a safe space for discussing their work, reflecting upon the decision-making

processes employed, and learning from their mistakes. This understanding of self and others will provide them with a better view of their leadership skills and repertoire; this will provide specific areas for growth and development (Donaldson, 2008; Green, 2010).

The professional development of principals should be a priority that continues throughout their careers (Brownridge, 2009). Coaching and mentoring have become the norm in multiple professions as the wisdom of others' experience can be useful to those at any stage of a profession (Gawande, 2011). Continued learning opportunities can strengthen areas of weakness and enable principals to serve as the faith leader across all settings and situations. Multiple and frequent faith-developing events and activities will help principals grow into this role and increase their confidence in leading others. Professional learning should be job-embedded, so that it is closely related to the ongoing work of the principal and links with school improvement efforts. The three main roles of the Catholic leader must be the foundation for the learning, so that the new principal is supported in all areas and reminded how these areas translate to the school's overall success. The learning should focus on strengthening the faith identity role and helping leaders grow along a continuum throughout the career of a principal. Networks of new principals in small groups can support their learning and prevent the feelings of isolation. Priests and other religious can support faith development along with principal colleagues and diocesan personnel.

While induction programs help to introduce the novice principal to many aspects of the position, ongoing professional learning that is targeted to a principal's area of need will help him/her grow and develop into a capable leader. Topics covered should use actual challenges to drive the learning; principals need help across all domains, whether balancing the stress of the job, or needing help with teacher evaluation, or requiring more opportunities to grow as a faith leader. This continuity of support and learning requires a concerted effort of dioceses to prepare principals for new initiatives and be at the forefront of this new learning. It may be helpful to partner with public schools, particularly on content initiatives that are shared, such as the Common Core State Standards, or other current topics.

Pastor-principal relationships. Pastor-principal relationships can play a significant part in the success of new principals. Pastors are in a position to help new principals understand the prevailing culture and it challenges while providing additional support. Varying models of school governance are a factor; schools with the president principal model may be able to partner and

share duties. Clearly, there is a need to work together, but more importantly there is a need to understand both roles and responsibilities in relation to the Catholic mission. Principals are highly visible, and represent the Catholic Church and its mission to many families. This is especially true for those who are not engaged in parish life and regular Mass attendance. The principal's role needs to be embedded in the fabric of parish life; communication of the Catholic goals and mission must be consistent and in alignment so a clear message is sent to all constituents. In addition, the pastor is in the unique role of nurturing the principal's faith life and faith identity. They need to be available to principals for consultation, as well as suggestions for deepening the faith experiences of the community.

Central office support. This study has implications for the work done at the central office level. The recruitment process can be the beginning of the mentoring experience, so that candidates have clear expectations of what will be expected of them. Local area principals should provide another layer of support for the new principals. They can provide assistance to help principals with stress, to develop instructional goals, to plan school improvement, and other school specific duties. Central office personnel can help establish these connections between new and veteran principals as soon as new assignments are announced. While the central office is responsible for familiarizing principals about policies and procedures, they can also help with connecting new principals with strong veteran principals who have the skillset for successful mentoring. Principals can learn from one another and build their repertoire of knowledge for serving as a faith leader.

Succession planning. Finally, continued work is needed to better prepare for transitions that occur with leaders, so that the new principal doesn't waste time collecting information on what has been left behind and what has been accomplished. A specific transition planning guide can assist with transitions and outline what steps should occur in the process. Schools and their central office need to require an exit plan with outgoing and some of the remaining staff to help the new principal transition to his or her new role. Succession planning and a well-outlined process for this transition will better strengthen Catholic schools and how they are perceived in the community. All of these will better equip the principal to serve as a confident educational leader, spiritual leader, and managerial leader.

The challenges facing novice Catholic school principals are many and require a support system that can provide feedback and coaching across all roles and responsibilities. New principals have expectations about some of

the realities they will be faced with across the multiple roles of their work. Emphasis needs to be placed on systems to provide support in the managerial and instructional roles, and most importantly, on the faith leader role. This critical work of a Catholic school leader needs to be mentored so that it can develop as well as provide service to the Church.

Conclusion

Novice principals are faced with many challenges in the multiple roles that they serve in as Catholic school leaders. Each of the roles is a complex one, requiring continued support and training as they begin and continue in their careers. Existing structures are in place which can assist leaders; improvements at the beginning stages of training such as in principal preparation programs and throughout their careers can address these challenges. Central to the principal's role is that of faith leader and helping others with faith development. Principals understand the Catholic mission and how it impacts their decisionmaking. They appreciate the significance of serving as the leader of learning, while building the culture and community within their schools. In an era when so much has been placed on the shoulders of the principal, the need for ongoing mentoring and supports becomes essential. The continued success and development of the principal is linked to supports and systematic processes for their growth and expertise in the position.

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