


Winter 2017

Exploring the Leadership Practices of National Catholic Educational Association Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals and Defining the Leadership Needed to Survive the 21st Century Challenges

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The University of San Francisco

Exploring the Leadership Practices of National Catholic Educational Association
Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals and Defining the Leadership
Needed to Survive the 21st Century Challenges

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Natalie Cirigliano
San Francisco
December, 2017

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Exploring the Leadership Practices of National Catholic Educational Association
Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals and Defining the Leadership
Needed to Survive the 21st Century Challenges

The purpose of this study was to explore the life experiences (personal and educational) of eight distinguished elementary Catholic school principals formally recognized by NCEA through its Distinguished Principal Award. The study sought to identify their leadership practices and how they were demonstrated in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study sought to identify the major 21st century challenges that the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced and how they addressed them.

This case study included eight participants from eight different (arch)dioceses over seven states. Each principal participant completed an initial questionnaire and responded to interview questions about their spiritual, instructional, and managerial leadership practices as well as the 21st century challenges they face and how they address them. Additional data was gathered from faculty focus group interviews.

Data from initial questionnaires and principal and faculty focus group interviews was analyzed to identify the effective leadership practices of the NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals. Effective instructional leadership practices identified include engaging in lifelong learning, providing teachers with necessary resources and professional development, providing students with necessary materials, maintaining budgets, evaluating instruction through formal and informal

observations, and analyzing data. Effective spiritual leadership practices identified include modeling, being visible in the faith community, building the faith community through prayer and shared Catholic traditions and experiences, and providing ongoing catechist training. Effective managerial leadership practices identified include delegating tasks, creating goals, holding regular meetings, reviewing finances, establishing Administrative Teams, adhering to deadlines and policies, holding regular safety drills, and upholding safety plans.

The study revealed that the role of the Catholic elementary school principal is exhausting and never-ending and that there is a need to continue to explore effective Catholic elementary school leadership practices while also evaluating the current structure of and expectations placed on the Catholic elementary school principal. Further research on the importance of the pastor/principal role to Catholic elementary school success and how this relationship can be fostered were recommended. Additional recommendations were made to better identify necessary spiritual leadership practices.

SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my husband, Neil, thank you for supporting me throughout these past two years. When I think of my time at USF I think of us and how you proposed to me on Lone Mountain after an all day Saturday class. I know the hours I was away were frustrating. Know that you were a major factor in my desire to pursue this degree. You are one of the smartest people I know, yet you were not made to feel that way throughout your educational experience. Thank you for inspiring me to ensure that my students' gifts are always recognized and developed. You made me want to have more opportunities in my career to ensure that I reach as many students as possible. Thank you for supporting me over these past two years- your support and love mean more than you will ever know.

Thank you to my parents for always believing in me and believing in education. Growing up you made many sacrifices so I could have the life and educational experiences I did. Thank you for providing me with a strong faith foundation that was rooted in Catholic education. You always valued your faith and education, and this in turn inspired me and my career. Thank you for always encouraging me to pursue my education. If all children could experience the love and support I felt from you, the world would truly be a better place.

To Jillian, thanks for being the big sister that knows everything. You put up with my crazy more than anyone I know! Thank you for making me laugh and for constantly reminding me that life should be fun. What a blessing it has been in my life to have you as my older sister and best friend.

My entire life I had a very special relationship with my twin brother, Nicolas, and with it came an unspoken yet healthy competition. What he did, I wanted to do so when he decided to get his Ph.D. in Materials Science Engineering I only had one option- I had to get my doctorate too. I would like to thank my brother for constantly pushing and encouraging me throughout my life. Thank you for inspiring me to continue my education. I blame you for the chaos of my life these past two years, and I also thank you for it.

To Michelle and Michael, thank you for being the best in-laws! You both bring so much joy to my brother and sister, and that in turn brings joy to me. I hit the jackpot when my siblings found the two of you! Thanks for your consistent support and love.

During this dissertation process I became an aunt four times! Thank you to Gianna, Oliver, Daniella, and Dean for reminding me why it was so important to finish this paper- so I could have more snuggles and fun with each of you. You each brighten my day and were the best study breaks (aka writing distractions) a girl could ever have.

Thank you to the eight distinguished principals who participated in my study. Each of you taught me a lesson in distinguished leadership, and I will forever be grateful for your generosity in sharing your time and talents with me. It was truly an honor working with you and learning from you.

Thank you to my advisor, Doreen Jones. Though you retired before I could finish my studies, the impact you had in my education is immeasurable. Thank you for encouraging me to begin my dissertation studies and for guiding me early in my writing process. Thank you most importantly for showing me what spiritual leadership is and for challenging my understanding of faith.

To my friends and colleagues at Holy Name School- thank you for being supportive over the last two years and for teaching me how to be a better leader. To all the educational leaders I have worked with- thank you for your shared lessons in life and leadership. Thank you to Sr. Antonella, Lisa Tortorich, Laura Held, and Father Arnold for taking chances when hiring me. You each directly impacted my life in such a meaningful way, and I will forever be thankful for your trust in me.

To my dissertation community- thank you. Thank you for sharing in the experience and for reminding me that I was never alone.

Finally, thank you to my dissertation committee. Dr. Mitchell, thank you for serving as my chair and for helping me to reach my goal. Thank you to Dr. Ursula Aldana and Dr. Jane Bleasdale for being committee members. Each of you encouraged me to challenge myself and to go further in my research. Thank you to Thanh for always keeping me on track and for sharing your smile on the days I most needed a spark of energy! Thank you to my USF professors for your ongoing commitment to education.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The role of the elementary Catholic school principal has evolved over the past decades to meet the many demands of its 21st century students, parent communities, and society (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013). This ever-evolving position has led to many complex and daunting responsibilities that require principals to act as managerial leaders, spiritual leaders, and educational leaders (Ciriello, 1994, Peterson, 2016, Rieckhoff, 2013). Understanding how principals effectively meet these many roles is imperative as the future of Catholic elementary education depends on the strength of our current Catholic elementary school principals (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013).

Effective Catholic school leadership is essential to the success of Catholic elementary schools (Ciriello, 1994, Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2004). The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), the largest, private professional education association in the world, attests to this regularly through its mission that focuses on Catholic education. NCEA works to support Catholic educators in their teaching ministry. Additionally, it places a large emphasis on recognizing current leaders so that successful leadership practices can be shared with developing leaders. Each year NCEA recognizes key distinguished principals within the United States through its annual NCEA Distinguished Principal Award for their inspirational leadership and commitment to Catholic educational excellence.

Candidates of this award are nominated by their superintendents and are asked to answer a variety of questions. These nine questions are designed to gain specific details about the candidates and their commitment to Catholic education and their leadership

styles and practices. Candidates are also asked to provide a resume with specific information pertaining to their professional preparation, experience, activities, awards, and honors as well as their service to the community. Finally, candidates are asked to describe one to five practices that have worked well in their schools. Distinguished Principal Candidates are asked to present this information as well as references from their archbishop, superintendent, supervisor, peer principal, teacher, parent, and student. A copy of this qualitative data is given to each member of the Distinguished Principal Selection Committee who uses the collected data to score each candidate in the following twenty areas:

1. Exercise responsible decision making
2. Realize and implement the school's mission and vision
3. Work collaboratively toward continuous school improvement
4. Actively model service to others within the community
5. Demonstrate faithful stewardship of resources
6. Engage in responsible financial planning in collaboration with others
7. Utilize outside resources as appropriate to their position to promote operational vitality
8. Contribute to long term planning for continuous improvement to realize the mission of Catholic education
9. Supports rigorous academic program that integrates the faith across subject areas
10. Collaborate to achieve continuous improvement of instructional practice
11. Creatively engage and motivate others to meet the needs of all students
12. Demonstrate commitment to personal improvement through professional development and ongoing faith formation
13. Guide students in 21st century skills, including technology integration
14. Support the development of student and family life
15. Embrace Catholic identity
16. Demonstrate Gospel values
17. Adhere to the school mission
18. Contribute to student and adult faith formation
19. Participate in liturgical and communal prayer and service
20. Promote the school mission and vision through meaningful communication, marketing, and development

Those candidates who receive the top scores in the areas above become recipients of the NCEA Distinguished Principal Award.

Though this award acknowledges that these recipients make up the very best within the field of education, there is a lack of understanding of which specific practices make these recipients distinguished in their leadership styles.

According to the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), the role of the Catholic school principal can be explained across three roles: educational leader, spiritual leader, and managerial leader (Ciriello, 1994, Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, Rieckhoff, 2014).

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. (Rieckhoff, 2014, p. 26)

The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) expands on these three roles by breaking the job responsibilities into four key areas: Catholic identity, academic excellence, school viability, and general administration (Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2002, Rieckhoff, 2014). The responsibilities of the Catholic elementary school principal are enormous; there is a “never-ending list of urgent action items...each day... (which leads

to) other important and essential tasks (going) unaddressed” (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, p. 54). Despite the myriad of responsibilities that must be met, there is currently no standardized model to support these principals in their unique and demanding leadership expectations (Rieckhoff, 2013).

Though research substantiates multiple leadership models including faith leadership (Hunt et al., 2004, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2004), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), transformational leadership (Sergiovanni, 2007), authentic leadership (Northouse, 2010), and instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 2010), there has been limited empirical research that articulates what the specific characteristics (inclusive of personal and professional backgrounds, specific leadership qualities, and action plans) and practices are of a distinguished Catholic elementary school principal.

Very little is “known about the leadership practices utilized by (elementary) Catholic school principals and how they use their leadership to address some of the challenges currently facing Catholic schools” (Zamora, 2013, p. 15). There is a lack of empirical research that explores these current 21st century challenges that Catholic elementary school principals specifically face and how these challenges have changed the role and expectations of the Catholic elementary school principal. “The demands on a 21st Century Catholic school leader have far surpassed the abilities of a solitary leader acting alone to provide the necessary leadership....and (these demands) are constantly changing” (St. Louis University, n.d.). For the solitary Catholic elementary school principal to remain a viable solution to Catholic school leadership, there is a need to

understand the challenges they are facing and the qualities and skills that allow distinguished leaders to be successful.

This dissertation sought to understand distinguished leadership by exploring the leadership styles and practices of eight American elementary school principals who received the NCEA Distinguished Principal Award. This dissertation sought to understand how distinguished Catholic elementary school leaders serve as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders of their schools. In doing so this study sought to discover what personal and professional backgrounds distinguished Catholic elementary school leaders possess as well as what their typical leadership practices are. Additionally, this study sought to identify what the major challenges 21st century Catholic elementary school principals face, and how these distinguished leaders have addressed these problems. Finally, the study sought to explore if any similarities exist between the leadership styles of NCEA- identified distinguished principals.

Background and Need

Strong leadership is essential in establishing and maintaining a culture of school excellence within public and private schools (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013). All elementary school principals face similar challenges and demands, yet Catholic elementary school principals are tasked with additional challenges that are unique to Catholic education, particularly in their added role as spiritual leader (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, Rieckhoff, 2014). Not only do Catholic elementary school principals need to serve as the educational and managerial leaders of their schools, but they also must work “collaboratively with a variety of parish and diocesan groups, promoting a Christian community among teachers, and providing effective leadership

that reflects the unique Catholic character of the school” (Hunt et al., 2004, p. 483). As the presence of religious members continues to significantly decline in schools across America, more and more responsibility is placed on the lay Catholic elementary school principal to uphold the Catholic identity of the school while providing a strong Catholic educational experience to all students (McDonald & Schultz, 2011).

Church documents have stressed the importance of Catholic education and its leaders for over a century. Vatican II (1965a) urged Catholic elementary school educators to “recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs” and that “they should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world” (§8). Catholic school leaders are challenged to meet this task and to ensure that their teachers are also succeeding in this. Catholic education is in need of strong educational leaders who can ensure that the “educational experience for young people... is both truly Catholic and of the highest academic quality” (USCCB, 2005, p. 1).

As Catholic elementary school principals continue to face unique challenges that their public elementary school principal counterparts do not, it is imperative that Catholic elementary principal leadership practices are explored. “Knowing what leaders do is one thing, but without rich understanding of how and why they do it, our understanding of leadership is incomplete” (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, p. 23). By exploring the leadership practices of NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School

Principals, we can begin to better understand how distinguished leadership can be supported and developed.

NCEA determines distinguished leadership by looking at qualitative data to analyze leadership effectiveness over twenty criterion points. These criterion points look at various duties of the Catholic elementary school principal from their demonstrating Catholic values to their working collaboratively towards school improvement. Those principals who score highly are recognized with the NCEA Distinguished Principal Award, and they offer important insight into exemplary leadership practices.

It is important to better understand how NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have succeeded in facing the many challenges and expectations placed on them so that future leaders can be given direction and guided in their leadership growth through meaningful professional development. Currently there is no standard model used to support and develop principals in their leadership (Peterson, 2016). An exploration of successful leadership practices through the lens of distinguished Catholic elementary principals can provide insight into which leadership styles and qualities make up best practices in Catholic elementary school leadership, particularly in respect to their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders.

Additionally, there is a need to fully understand what 21st century challenges current Catholic elementary school principals are facing. Though all educational leaders face significant challenges on a daily basis, Catholic educators face additional challenges that are unique to Catholic education. Acting as spiritual leader of their school is an additional role that their public school counterparts are not responsible for. Additionally,

Catholic educators have increased fiscal responsibility as Catholic schools do not receive any federal funding and have very limited resources. For Catholic education to survive, competent and capable school leaders must be identified and placed in school leadership positions. The current research on Catholic distinguished elementary school principals and their leadership practices is very limited as it does not tell us how these leaders successfully lead (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Understanding how distinguished principals lead is necessary to plan for the long-term sustainability of Catholic elementary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the life experiences (personal and educational) and the leadership practices of eight distinguished elementary Catholic school principals formally recognized by NCEA through its Distinguished Principal Award. The study sought to identify what leadership practices these distinguished leaders demonstrated in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study looked to identify the major 21st century challenges that the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced and how they addressed them. Finally, this study sought to identify what the NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals had in common.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory. When studying leadership there is a vast array of leadership styles and often researchers try to pinpoint one style as being the most effective. Situational

theory suggests that there is no one size fits all leadership style and that no one leadership style can be considered “the best.” Situational theory proposes that “successful leaders are those that can adapt their behavior to meet the demands of their own unique environment” (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976, p. 348). In other words, the best leadership practices are dependent on individual circumstances and each circumstance requires different leadership skills to be used. “From this perspective, to be an effective leader requires that a person adapt his or her style to the demands of different situations” (Northouse, 2010, p. 89).

Situational Leadership Theory is grounded in the belief that effective leadership should involve an interaction between three factors: task behavior, relationship behavior, and maturity. Task behavior is defined as the amount of direction a leader must give another individual while relationship behavior is the amount of emotional support a leader must provide (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976). Maturity is defined in terms of the situation being faced, yet it refers to one’s ability and willingness to take responsibility as well as one’s personal and academic experiences (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976).

Situational Leadership Theory articulates how leaders are most effective when they adapt to their situations and those individuals with whom they lead. The most effective leaders know the strengths and areas for growth of the individuals they are working with as well as their commitment to tasks, and they adapt their leadership to meet the individual needs (Northouse, 2010). The relationship between these factors greatly lies in the situation faced and the maturity of those involved. As maturity

increases leaders are able to reduce the amount of direction and emotional support offered, and vice versa.

The Situational Leadership Theory finds its foundation in the belief that there are four leadership styles and four maturity styles (Mulder, 2012). Leadership styles can be described as S1: Telling (Directing), S2: Selling (Coaching), S3: Participating (Supporting), and S4: Delegating. While S1 and S2 styles focus on completing the task, styles S3 and S4 are more focused on how to develop employee abilities to work on their own and independent of the leader. The four levels of maturity are M1, M2, M3, and M4. “According to Hersey and Blanchard, knowing when to use each (leadership) style is largely dependent on the maturity of the person or group you are leading” (Mind Tools, 2013, p. 2).

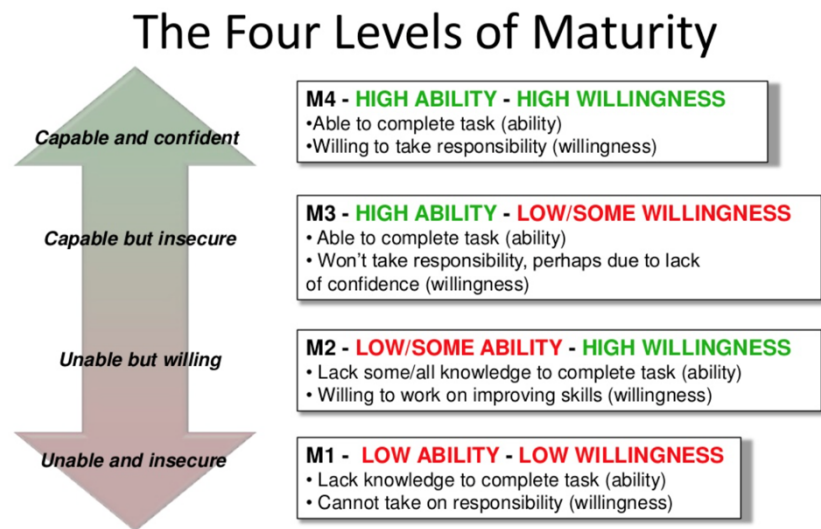


Figure 1. The Four Levels of Maturity in Situational Leadership Theory

Source: <http://image.slidesharecdn.com/situationalleadershippresentationslideshare-130807063813-phpapp01/95/situational-leadership-step-by-step-presentation-v10-4-638.jpg?cb=1375857549>

At an M1 maturity level, employees are unmotivated, incompetent, or lacking the necessary confidence to complete skills. As a result of this lack of knowledge or skills, an S1 leadership style is required of leaders. In this leadership style the leader directs the employee by telling him or her exactly what to do. This S1 leadership style differs from S2 in that the employees with an M2 level of maturity wish to work more independently, however they do not yet have the abilities to do so. As a result of the employee's undeveloped skills and/or knowledge, the leader must coach the employee. By explaining his or her decisions as well as by giving a voice to the employee, a leader displaying S2 leadership is able to effectively coach the employee.

When employees have an M3 level of maturity, they have the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in work expectations, yet they are unwilling to take on full ownership of duties, often due to a lack of confidence. In this case an S3 leadership style is required of the leader (Mulder, 2012). An S3 leader supports an employee by including them in decision-making and encouraging their active participation. The S3 leadership style actively engages the employee in order to encourage the development of their confidence. When an employee gains confidence, they show an M4 level of maturity. At M4 employees can and want to take on job expectations and responsibilities. As a result, an S4 leadership style is most effective as it passes on a majority of responsibility to the employee. Though a leader still monitors an employee's advancement, the leader actively removes him or herself from major decision making.

The situational leadership model was further developed by Blanchard (1985) and Blanchard et al. (1985) with a focus on leadership style and development level of subordinates. Image 2 shows this Situational Leadership II Model which is an "extension

and refinement of the original situational leadership model developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969a)” (Northouse, 2010, p. 90).

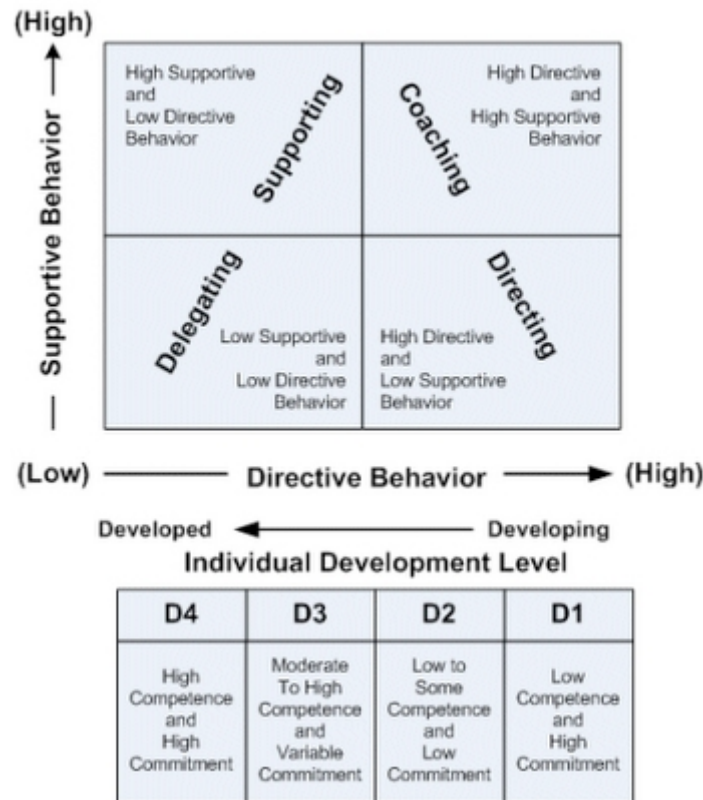


Figure 2. Blanchard Situational Leadership II Model

SOURCE: From *Leadership and the One Minute Manager: Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership*, by K. Blanchard, P. Zigarmi, and D. Zigarmi, 1985, New York: William Morrow.

Leadership style “consists of the behavior pattern of a person who attempts to influence others (and) it includes both *directive (task) behaviors* and *supportive (relationship) behaviors*” (Norton, 2010, p. 91). Directive behaviors include the telling through one-way communication of how to do something whereas supportive behaviors are defined by two-way communication in which social and emotional support is offered. Supportive behavior practices are job-related and include praise, problem solving, and listening (Northouse, 2010). The four leadership styles are S1 (directing),

S2 (coaching), S3 (supporting), and S4 (delegating). Each of these four leadership styles requires high and/or low directive and supportive behaviors.

The Situational Leadership II Model also involves the development level of subordinates. Development level is the degree to which employees have the knowledge, commitment, and attitude required to accomplish a task (Blanchard et al., 1985 & Northouse, 2010). Employees can be classified into four levels of development: D1, D2, D3, and D4, from low development to high development. These levels of development are illustrated at the bottom of Image 2. D1 employees are low in their abilities yet high in their commitment. Though they lack the knowledge to do the task, they are excited and have a strong commitment to do it. D2 employees on the other hand have lost some of that initial excitement and therefore have a lower commitment despite having some knowledge. D3 employees have moderate to high knowledge but lack the commitment or the confidence to do the task themselves. D4 employees are high in their knowledge and their commitment. D4 employees are motivated and capable of completing tasks on their own. Employees move throughout their level of development and as such “it is imperative for leaders to be flexible in their leadership behavior (Northouse, 2010, p. 94).

The Hersey-Blanchard Model of Situational Leadership Theory and the Situational Leadership II Model support the idea that an appropriate leadership style should be matched to the employee’s maturity and developmental levels and how they relate to the specific expectations and duties being asked of them. Weyers (2002) further supported this idea in explaining that leadership elasticity requires a leader to be able to change the direction and style of his or her leadership to the situation and individual at

hand. This needed flexibility is due to the changing abilities and levels of confidence in employees (Mazzarella & Smith, 1989, Northouse, 2010). Effective leaders must adapt their leadership styles to meet the needs of their employees.

Situational theory is important to Catholic educational leadership, because it acknowledges that a leader needs to be very meaningful in how he or she develops the maturity of his or her faculty and staff (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976). A Catholic elementary school principal has at least nine classroom teachers, some aides, and many support staff members who he or she must lead. A large staff that varies in age, educational experience, work experience, personality, and work ethic requires the school leader to be cognizant of each staff member's needs and to "adjust his or her leadership style accordingly" (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976, p. 354). Furthermore, "situational leadership reminds us to treat each subordinate differently" based on their knowledge, maturity, and confidence levels (Northouse, 2010, p. 95). Due to the wide variety of employees and stakeholders that Catholic elementary school principals serve, it is necessary for them to acknowledge the different strengths and areas for growth of each and to adjust their expectations and leadership style appropriately.

Situational theory is important to this study, because no two days in Catholic education are ever the same (Peterson, 2016). Throughout a typical day, Catholic elementary school principals are faced with a variety of situations ranging from organizing professional development for faculty members to confronting inappropriate teacher behavior to mediating students' friendship issues. None of these situations are alike and therefore no one leadership style would be appropriate for a Catholic elementary school principal to fully adapt. Rather, elementary school principals are

required to tap into a variety of leadership styles ranging from transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and instructional leadership. “Effective leaders are those who can recognize what employees need and then adapt their own style to meet those needs (Norton, 2010, p. 90). Successful Catholic elementary school principals must be able to identify when each leadership style is appropriate by knowing the needs of the situation and understanding the maturity levels of all those involved.

Situational theory cuts to the heart of the need of Catholic education. For Catholic elementary school principals to survive the many challenges they face while also ensuring the Catholic identity of their schools, they must be able to adjust their leadership style to fit the needs and behaviors of their colleagues, students, and families as well as each unique situation faced (Mulder, 2012). Additionally, principals must be able to adjust their expectations of employees according to employee maturity levels and abilities. Situational Theory allows educational leaders at all levels the ability to “increase their probability of success in working with and through others to accomplish goals” (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976, p. 354).

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated in order to examine the successful leadership qualities of NCEA- identified distinguished Catholic elementary school principals.

1. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as educational leaders?

2. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders?
3. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as managerial leaders?
4. What major 21st century challenges have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced?
5. How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals addressed 21st century challenges?
6. How are the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices?

Limitations

This study was limited to eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals who were part of eight different (arch)dioceses within seven states. The diversity of the NCEA-identified distinguished principals led to a number of factors that could not be controlled. Since the principals were from various dioceses, the Catholic elementary principals had inconsistent access to and training in the area of leadership. The professional development principals had access to was highly dependent on personal choice as well as the direction of their own (arch)diocese superintendent. This historical professional development could have lead to different leadership goals for the principals as it could have caused the principals to place greater emphasis on a variety of academic agendas.

An additional discrepancy existed in the varying amount of experience principals had in their principalship. Principal interviews and surveys could have limited the study in

that principals may not have been fully honest in their responses and may also not have even recognized their areas for growth. The lack of on-site shadow observations could have limited the reliability of the self-surveys. The faculty focus groups could have also served as a limitation in that they may not have felt comfortable voicing their opinions and may not have been fully honest in their responses.

It is also important to note that pastor involvement could have a significant impact on the leadership abilities of principals. Some pastors are much more involved than others which could limit the principal by creating a climate that makes it difficult for them to introduce new initiatives that they may be more than capable of executing.

The small sample size, gender, and location of the principals were also limitations in this study. The research was based off of a sample size of eight principals. The experiences and practices of these eight principals may not fully represent the overall leadership practices of NCEA-identified distinguished leaders. Of the eight participants, two were male and six were female. This discrepancy could have caused gender bias in the results.

An additional limitation existed in the variation in the demographics of the eight schools. The participants of this study worked across eight different states, and they most likely faced different regional and state challenges that are unique to their locations. These differences could have resulted in their need to model different leadership practices and to have varied leadership expectations. Differences in socioeconomic status also acted as a limitation as certain schools had more resources readily available to them than others.

The involvement of the researcher both in Catholic education and as an elementary Catholic school principal could have biased the analysis of the qualitative data. The researcher's opinions of what qualities make up distinguished leadership could have led her to look for examples that support these leadership styles.

Educational Significance of the Study

Although there is a wealth of research in the areas of leadership and Catholic education, very little research focuses on the leadership practices that are necessary for 21st century Catholic elementary school principals to be successful. This research explored the leadership practices of Catholic educational leaders in order to identify the leadership practices most commonly used by elementary Catholic school principals in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Furthermore, this research looked at what leadership qualities are most important to ensuring school success. This information can be used by (arch)dioceses across the country to guide them in the employment of educational leaders as well as the creation of leadership- centered professional development.

Currently there is very little “known about the leadership practices utilized by Catholic school principals and how they use their leadership to address some of the challenges currently facing Catholic schools” (Zamora, 2013, p.15). The sustainability of Catholic elementary schools is dependent on our ability to identify distinguished leadership practices so that we can aide in the identification and development of future distinguished Catholic elementary school principals (Hunt, Oldenski, & Wallace, 2000). The findings from this study can help to identify what leadership practices are essential to distinguished leadership. This information can in turn help hiring committees to identify

qualified candidates who are capable of leading schools successfully despite the increased and constantly changing demands of the position.

Though Catholic educational leaders have always been tasked with a number of responsibilities, the changing world in which we live has significantly multiplied these job expectations. Some of the many increased demands placed on elementary Catholic school leaders include the need to manage major fundraising and endowment campaigns with little to no fundraising experience or support from the (arch)dioceses in which they work. Educational leaders are also constantly faced with the challenge of maintaining a healthy enrollment while keeping tuition costs as minimal as possible. Where completing curriculum by the end of the year was once enough, Catholic educational leaders are now tasked with ensuring that their teachers integrate technology and bring innovative lessons into their classroom curriculum while also going above and beyond the once-accepted end of year academic goals. Finally, Catholic schools have faced a significant decrease in the presence of religious people working in schools. Today only 3.3% of Catholic school faculty members are made up of religious people (McDonald & Schultz, 2011). Due to this lack of religious presence, Catholic educational leaders are called on even more to maintain the spiritual identity of the school's mission by creating, leading, and modeling the spiritual formation of a predominantly lay faculty.

Despite the fact that Catholic educational leaders have been tasked with significantly more leadership expectations, a majority of Catholic elementary school principals still have no additional administrative support due to the financial constraints the Catholic elementary school system faces. As a result, Catholic elementary school

principals are expected to successfully serve as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders.

This study adds to the research on leadership and Catholic education by combining the two fields to help identify the major challenges facing current Catholic elementary school leaders and which leadership practices best lead to the success in meeting these challenges.

“The demands on today’s Catholic school leader require a wide breadth of skill and knowledge”, and this study helps to identify what these are specifically (Educating Catholic School Leaders, n.d.). This research provides superintendents and bishops within a number of (arch)dioceses across the country with valuable information in terms of what leadership qualities are needed from Catholic elementary principals to ensure that the K-8 Catholic school system survives the many challenges the 21st century has generated. A better understanding of necessary Catholic elementary school principal leadership practices can help lead to more effective Catholic elementary schools and school leadership.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been operationalized for this study:

21st Century Challenges: The new and changing problems that require educators of this century to rethink their priorities and how to address them.

Catholic school: Schools that uphold the mission of the Catholic Church in alignment with their own educational mission. Catholic schools may be diocesan, parish, or private.

Diocese (Archdiocese): A region that is governed by a bishop (or archbishop) of the Catholic Church.

Educational institutions: K-8 Catholic educational systems.

Educational leaders: A leader in curriculum design, instruction, and pedagogy as well as the evaluation and supervision of teaching faculty.

Layperson/ Laity: An individual who is not a member of a religious order.

Elementary Schools: Schools that enroll students from grades kindergarten or preschool up to eighth grade.

Leader: A person who sees a vision, takes action toward the vision, and mobilizes others to become partners in pursuing change (Laub, 2004, p. 4).

Leadership: An intentional change process through which leaders and followers, joined by a shared purpose, initiate action to pursue a common vision (Laub, 2004, p. 5).

Managerial Leader: A leader who performs administrative and organizational tasks to maintain the successful running of an organization.

NCEA (National Catholic Educational Association): Professional education organization that acts as a voluntary association of Catholic school educators and institutions.

NCEA Distinguished Principal Award: Annual award presented by NCEA to one elementary school principal per geographic region in order to honor the work of an identified outstanding principal.

Pastor: A priest who manages a parish and its parish school.

Servant leadership: An understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for

the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization” (Laub, 2004, p. 81).

Spiritual Leader: A leader who encourages and supports the faith and moral development of others and who promotes Christian stewardship and religious education.

Transformational leadership: A style of leadership where the leader works with employees to identify the needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change collaboratively with members of the group.

Summary

The role of the Catholic elementary school principal is becoming more and more complex as additional expectations are embedded into the position to meet the needs of the students and the church. In order for the Catholic elementary school system to be successful, leaders must adapt to these changes by providing distinguished leadership to their respective school communities. Though distinguished leaders have been identified, there is a lack of understanding in terms of what leadership practices define distinguished leadership. This understanding is essential to the long-term sustainability of the Catholic elementary school system in order to identify and develop future Catholic elementary school principals.

This study aimed to further explore the leadership practices of NCEA- identified distinguished Catholic elementary school principals in their roles as educational, spiritual, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study further explored what 21st century challenges the NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have faced and how they have addressed them.

Chapter 1 acts as an introduction to the study and clarifies the purpose and educational significance of the study. Chapter 2 introduces a literature review which includes an introduction to leadership theories and the three main roles of the Catholic elementary school principal. Chapter 2 also includes a review on the history of Catholic Education and the role of the Catholic school principal. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology used in this research study. Chapter 4 provides data analysis. Chapter 5 concludes this research study with conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Restatement of the Problem

Catholic elementary school principals serve as managerial, spiritual, and instructional leaders. These three roles bring different expectations and challenges. How distinguished leaders meet the needs of these varying roles is imperative to understanding distinguished Catholic elementary school leadership. Little is known about the leadership styles and qualities of NCEA- identified distinguished elementary school principals and the way they put their leadership styles into practice. Additionally, there is a lack of knowledge in terms of what major 21st century challenges NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have faced and how they have addressed them. There is a need to better understand the specific leadership practices of NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals.

Introduction

Though all educational leaders face significant challenges on a daily basis, Catholic educators face additional challenges than those in the public sectors due to the increased job responsibilities placed on them and the fact that they do not receive any federal funding and have very limited resources. For Catholic education to survive, competent and capable school leaders must be identified and placed in school leadership positions. The current research on Catholic elementary school principal leadership is very limited, yet extremely necessary to ensuring the sustainability of Catholic elementary schools. This chapter explores the leadership role in a very broad sense as well as in relation to the Catholic elementary school principal, particularly in its three

roles as educational leader, spiritual leader, and managerial leader. Additionally, this chapter explores the history and role of Catholic education and the role of the Catholic leader.

Catholic Schools

The history of Catholic education began with the “250-year effort to convert a continent to Christianity” (Walch, 2003, p. 7). Since the sixteenth century missionaries set out to evangelize natives in foreign lands. In this process mission schools were indirectly developed as a means to educate these natives. When colonists arrived in America there was a strong desire from Catholics to ensure that their faith was not lost in the process of Americanization (Walch, 2003, Boland, 2013). In 1792 John Carroll, the first bishop in America, wrote a letter to the Church stressing the “importance of Catholic education as a means of instilling principles that would preserve religious faith” (Walch, 2003, p. 16). Though his plea led to the development of parochial schools, their success was initially inconsistent.

The years between the Civil War and World War II marked a shift in the direction of parochial schools. As a result of different hopes for Catholic education, three models of parochial education developed- the publicly supported parish school, the Americanized Catholic School, and the ethnic Catholic school (Walch, 2003). The Americanized Catholic School set out with the objective of developing a faith-based educational system that would offer a superior education than their public school counterparts (Walch, 2003). It is this model that serves as the model of today’s Catholic schools. Since its development, the Church has consistently defined the mission of the Church and of Catholic education.

The Mission of the Church

The mission of the Church is to evangelize (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). The Catholic school provides a place for evangelization by providing “an atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to our sisters and brothers is the norm, and thanksgiving and worship of our God is cultivated” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p. 266). Catholic education makes a commitment to its students to provide academic excellence within an evangelizing community. “What separates Catholic schools from public and other private schools is the experience of faith within community” (Boland, 2013, p. 519). As such, Catholic educators play a very important role in the educational mission of the Church.

Catholic School Principals

Leading a school in today’s diverse and challenging society is a daunting task. It requires an administrator with unwavering vision, passionate advocacy for his or her school, focus on the bottom line, the ability to prioritize, swift and definite decision making and the skills necessary to communicate those decisions to an often unreceptive audience. Add to these tasks the need to garner the approval and support of the parish priest before any decision can be finalized and you have some idea of the often overwhelming, but equally gratifying, world of the Catholic school administrator (Urbanski, 2013, p. 31).

Catholic school principals must serve as managerial leaders, instructional leaders, and spiritual leaders (Ciriello, 1994, Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, Rieckhoff, 2014). Of these roles, spiritual leadership should permeate through all the actions and decisions

of the Catholic school principal. “For the Catholic school principal, the school is first and foremost a community of faith and a gathering of disciples, and the principal’s role is ministry, a ministry of spiritual leadership exercised in a learning community” (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, p. 3). It is through the role of the spiritual leader that the religious aspect of leadership is modeled, and it is the religious aspect that sets the Catholic school principal apart from his or her public school counterparts (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013). This religious dimension brings additional duties to the Catholic school principal which include “knowing about and making available church documents and other religious resources, providing for spiritual development, being a leader of prayer, creating an environment for religious education, integrating gospel values and other religious principles into the curriculum, and providing services to the parish and civic community” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 35). As part of the religious element of Catholic elementary school leadership, the principal is also required to understand the role he or she plays with the pastor in school leadership.

Pastor- Principal Role

Many Catholic elementary school principals serve as the leaders of parish schools. As such, “the principal is the designated leader of the school, the educational administrator, and the supervisor of the faculty and students. By Canon Law, however, the pastor of the parish remains ultimately responsible for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the entire parish” (Schafer, 2004, p. 234). Though the principal is hired to lead the school and its educational and extracurricular programs, it is ultimately the parish priest who has full control over the school. This unique dynamic can often cause Catholic elementary school principals to feel as if they never have full control of their

leadership duties as they are required by the hierarchical structure to run all decision making through the parish pastor. “This additional layer can result in complications” if the pastor and principal do not have a strong relationship (Urbanski, 2013, p. 31). Thus, the relationship between the parish pastor and the school principal is perhaps the most important factor in determining a school’s ability and potential to be successful as it can both hinder and foster the growth of academic programs and the strength of a school community.

Pastors and principals have different educational backgrounds and often times have different personalities and opinions. These differences can lead to frustrations and misunderstanding if the two leaders do not take ownership of their roles and understanding of their limitations (Urbanski, 2013). When this occurs principals often find themselves feeling ineffective and exhausted. This unfortunately can lead to principals feeling less inspired and motivated to move forward with ideas. When the pastor-principal relationship causes extra work on the principal to push a school forward, the relationship can have a negative effect on a school community. Though the pastor principal relationship can hinder a school community, this unique dynamic also holds the potential to have a powerful impact on a school community if the pastor and principal recognize their differences and serve as support systems to one another.

When a pastor and principal come together in a respectful manner, a “powerful partnership” can form which “can result in a strong and responsive school that is guided by a Catholic ethos and a multi-dimensional vision that can best prepare the school for the demands of the present and the challenges of the future” (Urbanski, 2013, p. 32). Thus, the meaningful collaboration of a pastor and principal can have a significant effect

on the success of a school community. Muronaga and Harada (1999) found that “collaborative interactions enable people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems” (p. 9). Though the pastor and principal often have uniquely different backgrounds in their training and education, their decision to value these differences through collaboration leads to successful parish-school partnerships.

The pastor- principal relationship is a delicate one that can ultimately be the deciding factor on how successful a school principal is, and therefore, how successful a school is. “If the principal and pastor do not have a clear understanding of their own role and the role of the other in the school, then a positive working relationship between these two leaders may be affected; as a result, the education and the formation of the children may also be negatively affected (Schafer, 2004, p. 234). In order to ensure the success of a Catholic elementary school, “the discernment of a shared vision (between the pastor and principal) is crucial for effective governance” (Schafer, 204, p. 242).

Leadership

“As soon as we try to define leadership, we discover that leadership has many different meanings” (Northouse, 2010, p. 2). There are over 200 definitions of leadership that exist today, and each definition carries with it a unique view on the topic (Rost, 1993). According to Bass (2000; 2008) there is no single best definition of leadership as it is entirely dependent on the aspect of leadership and the context of it that is being explored. What is known is that “the effectiveness of a leader is critical to the success of any organization, including schools” (Zamora, 2013, p. 20).

A leader is a person who sees a vision, takes action toward the vision, and mobilizes others to become partners in pursuing change (Laub, 2004, p. 4). According to John Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership Theory, a leader develops through position, permission, production, people development, and pinnacle. Positional leadership is the lowest level of leadership and one that simply comes with a job title. At this position people follow a leader because they have to, whereas at level two, the permission level, people follow the leader because they want to. At this level, relationships are developed which helps leaders to gain the credibility needed to get to level three, the production level. At this level of leadership people follow the leader due to what they have done for the organization. At level three "momentum kicks in... (and) leaders can become change agents" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 8). With the foundations that levels one, two, and three provide, a leader can advance to level four which is people development. It is in this level that people follow the leader as a result of what the leader has invested in them and done for them personally. At the highest level of leadership, the pinnacle level, leadership comes as a result of who the leader is and what the leader represents. "While most people can learn to climb to Levels 1 through 4, Level 5 requires not only effort, skill, and intentionality but also a high level of talent... Level 5 leaders develop people to become Level 4 leaders" and that is the true gift and power of leadership (Maxwell, 2013, p. 27). According to Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership, the higher the level you reach, the more time, energy, and commitment is required of you.

Regardless of the level of leadership an individual is at, there are certain characteristics that admired leaders display (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Honest and

forward- thinking are two highly valued leadership qualities as they encourage trust and hope through a genuine and compassionate approach.

Leadership vs. Management

“Managers do things right, and leaders do the right things” (Bennis, 1989, p. 42).

It is important to distinguish between leaders and managers; though they are often thought to be the same thing. In Leadership: Theory and Practice, Northouse (2010) acknowledges the similarities between leadership and management:

Leadership is a process that is similar in management in many ways. Leadership involves influence, as does management. Leadership entails working with people, which management entails as well. Leadership is concerned with effective goal management, and so is management. In general, many of the functions of management are activities that are consistent with the definition of leadership... But leadership is also different from management. (Northouse, 2010, p. 9)

Managers help to maintain order and consistency, whereas leaders produce change and create vision (Zamora, 2013). Table 1 outlines how managers and leaders differ from one another. It is important to acknowledge that managers often act as leaders and leaders often act as managers and that a healthy balance of both is necessary to the maintenance and growth of any organization (Zamora, 2013). Though managing is very important to the overall production of a company, “a purely management concept of leadership is insufficient for effective leadership” (Hobbie, Convey, & Schuttloffel, 2010, p. 9).

Leadership Theory and Practice

Management Produces Order and Consistency	Leadership Produces Change and Movement
Planning and Budgeting	Establishing Direction
- Establish agendas	- Create a vision
- Set timetables	- Clarify big picture
- Allocate resources	- Set strategies
Organizing and Staffing	Aligning People
- Provide structure	- Communicate goals
- Make job placements	- Seek commitment
- Establish rules and procedures	- Build teams and coalitions
Management Produces Order and Consistency	Leadership Produces Change and Movement
Controlling and Problem Solving	Motivating and Inspiring
- Develop incentives	- Inspire and energize
- Generate creative solutions	- Empower subordinates
- Take corrective action	- Satisfy unmet needs

Source: Northouse, 2010, p. 10

Table 1. Functions of Management and Leadership

The idea of school principals acting as leaders and managers has been around for many years, yet there is needed change within this dynamic duo. Herb (as cited in Caruso, 2003) acknowledged the need for this change when he stated that “schools have existed with good managers for years. Today we need leaders with vision to help shape the new landscape of Catholic education” (p. 48).

Today’s Role of the Catholic School Principal

The role of the school principal is a stressful one, and one that requires numerous roles and responsibilities. Barth (1980) described the breadth of these duties:

The principal is ultimately responsible for almost everything that happens in the school and out. We are responsible for personnel- making sure that employees

are physically present and working to the best of their ability. We are in charge of program- making sure that teachers are teaching what they are supposed to and that children are learning it. We are accountable to parents- making sure that each is given an opportunity to express problems and that those problems are addressed and resolved. We are expected to protect the physical safety of children- making sure that the several hundred lively organisms who leave each morning return, equally lively, in the afternoon.

Over the years, principals have assumed one small additional responsibility after another- responsibility for the safe passage of children from school to home, responsibility for the safe passage of children from home to school, responsibility for making sure the sidewalks are plowed of snow in winter, responsibility for health education, sex education, moral education, responsibility for teaching children to evacuate school buses and to ride their school bikes safely. We have taken on lunch programs, then breakfast programs; responsibility for the physical condition of the furnace, the wiring, the playground equipment. We are now accountable for children's achievement of minimum standards at each grade level, for the growth of children with special needs, of the gifted, and of those who are neither. The principal has become a provider of social services, food services, health care, recreation programs and transportation- with a solid skills education worked in somehow. (pp.4-6)

The Catholic elementary school principal is tasked with additional responsibilities than his or her public school counterparts due to the fact that they are not federally funded. Catholic school principals must ensure the school is following a healthy budget

and must raise money through various fundraisers that they are ultimately in charge of. Additional roles are also placed on the Catholic elementary school principal due to the added religious dimension and the responsibilities that come with it (Peterson, 2016, Sergiovanni, 2006). The religious dimension requires the Catholic elementary school principal to provide spiritual participation to educators and students through shared traditions and experiences. Additionally, the Catholic elementary school principal must ensure that the mission of the school is at the heart of all actions, celebrations, and decisions. Faith-based decision making is a must for the Catholic elementary school principal.

As the role of the Catholic elementary school principal continues to expand to meet the many demands that our 21st century society brings with it, there is greater need to fully understand the role expectations of the Catholic elementary school principal and how these principals can be supported in learning best practices. In 2008 the Creighton University Education Department and the Archdiocese of Omaha's Catholic School Department formed a task force to create a framework for a proposed Catholic school leadership coursework (Hobbie, Convey, & Schuttloffel, 2010, p. 9, Cook & Durrow, 2008). In order to organize the education needed to have a focused Catholic School Leadership Coursework Program, the Task Force first organized the various personal attributes and leadership capabilities of Catholic School Leaders. Figure 1 outlines these attributes and responsibilities. Not only do Catholic elementary school principals need to display strong faith and morals, but they must also be patient, committed, inspirational, and able to delegate. These qualities are so important because their duties are endless.

Figure 3 outlines the overwhelming leadership expectations of the Catholic school leader.

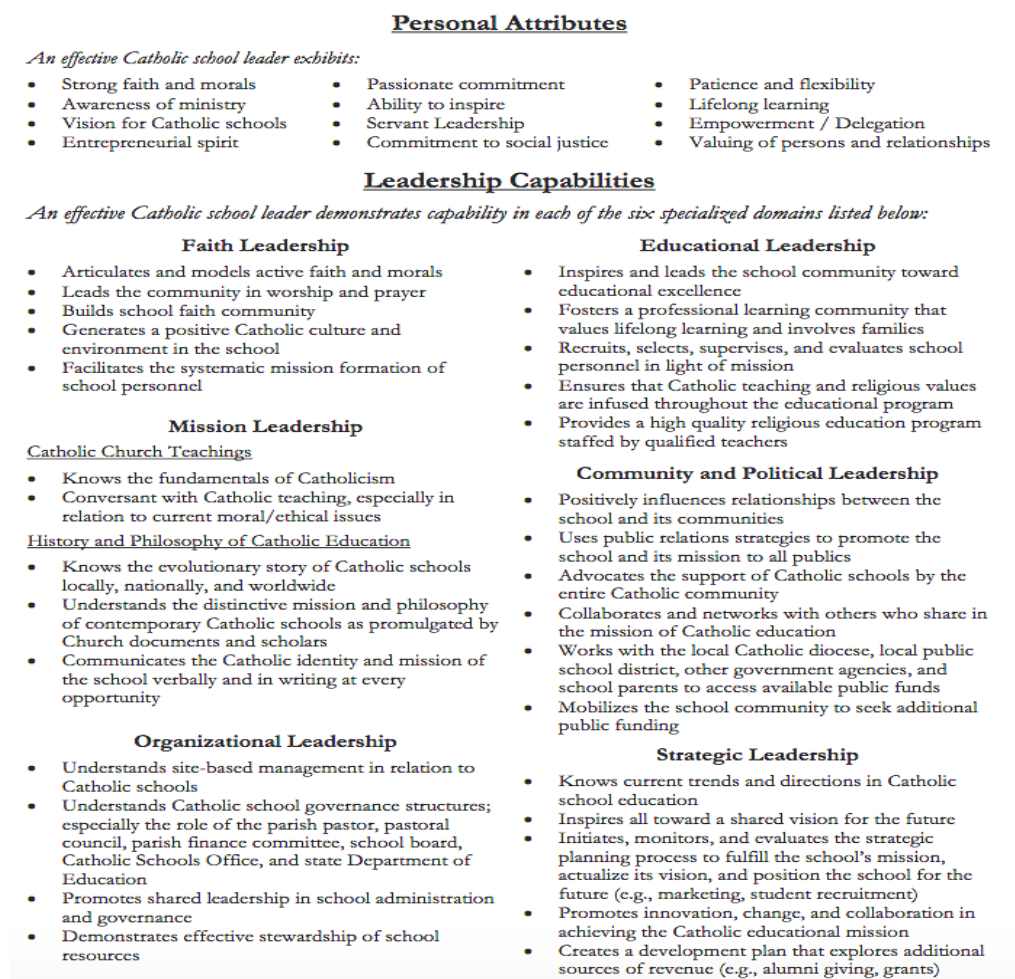


Figure 3. Framework for Developing Catholic School Leaders

Drahmann and Stenger (1989) organized these responsibilities of the Catholic school principal into three main roles as the religious leader, educational leader, and manager. Ciriello (1998) further defined these three roles as the spiritual leader, educational leader, and managerial leader. Knowing that “Catholic values permeate the organizational climate (and) the school fulfills its catechetical mission” when these three roles are present in school leadership, the Creighton University Education Department and the Archdiocese of Omaha’s Catholic School Department formed a task force to create a framework for Catholic school leadership (Hobbie, Convey, & Schuttloffel,

2010, p. 9, Cook & Durrow, 2008). The Task Force proposed a Catholic School Leadership Certificate Coursework which can be seen in Figure 3.

EDU 520	Foundations of Catholic Education	(3 credits)
EDU 602	Fundamentals of Catholicism for Educators	(3 credits)
EDU 603	Leadership in Catholic Schools: The Educational Domain	(1 credit)
EDU 604	Leadership in Catholic Schools: The Spiritual Domain	(1 credit)
EDU 605	Leadership in Catholic Schools: The Managerial Domain	(1 credit)

Figure 4. Catholic School Leadership Certificate Coursework at Creighton University

The Task Force's proposed EDU 603, EDU 604, and EDU 605 courses supported the importance of the Catholic elementary school principal's role as the educational leader, spiritual leader, and managerial leader of his or her school. It is in these three roles that the Catholic elementary school principal must receive formation opportunities in order to be effective and successful.

Catholic Elementary School Principals as Spiritual Leaders

The identity of the elementary Catholic school rests in the spiritual leadership of the Catholic elementary school principal (Earl, 2005). Effective spiritual leaders should develop the faith of their faculty and students while also building community through faith celebrations and community service (Ciriello, 1996, 1998). Spiritual leaders should foster an environment that provides a safe place for the development of the spiritual needs of others (Kaya, 2013). A unique responsibility that the Catholic elementary school principal is faced with in the role as spiritual leader is ensuring that all staff members adhere to their responsibility of bringing spirituality into all areas of their teaching and pedagogy. In order for teachers to be able to confidently bring spirituality into their classrooms, principals must provide spiritual leadership to their faculty that in

turn encourages the development of spiritual leadership in teachers. Ciriello (1998) shared that the effective Catholic elementary school principal encourages, supports, and advances the faith and spiritual growth of its faculty and students. Encouraging the development of spiritual leadership skills is one of the greatest duties of the Catholic elementary school principal (Moreno & Waggoner, 2010). The question remains- how does a principal do this? How does a principal effectively develop spiritual leadership?

A variety of practices exist including attending workshops, adopting a spiritual theme for the year, and assigning a faculty member to take over spiritual leadership (Moreno & Waggoner, 2010). Of all the best practices in spiritual leadership, it is important for a Catholic elementary school principal to remember that the best way to encourage faith development comes through example (Moreno & Waggoner, 2010). Though this may seem simple enough, many lay principals report that they are uncomfortable with the role they play as faith leader due to the overall lack of training they fail to receive for this role (Wallace, 1995).

Recent studies have found that Catholic elementary school principals are lacking in formal theological education and spiritual leadership skills (Schuttloffel, 2003). As a result, it is common for Catholic school leaders to lack a deep understanding of the Catholic faith and its many teachings. Despite the increased urgency for developed spiritual leadership among Catholic elementary school principals, “the practical implications of faith leadership remain problematic” (Neidhart & Lamb, 2010, p. 1).

For laypeople to be effective spiritual leaders, they need to have a strong understanding of Catholic school leadership as well as formal Catholic school leadership training (Wallace, 1998, USCCB, 2005). “Formation is indispensable; without it, the

school will wander further and further away from its objectives” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, p. 79).

Catholic elementary school principals are challenged by the task of maintaining the Catholic identity of their schools as the Catholic Church instructs them to do (Congregation for Catholic Education [CCE], 1977, 1988). Principals as spiritual leaders must keep their actions and decisions grounded in the Catholic faith and doctrine. An effective leader should show “a great deal of flexibility when concerned with the everyday articulation of these values into teaching and learning practices and designs” (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 174). Spiritual leadership is about evangelization and the “reinforcement and animation of these perennially relevant attitudes and values: God loves the world, God dwells among us, God empowers us to make the world worthy of God’s children” (Nicolas, 2013, p. 25).

“It seems that today there are more questions than answers in respect to the (spiritual) leadership dimension of the primary principal’s role (Neidhart & Lamb, 2010, p. 1). Though the principal’s role as spiritual leader has been explored since the 1990’s, there is still a lack of clearly defined expectations, and this is proving to be a major problem for Catholic education (Ciriello, 1993).

Catholic Elementary School Principals as Educational Leaders

Educational leadership is the number one variable linked to effective schools (Rinehart, 2017). Educational leaders are expected to serve as the instructional leaders of the school, and as such they should be “directly involved in the teaching and learning life of the school” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 269). Though educational leadership can be both direct and indirect, elementary Catholic school principals, when compared to their high

school counterparts, are required to be direct in their leadership approach due to the lack of hierarchical support below them (Bendikson, Robinson, Hattie, 2012). Knowing that they are the primary educational leader of the school, it is important for Catholic elementary school principals to be active and present every day as educational leaders.

Principals must be in the classrooms so they can actively see what is being taught to students and how the instruction is being delivered. Educational leaders are expected to dedicate time to observe and evaluate classroom teaching. Furthermore, they must regularly check lesson plans to ensure that appropriate pacing is occurring and that local and state standards are being effectively taught.

The principal in the educational leadership role must facilitate teacher growth (Marks & Printy, 2003). In a study by Blase and Blase (2000) it was found that principals who were successful educational leaders encouraged the professional development of their teachers by providing time for feedback, reflection, and collaboration. “Teachers need to be provided with the training, teaching tools, and the support they need to help all students reach high performance levels” (Lunenburg, 2013, p. 4). Educational leaders need to ensure that teachers are given the time and resources needed to maximize student learning. This expectation of the educational leader role requires the Catholic elementary school principal to remain fully dedicated to his or her own professional development.

Effective educational leaders should use research and data to drive curriculum and instruction (Ciriello, 1996, 1998). Catholic elementary school principals as educational leaders should remain current in the field of education's research and standards so that they are able to pass knowledge down to teachers and ensure that the most current

information is being taught to the students. Principals must foster a school environment where new practices are encouraged and implemented (Lunenburg, 2013). Furthermore, they must ensure these practices and assessments are aligned with the school's instructional goals.

The educational leader must ensure that instructional goals are clear (Lunenburg, 2013). The Catholic elementary school principal as educational leader is required to collaborate with teachers to ensure that all stakeholders understand the instructional goals and have the necessary training and resources to be successful at teaching them. The principal as educational leader is also responsible for working with teachers to ensure that classroom assessments properly reflect the classroom curriculum being taught. They also must ensure that there is an assessment plan in place to monitor student progress and curriculum effectiveness.

There is no doubt that the role of the educational leader is a very important one that directly affects student achievement; however, the time required for Catholic elementary school principals to be effective and successful educational leaders is very limited. Stronge (1988) found that only one-tenth of a principal's time is spent acting as an instructional leader. There are many factors that lead to this lack of focus in this role including lack of time, increased managerial duties, and lack of training (Flath, 1989). "The twenty-first century school leaders are finding it difficult to keep up with the pressures brought to bear on their profession," and simply put, school principals do not have the time to act as the educational leaders they know they should be (Leonard, 2010, p. 1).

Knowing the time constraints, the Catholic elementary school principal faces, Fullan (2014) stated that the principal as the main educational leader could not be the solution and that instead, the principal needs to begin to transition to the role of leading learner so that teachers can be assisted in their professional development (Peterson, 2016). As long as time remains a constraint in their ability to focus on acting as educational leaders, principals must find a new way to successfully serve as an educational leader.

Catholic Elementary School Principals as Managerial Leaders

The managerial role of the Catholic elementary school principal is becoming more and more complex as additional duties are being placed on the school leader (Peterson, 2016). Recent literature suggests that this managerial role should be further studied by looking at the organizational manager versus the administrative manager (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

New research on school principals as organizational managers suggests that the managerial role is more important than ever as “schools that demonstrate academic improvement are more likely to have effective organizational managers” (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 67) Principals can have a tremendous impact on student learning through their managerial role.

Though the role of managerial leader can be frustrating for many Catholic elementary school principals who want to be knee deep in teaching and learning, the reality is that those principals who embrace their managerial leadership role can encourage greater student, teacher, and school outcomes (Horng & Loeb, 2010). By putting greater time and effort into being selective with who they hire, how they manage

the gifts of individual teachers, and how they allocate their limited funds, the Catholic elementary school principals in their managerial role can develop a high-quality school.

Though the role as managerial leader in organizational management activities is very important, principals on average only spend one-fifth of their time on these activities while they spend a third of their time in administrative tasks (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010, Horng & Loeb, 2010). It is here that the problem lies for the Catholic elementary school principal as managerial leader.

It seems as if the Catholic school principal, more than ever, is spending greater time acting as a managerial leader completing administrative duties due to the increased demands placed on this role (Schafer, 2004, Peterson, 2016). Effective managerial leaders must maintain the personnel and financial aspects of school operations as well as adhere to all local, state, and (Arch)diocesan policies (Ciriello, 1996, 1998).

Since Catholic schools run under civil and Church laws, the Catholic elementary school principal must remain educated and current on his or her understanding of each. In order to do this the managerial leader must commit time to attending workshops and reading new legislature. Additionally, school principals must ensure that all school employees follow the necessary rules and policies. This additional management expectation requires an immense amount of time to document the actions and acknowledgments of various employees.

Maintaining personnel in the Catholic school system has become even more demanding of Catholic elementary school principals. In the 1950s only 10% of Catholic school staffs were made up of lay people (Schafer, 2004). In 2011, this number skyrocketed to 93% (Schafer, 2004). The shift from religious to lay people in faculty has

brought increased hiring needs and demands. Where those in religious orders would remain committed to a position for a minimal salary, lay people are constantly moving around to look for salary and benefit increases. Not only are principals looking to hire more frequently than before, but they are also expected to provide more training to employees on pertinent legislation that affects lay people.

The Catholic elementary school principal is also faced with an increased financial responsibility in the managerial role. Principals are required to know more about responsible financial planning as well as how to plan, implement, and manage successful fundraising campaigns (Ciriello, 1998, Baxter, 2012). Suddenly Catholic elementary school principals are expected to produce balanced budgets with new line items for marketing and advancement that their former colleagues never had to worry about.

The managerial role of the Catholic elementary school principal has become one that is defined by duties that take the educational leader out of the classroom and into the principal's office. The managerial leader as an organizational manager can have a tremendous impact on the success of the school and student learning; however, the managerial leader as an administrative manager has placed additional burdens on the Catholic elementary school principal. In turn, these burdens get in the way of the success of the Catholic elementary school principal.

Needs of Catholic Education

In 2001, a study conducted by NASSP found that “not enough time, too much paperwork, and inadequate financial resources were major problems for principals, having been mentioned as impediments by 70.3 percent, 69 percent, and 50.8 percent of the principals” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 39). Over a decade later, in 2013, Nuzzi, Holter,

and Frabutt published the Notre Dame Study of U.S. Catholic Elementary School Principals. The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand the needs of U.S. Catholic primary school principals. This research study was the first nationwide survey of Catholic elementary school principals, and it helped to establish the current challenges that these educational leaders are facing. 1,685 Catholic school principals participated by answering online survey questions. Data revealed that principals have many needs, with the top five being enrollment management, financial management, development, marketing, and capital improvements. The study found that principals face a major challenge in their “need to maintain, stabilize, increase, or grow enrollment in today’s Catholic schools” (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, p. 23). Enrollment has a direct and necessary effect on the school budget. Every student brings in money that is then directed to salaries, programs, and resources. As a result, there is an immediate need to retain students and develop recruitment practices. Principal participants of this study identified many patterns when describing the financial challenges they face. These patterns include “finances linked to a specific need area, maintaining affordability, (reviewing the) gap between tuition and actual cost to educate, and economy” (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, p. 30). Addressing the increasing financial needs of schools is essential to school success. This need was further discussed by participants in their acknowledgment that development is an additional area in which they are challenged.

“As it relates to Catholic schools’ broad paradigmatic approach to matters financial, principals encouraged a shift in mentality from fundraising to development” (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, p. 33). In order to create a meaningful approach in fundraising, development directors were identified as a personnel need that could help to

professionalize the way schools go about meeting their financial needs. In this role schools have dedicated staff members who can promote the school and create relationships with community members and organizations. This need also ties into the identified need for increased marketing. Catholic elementary schools need to better market their triumphs and successes in an attempt to increase enrollment. The need for marketing was a double-edged sword to principal participants as it requires finances that are not available yet it is needed in order to bring in these finances through increased enrollment. The final need identified in this study by principal participants was the need for capital improvements. “Maintaining ‘aging,’ ‘dated’ buildings is an ongoing challenge” (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013, p. 36). Updating and modernizing schools is a constant worry identified by principal participants not only due to the safety concerns they bring but also the need to be visually appealing to prospective families. Principals shared that capital improvements are often focused on specific areas such as roof repairs that often bring unknown secondary repair needs with them.

The Notre Dame Study of U.S. Catholic Elementary Principals (2013) identified the main challenges Catholic elementary school principals face. Though different, each of the five major themes revolved around the many financial needs of a school. To be successful in their roles as school leaders, Catholic elementary school principals identified the need to focus on enrollment and marketing as ways to bring in additional funds through increased enrollment and increased gifts from donors and community organizations.

Leadership Styles

A variety of leadership styles are used by successful Catholic elementary school principals in their roles as spiritual leaders, educational leaders, and managerial leaders. Various qualities of transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and instructional leadership will be discussed as they pertain to Catholic educational leadership.

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership was first introduced in 1978 by James MacGregor Burns and was defined as a leadership approach that brings about change and enhances the morale and performance of employees. In 1985 Bernard M. Bass expanded on Burns' work by defining four main categories of transformational leadership: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders inspire their colleagues to work collaboratively to achieve a common goal which is oftentimes what Catholic elementary school principals find themselves doing as they work towards achieving the school's mission. "The transformational leader creates a vision for the future of an organization and builds trust with his or her followers and collaborates with them in order to accomplish the set-forth vision" (Zamora, 2013, p. 36). Transformational leaders are needed in Catholic schools in order to help to continue to move Catholic education into the future. In order to do this, Catholic elementary school principals must inspire their faculty. Transformational leadership offers "the ability to tap higher depths of human potential and to produce levels of performance that are beyond human expectations" (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 80).

In a mixed-methods study, Hauserman and Stick (2013) found that highly transformational principals encouraged the leadership development of all their staff members. Additionally, they worked collaboratively with staff in order to increase the level of support to the school as well as to continue to define and expand on the school's vision. These leaders involved teachers when questions arose, and they constantly reflected on their leadership style and practice.

Schools undergoing change are in need of transformational principals. Transformational leadership sets out to improve an organization by collaborating with various stakeholders to identify and solve problems (Marks & Printy, 2003). This deepened engagement with others “creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse, 2010, p. 172). As schools are faced with unique 21st century challenges, Catholic elementary school principals will need to increase their collaboration with and support of their colleagues, and it is through transformational leadership that they will be able to help others to reach their full potential (Norton, 2010).

Servant leadership. “A servant leader focuses on the needs of followers and helps them to become more knowledgeable, more free, more autonomous, and more like servants themselves. They enrich others by their presence (Northouse, 2010, p. 385). Helping others lies at the heart of servant leadership and was first introduced by Robert Greenleaf in 1970 in his work “The Servant as Leader”. In his work Greenleaf stated the following:

The Servant-Leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to

lead... The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (1977: 7)

Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) further developed the idea of servant leadership by defining its eight main characteristics: empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship. Servant leaders do not put themselves first (Schafer, 2005). Servant leaders are empathetic, active listeners, unconditionally accepting of others, and genuine motivators (Norton, 2010). These qualities align with the mission of the Catholic Church. Throughout the Church teachings there is evidence that we are called to put others first and the role of the Catholic educational leader is no different. In the roles of spiritual leader, educational leader, and managerial leader, the Catholic elementary school principal is called to put the spiritual, academic, and personal well-being of faculty and students first. Servant leadership calls on individuals to be humble and courageous (Kiersch, C., & Peters, J., 2017).

Authentic leadership. Authentic leadership is rooted in the “authenticity of leaders and their leadership,” or in other words, in leadership that is “genuine and ‘real’” (Northouse, 2010, p. 205). This leadership is defined by honest, genuine, and trustworthy qualities. There are four main aspects of authentic leadership: self-awareness, a moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Northouse, 2010). Together these four components make up the heart of authentic leadership.

Northouse (2010) identified that there is no single accepted definition of authentic leadership among scholars and as such, is discussed using three different viewpoints: intrapersonal, developmental, and interpersonal.

Defined from an intrapersonal perspective, authentic leadership focuses closely on the leader and what goes on within the leader. From the (developmental) perspective, authentic leadership is viewed as something that can be nurtured in a leader, rather than as a fixed trait. (The interpersonal) perspective emphasizes that leadership is relational, created by leaders and follower. (pp. 208-209)

Regardless of the perspective Walumbwa and associates (2008) found four components that form the foundation for theories of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Kiersch, C., & Peters, J., 2017, Northouse, 2010). “Self-awareness includes reflecting on your core values, identity, emotions, motives, and goals” (Norton, 2010, p. 217). Authentic leaders are aware of who they are. Authentic leadership is values and moral based (Northouse, 2010). Because authentic leaders rely on their personal moral beliefs and compass, they are able to make difficult decisions for others. This ability is also supported through balanced processing that allows them to “analyze information objectively and explore other people’s opinions” (Northouse, 2010, p. 218). Through relational transparency, authentic leaders share their true selves with others by “communicating openly and being real in relationships with others” (Northouse, 2010, p. 219).

George (2003) further studied the characteristics of authentic leaders by studying the attitudes and practices of 125 successful leaders. Through this study George found

that authentic leaders exhibit five main characteristics: (1) they understand their purpose, (2) they have strong values about the right thing to do, (3) they establish trusting relationships with others, (4) they demonstrate self-discipline and act on their values, and (5) they are passionate about their mission. “In his interviews, George found that authentic leaders have a real sense of purpose. They know what they are about and where they are going” (Northouse, 2010, p. 212). This sense of purpose leads to an excitement, passion, and genuine concern for what they are doing. Their strong understanding of their value system helps authentic leaders remain loyal to their moral beliefs in difficult decisions. George also found that authentic leaders are successful through their establishing connections with others and their self-discipline in remaining focused. Finally, George found that the development of compassion is critical to their authentic leadership, because it is through compassion that individuals “learn to be authentic” (George, 2003, p. 40).

In their roles as spiritual leaders, Catholic elementary school principals must have a strong self-awareness of their own faith and an openness to exploring this faith and developing it in others. Authentic leadership shares a moral component with transformational and servant leadership. Doing what is best for others while balancing processes is of the utmost importance to authentic leaders. Catholic elementary school principals often strive to be authentic leaders as these leaders create and embody trust in all they do (Zamora, 2013).

Instructional Leadership. The idea of instructional leadership was first introduced in the early 1980s when researchers found a relationship between those principals who stressed academic leadership with effective schools (Brookover &

Lezotte, 1982). Instructional leadership is an academically-focused leadership that aims to improve teaching and learning. Instructional leadership practices are reflected in the decisions and actions of principals that are focused around student learning (Jenkins, 2009). Strong instructional leaders have the ability to lead major academic growth as well as foster collaboration and professional development among faculty members.

Effective instructional leadership practices include being visibly present, strong communicators, resource providers as well as instructional resources (Jenkins, 2009). Furthermore, successful instructional leaders should always be up-to-date in their knowledge of assessment, curriculum, and instruction (DuFour, 2002). An important aspect of instructional leadership is that it must be direct and indirect (Sergiovanni, 2006). Instructional leaders impact student learning by fostering an environment where teacher learning takes place. Instructional leaders provide opportunities for the professional growth of teachers.

In their role as educational leaders, Catholic elementary school principals must display qualities of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is very important to student success, yet principals only devote one-tenth of their time to this type of leadership due to the amount of managerial tasks they must complete (Stronge, 1988). There is no doubt that Catholic elementary school principals have a duty to demonstrate instructional leadership as Canon Law states that Catholic schools must offer the same if not better academic programs than their public school counterparts (Canon 806). “Principals must be instructional leaders who are directly involved in the teaching and learning life of the school” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 269). In order for Catholic Schools to

compete with public schools, educational leaders must place part of their leadership emphasis on the development and constant evaluation of the curriculum.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the life experiences (personal and educational) of eight distinguished elementary Catholic school principals formally recognized by NCEA through its Distinguished Principal Award. The study sought to identify their leadership practices and how they were demonstrated in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study sought to identify the major 21st century challenges that the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced and how they addressed them. Finally, this study sought to identify how the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices.

Research Design

Case study research “contributes to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena,” and it allows us to understand “complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2014, p. 4). A multiple embedded case study was used to explore qualitative data and to better answer each research question. Currently there is a lack of knowledge in terms of which leadership practices define distinguished Catholic elementary school principal leadership. Case study research “offers insight and illuminates meanings,” and can help to begin to answer these unknowns (Creswell, 1998, p. 41). Case study research is ideal in trying to answer the research questions, because

case study research includes direct observations of what is being studied as well as interviews with those involved (Yin, 2014).

Eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals were interviewed over the phone or through an online survey. “Interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants’ experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic” (Turner, 2010, p. 754). Knowing that interviews, when combined with other data collection points, can help to lead to strong analyses, two forms of data collection were used in this research study (Turner, 2010).

Primary data sources included questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups pertaining to each NCEA Distinguished Principal. Qualitative data was first collected via electronic questionnaires that were sent to the eight principals. These questions helped the researcher to learn about the personal and educational backgrounds of the principals.

Additional data was collected via four survey interviews with each of the eight NCEA distinguished Catholic elementary principals. The four surveys aimed to gain data in the areas of Spiritual Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Managerial Leadership, and 21st Century Challenges. Interview questions were designed to have standardized open-ended interviews. By asking the same questions to all eight participants in a way that encouraged open-ended responses, the researcher was able to get more detailed responses from the participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Turner, 2010). Additional data was gathered through teacher focus groups and informal follow-up interviews with school principals. The combined qualitative data gathered from these eight case studies led to more compelling evidence due to the additional data points (Herriott & Firestone, 1983, Yin, 2014).

Research Setting

The settings of this study included eight schools throughout America where the eight distinguished Catholic elementary principals worked. Schools represented eight (arch)diocese over seven states. All schools are registered with NCEA.

Population and Sample

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership practices of NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals. Purposeful sampling was used in this research study so that the researcher could “intentionally select individuals...to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). The purposeful sampling and interviewing of eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals brought “information-rich cases (that) would illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Each year NCEA recognizes twelve principals throughout the United States for their distinguished leadership in the role of a Catholic elementary school principal. Eight former NCEA Distinguished Principal Award recipients were chosen to be part of this research study after a process of screening was used by the researcher (Yin, 2014). In order to gather current data, participants were screened based on the following criteria:

1. Did the principal receive NCEA’s Distinguished Principal Award?
2. Is the distinguished principal still currently working in the same school he or she was working at when he or she was originally honored with the award?

Twelve NCEA-distinguished Catholic elementary school principals working throughout the United States were identified after the screening process as potential

participants for this research study. Potential participants were emailed a letter (Appendix A). Nine potential participants confirmed their willingness to be part of this research study. Eight of these principals completed the questionnaires and interview questions.

At each school a focus group was made up of the faculty and staff who currently work with the NCEA distinguished Catholic elementary school principal. All faculty members were invited to be part of the focus group. The researcher gathered data from the focus group in one of three ways: in person, via Skype, or via an online survey. The researcher used open-ended questions to encourage the start of an open discussion with the focus group members. Knowing that participants could easily get off topic, the researcher was prepared to ask follow-up questions in order to ensure that needed information could be extracted (Creswell, 2007).

Data Collection

The researcher received the required authorization from the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board. Once the researcher received approval, she sent a letter (Appendix A) to each of the eight NCEA distinguished elementary school principals. This letter described the study and invited them to be participants in the research study via a consent form. The description of the study explained how data was collected for the study and asked for approval to conduct a faculty focus group. After one week the researcher followed up with the principals to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. Once this was confirmed the researcher sent an electronic Initial Principal Questionnaire (Appendix B). This questionnaire allowed the researcher to gain

important background information about the eight distinguished leaders in terms of their education and family experiences.

After initial questionnaires were completed, the researcher sent out a second email with electronic surveys. Principals were given the option to preview the questions prior to an in person, Skype or phone interview. They were also given the option to complete the survey questions via the electronic forms with follow-up phone calls. Each form was focused on gaining data in regards to their leadership practices as a spiritual leader (Appendix C), an instructional leader (Appendix D), and a managerial leader (Appendix E). Additionally, principals received an electronic survey that was focused on gaining data in regards to the 21st century challenges they face (Appendix F). Finally, the researcher sent electronic surveys to the faculty focus groups to complete or to use as a preview before the in-person or Skype interviews (Appendix G). These interview questions allowed the researcher to further explore the leadership practices of the distinguished principals.

Strong case studies should bring in as many data sources as possible (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) recommends that four principles should be followed when collecting data: multiple sources of evidence should be used, a case study database should be created, a chain of evidence should be maintained, and special caution should be used when incorporating electronic data sources.

The primary data sources used for this research study were principal interviews and faculty focus group interviews. The researcher interviewed each principal either in-person, through Skype, or through an electronic form. Faculty members from each school were asked to be part of a faculty focus group. This group was asked to meet in

person, via Skype, or through an electronic form to gain further understanding of distinguished leadership practices and to strengthen the reliability of the data gathered from the principal interview and observations.

The researcher created a case study database that organizes and documents data (Yin, 2014). This database contains all interview and observation notes. All archival documents that the researcher was given permission to include were also organized in this case study database.

Data was collected over a five-month period.

Instrumentation

A pre-questionnaire and interviews were set up with each principal participant. Additionally, a focus group at each school was created. Interview questions consisted of open-ended questions that helped to determine leadership practices displayed by the NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals in terms of their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, these interview questions introduced the researcher to the 21st century challenges the principal participants face and how they manage these challenges.

The following experts made up the Validation Panel:

Validation Panel Member	Position
Dr. Patricia Mitchell	Chair, Department of Leadership Studies School of Education University of San Francisco
Dr. Doreen Jones	Former Professor, Catholic Educational Leadership School of Education University of San Francisco
Dr. Melanie Morey	Associate Superintendent of Governance Office of Catholic Identity Assessment and Formation

	Archdiocese of San Francisco
Mrs. Carol Grewal	Principal, Former NCEA Voting Committee Member St. Brendan Catholic School Archdiocese of San Francisco

The Validation Panel Committee was asked to review the proposed questions using the Interview Validation Rubric (Appendix G). All feedback received was taken into account and necessary adjustments were made to strengthen the content validity. Finalized questions were pilot tested with a non-participant Catholic elementary school principal.

Data Analysis

Initial data was collected from an electronic Principal Questionnaire. Additional data was gathered in person or electronically through Principal Interviews. All in-person interviews were recorded if given permission and were transcribed. Principals received these transcripts for validation and approval. Any participant additions and/or edits were made. Transcripts were coded and analyzed for common themes.

To gather additional qualitative data, faculty focus groups interviews were conducted. Data was collected via Focus Group Google Forms. Data was coded to distinguish the common leadership practices used by Catholic elementary school principals as well as any common themes brought up by principals and/or teachers.

All interviews were collated into one document titled “Principal Leadership Interviews.” These were stored in a secure location in the researcher’s home as well as on a password-protected Google drive.

The following questions asked on the electronic questionnaire will go towards answering research question six (How are the two NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices?):

1. What do you consider your leadership strengths to be?
2. What do you consider your leadership areas for growth to be?
3. What is your definition of effective leadership?
4. Do you consider your leadership style to be effective with those you interact with such as a) the pastor, b) the faculty and staff, c) the students, d) the parents, and e) school board members?
5. Please give an example of how your leadership style has been effective with each of the shareholders you interact with: a) pastor, b) the faculty & staff, c) the students, d) parents, and e) school board members.
6. What educational experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
7. What family experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
8. What personal experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
9. What professional experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
10. What factors have contributed to the leadership style that you utilize, in general?

11. In what ways has the Department of Catholic Schools in your respective (arch)diocese supported your leadership development?

12. What leadership practices do you consider to be most important to your effectiveness as a Catholic elementary school principal?

Additionally, a comparison of the coding and analysis of the Principal Interview Questions was used to answer Research Question Six.

After completing the initial Principal Questionnaire, the researcher interviewed each principal. The following interview questions will go towards answering Research Question One (How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals acted as instructional leaders?):

1. What does “Instructional Leadership” mean to you? Specifically, what do you perceive its components to be? (Principal Interview Question)
2. How do you support classroom teaching? (Principal Interview Question)
3. How do you support student learning? (Principal Interview Question)
4. How do you evaluate classroom instruction? (Principal Interview Question)
5. How do you remain up-to-date in your knowledge of curriculum? (Principal Interview Question)
6. How do you evaluate the rigor of your school's academic programs? (Principal Interview Question)
7. How does your principal act as an Instructional Leader? (Focus Group Question)

The following interview questions will go towards answering Research Question Two (How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals acted as spiritual leaders?):

1. What does “Spiritual Leadership” mean to you? Specifically, what do you perceive its components to be? (Principal Interview Question)
2. How do you model spiritual leadership in your school? (Principal Interview Question)
3. How does your spiritual leadership impact the Catholic identity of your school’s mission? (Principal Interview Question)
4. How do you build the Catholic faith community at your school? (Principal Interview Question)
5. How do you nurture faith formation in your faculty? (Principal Interview Question)
6. How do you nurture faith formation in your students? (Principal Interview Question)
7. How does your principal act as a Spiritual Leader? (Focus Group Question)

The following interview questions will go towards answering Research Question Three (How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals acted as managerial leaders?):

1. What does “Managerial Leadership” mean to you? Specifically, what do you perceive its components to be? (Principal Interview Question)
2. How do you address the many managerial responsibilities within your school as it is? (Principal Interview Question)
3. How do you address the four National Standards regarding their school’s OPERATIONAL VITALITY:(a) Long-term financial/fiscal planning (b) Published compliance policies for expectations, responsibilities, and

accountability (c) Long-term planning regarding facilities, equipment, & technology Institutional advancement plans? (Principal Interview Question)

4. How do you adhere to the rules and regulations placed on you by the government? (Principal Interview Question)
5. How do you adhere to the rules and regulations placed on you by the (Arch)Diocese? (Principal Interview Question)
6. How do you ensure that your school is safe? (Principal Interview Question)
7. How does your principal act as a Managerial Leader? (Focus Group Question)

The following interview questions will go towards answering Research Question Four (What major 21st century challenges have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals confronted?):

1. What challenges are you currently facing as a 21st century Catholic elementary school principal? (Principal Interview Question)

The following interview questions will go towards answering Research Question Five (How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals addressed 21st century challenges?):

1. How have you effectively managed these 21st century challenges? (Principal Interview Question)
2. What support/ resources do you need in order to effectively manage the 21st century challenges? (Principal Interview Question)
3. How does your principal respond to 21st century challenges? (Focus Group Question)

Ethical Considerations

The guidelines set forth by the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board were strictly followed. Participation in this study was voluntary, and confidentiality was ensured for all principal and teacher participants. Those participants who were interviewed were asked permission to record the interviews. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms. All information collected as part of this research study remained confidential and was not shared with anyone outside the parameters of this study.

Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure for the validity of the Interview Questions, a panel of experts on Catholic education and principal leadership reviewed and approved the Principal Interview Questions.

Creswell (2013) explains that reliability requires consistency. In order to ensure for reliability between the two principal interviews, the researcher used the same Principal Interview Questions. The researcher conducted an interview test with an elementary school principal prior to collecting data. In order to increase reliability of the case study, a chain of evidence was maintained.

Patton (2002) stated that data triangulation is a form of triangulation that can increase the validity of research findings. Data triangulation was used in this research study through the use of initial principal questionnaires, open-ended principal interviews, and open-ended faculty focus group interviews.

In order to ensure for the validity of the analysis of data, the researcher asked a local Catholic elementary school principal to code the interview of one principal

participant. Coding was compared with that of the researcher. Discrepancies were discussed and agreed upon to ensure for the validity of research analysis.

Researcher's Profile

My Catholic faith is at the core of who I am. I was blessed to be raised by two parents who greatly value their Catholic faith. It didn't matter where we were or how busy our weekends were- without question we attended mass as a family every Sunday. My dad was one of ten children raised in a large Italian Catholic family, and my mom was one of four kids raised in a German-Irish Catholic family. My grandmother, who served as my moral and faith exemplar, lived down the street from me. Her faith was her rock, and she was my rock, so by default I naturally embraced her faith and love for Catholicism. My grandma made being Catholic a gift and she brought every major life event or decision back to having faith in God.

As a product of the Archdiocese of San Francisco's K-12 Catholic school system, I am very committed to giving back to Catholic education. I believe that a Catholic education is unique in that it is able to offer its students a foundation built on strong morals and unwavering faith. In a time when many Catholic schools are struggling to keep their doors open I believe it is imperative to ensure that there are strong leaders to guide the schools through these times.

Currently I am the principal of Holy Name School in San Francisco. I have loved being part of the K-8 school system again after being a high school administrator for five years and a junior high teacher before that. Part of the reason I am so interested in Catholic leadership is because I have the unique experience of working in the elementary and secondary schools as both a teacher and administrator. I am very aware of the

significantly different needs of both systems yet the same issues that plague all educators.

I would love nothing more than to help bridge the gap between the two systems to better prepare our students for high school, college, and their professional and adult lives.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the life experiences (personal and educational) of eight distinguished elementary Catholic school principals formally recognized by NCEA through its Distinguished Principal Award. The study sought to identify their leadership practices and how they were demonstrated in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study sought to identify the major 21st century challenges that the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced and how they addressed them. Finally, this study sought to identify how the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices.

Principals Profiles and School Demographics

To ensure anonymity principals are referred to as Principals A-F.

Eight principals participated in this study. Principal participants were chosen based on two criteria: 1.) they received the NCEA Distinguished Principal Award and 2.) they were still acting as principal at the same school that they were at when they won the award. The eight principals represented seven states as two principals work in California. Of the eight participants, two were male and six were female. The mean age of principal participants was 58.5 years. The mean years of principal experience was 21.9 years. All eight principal participants received bachelor degrees. Five principal participants received master's degrees and two principal participants hold doctoral degrees. All

principal participants received a Catholic education at some point in their educational career. No principals were members of a religious order. To ensure anonymity principals are referred to as Principals A-F (See Table 2).

Table 2 Principal Demographics

Principal	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Age	56	68	63	50	45	63	60	63
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
Years as Principal	20	37	20	18	18	19	24	19
Years at current school	33	29	20	6	13	29	24	19
Highest Level of Education	Ed.D. Catholic Educational Leadership	BA and Teaching Credential, Pupil Personnel Credential	Masters-Administration and Supervision	M.ED.-Educational Administration	Ed.D.-Educational Leadership	Masters-Special Education. Educational Leadership	Masters-Elementary School Leadership	Masters-Elementary and Middle School Administration/Principalship
Attended Catholic School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious Order	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

All principal participants lead schools within the United States. To ensure anonymity, schools are referred to as School A-F and align with the letter of the principal. Table 3 provides information about each principal's school. This information provides an overview of the school's enrollment and demographic information about the student population.

Table 3 School Demographics

School	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Location (Region of the United States)	Pacific Northwest Region	Pacific Northwest Region	Atlantic Southern Region	West South Central Southern Region	West North Central Midwest Region	Atlantic Southern Region	West South Central Southern Region	West North Central Midwest Region
Grade Level	PreK-8	K-8	PreK-8	PreK-8	K-8	PreK-8	PreK-6th	PreK-8
Enrollment	250	269	258	810	554	315	632	275
% White	69%	63%	60%	60%	86%	13%	95%	N/A
% Asian	16%	8%	5%	N/A	N/A	27%	4%	N/A
% Hispanic	3%	22%	17%	30%	8%	12%	N/A	N/A
% African American	1%	4%	7%	N/A	1%	38%	<1%	N/A
% Multiracial	N/A	24%	N/A	N/A	N/A	10%	<1%	N/A
% Native American	N/A	1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Other	11%	N/A	11%	10%	5%	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Catholic	60%	78%	85%	90%	95%	73%	84%	N/A

Principal A

Principal A has worked at her school for 33 years serving as a teacher for 13 years and principal for the last 20 years. She is married with one daughter. Principal A received her doctorate in Catholic Educational Leadership.

Principal A defines effective leadership as working with others through continuous learning and growth for the greater good of the school community. She believes her leadership style has been impacted through her educational, family, and personal experiences. Coming from a close Italian family, Principal A was always taught to work as a team and to work for the greater good. She credits her extensive

education as having provided her many opportunities to work closely with inspirational leaders. The Sisters of Mercy had a major impact on her leadership style as they inspired her during her high school years to make social change. The Salesian Sisters, through their role in her professional life, also had an impact on her understanding of being a spiritual leader of a Catholic organization. Principal A is thankful to a former superintendent for teaching her a great deal about professionalism and detail to tasks. Principal A feels very fortunate that she has had a number of role models throughout her educational career. She incorporates the practices that she feels are right as she travels through her experiences.

Principal A believes many factors have contributed to the leadership style that she utilizes. Her recognition that teaching is a vocation and not a job helps her to focus on her desire to create a strong community of like minded individuals. Principal A is always looking at new and improved methods and strategies which she wants to inspire those around her to also care about.

School A

School A is located in the Pacific Northwest Region and serves 250 students in grades pre-K through eighth grade. 60% of the student body is Catholic. 69% of students are Caucasian, 16% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 1% African American, and 11% identify as Other.

School A opened in September of 1925 as a parish Grammar School for Boys. Early leadership included Salesian Brothers and Priests and Presentation Sisters. School A went coeducational in 1950 when the all girls school closed and there was a need for a Catholic school for female students. This change brought Salesian Sisters to the area.

Shortly after there was a strong influx of Chinese immigrants. This demographic change marked an ongoing shift in demographics.

School A's mission and philosophy follow the teachings of Saint John Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Order. The school philosophy reflects the school effort to educate and develop problem solvers, responsible citizens, active Christians, involved individuals, successful life-long learners and effective communicators.

Principal B

Principal B has worked at her school for 28 years as its principal.

Principal B defines effective leadership as the collaborative use of people's skills and talents for a successful learning environment for children to enjoy learning, to succeed, and most importantly to know that they are loved by those around them and by their God. She believes her leadership style has been impacted through her educational, family, and personal experiences. Principal B's parents and grandparents modeled leadership through their positions and service to others. Both of her parents were very involved in the community they lived in. The loss of her sister as a young wife and mother impacted Principal B's leadership as it reminded her of the presence of God. Her leadership was also affected by her own struggles in school as she had a difficult time academically and socially in elementary school. These struggles impacted her leadership in how she treats her students and how she empathizes with those who live through similar struggles. In her professional life she was affected by leaders that she worked for who struggled in delegating and asking for help. Principal B was blessed to work with some magnificent leaders who reminded her what was really important in her role and how to go about achieving a loving environment that is Spirit filled.

Principal B believes that many factors have contributed to the leadership style that she utilizes. She credits her Faith as the major factor that she relies on in her leadership. She believes her people skills, laughter, and patience have also helped to mold her leadership style. Principal B is proud that she has the ability to ask questions without shame.

School B

School B is located in the Pacific Northwest Region and serves 269 students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. 78% of the student body is Catholic. 63% of students are Caucasian, 22% Hispanic, 4% African American, 8% Asian, 1% Native American, and 24% are Multiracial.

School B opened in 1956 as a parish school. The opening was a milestone as it required an appeal to the city against an ordinance that limited the building of private schools in an area where students could be accommodated in public schools. This victory was not just for School B but for the rights of private education everywhere. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary led the school until the first lay principal was hired in 1972.

Over the past decade school enrollment has been affected by economic conditions and the popularity of public charter schools in the area. School B remains committed to its ministry of the parish in nurturing and challenging their students to develop life skills for spiritual, academic, social, and physical growth.

Principal C

Principal C has served as the school principal for 20 years. Principal C defines effective leadership as leading by example. In the Catholic school she believes the most

important thing an effective leader brings to his or her school is the power of personal witness to the Faith. She believes her leadership style has been impacted through her educational, family, and personal experiences. Principal C has spent most of her life in Catholic education as a K-12 and college student, teacher, and principal. All of the educational experiences- positive and negative- have affected her daily practice as a school leader as she has taken these experiences into her daily decision making.

Principal C is a wife, a mom, a grandma, and a long term caretaker for her mother. She believes all of these experiences have given her a better understanding of the “human condition” and all of its frailties and challenges. These family experiences have given her more patience and compassion in her leadership role. Professionally Principal C had a phenomenal principal who she worked with for 12 years prior to accepting a principal role. She credits this principal’s leadership as her model of what to do in her early years as principal. Principal C found the professional and spiritual development opportunities offered through the Office of Catholic Schools of her Diocese to be very helpful and well designed. She has taken much coursework, particularly in advanced catechesis, which has allowed her to form cohorts with educators and continue in her learning. Her Master’s coursework in Administration and Supervision was very helpful to her in practical applications and understanding school law, accounting, budgeting, and human resources.

Principal C believes that one main factors has contributed to the leadership style she utilizes. Her core principle lies in her unwavering belief that God is good, that His mercy is endless, and that everything and everyone He created deserves respect and

dignity. She believes if you put your life and the life of those you care for in His hands, that everything will fall into place.

School C

School C is located in the Atlantic Southern Region and serves 258 students in grades pre-K through eighth grade. 85% of the student body is Catholic. 60% of students are Caucasian, 17% Hispanic, 7% African American, 5% Asian, and 11% identify as Other.

School C began in 1912 when a group of dedicated women known as the “Ladies Seminarian Society” began gathering children and educating them in the Catholic faith in a cobbler’s shop. In 1924 Dominican Sisters and Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart began teaching religious education to parish children. It wasn’t until 1952, the same year that the Sisters of Saint Joseph joined the community, that an official school was built for children. In 1966 the then pastor and principal established a “Home and School Association” to bring teachers and parents together for the good of the children and the good of the parish.

School C is dedicated to forming children intellectually and spiritually through the use of Church teachings and traditions.

Principal D

Principal D has served as the principal of School D for 18 years. Principal D defines effective leadership as having respect for the people you work with, being open to suggestions, and not being afraid to make a decision. He believes his leadership style has been impacted through his educational, family, and personal experiences. Principal D has had great mentors throughout his years as principal. His wife is a Catholic educator,

and her perspective has been instrumental in his work as a principal. Her shared insight has helped Principal D to be open to the needs of the staff. Prior to his career in education, Principal D was a serving line officer in an Air Defense Artillery platoon in Desert Storm. His experience leading troops into combat and the perspective he gained from his sergeants has impacted his leadership style as it was these experiences that were his greatest lessons.

Principal D believes that many factors have contributed to the leadership style that he utilizes. The guiding factor of his leadership lies in his belief that you can learn something everyday. Principal D believes the daily experiences and the work he does with his staff help him to grow constantly while having a cumulative effect to his daily leadership.

School D

School D is located in the West South Central Southern Region and serves 810 students in grades pre-K through eighth grade. 90% of the student body is Catholic. 60% of students are Caucasian, 30% Hispanic, and 10% identify as Other. School D opened in 1955.

School D is committed to educating students in their Catholic faith while developing their academic potential. School D nurtures the whole person- physically, socially, and morally. The school philosophy is based upon a call to serve and respond to the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social, and physical needs of their students. School D has strong community involvement with local organizations. The parents are very committed to helping to fundraise throughout the year in order to provide over 25 programs to the school each year.

Principal E

Principal E has served as principal for 18 years.

Principal E defines effective leadership as setting a vision for the direction of the school and helping to keep everyone focused on that vision regardless of the many challenges that might arise. He believes his leadership style has been impacted through his educational, family, and personal experiences. Throughout his doctoral studies he met several great principals and superintendents. Their shared stories about their leadership experiences and practices benefitted him in his principal role. Specifically, Principal E worked with a principal who was acknowledged as a Distinguished Principal by both NCEA and NAESP when he was a teacher. He learned a great deal from this leader and these lessons have stayed with him in his own principalship. Principal E believes his experience playing on sports teams also had a significant impact on his leadership development as he was often placed in leadership roles. These experiences taught him at an early age the importance of leading by example as well as the impact encouraging others can have on group dynamics.

Principal E believes that many factors have contributed to the leadership style that he utilizes. A major factor that has contributed to his leadership is the community that he works for. This community is very demanding with extremely high expectations. Most parents are business owners, physicians, and attorneys. This community has taught him to work effectively and efficiently while supporting the teachers. He has also had to adjust his leadership style to keep some of these parents at bay so that he and his faculty can focus on their jobs.

School E

School E is located in West North Central Midwest Region and serves 554 students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. 95% of the student body is Catholic. 86% of students are Caucasian, 8% Hispanic, 1% African American, and 5% identify as Other.

School E opened in 1924 as a parish school. In 2010 School E was selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. School E is unique in that it is a tithing parish. The school does not charge a tuition as it receives 30% of the parish income.

School E is committed to the education of the whole child. School E strives to help students recognize their potential as life-long learners and important members of a greater society.

Principal F

Principal F has served as principal for 19 years.

Principal F defines effective leadership as following Jesus' model of servant leadership. Effective leadership begins with a passion to serve others that unites and inspires others to join in the mission and build community. She believes her leadership style has been impacted through her educational, family, and personal experiences. Principal F's family had a strong faith life that encouraged the faith formation she received in school. Principal F attended a Catholic high school and this formed the foundation of her faith and influenced the value she places in prayer. This faith in prayer was further developed when she was in the 4th grade. Her father was diagnosed with a brain tumor and was only expected to live for a few days; however, he lived for an

additional 8 years. This miracle served as a reminder of the power of prayer and the impact of a faith community. Serving in a small Catholic school opened many opportunities to Principal F to assume leadership roles early in her career. These opportunities assisted Principal F in forming good relational, instructional, communication, and managerial and data analysis skills.

Principal F believes that many factors have contributed to the leadership style that she utilizes. One experience that strongly contributed to her leadership style was that of working under two principals. After working for a principal who served as a mentor and was trusting and supportive, Principal F worked for a not so positive leader. The experience solidified her belief in the effectiveness and benefit of a collaborative and supportive leadership style.

School F

School F is located in South Atlantic Southern Region and serves 315 students in grades pre-K through eighth grade. 73% of the student body is Catholic. 38% of students are African American, 27% Asian, 13% Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, and 10% identify as Multiracial.

School F opened in 1954 as a parish school. It was originally staffed by the Sisters of Mercy, and the school still reflects this charism daily through its motto of Reverence, Respect, and Responsibility. Community, service, and social justice embody the school's heritage and are embedded in daily student life. School F's unique location at the intersection of three main interstate highways allows it to attract students from ten counties and twenty-one parishes in the area.

School F has a longstanding history of academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment. It is a three-time National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. School F's faculty is especially committed to their professional learning- 36% have conducted presentations at local, state, and national conventions. School F embraces its mission of educating the whole child: body, mind, and soul in its Christ-centered environment.

Principal G

Principal G has served as principal for 24 years.

Principal G defines effective leadership as working hard to fulfill the mission. She believes her leadership style has been impacted through her educational, family, and personal experiences. As the oldest of seven siblings, Principal G served as a leader from a young age. Principal G believes a happy family life keeps her grounded. Often her husband and two children serve as her sounding board. Her grandchildren help to remind her why her role is important. Prior to beginning her principalship at her school, Principal G served as the Assistant Principal for three years. The training she received under the previous principal helped her to gain the confidence to take on the role of principal. Principal G has been involved in NCEA through serving on the Department of Elementary Executive Committee for 12 years. This experience has allowed her to form a wonderful network of educators that she collaborates with and learns from.

Principal G believes her faith is the greatest factor that has contributed to the leadership style that she utilizes. She tries to be a role model of the Catholic faith with everyone she works with, and she incorporates prayer in her daily role as decision maker and leader.

School G

School G is located in West South Central Southern Region and serves 646 students in grades pre-K through sixth grade.

The Sisters of Mercy helped to open School G in 1949 as a parish school that served K- 4th grade students. Each year one grade level and one staff member was added until the school served kindergarten through eighth grade students. Since its opening School G has continued to expand as an art room, computer lab, junior high wing, preschool, and administrative room were added. In 1974 grades seven and eight were discontinued.

School G is committed to teaching and living the Catholic doctrines and values. It hopes to promote moral behavior while providing a quality education that integrates religious truth and values. In order to prepare students for life in today's church and society, School G provides a strong, basic, and contemporary curriculum with special emphasis on the instruction and formation of Catholic Christianity beliefs, values, and traditions. All classroom teachers are practicing Catholics who partner with parents in their role of educational ministry. Faculty members are challenged to ongoing professional and spiritual growth.

Principal H

Principal H has served as principal for 19 years.

Principal H defines effective leadership as believing in lifelong learning that all people regardless of age are capable of succeeding in. She believes her leadership style has been impacted through her educational, family, and personal experiences. Principal H was an RA in college which strengthened her leadership skills and taught her how to be

assertive. As the only girl in a family of four boys, Principal H had a unique experience as the “princess” of the house. The professional experiences that Principal H believes impacted her leadership style the most was making mistakes. Principal H believes the factor of learning what works best for her staff and stakeholders has contributed the most to the leadership style that she utilizes.

School H

School H is located in West North Central Midwest and serves 275 students in grades pre-K through eighth grade.

School H opened in 1949. For the school’s first 23 years the Precious Blood Sisters taught the students. In 1971 the Sisters of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary came to the school and stayed for 18 years. Today’s teaching staff continues the early established commitment to the teaching profession.

School H strives to provide a meaningful educational experience for all students in a faith-filled and supportive environment. Human dignity and justice are embedded into lessons to encourage students to be active participants in our global society. School H is committed to teaching Catholic Christian values, meeting individual student needs, encouraging the development of self-discipline and self-esteem, and maintaining open lines of communication with families. School H provides its students with an environment that is safe, accepting, and caring.

Summary

The backgrounds of the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals were unique in their education and leadership practices. Each principal felt a calling to Catholic education which ultimately led them to a

principalship. All principals shared a deep commitment to their vocation of Catholic leadership and their daily desire to model the life of Jesus. All principals were heartfelt in their joy of working with children and how much they hoped to instill in their students a strong understanding of the Catholic faith.

Research Questions and Findings

Data was collected through initial principal interviews, principal interviews, and faculty focus group interviews. All principal interviews were collected or transcribed using a Google Form that automatically emailed participants a copy of their responses. Participants were asked to email me with any inaccuracies or changes. None of the eight participants requested an edit to their original responses. Data was used to answer the following six research questions that were introduced in Chapter One.

1. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as educational leaders?
2. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders?
3. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as managerial leaders?
4. What major 21st century challenges have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced?
5. How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals addressed 21st century challenges?
6. How are the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices?

The following are the answers to these research questions.

Research Question 1

How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as instructional leaders?

To understand how NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as instructional leaders, the researcher interviewed principal participants. Participants were first asked to identify what instructional leadership meant to them and how they support classroom teaching and student learning. Participants were asked to reflect on how they evaluate classroom instruction. Finally, principal participants were asked how they remain up-to-date in their knowledge of curriculum and how they evaluate the rigor of their school's academic programs. Additionally, faculty focus groups were asked to share the effective instructional leadership practices of their respective principals. Analysis of these question items led to themes being identified. Distinguished Principals and members of their faculty identified instructional leadership practices.

Definition of Instructional Leadership. All principal participants were asked what instructional leadership meant to them, and what they perceived its components to be. Using coding, patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases that were used to describe instructional leadership.

Principal A defined instructional leadership as overseeing that there is forward progress while ensuring the school stays contemporary in topics and trends. Similarly, Principal B described instructional leadership as ensuring that instruction is set for all children to succeed and that all curriculum standards are met. Principal C stated that

instructional leadership has many components including “providing materials, professional development, and environments necessary for truly effective instruction”. As an instructional leader, Principal C finds it important to always teach a class as it “keeps (her) grounded in the daily routine of the school, reasonable in (her) timeline expectations, and allows (her) to model practical teaching.” Principal D agreed that leading by example is an important component to instructional leadership as is consistent communication, delegation, and inviting a collaborative approach. Principal E believed that vision was key to instructional leadership in that effective instructional leaders should begin with a vision that they help to form and get others onboard with. Principal F expressed that instructional leadership requires a leader to take full administrative responsibility for carrying out the instructional program of the school while involving students, teachers, and parents. Principal G explained that instructional leadership requires a principal to ensure all students receive a quality academic education. Important components to ensuring this include knowing the curriculum, choosing and supporting the best materials, providing access to professional development, and spending time in the classroom. Like Principal E, Principal H expressed her belief that instructional leadership involves establishing a vision that is supported through shared leadership, assessment of data, and the monitoring of curriculum.

After disaggregating the data that examined the phrases used to define instructional leadership, three main themes were identified- collaboration, professional development, and curricular leadership. Principals A, B, D, F, and G all spoke of the importance of collaboration with key stakeholders in effective instructional leadership. According to Principal B “having a lot of collaboration” is crucial to

ensuring instruction is set and that all children are capable of being successful. Principals B, C, D, and G each discussed professional development as a major component of effective instructional leadership. Principal G explained that it is important for instructional leaders to ensure teachers “have access to appropriate professional development to help them be the best teachers they can be.”

The most common theme that was discussed in regards to instructional leadership was the importance of providing curricular leadership. Principals A, B, C, D, F, G, and H each spoke of an instructional leader’s responsibility to monitor instruction and curriculum. Overseeing the quality of the instructional program was defined as the major component of effective instructional leadership. A majority of principals went on to describe the many duties that come with this responsibility. Principal D explained these well:

I balance my duties as curriculum leader and administrator though clear and consistent communication, leading by example, delegating, and inviting a collaborative approach when appropriate... We have created grade and subject level teams that evaluate curriculum and student achievement... We explore, evaluate, and then bring in materials, tools and training for our teachers to enhance instruction and learning for the children at all levels. Through frequent classroom observations and regular meetings... we are continually improving our ability to analyze student performance data and instructional processes.

Principal H acknowledged that the oversight of instruction was “certainly one of the most important hats we wear as principals.” She also acknowledged that it is the one she actually spends the least amount of time on because there are “simply too many other

demands of (her) time.” The overwhelming duties of an instructional leader was supported through the eleven different data points that encompassed the many components of effective instructional leadership as defined by the eight principal participants in this study: leader of curriculum effectiveness (Principals A, B, C, D, F, G, H), leader of collaboration (Principals A, B, D, F, G), leader of professional development (Principals B, C, D, G), leader of leadership team (Principals A, D, H), leader of data analysis (Principals D, H), leader by example (Principals C, D), leader of vision setting and development (Principals E, H), leader of classroom observations (Principals D, G), leader of deciding materials (Principal G), leader of strong communication (Principal G), leader of creating opportunities (Principal A).

Classroom Teaching. All principal participants were asked how they support classroom teaching. Patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases that were used to describe leadership practices used in supporting classroom teaching. The main theme identified was the importance of providing time for professional development both in and out of school. Principals A, C, D, E, F, G and H discussed the importance of encouraging professional development in their effectiveness as an instructional leader. Principal E stated, “my main responsibility or job is to support teachers in any way I can. Anything I need to do to provide them with the instructional materials or professional development that they need, I will.” Principal F spoke of the benefits to the school when professional development is done as a faculty- “teachers (support) one another in implementing these strategies and students respond positively to them.” Professional Development is often costly. Principal A spoke to the importance of including professional development in the annual budget. Each year Principal A ensures

there is enough money for all teachers to engage in three professional development opportunities of their choosing. Though she acknowledged they might not always use this, she did speak to the importance of having it so it is always available to the staff. The faculty of School A acknowledged her commitment to professional development and stated that they are never told no if they ask to take part in professional development.

Not only did principal participants acknowledge the importance of providing professional development opportunities to their faculty members, but they also spoke to the importance of providing staff with resources and materials. Principals A, B, E, G, and H all agreed that providing whatever teachers need is critical to supporting classroom teaching. Principal H shared that she always tries to provide teachers with the materials they need in order to be successful in reaching strong, identified learning targets. For Principal A, time is a resource she always tries to offer her faculty. “I am a big fan of creating doable schedules with lots of prep time and time when they can work with colleagues, because I think teaching can become a vacuum where...they don’t grow their techniques or their studies.”

The last theme identified in supporting classroom teaching was the budget. All of the principal participants acknowledged the desire to be able to provide their faculty with what they need to be successful. Principals A, C, and E spoke to the importance of the budget in being able to support classroom teaching. To encourage professional development at the master degree level, Principal C offers to pay for one class a year per teacher. She acknowledged that “budgeting for new textbook series, as well as enhancements to the classrooms and school buildings, as well as many activities” is a

joint effort between administration and the PTO “to show appreciation for the teachers and staff” and to maintain morale.

All principal participants shared leadership practices of how they support classroom teaching. These practices include the meaningful creation of schedules (Principals A, E), encouraging grade level leaders (Principals A, C), visiting classrooms (Principals C, G), making time for conversations (Principals A, E), hiring specialty positions (Principals A, C), reviewing lesson plans (Principal C), using data to meet needs (Principal C), setting goals with teachers (Principal D), and completing teacher evaluations (Principal G).

Student Learning. All principal participants were asked how they support student learning. Over fifteen leadership practices were identified by the eight principal participants when describing how they support student learning. Six of these practices- encouraging collaboration, developing professional learning communities (PLCs), identifying student needs, differentiating learning, meaningful scheduling, providing specialized staff, providing a strong faculty- were identified as the main themes. Principals A, D, and H identified collaboration and the importance of developing PLCs as effective leadership practices that support student learning. Principal A developed a PLC by first establishing a Leadership Team with one representative from each grade level. “We meet once a week for an hour and half.... we talk about what kind of direction we want the kids to go in (and) what academic shifts we are noticing.” She credits the ongoing conversations and the data-driven culture to the fact that people are vested and proud of the time they have put into the conversations. Principal H also encourages a culture of collaboration through her PLC. “We collaborate a lot about our practice as a

learning community; what needs we have identified in our students (and) how to help them be successful learners.” The conversations that are encouraged through collaboration and PLCs result in meaningful meetings and conferences about student learning. Principal D shared that “the meetings, conferences, and trainings we hold are an investment of time that has proven to be most worthwhile and beneficial for children.”

The eight principal participants of the study spoke to the importance of identifying student needs (Principals B, D, and H), differentiating learning (Principals A, D, F, and H), and providing specialized staff to provide the identified learning needs (Principals A, D, and E). Principal A discussed how the combination of qualified teachers, a resource specialist, a counselor, and teaching assistants allow School A to better support student learning. With qualified staff, School A is able to have regular conversations that result in data-based decision making. This decision making includes action plans on how to best support the students of School A. Principal E also discussed how in order to better support classroom instruction, he brought in additional staff members:

I have really beefed up the support staff. We have about eight now. We have an inclusive education coordinator which I am very happy to offer. Two people work part-time in an accelerated program to ensure the students who need the extra challenge receive it. This year we hired an academic interventionist who looks through test scores and works with students who might not get the support others do because they are more middle of the road students.

Principal participants acknowledged that often times these three themes of identifying student needs, differentiating learning, and providing specialized staff go

hand in hand. Principal D spoke to this correlation by acknowledging how data-driven decision making led to the development of a new program with specialized staff.

Principal D reported that School D has made “great progress in the use of standardized testing and internal assessment data to help all learners excel.” School D uses the data they gather to help identify specific needs of their students with learning deficiencies, special needs, and exceptional abilities. This data helped Principal D to identify the gaps that existed in the school and how School D could better differentiate learning to support the identified student needs:

We have two counselors who review education plans, coordinate with parents, and assist teachers in implementing these plans. We place students in ability groups in middle school math and language arts that are based upon achievement tests, grades, teacher recommendations and quarterly benchmark assessments. This provides students with opportunities to receive instruction based on their needs. We have assigned math and language arts chairs to better organize and assess curriculum alignment across all grade levels. In addition to these internal programs, we have just completed construction of our new Student Learning Center. This facility has classrooms for students who have special needs and/or IEPs. The Learning Center staff ensures that students receive those accommodations. The center also includes classrooms for our dyslexia program, Take Flight, where students receive daily therapy to address reading issues. We also have a classroom for students who need additional challenges and/or enrichment, and a staff member who is using the most recent techniques and resources for the children. We have instituted an aggressive training program

which encourages teachers to be aware of current research to provide our students with differentiated instruction. Teachers are expected to set instructional goals that will help them reach these goals. It is a true team approach to educating our students.

Principal D's development of a specific program to accommodate the learning needs of elementary students and the development needs of teachers is a program that is unique to Catholic elementary education, and one that serves as a model to how best to support student learning.

An additional theme that was identified by Principals A, F, and G was the impact of meaningful scheduling on student learning. Principal G explained how she plans the schedule in order to optimize learning and limit the interruptions to teaching time.

Principal A also discussed how it was her goal to cut down on the many wasted minutes in the classroom by encouraging her teachers to teach "bell to bell." Principal F agreed that instructional minutes should always be followed in order to support student learning.

Additional leadership practices identified by principal participants as effective to supporting student learning include listening to students (Principals E, F), analyzing data (Principals C, D), offering 1:1 technology programs (Principal G), making sure teachers have what they need (Principal B), offering professional development (Principal G), communicating through a weekly newsletter (Principal G), providing study hall/ homework help (Principal F), providing after school enrichment opportunities (Principal F), and consistent evaluation of curriculum (Principal D).

Classroom Instruction. All principal participants were asked how they evaluate classroom instruction. Though principal participants shared a variety of effective

leadership practices in evaluating classroom instruction, two main themes emerged after disaggregating data. Seven of the eight principal participants shared that they evaluate classroom instruction through formal observations (Principals A, B, C, D, E, G, H) and informal observations (Principals A, B, C, D, E, G, H). Principal D shared that he evaluates classroom observations through frequent classroom observations. These observations provide him with insight to classroom instruction that allows him “to guide those teachers who need to improve and enhance the work of those teachers who are already excellent.” Principal C shared that she tries to visit each classroom once a week. Additionally, School C recently began using an electronic capture of data for formal walkthroughs that is reviewed regularly with teachers. These conversations encourage teacher reflection on best instructional practices. Principal A and B both shared that they are fans of the classroom drop-ins so that they can get in the classroom regularly. Principal A emphasized that for pop-in observations she feels anything under five minutes is unproductive and anything more than ten minutes is excessive. Though she feels ten-minute pop-in evaluations are great, she did acknowledge that she has gained great insight from “cruise-bys” where she just passes through and listens. A strong majority of principal participants shared that the best way to evaluate classroom instruction is to physically go into the classroom to watch and listen.

Additional leadership practices that principal participants shared of how they effectively evaluate classroom instruction include providing oral feedback (Principals A, C, D), reviewing lesson plans (Principals A, B, C), observing highlights (Principals A, E), providing written feedback (Principals A, D), providing support for new teachers (Principals B, D), having formal teacher meetings (Principals C, D), developing grade-

level teams (Principals A, D), managing instructional minutes (Principal A), staffing a technology coordinator to provide tech support (Principal B), requiring self-evaluations on annual goals (Principal C), reviewing standardized tests (Principal C), delegating to an assistant principal (Principal E), watching video observations (Principal E), providing professional development (Principal F), and going on school tours (Principal G).

Knowledge of Curriculum. All principal participants were asked how they remain up-to-date in their knowledge of curriculum. Three main themes- reading, professional development, and colleague relationships- were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices in remaining up-to-date in curriculum. Principals A, B, G, and H shared that they are committed readers. Principal A and G read professional literature and articles available on NCEA's website. An effective leadership practice that Principal B shared was that she tries to focus on one or two of the "newest things out there," and it is these topics that she looks for articles to share with her faculty. Principals A, B, C, E, and G discussed their commitment to professional development in staying up-to-date in their knowledge of curriculum. Principal A said that she looks at any professional development opportunities that are within reason to travel to. Principal G said that she attends conferences so that she can stay current in the area of curriculum. Colleague relationships were reported by Principals A, B, E, F, and H as ways to stay up-to-date in the field of education. Talking with other principals to hear their ideas has helped Principal E to remain current in his knowledge of curriculum. Principal A credited her various committee member colleagues as a professional learning community that allows her to speak openly about education today.

Additional effective leadership practices identified by principal participants to remain up-to-date with curriculum include taking higher education courses (Principals A, C), engaging in professional development offered by the Department/ Office of Catholic Schools (Principal C), hiring someone (Principal E), blogging (Principal E), and taking part in various committees (Principal A).

Rigor of Academic Programs. All principal participants were asked how they evaluate the rigor of their school's academic programs. Patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices in evaluating the rigor of a school's academic program. All principal participants identified standardized tests as a main tool used to assess the rigor of their school's academic programs.

Principal C shared that School C has three standardized testing windows a year. This increase in annual tests has allowed School C to increase their access to useful data on each student. Similarly, School E has been able to gain additional data through IOWA assessments and AIMS Web scores that are used by the interventionist to assess student growth. Principal H shared that she leads her faculty through an intensive evaluation of the reading benchmark in which they go through and analyze the results of each question. This data gives School H "a good indication of where we are and how our students are performing."

Two additional themes of analyzing a variety of data that is not limited to standardized testing (Principals A, C, D, E, F, H) and evaluating high school success rates (Principals A, B, E) were identified. School E regularly communicates with the local high schools to see how former students are progressing post- elementary school. Principals A and B also shared how they keep close relationships with local schools so

that they can always check in on their former students and gain informal feedback and data on their success in the high school transition. Principal F shared how School F reviews and discusses a variety of data, such as failing grade reports, behavior reports, and instructional strategies:

I work with the Data Team to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and to address areas of need. STAR reading, AR, Daily Five, Fountas and Pinell Benchmark Assessment System, and the SST process provide data for student progress monitoring. Disaggregated data by race, poverty level, gender, etc. provide a deeper look at progress across multiple data points. Faculty Council and the Data Team analyze school-wide data to recommend curriculum focus areas and possible professional development to address these needs.

Effective instructional leaders evaluate the rigor of a school's academic program through a collaborative approach of reviewing and disaggregating data.

Additional effective leadership practices that were identified by principal participants to evaluate the rigor of academic programs include receiving parent input (Principals A, B, C), high school honor placement (Principals A, B), evaluation of grades (Principals B, G), high school acceptance rates (Principal A), use of the accreditation process (Principal E), evaluations (Principal F), and submission of weekly lesson plans (Principal F)

Research Question 2

How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders?

To understand how NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders, the researcher interviewed principal participants. Participants were first asked to identify what spiritual leadership meant to them and how they model it in their school. Participants were asked to reflect on how their spiritual leadership impacted the Catholic identity of the school's mission. Finally, principal participants were asked how they build Catholic faith community at their respective schools and how they nurture faith formation in their faculty and students. Additionally, faculty focus groups were asked to share the effective spiritual leadership practices of their respective principals. Analysis of these question items led to themes being identified. Distinguished Principals and members of their faculty identified spiritual leadership practices.

Spiritual Leadership. All principal participants were asked what spiritual leadership meant to them, and what they perceived its components to be. Using coding, patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases that were used to describe spiritual leadership. Principal A believed spiritual leadership begins with being a role model who demonstrates “good ethics, good morals, kindness, and compassion.” She also explained that spiritual leadership consists of integrating the faith throughout the daily structures of the school. Like Principal A, Principal B also believed that spiritual leadership involves providing an environment that models the Christian faith and values. For Principal B “the mission has to be the guiding light of the school,” and the components that support this are teaching the doctrine, providing students with liturgical experiences and opportunities for service, and keeping families informed. When asked what spiritual leadership meant to her, Principal C stated that it should follow the words

of St. Francis who is often quoted as saying “preach often and when necessary use words.” Like Principals A and B, Principal C believed a major component of spiritual leadership is modeling the experience of faith for children. Equally important to her to have effective spiritual leadership is the partnership and collaboration between pastor and principal. Principal E believed that spiritual leadership equated to the principal being the faith leader of the school. He shared that spiritual leadership requires someone to set the spiritual tone of the organization and to bring real life experiences into the conversation. Principal F shared that spiritual leadership brings with it a responsibility to “promote and coordinate religious services and practices in accordance with current Church teachings.” Principal G happily stated that spiritual leadership entails bringing Jesus to staff and students. Principal H shared that spiritual leadership involves nurturing faith so that others “can become the disciples of Christ they are called to be.”

After disaggregating the data that examined the phrases used to define spiritual leadership, two main themes were identified- the importance of providing students with opportunities that nurture their faith and the importance of modeling faith. Principals A, B, C, E, F, G, and H agreed that a key component of effective spiritual leadership is providing students with opportunities to explore and deepen their faith. Principal B recognized the importance of providing opportunities for her students and staff to experience Christian faith rituals and experiences. To her, this importance lies in her desire to help students “realize that Jesus is in their lives all the time.” Like Principal B, Principals A, C, E, F, G, and H provide opportunities for faith development through a variety of ways including teaching doctrine, providing liturgical experiences, offering service opportunities, and organizing prayer services. The importance of providing these

opportunities was summed up by Principal H who stated that these opportunities and experiences encourage faith to be nurtured so that “students can become the disciples of Christ they are called to be.”

Another major theme that was discovered was the important role a spiritual leader plays in modeling faith. Principals A, B, C, and F agreed that their examples helped to set the culture of the school and the expectations for spiritual formation. Principal A discussed how actions always speak louder than words. She stated that “as a Catholic leader you have to talk the talk and walk the walk. As a spiritual leader you have to demonstrate that everyday.” Principal F agreed that as the spiritual leader of the school the principal has a responsibility to “model Catholic values and attitudes in daily interactions with students, parents, and staff members.” The role a spiritual leader plays in the lives of children was not taken lightly by Principal C. “The most powerful witness that children experience is from the adults in their lives, and during the school day that is their teachers and principal.” Principal C recognized the important role her own modeling played in the spiritual leadership of teachers and the indirect impact that it has in the classroom for the students. For Principal B, she strives to make Jesus known to her students through her daily interactions with others.

Additional themes were identified including the importance of the pastor-principal role (Principals C, H) and the value of the parent-school partnership (Principal B, H). Principal C shared that “collaboration with the pastor is absolutely essential in ensuring a vibrant and meaningful spiritual formation for the children in our care.” Principal B agreed with this and stated that often the principal as the spiritual leader not only works with the pastor but acts on behalf of him. As the spiritual leaders of the

school and parish this relationship is integral to strong spiritual leadership. Principal E shared his belief that an effective spiritual leadership practice is incorporating the real world. “To take the real life experience and talk to the kids is important. I talked about my 23-year old nephew's death and the Las Vegas deaths. It helps us to remember what we should be focusing on and what we are as a community.”

Model Spiritual Leadership. All principal participants were asked how they model spiritual leadership. Patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices in modeling spiritual leadership. The major theme identified was that effective modeling of spiritual leadership means you do just that- the daily actions and words of a spiritual leader matter. Principals A, B, C, F, and G all spoke to the importance of this. Principal A explained that you just try to do the best you can. “You show people what your concepts of your mission are, that you are dedicated to your vocation, and that you try to be a good compassionate person.” Principal B also spoke of the important component of owning your faith when you model it. Principal B is not afraid to say that faith is the center of her life, and she often goes over the PA to share this message with her students:

I talk about respect a lot. I always remind them it is the most important thing. It is what is required of us as followers of Jesus. It has to be what leads us.

For a majority of the principal participants, modeling spiritual leadership means you take your role as a spiritual leader seriously and that you are very aware of your words and actions.

Another theme of modeling spiritual leadership that arose was the importance of being a visible and active member of the parish. Principal A explained that as a parish

principal “you are witness to all the life and events of the parish.” As a result, she tries to get as involved in it as possible so that she can be an active part of and in the parish life. Principals B, F, and G agreed and shared their own involvement in practicing their faith for their communities. Principal G shared that she serves as a Eucharistic Minister and attends Mass regularly. She also spends time in the Adoration chapel each week. The physical presence of spiritual leaders in the faith life of the Church matters. The Faculty Focus Groups of each school confirmed the importance of this. All Focus Groups commented on their principals’ commitment to bringing faith alive through their own modeling and compassion shown towards others.

Additional themes of effective modeling of spiritual leadership include leading prayer (Principals C, G), sharing life experiences (Principals B, E), planning retreats for faculty (Principals F, G), maintaining a strong and visible relationship with the pastor (Principals A, B), and providing resources for teachers (Principal B). For Principal E, the most important aspect of modeling spiritual leadership is his sharing of life experiences. He stated that he “does not want kids to think that religions is a bunch of bull so I try to take real life experiences.” He tries to model faith daily through helping students to see what is real and part of life, and he does this by sharing life experiences and “the emotions that go with it.”

Impact of Spiritual Leadership on the Catholic Identity of Mission. All principal participants were asked how their spiritual leadership has impacted the Catholic identity of their schools. Patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that impact the Catholic identity of the school’s mission. One theme was identified. Principals A, C, and E believed that their

spiritual leadership impacted the Catholic identity of the mission by setting the tone of the spiritual culture of the school. Principal C spoke of how her spiritual leadership entails much modeling of Catholic traditions and messages. Through her focus on the Eucharist, Principal C is proud of the mission her “classic Catholic school” honors. Principal E acknowledged that he sets the tone for everything. The tone that is set through the spiritual leader of a principal encourages the establishment of a culture that is unique to every school.

Finally, the theme of recognizing and honoring the traditions of early leaders was stated by Principals A and F. “We really try to stay connected to the Salesian element of our school. We do a Good Morning (Salesian tradition) where we gather in the gym and my assistant principal, who is a nun, leads a morning message or an ethical shared story.” Similarly, Principal F shared that she tries to honor the Sisters of Mercy through the stress on their charism and the annual celebration of Mercy Day. She shared that the meaningful “emphasis on our Mercy charism helped our community connect to our Mercy roots and focused our service around the Corporal Works of Mercy. Through their leadership in honoring the respective orders who helped to establish their schools, Principals A and F preserve and allow for the continued development of the mission as it was originally intended.

Principal E brought a unique interpretation to this interview question having recently lost his twenty three-year old nephew. This life experience at the time of the interview had a significant effect on his ability to answer this question. Principal E discussed how it was interesting to be asked “these types of things, because it is changing. I went through this personal experience. Teachers are seeing a more vulnerable part of me.”

Principal E's honest reflection was his acknowledgment that life experiences play a role in the spiritual leadership of a principal. For Principal E, at a very hard personal point in his life, felt that his vulnerability towards life brought a new dimension to his spiritual leadership and the mission of the school. Principal B, whose unwavering faith is known amongst her faculty, shared that she believes her spiritual leadership in turn provides comfort to those who know her. This comfort helps to foster a culture of respect that is deeply engrained in School B's mission.

Build Catholic Faith Community. All principal participants were asked how they build the Catholic faith community at their schools. Three main themes were identified after examining key words and phrases used by principal participants to describe their leadership practices that effectively build faith communities. Principals A, B, F, G, and H discussed the importance of providing meaningful professional development to their faculty members. Principal H summed up the importance of offering time for professional development to teachers when she stated that by “feeding” our teachers, they in turn “feed” our students. For the teachers to support the faith community of the school, they must constantly be given the opportunity to reflect on and develop their own understanding of the Catholic faith. To Principal B, that time includes providing opportunities that give them the experience of love and peace. Principal participants spoke to how professional development can be offered to teachers in a variety of forms including through workshops, prayer services, and retreats. Principal A stated that building a Catholic Faith Community is a “work in progress” that sometimes requires a leader to mandate certain things such as attending various workshops. Though she acknowledged that often teachers want to participate out of general good will, that

sometimes you need to place an expectation to ensure that the community remains committed in its development. Principal B also shared that she has an expectation that her teachers participate in two to three pieces of faith which can include leading school prayers, reflecting on the various seasons of the church, and reflecting on what it means to be a part of the school's faith life.

Principals B, C, E, F, and G shared their commitment in honoring Catholic traditions and providing these faith opportunities to their students. Principal F summed up the many Catholic traditions that principal participants provide to their students:

Students participate in vibrant worship every Friday and holy days at Mass, during Adoration and various prayer services with family participation like Stations of the Cross, Mary's Way of the Cross, the Divine Chapel, Parents in Prayer, and Scriptural Rosaries. Reconciliation is offered twice a year.

Principal C reiterated the many faith opportunities available to the students of School C. "Our children attend Mass weekly, have the opportunity for Confession twice a week, sacramental preparation, rosary, Adoration, Stations of the Cross and numerous other seasonal opportunities." Principal G shared that all students attend mass twice a week and have the opportunity to visit the adoration chapel regularly. Principal E shared a unique observation that speaks to the importance of providing Catholic traditions that are rooted in the Church's history. Principal E said that coming from Chicago to School E was weird because many practices that were common in Catholic schools were not happening there. "Things like May Crowning and Stations of the Cross were not being done. So we started them up and brought in some of these Catholic traditions to further develop the Catholic identity." Principal B shared that it is most important to provide opportunities

for students to be a part of the faith life so that they see they play a role in it and that they don't forget it starts with them. Through these experiences the mission lives on in the students. These faith opportunities are critical according to Principal B in ensuring that “the mission (doesn’t) die”.

Principals A, B, C, E, and F identified a third theme of the emphasis of prayer. At School F, prayer is an integral part of the school day beginning with Morning Assembly. Principal F explained that “various forms of prayer are offered throughout the day in all classrooms, in the lunchroom, among colleagues, at the end of the school day, at faculty meetings and sporting events.” Principal B ensures that prayer is equally distributed throughout the day and that students are provided with opportunities to lead prayers as well as to join in the reflection of them. Prayer is Catholic tradition that was explicitly mentioned by four principal participants. Through the emphasis on prayer students are provided with the time to stop and reflect on their spiritual and personal experiences. This meaningful devotion to prayer encourages a faith community that prays together.

Additional practices used to build Catholic faith communities were identified. Principals C, G, and and F discussed the importance of providing a strong religious curriculum to help in the spiritual formation of students. Principals E and F discussed how they build their faith communities through shared life experiences. Principal E shared that School E had a number of tragedies over the last couple of years:

We have had five parents die in the last year and a half and four more with advanced stage cancer. We have a teacher who, a month and a half after finding out she had breast cancer, she died. I don’t know how, but we deal with these

tragedies head on, and we talk about them and pray with them... it is unfortunate to experience it all, but it has really brought the community close together.

Often times in Catholic education schools are brought together in community when families experience tragedies. The spiritual leadership provided by principals in times of tragedies can determine just how much a community comes together. Principal E recognized that his faith community has strengthened as a result of their coming together to help families and to pray for them.

Finally, Principals A and F spoke to the power of service projects and the strong effect they have on the faith community. School F has an annual Night of Giving that involves the entire school community (including alumni) in service projects benefitting the homeless, military personnel assigned abroad, cancer patients, seminarians, prisoners, children in shelters, and St. Vincent de Paul store. Providing opportunities to school communities to give back to those in need helps to develop empathy and community.

Nurture Faith Formation in Faculty. All principal participants were asked how they nurture faith formation in their faculty. Patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that nurture the faith formation of school faculties. A major theme was identified by principals A, B, C, F, G, and H who shared that they provide regular catechist training for their teachers. Principal H shared that she provides regular monthly faith formation opportunities. Principal B shared that catechist trainings are important in providing faculty with the information they need to be knowledgeable to share the Catholic faith with students. Principal F offers catechetical formation and faith development at faculty meetings once a month. She shared a variety of resources she uses in developing these opportunities

including using Bishop Barron's Catholicism and Pivotal Players series, bringing in guest speakers, using USCCB resources, and accessing archdiocesan resources. Principal A shared that it can be hard to nurture faith formation "because our faculty is so Catholic and has been part of the school community for so long. Sometimes it is easy to think you are all formed." For this reason, she makes a point to emphasize the ongoing catechist workshops and the importance of staying current with the required Archdiocese certification.

Principals A, F, and C identified the theme of providing opportunities to be involved in Catholic traditions. Principal F shared that "adoration is offered for faculty, staff and students every Friday during Advent and Lent." Additionally, she provides regular prayer services for her faculty. The theme of providing annual faith formation retreats to faculty members was shared by Principals A, F, and G. These principal participants identified the importance of developing a retreat each year to help re-center staff. Principal G likes to begin the school year in this way with an annual retreat for teachers. Additionally, these retreat days provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their faith and what it means to them. Principal A acknowledged that she always tried to encourage retreats in School A throughout the year.

Prayer was identified as a theme by Principals B, E, and G. Principal G provides optional prayer services during Advent and Lent to her teachers after school. Principal G began this in order to further encourage prayer in the daily life of her faculty. The diocese of School E asked principals to provide a regular prayer reflection to teachers. Principal E took the directive and molded it into what works best for his community. In groups of four, faculty meet three times a month to reflect on the Gospel of Matthew.

The faculty then speaks as a collective group once a month to further reflect on the passages and their faith. Principal E has found that this has led to greater participation in shared faith experiences amongst faculty members.

Nurture Faith Formation in Students. All principal participants were asked how they nurture the faith formation of their students. A main theme of providing students with Catholic experiences was identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that nurture the faith formation of students. Principals A, B, C, F, G, and H spoke to the power of providing these Catholic experiences in forming students' spiritual lives. Principal H explained that she assists student faith formation "through prayer, mass, special prayer services, and by inviting them to participate in the faith." Principal F also shared that she provides these Catholic traditions as well as participation in Stations of the Cross, Adoration, the Divine Chapel, and reconciliation. Principal participants agreed that through the regular incorporation of Catholic faith traditions in the daily school life, students are encouraged in their faith journey. Principal C shared her joy of knowing that these experiences help to grow her students in faith:

One of my favorite moments of the day is passing by a classroom in the middle school and hearing eighth graders praying together, sharing their intentions for those prayers and building a community of prayer together in a world where children their age, in the culture outside the school, would never have that moment as part of their daily life together.

Principal A and C also identified a theme of hiring qualified and committed faculty who value their role in modeling faith to their students. Principal C described the special attention she gives in hiring new faculty members. When she interviews teachers

she looks for faculty who are faith- filled and joyous in their sharing of the Faith, as well as living models of the Faith. Principal C explained that her meaningful hiring practices are due to the fact that “the number one factor in nurturing faith formation in children comes from the witness and model provided by the adults in their lives.” Hiring the right people for the job is an important piece to providing faith formation opportunities to students. According to Principal A, “having a faculty and leadership that demonstrates (the) many qualities of being a good Catholic” is crucial in nurturing the faith formation of students.

Principals A, B, E, and G identified the theme of stressing the importance of being a good person. Principal A explained that students learn how to be good citizens and good human beings. Developing ethics and good character are key components to nurturing the faith formation of her students. In developing this character Principal B constantly reminds students of their many talents and gifts. Principal E finds many ways to constantly remind students of what it means to live like Jesus. One unique leadership practice that Principal E shared was that he writes personal messages on each students’ report card. Through simple messages like “Remember to treat others how you would want them to treat you” and “learn as much as you can about God,” Principal E encourages the faith formation of his students.

Research Question 3

How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as managerial leaders?

To understand how NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as managerial leaders, the researcher interviewed principal participants.

Participants were first asked to identify what managerial leadership meant to them and how they address the many managerial responsibilities within their schools. They were then asked how they address the National Standards regarding operational vitality. Finally, principal participants were asked how they adhere to the many rules and regulations placed on them by the government and by the Archdiocese and how they ensure that the school is safe.

Distinguished Principals and members of their faculty identified various managerial leadership practices.

Managerial Leadership- All principal participants were asked what managerial leadership meant to them and what they perceived its components to be. Using coding, patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases that were used to describe managerial leadership.

Principal A laughed as she defined managerial leadership as “impossible.” She shared how the components of managerial leadership are not focused:

One day you are talking about instruction and the next day you are talking about spirituality. Then you are talking about the psychological situations of a student.

And then one minute you are the plumber or the Terminix person. It's just kind of a crazy job that (requires) you to have to triage what's crucial.

Principal A explained that managerial leadership requires a leader to be good at prioritizing and delegating. Principal B defined managerial leadership as managing people and resources. She defined its main components to be people, facilities, finances, budgeting, and strategic plans. Principal C shared that managerial leadership is one of the broadest aspects of a principalship. Like Principal A, Principal C shared a number of

duties that often come with managerial leadership including the management of facilities, human resources, hiring and dismissing, the daily schedule of events for a school, and the operations and job descriptions for support staff. In trying to sum up the components of managerial leadership, Principal C said that it includes “all the aspects of school life that I have oversight of.” Principal D described the components of managerial leadership to include the various ways that a leader interacts and works collaboratively with the school community. These include working with various school groups, holding regular meetings, and reviewing the calendar. Principal E described managerial leadership as “making sure all of the pieces of the puzzle are in the right places.” Principal F stated that a managerial leader is responsible for the day-to-day operations of an organization:

The principal supervises and evaluates all staff, giving feedback in a timely and professional manner. The principal creates and implements the vision of the school among the members of the school community.

Principal G described that a major component of managerial leadership is working in committees to ensure everything is done well. This in turn requires a managerial leader to trust the people on these committees. Principal H described the role of managerial leader to be time consuming due to the majority of managerial tasks that are required of her.

After disaggregating the data that examined the phrases used to define managerial leadership, one main theme was identified. Principal C described this theme perfectly when she stated that managerial leadership is one of the broadest aspects of a principalship in that “there are innumerable... aspects to this part of the leadership model.” Principal A confirmed the tremendous amount of responsibilities that encompass

the managerial leadership role when she said that the job description “is ridiculous and enormous and not at all focused.” The wide variety of responses from the eight principal participants confirmed this lack of focus. Principal participants perceived the components of managerial leadership to include maintaining facilities (Principals B, C), managing budgets and financing (Principal B, H), developing strategic plans (Principal B), developing daily schedules (Principal C), managing various school groups (Principal D), and participating in a variety of weekly meetings (Principal G). Principals identified many components of managerial leadership that could be related to the roles and responsibilities often associated with human resources. These include hiring and dismissing employees (Principal C), creating job descriptions (Principal C), maintaining files (Principal E), hearing staff concerns (Principal A), and managing people (Principals B, F, K). Principal participants also identified managing classroom observations and providing feedback (Principal H), managing spiritual development (Principal B), managing the psychological needs of students (Principal B), managing curriculum and instruction (Principals B, H), and creating and implementing a vision (Principal F) as components of managerial leadership.

Principal H shared that “as managerial leader, the principal is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school.” Due to the tremendous duties that this entails, Principal A explained that an effective principal, in the managerial role, needs to be good at prioritizing, able to recognize what they have no control over, able to ask for help, and able to delegate. These skills help leaders to effectively manage the many managerial duties that arise each day.

Address Managerial Responsibilities. All principal participants were asked how they address the many managerial responsibilities within their schools. Three main themes were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that address the many managerial responsibilities they face. Principals A, B, C, E, G, and H described the importance of delegation in being an effective managerial leader. Principal A explained that delegation helps to balance the many responsibilities placed on the managerial leader. “There's too much so you need to learn to delegate, learn to motivate and get all people involved...You find people who are suited to support you.” Principal E shared that when he hires new faculty members to join School E’s community that he looks for what applicants can bring to the community to better support the school and principal needs. Principal C acknowledged the challenge of delegating by sharing that this has been an area for growth for her throughout her twenty years of being a principal. Through her experience she has recognized that to be an effective leader you have to delegate or else you are “spread too thin and you really don’t do anything as well as you might wish.” Being able to delegate is a crucial leadership practice in being an effective managerial leader. The more comfortable a principal can be in delegating responsibilities the more time they will have to focus on their other duties.

The second theme identified by Principals C, D, F, and G was the importance of having an extended administrative team. Principal C shared that over the past ten years she has expanded her administrative staff to include a development/admissions director, a preschool director and an assistant principal. She explained that “the addition of this staff, with clearly defined job descriptions and staffed with just the right people, has been invaluable in ensuring the forward progress of the school in all areas. This has allowed

me better focus in the classroom and development of the faculty.” Principal G confirmed the support an extended administrative staff is able to provide in helping with the many managerial duties she faces:

I have a finance manager who sits on my finance committee. We work on budgets and oversee the finances of the school regularly. I have a Development Director who sits on my Marketing committee. We work on Enrollment Management, Advertising, Communications, Special Events, and the Endowment Fund together. I have a plant manager who sits on my Building and Grounds Committee who helps me plan and research ongoing projects... I have a lot of help.

Principals C, D, F, and G all shared how the additional staff members hired have provided crucial help in their abilities to stay on top of the many managerial expectations placed on them.

The third theme identified by Principals A, B, and E was the necessity for the managerial leader to be able to make decisions. Principal A discussed how it is ultimately the principal's role to make difficult decisions:

The principal has the umbrella view that nobody else has. The principal has to do what they believe is the best to do for the students. The principal has to be part of the discussion and ultimately make the decision of what they will do. It has to be for everybody and not for a certain group.

The responsibility of making decisions can be a difficult component of managerial leadership. Principal A explained how this requires effective managerial leaders “to be brave about the democratic role. You need to have the courage to make the

decisions after hearing everyone's opinions.” Early in his career Principal E received advice from a pastor that was very helpful:

My pastor used to say ‘you are on the tectonic plates of the parents and teachers. And you need to close the doors and put that all together and make decisions.’ He told me I needed to be ok pissing off people. It was helpful as a principal to hear this from my pastor.

Making difficult decisions is never easy. Effective principals are those who have the courage to make these difficult decisions. Additionally, principals are able to be more effective if they are able to recognize that they cannot keep everyone happy. Principals need to be ok knowing that some people might not always agree with or support their decisions.

An additional theme of holding regular meetings (Principals D, F) was identified. Principal F helped to bring to light the amount of meetings that principals are asked to attend on a regular basis:

I attend numerous weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings. These include faculty meetings, SST, curriculum/level and Administration Team Meetings, Advisory Council, Parish Council, Parish Staff, Finance Committee, Mission Effectiveness, and Home and School Board, Home School general meetings. I attend quarterly Technology Committee meetings, Mission Effectiveness Meetings, Home and School Events, Title I and Title II meetings. I also attend Principal Meetings and Archdiocesan Race Relations Meetings.

Meetings require a great amount of time from principals, yet they are often necessary for principals to be able to manage the resources, staff, and facilities. Principals B and E

identified the theme of needing to have the courage to have tough conversations.

Principal B explained that “you have to be willing to tell people when they are screwing up (because) if you don't do it then your kids can hurt in the long run.” Principals must be willing to have uncomfortable conversations in order to ensure that students are receiving a fair and strong education.

Additional managerial leadership practices shared by principal participants include prioritizing (Principal A), managing resources (Principal B), monitoring finances (Principals A, B), and trusting others (Principal A).

Operational Vitality. All principal participants were asked how they address the four National Standards regarding the school’s operational vitality. Four themes were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that nurture operational vitality. Principals A, B, C, E, F, and G identified the theme of holding regular meetings regarding the operations of the school. All principals explained how meetings with key stakeholders and committees was critical to the school’s operational vitality. An additional theme of creating short and long term plans was identified by Principals A, B, D, and G. Principal A shared that the school works backwards in creating five year projections and plans. This helps her to identify the different areas in which School A is strong and weak. Principal B works with various stakeholders to develop five-year plans. Principal B explained that by having these plans in place people with special interests can’t come and try to get you to do something else. Principal G shared that School G has ongoing long range plans that get updated regularly through the help of committees. Principal D shared that his School Board took the leadership in the development and implementation of the School’s strategic plan:

The school originally had a very detailed and expensively produced strategic plan that was developed by an outside consultant which was very tactical in nature to appeal to recently generated survey results that would please small groups of parents, but were not overarching in nature and did not really address the future needs of the school, thus not very strategic. The School Board recognized the need for a plan that could be easily used and implemented both through short term and long-term goals. The Board also worked to streamline the organizational structure of the plan, moving from multiple small teams to hosting larger meetings with a multitude of stakeholders who could interact and share ideas and create synergy. A solid 3-5-year plan was created and is currently being implemented.

The third theme identified by Principals A, B, C, and E was the regular review of the finances. Principal A shared that she makes regular phone calls to people who are late with tuition. “Every student’s money is important so every week we dive down into where we are in our budget.” Principal A meets weekly with her finance accountant to review the school’s finances. Principal A shared that she is constantly thinking of how she can make the finances work. The principal, pastor, finance officer, school finance board, and parish finance committee of School A work together to make financial decisions for the school. Principal B works with a Finance Team to review the finances regularly. As the principal of a tithing parish, Principal E is constantly looking over the budget. School E has strict guidelines of how money is spent, yet Principal E does have firm authority to spend it how he feels is best.

The last theme identified by Principals A, B, F, and G was the establishment of an Administrative Team. Principal F shared that she meets bi-weekly with her Administrative Team that consists of the ESP Director, Business Manager, Facilities Director, Admissions Director, Counselor, Curriculum Coordinator, Office Administrative Assistant, and Advancement Director. This team helps Principal F with the day-to-day operations of the school.

Adhere to Government Rules and Regulations. All principal participants were asked how they adhere to the rules and regulations placed on them by the government. Patterns and trends were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that adhere to government rules and regulations. Principals A, B, D, F, and H shared that they simply always comply. Principals A and C acknowledged that the support they receive from their respective (arch)diocese makes it easier for them to comply with all government rules and regulations. Principal C shared that her Office of Catholic Schools provides guidance and careful monitoring of any and all state and local requirements. Principal B shared that the support she receives from faculty members such as her assistant principal and secretary helps her to better manage the many deadlines and policies that are set by the state.

Adhere to Archdiocese Rules and Regulations. All principal participants were asked how they adhere to the rules and regulations placed on them by the (Arch)diocese. Three patterns were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that adhere to (Arch)diocese rules and regulations. Principals A, B, C, and F shared that they meet all deadlines placed on them by their local (Arch)diocese. Principal F spoke about how a colorful reminder sheet helps her to meet deadlines. This

sheet has all of the deadlines listed, and she hangs it in front of her computer so that she has a constant reminder of upcoming deadlines. Principal B shared that “if there is a due date you just do it, and if I can pass it on I will. If I can give it away, I will give it away!” For principal B, delegating the responsibility of these deadlines is a huge component that helps her to meet all deadlines in a timely manner. Principal C shared that her Diocesan Office sends out regular reminders of upcoming requirements or any missed deadlines. In this way her Diocese makes it very easy for her to meet all deadlines.

Principals A, B, D, and H shared that they follow all policies that are set by the (Arch)diocese. Principal A said that she basically just tries to do everything the Archdiocese asks their school to do. “That is what we are called to do. We need help and guidance.” Principal A acknowledged that she might not always appreciate the various rules and regulations but that she will always honor them and mold them into what works best for her school community, if there is any room for change. As the principal of an accredited school, Principal G shared that she has to follow all rules placed on them by the Diocese. As such, she does whatever is needed and expected of her and her school. Principals D, G, and F shared that they follow their (Arch)diocesan handbooks. Principal F shared that she appreciates and follows the archdiocesan policies indicated in the Archdiocesan Policy Manual. “They are well-written and provide helpful guidelines encompassing the important responsibilities we undertake each day.” Principal G also shared that she has a Diocesan Handbook. Each month at the local Catholic school principals meeting, any additions or changes to rules or regulations are shared.

One principal participant made a point to share that s/he makes a point not to adhere to the Diocesan rules and regulations. This principal shared that “when the

diocese says we are doing something my initial reaction is usually more skeptical or cynical.” Principal E supports the Diocese; however, s/he feels s/he knows what is best for his/her school. Principal E manages the rules and regulations placed on him/her by the Diocese by finding what is helpful and making decisions based on what is best for his/her community and not what the Diocese thinks. This principal further explained his/her beliefs of the relationship between the Diocese and the school:

I feel I am the stop gap between the diocese and the staff. I feel the Diocese is support. If you need support, then you can reach out. If there is a good principal and a good pastor, I believe the school should be left alone. I need to make sure my goals are not altered because of what the Diocese is telling me to do. Odds are we have the money and resources to do it better.

School Safety. All principal participants were asked how they ensure that their schools are safe. Four major themes were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe leadership practices that nurture a safe environment. Principals A, B, D, E, and F identified the importance of holding regular safety drills. Principal D holds fire, tornado, and severe weather drills. Each week School E rotates between drills such as lockdown drills and fire drills. Like Schools D and E, School B holds regular safety drills. School A holds a huge safety drill in September that includes a thorough review of the school’s reunification process. Regular drills help principals to ensure that their faculty and students are aware of the procedures should there ever be any emergencies. Making time for safety drills was identified as an effective managerial leadership practice in ensuring school safety.

Principals C, E, F, G, and H identified the theme of having a security system with safety cameras in the school. Principal E shared how after Sandy Hook School E relooked at everything and had a lot of surveillance cameras installed in their school. School H also has a security system in the school to provide additional safety measures for the staff and students. School F has also recently added additional cameras and fobs to better control access to the school and students. Additional safety cameras provide greater safety to the students. Principals C, E, F, and G identified an additional theme of local and federal involvement. School E brought in the FBI to discuss how to improve school safety. School E has a lot of windows inside their courtyard so Principal E asked for the FBI's help in looking at how to make School E more safe. Principal F brought in a GEMA official to meet with School F's Facilities Director. This official helped School F to review their safety plan and confirmed that it was a strong safety plan. Working with local and federal officials provides principals with an additional resource to ensure that plans are manageable and up-to date.

Principals A, B, C, and G identified the theme of having a disaster/ safety plan in place. Principal G shared that she has a well-written safety plan that is reviewed annually. Each year the plan and any updates are disseminated to the staff along with training. Principal B shared that School B has a very clear disaster plan. For this plan to be effective Principal B explains that there are many components that she must manage. These include ensuring the fire extinguishers work and how to contact parents in the case of an emergency. As an inner-city school, Principal A shared that School A has a safety plan that is a constant topic amongst the stakeholders of the school. Maintaining an up-to-date safety plan that is shared and regularly discussed with faculty is an effective

leadership practice in maintaining school safety. Additional leadership practices were identified by principal participants. These include regularly monitoring of the school (Principals B, C), providing CPR and AED training for faculty (Principals B, D), engaging in OSHA online training (Principal H), keeping doors locked (Principal D), and requiring visitors to wear badges (Principal D). Principal B summarized the importance of ensuring school safety- “everything is looked at through the safety lens, and safety concerns get prioritized.”

Research Question 4

What major 21st century challenges have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced?

To understand the 21st century challenges that NCEA distinguished Catholic elementary principals face, the researcher asked participants to identify these challenges. Though each participant spoke from his or her local experience, analysis of identified challenges led to certain themes being identified. Of the eight principal participants, five identified finances as being a major 21st century challenge that Catholic elementary school principals face today. Four of the principals identified social media and technology and the many components of its implementation (i.e. financing, professional development needs, etc.) as a major 21st century challenge. Three principals discussed the challenge of meeting the needs of the increased student population of students with learning differences. Three principals discussed their challenges with enrollment and retention. Two principals acknowledged that the changing family dynamic has brought new challenges to the role of the Catholic elementary school principal.

Principal A works in a city where there are more dogs than children so she identified recruiting and retention as a major concern for School A. Principal A believes that Catholic education is at a precarious spot right now as Catholics no longer think they need to send their kids to Catholic schools to have a strong faith. This requires an increased responsibility for the school to attract students. Principal A also identified school finances to be a major challenge. The public schools in her area are becoming stronger so it is difficult for people to justify paying for an education that they believe is equivalent to what they would receive for free at a local public school. Since each child matters in budgeting the balance, School A is challenged to find a way of keeping tuition sensible so that it does not become an institution for the elite. The financial challenge for School A is especially real for Principal A as the school has recently undergone a seismic retrofitting assessment which would require a major campaign to raise millions of dollars. Finally, Principal A commented that there are so many managerial tasks and so many emails that take up much of her time.

Principal B identified the change in the family dynamic as a major 21st century challenge she faces. Families are not as present in the school community and in the child's education as they used to be. Principal B believes this stems from the fact that so many families are so busy due to job commutes and added extra-curricular activities of children. Principal B also credits this change to different ethnicities placing different value on the importance of being involved. The lack of volunteerism is a constant challenge for the school as it depends on parent support for fundraisers. Principal B also identified the need and cost for specialized staff to be a challenge. As the diagnosis rate for ADHD increases, she finds that there are more children who are in need of

accommodations yet not all classroom teachers have the education, skills, and/or resources to accommodate these needs. This has led to the need to hire a more specialized staff who have the necessary skill sets to serve students with learning differences. An additional challenge Principal B faces is the cost associated with technology. The costs of technology per child get pricey as new technology is constantly introduced which requires expensive training.

Like Principal B, Principal C believes the most difficult 21st century challenge she has faced in recent years is the changing structure of the family. The significant rise of divorce within the Catholic community mixed with shifting cultural norms of society has resulted in the school having to fulfill a much wider range of roles and services. Parents are not as active in the life of the church. Additionally, they have changing expectations of the school as well as have new expectations in terms of how they interact with the school. Principal C also identified the effect of technology on this generation of students. School C is challenged to engage students who are immersed in technology and social media outside of their school life. Students have come to expect this as the norm.

Principal D also identified social media and technology access as 21st century challenges that School D faces. These bring a number of social challenges to Principal D.

Though Principal E identified bullying as an issue that is always a challenge, he had a very different experience than his colleagues. School E is in a good place in many areas that other Catholic schools struggle with in terms of finances and enrollment. School E has had a consistently healthy enrollment and finances. As a tithing parish, families do not have to pay tuition. As a result, Principal E experiences a very unique

challenge in that because School E is in a good position they need to continue to raise the bar and continue to advance the educational experiences of the students. Principals E's big challenge is getting teachers to the next level of successful instruction by constantly picking things apart. Principal E remains focused on not becoming complacent in anything they do so they can continue to move forward.

Principal F identified the cost associated with technology as the biggest 21st century challenge she is facing. Finances are affected by the costs associated with keeping technology up-to-date and maintaining an infrastructure necessary to accommodate one to one programs. Additionally, they are affected by the need to provide professional development for teachers to ensure technology is being used for higher learning thinking, collaboration, research, and the creation of new products.

Principal G agrees with Principal F that technology and the costs associated with it are the major challenges she faces as a 21st century Catholic elementary school principal. Since technology is constantly changing it is difficult to keep up.

Principal H identified enrollment and finances as the top 21st century challenges that she faces.

Research Question 5

How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals addressed 21st century challenges?

To understand how NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have addressed 21st century challenges, the researcher asked participants to describe how they effectively managed these challenges and what support and resources they need to continue to effectively address these challenges. Additionally, faculty focus

groups were asked how their respective principals responded to these 21st century challenges. Analysis of identified practices that leaders displayed led to themes being identified. The importance of the pastor/principal relationship was identified by all principals during the data collection process as a necessary relationship to managing the 21st century challenges.

Of the eight participants, four of them responded to challenges by increasing the available support staff and being more meaningful in who they are hiring in relation to the skillsets these employees can bring with them to the school and students. Four participants also identified the development of parent education programs as responses to the changing family dynamic and their involvement expectations.

Principal A said that she works hard and does her best to effectively manage 21st century challenges. School A always strives to build a strong academic and spiritual school. Marketing, recruiting staffing, and developing long term plans have been important in attempting to address the concerns of recruitment and retention. The faculty of School A joked that Principal A responds to challenges by being an event planner, a general contractor, and a project manager. The staff unanimously agreed that though they feel there is too much asked of their principal, that she is effectively managing the many challenges that arise. She is always the last one out of the building and always working. The faculty noted how her regular presence in the classroom allows her to be aware of the needs of the students and the teachers. Principal A identified that increased Archdiocese resources would help School A to effectively manage the 21st century challenges. If plant, financial, and marketing support were more readily available, the financial burden of School A could become more reasonable. Additionally, a more

consistent and clear message from Human Resources could provide increased support to manage questions that Principal A is not trained in.

Principal B identified collaboration and conversations as ways she effectively manages 21st century challenges. The faculty of School B talks a lot about the challenges they face and they are writing a five-year plan to address these challenges. Principal B always regularly make time to sit down and talk to teachers about how they can be successful educators. The Parent Group of School B started a blog this year as an attempt to better educate parents on the needs of the school and what the school does. In order to better manage the financial challenges of running a school, Principal B tries to say no to the small requests so that there is money for the larger needs and classroom requests of the teachers. The faculty of School B acknowledge that Principal B stays on top of education and adapts where it is needed. They identified her organization and deep faith as tools that helps her to respond to 21st century challenges. Principal B shared that money is a much needed resource to continue to manage 21st century challenges. Additionally, she is looking at how to better take advantage of public school offerings. She is always looking for professional growth opportunities for her faculty.

Principal C has effectively managed the challenges that have come with the changing family structure by expanding School C's staff, resources, and programs. Principal C has increased the amount of aides in the classroom to allow for more individualized attention. She also secured the services of a counselor and started a series of parent education programs. Before and after school programs have been expanded in order to offer a wide range of activities for students. Increased use of social media has helped to keep parents better informed. Social media and newsletters include prayer and

catechesis. Principal C notes that the active steps taken to better support and interact with changing families has never resulted in the abandonment of the absolute truths of the Faith. The faculty of School C identified Principal F's deep faith and the modeling of her faith as a major piece of how she handles challenges. They also identified her patience in incorporating technology and her collaborative relationship with the pastor as effective responses to challenges. Principal C acknowledged the importance of the pastor/principal relationship in a school's success, and how she has been fortunate to have worked with three pastors who made significant time and financial commitments to the school. She identified this as an area that is needed to continue to effectively manage the 21st century challenges that continue to arise as well as the need for additional financial resources.

In order to address the challenges that social media and technology have brought to School D, Principal D has led parent trainings as well as worked with students to help them be responsible stewards of technology. Additionally, School D became a Common Sense Media Safe School. The faculty of School D identified Principal D's effective communication and open door policy as an effective response to managing 21st century challenges. Principal D asks faculty how the school and its stakeholders can best be served, and he follows through on the needs. He also meets monthly with each grade level and each school wing. Faculty of School D also identified his encouragement of positive attitudes and problem solving when facing challenges as an effective tool to facing challenges. Principal D supports the technology needs of faculty by sending them to conferences and providing them with the tools needed to be effective teachers. Principal D believes that greater involvement from all of School D's community members can help to effectively manage the 21st century challenges.

Principal E manages the challenge of bullying by providing a phone number that students can call and discuss their problems confidentially. To manage the unique challenges of School E, Principal E hired an assistant principal who he says is smarter than him. Her knowledge has allowed Principal E and School E to stay on top of best practices and to keep up with instructional topics. The faculty of School E identified Principal E's use of the various faculty members' skillsets as a successful practice in responding to 21st century challenges. By assembling the vice-principal and various support staff members, the faculty is able to effectively track student progress and intervene when appropriate. Additionally, the faculty is encouraged and expected to have a voice and to critically think when various challenges arise. The faculty appreciates how Principal E looks to the future by embracing technology and sending staff to various professional development opportunities. Principal E participates in professional development, leads by example, and is visible. Principal E believes that School E has no immediate needs in terms of support and resources to manage 21st century challenges. With a new assistant principal and academic interventionist as well as the finances to get any tools they may need, Principal E believes there is no excuse for not getting things done.

Principal F identified writing grants, fundraising, and developing a technology fee as effective practices in managing the 21st century challenges she faces. She also intentionally plans her budget to ensure a systematic replacement of equipment. Principal F uses Title I and Title II funds, professional development endowment, grant money, and intentional budgeting to invest in professional development for the faculty of School F. Principal F encourages collaboration as a tool to manage challenges by having

faculty share best practices at faculty meetings. The faculty of School F identified Principal F's commitment to ensuring students and staff use technology and that faculty are trained in using top of the line equipment. She has placed a school expectation that technology is a part of everyday planning. She encourages the use of technology and ensures the Technology Resource Coordinator is in all faculty meetings in order to address any questions as well as to introduce new digital learning resources. The faculty of School F identified Principal F's commitment to the faculty's professional development as well as her own. She confirmed the importance she places on professional development by identifying it as the major resource she needs to continue to effectively identify 21st century challenges.

Principal G identified her best approach to managing 21st century challenges as hiring great teachers who are up to speed on new technology. She also brings in experts from local universities to help her staff learn about the changes in technology and how they can be implemented in the classroom. Principal G believes that as long as she is successful in identifying what fundraised money will go to, that she is able to get financial support from the parent community. Faculty of Principal G confirmed her commitment to addressing the technology needs of School G. Principal G ensures faculty is provided with needed professional development to be successful with new instructional tools. The faculty of School G identified Principal G's recent response to the 21st century challenge of the changing parent and student population. Principal G led a professional development presentation on millennial parents and children in terms of their expectations and how teachers could meet these expectations in their teaching

practices. The staff of School G believes that Principal G addresses challenges head-on and is not afraid to make decisions even if they are unpopular.

Principal H developed a marketing committee for School H to help with the enrollment and financial challenges. Additionally, Principal H and colleagues are currently trying to pass legislation for school choice. The faculty of School H recognized Principal H's efforts in writing grants to get extra funds. They also identified her commitment to working with various community and business partners to ensure School H is safe with an up-to-date environment for all students. Principal H identified the need for more staff to devote to these specific areas especially since she is not an expert in them and her time is very limited in what she can devote to these areas.

Research Question 6

How are the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices?

To understand how NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices, the researcher asked participants to complete an initial questionnaire. This questionnaire asked principal participants to identify their leadership strengths and areas for growth as well as their definitions of effective leadership. Participants were asked to give examples of their effective leadership practices and to identify educational, family, professional, and personal experiences that they believed had major impacts on their leadership styles. Principal participants were also asked how the Department of Catholic Schools in their respective (arch)diocese has supported their leadership development. Finally, principals were asked what leadership practices they considered to be most important to their

effectiveness as a Catholic elementary school principal. Additionally, faculty focus groups were asked to share the effective spiritual, instructional, and managerial leadership practices of their respective principals. Analysis of these question items led to themes being identified.

Effective Leadership. All principal participants were asked to define effective leadership. Principal A believed that effective leadership is working with others for the greater good of the school community. Principal B shared that effective leadership is the collaborative use of people's skills and talents to develop a successful learning environment for children "where they know they are loved by those around them and their God". Principal C believed that effective leadership is leading by example and bringing the power of faith to the school. Principal D defined effective leadership as having respect for the people you work with. Though he believed effective leadership entails being open to the suggestions of those who work for you, he also believed that effective leadership requires a leader to not be afraid of making decisions. Principal E believed that effective leadership entails setting a vision for the direction of the school and helping to keep others focused on that vision despite the challenges that might arise. Principal F shared that effective leadership, in Catholic education, "follows Jesus' model of servant leadership (in that) it begins with a passion to serve others, promoting a cause much bigger than one's own personal gain, uniting and inspiring others to join you in this mission, building a community that shares in forming, building and supporting that mission and encouraging all to be their best selves using their God given gifts to the fullest to make their school, community and world a better place." Principal G defined effective leadership as "working hard to fulfill the mission." Principal H believed that

effective leadership entails valuing all learning styles and recognizing the importance of the emotional and social needs of students. Three patterns were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe effective leadership.

Principals A, B, E, F, and G shared that effective leadership entails working with others for the common good. These five principal participants shared that effective leadership requires collaboration for the good of the child. Principal E shared how this requires effective leaders to guide the group and keep it focused when challenges arise. Principals B, C, F, and H identified the theme of servant leadership within effective leadership. Principals A, D, and H identified the final theme of effective leadership to be lifelong learners. Additional patterns of what defines effective leadership identified by principal participants include setting a vision (Principals F, G), being open to ideas (Principals D, F), showing respect (Principal D), being able to make decisions (Principal D), and leading by example (Principal C).

Leadership Strengths. All principal participants were asked what they considered their leadership strengths to be. Two themes were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe these leadership strengths. Principals A, B, D, E, F, and H shared that they believed their leadership strengths to include being collaborative. Principal A shared that she invites others to participate in various conversations. She listens to what others want to contribute to conversations and debates, and she takes all shared opinions into account when making decisions. Principal B also shared that she believed her ability to listen carefully to others was a great leadership strength. Principal D shared that he trusts his team and encourages collaboration. Principal E shared that he encourages leadership from others and values the various strengths his staff brings to the

table. Like Principal E, Principal F shared that she strives to recognize and honor the many talents her faculty has:

My leadership style is collaborative. When centered on mission, it is about providing teachers, students, and parents the resources they need to accomplish the mission. As principal, I strive to recognize the God-given gifts of those around me. I strive to provide the time, resources, and support necessary for the fulfillment of each person's potential and contributions to the mission.

For Principal F, collaboration is focused around the mission as a way to constantly focus School F in their conversations. The theme of collaboration was also identified by the faculty focus group of each principal participant. Each faculty focus group shared that they felt like valued members of their communities who were encouraged to share their opinions.

An additional theme that was identified by principal participants was that of being a spiritual leader. Principals B, F, and G shared that they believed their strengths as a leader to be in their spiritual leadership. Principal B identified spiritual leadership and her “walking along with families through struggles” as a leadership strength of hers. This helped to emphasize what Principal F shared about her leadership strengths:

I am first and foremost the spiritual leader of the school. At a Catholic school, it is imperative to focus all stakeholders on the shared mission of the school. When you put Jesus in the center of all that you do, miraculous things happen. Teaching becomes a vocation, a calling, a ministry. A shared vision and belief system emerges. Students give their best efforts because everything they do is for the honor and glory of God. Parents aspire for their children to reach both college

and heaven. We are called to form saints, scholars, courageous and compassionate leaders.

To Principal F, her role as spiritual leader is the most important aspect to her being an effective leader. Ensuring the students know God and providing opportunities for them to know this and believe this shapes Principal F's leadership strength. Principal G acknowledged that as the leader of a Catholic school she is committed to "doing everything in my power to fulfill the mission" of Catholic education. Principal G recognized that her role as spiritual leader is essential to her effectiveness as a Catholic school leader.

Additional leadership strengths were shared by principal participants. These include being a strong listener (Principals A, B), staying focused (Principals E, G), providing necessary resources (Principal F), being knowledgeable of curricular trends (Principal H), building community (Principal B), being organized (Principal H), providing stability (Principal C), and staying calm (Principal C)

Leadership Areas for Growth. All principal participants were asked what they considered their leadership areas for growth to be. Each leader identified specific areas for growth that related to the unique challenges of their schools and (arch)dioceses. Principal A shared that she would like to be more targeted in her observation of faculty members. Additionally, she felt that an area for growth for her existed in offering more focused school site professional development for the faculty of School A. Principal B felt that her areas of growth were centered around the need for greater training in technology and data. Principal B hoped to learn how to better "use technology for grading and worksheets or forms, (use) social media more frequently, and (how to

analyze) testing data.” Principal C acknowledged that her area for growth lies in delegation. She shared that she is “still very poor at this skill.” Principal D shared that he would like to better spread himself around and get into the classrooms on a more regular basis. Principal E shared that his area for growth lies in the area of curriculum. “I am not as strong on curriculum writing so I am not as much of a leader in that area as I should be.” Principal E shared how he hired an assistant principal “who is very strong in areas in which I am weak, such as in curriculum writing” so that School E could be supported in this area that he could not fully provide. Principal F shared that “spiritual formation and professional learning are lifelong areas of growth” for her as well as managing her time. Like Principal F, Principal G also believed that managing time was an area for growth for her. Additionally, she shared that she works hard to stay on top of all of the newest technologies while discerning what is best for School G. Principal H shared that her area for growth is learning to not care too much.

Three patterns were identified by two different principal participants after examining key words and phrases used to describe these leadership areas for growth. Principals F and G shared they felt an area for growth was staying caught up with their workload and duties. Principal G shared that she “constantly (struggles) to keep up with all the activities and responsibilities of this position.” Principal F agreed that the many responsibilities of the Catholic school principalship could be overwhelming. “Budget, facilities, advancement, capital campaign, Parish Council, and events all take time away from being in the classrooms where I’d like to spend most of my time.” Principals F and G shared that the many demands of their roles caused them to feel to they could be better keeping up with their workload and duties. A similar theme was identified by Principals

B and F who shared that they felt an area for growth for them is better managing their time. Principal F shared that for her, “managing the time commitment required of a Catholic school principal is an ongoing challenge.” Principal B agreed that managing time effectively was a constant struggle for her, and she went on to acknowledge that this time management also included the need for her to better make time for herself.

Principals A and F identified the theme of ongoing professional development. Principal F shared that she is “always striving to keep abreast of best educational initiatives with data proven results.” Likewise, Principal A shared that she is looking to better focus on the specific professional development needs of School A. For Principal A and F, the desire to be lifelong learners and model lifelong learning guides them in their areas for growth.

Educational Experiences. All principal participants were asked what educational experiences they perceived to have had a major impact on their leadership styles. A main characteristic of qualitative research is researcher reflection of data (Creswell, 2006). This question was the first of five questions that asked principal participants to reflect on various experiences that had a major impact on their leadership styles. Because this question came first, it was perceived by many participants as professional experience since they work in education. The wording of this question could have been better if it asked them what educational experiences they had as students themselves. As such, the data in this section is limited. Though all participants acknowledged their experience in Catholic education at some point over the time of the research study, they did not identify this experience in this section. Despite this lack of data in this section, Principal F shared the impact of her Catholic educational experience. “Attending a Catholic school through

high school certainly formed the foundation of my faith and the value of prayer, sacramental life, service and the call to serve a purpose greater than my own personal aspirations.” This sentiment was shared informally by the other principal participants.

Family Experiences. All principal participants were asked what family experiences they perceived to have had a major impact on their leadership styles. Two themes were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe these family experiences. Principals A, B, F, G, and H identified that their close-knit family growing up had a major impact on their leadership styles. For Principal A, her close Italian family taught her that “you always work as a team, even when (you) are at odds.” Her parents also taught her to work for the greater good. Principal B’s parents also instilled in her the value of helping others. Principal B shared that her parents’ lives were “very powerful in (her) development” as they were both very involved in the community. Principal F agreed that her family greatly impacted her faith life, particularly that they provided her with a Catholic education that shared in her faith formation. As the oldest of many siblings, Principals G and H shared their roles in their close knit families growing up. Principal G joked that she had been training for the principal role her whole life as a result of her being a natural leader in her family growing up, while Principal H acknowledged that being the only girl in a family of four boys impacted her leadership. Principal participants acknowledged that their family experiences as adults also had major impacts on their leadership styles.

Principals B, C, D, E, F, and H identified their adult familial roles to have had a major impact on their leadership styles. Principal C shared that her experience as a wife, mother, and an adult daughter have had a significant impact on her leadership style:

I am a wife of 40 years, mom of two, a grandma of one, and a long term caretaker of my mom. All of these experiences teach us a better understanding of "the human condition" - its frailties and challenges. I think (these experiences) give us more patience and compassion in the face of the great pressures modern society has on our families. As we experience family falling away from the church, living in a manner contrary to church teachings, divorces and the like, we broaden our level of compassion and understanding.

Principal C's adult family experience has impacted her leadership style in that she feels her experiences of loving and caring for others has helped her to gain a deeper understanding of the vulnerability that loving others brings. It is this understanding that she brings into her leadership style and her interactions with her students, colleagues, and parents. Principal D also shared that his role as a husband has affected his leadership style. Being married to a Catholic school teacher, Principal D sees a different perspective in his role thanks to the shared wisdom and advice his wife provides him. Principal D feels this perspective he gains helps him to be more open to his colleagues and their needs.

Personal Experiences. All principal participants were asked what personal experiences they perceived to have had a major impact on their leadership styles. Two patterns were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe the personal experiences of principal participants. Principals A, B, and C identified a theme of childhood experience in education. Principal A shared that as a student she knew what worked for her and she knew what didn't work for her. Principal B explained that "elementary school time was difficult academically and socially." These difficulties have

impacted how Principal B treats her students as well as her understanding of those who struggle academically and socially. Principal C summed up the impact her experience as a student had on her leadership:

I think we all carry into our educational arena our own experiences as a student and teacher. Having spent my entire education in Catholic schools from K-12, through college, teaching 15 years in a Catholic school and 20 years as a Catholic school principal...All of those educational experiences - positive and negative - affect our daily practice as school leaders.

Principals B, E, and F identified a second theme when they shared that their leadership styles were affected by personal family losses. Principal B lost her sister who was a young wife and mother. This loss reminded her of the presence of God and had a major impact on her leadership style. When Principal E initially filled out the questionnaire, he wrote that he was not sure of how his leadership style has been impacted by his family and that he would have to think about this question further. Unfortunately, at the time of his interview, Principal E had recently lost his nephew. Though Principal E acknowledged multiple times that his tragic loss impacted his leadership style, he was still trying to define the impact. He felt that his idea of leadership was changing as a result of his nephew's death, yet he was still processing what that looked like. As a fourth grader Principal F lost her father. She shared that though he was only expected to live a few days, that he miraculously lived another eight years. Principal F shared that prayer was a very important aspect of her life during that time, and one that she credits those years to. This experience served as a reminder to Principal F of the power of prayer and the impact a faith community can have on

individuals and their spirit. Principals B, E, and F acknowledged the impact the loss of a loved one could have on their leadership styles. Though they each spoke of this differently, the shared comments suggested that their personal losses impacted their understanding and modeling of empathy and shared concern for others. These losses also strengthened their beliefs in the power of prayer.

Professional Experiences. All principal participants were asked what professional experiences they perceived to have had a major impact on their leadership styles. Two themes were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe these professional experiences. Principals A, B, C, D, E, F, and G identified the theme of mentorship and inspirational leaders. Principal A acknowledged the impact that working with inspirational leaders had on her leadership style:

I would say that working closely with certain inspirational leaders has had the greatest impact on my leadership style. I learned much from some of the Salesian Sisters I have worked closely with. They have taught me about being the spiritual leader of a Catholic organization. (The former superintendent) taught me a great deal about professionalism and detail to tasks. I have been fortunate to have many role models to learn from... I pick and chose to incorporate the practices that felt right as I traveled through these experiences.

Principal B agreed that the impact of great leaders was important to her leadership development. She shared that her work with and for “some magnificent leaders reminded (her) what is really important and how to achieve a loving environment that is Spirit filled.” Principal C also shared the impact an early principal had on her own leadership style:

I had a phenomenal principal for 12 years when I was teaching prior to accepting a principalship of my own. I spent many of my first few years as principal wondering what she would have done in a particular situation. She always saw the good in others, always erred on the side of compassion and never lost faith in any child. Her modeling for me was an invaluable witness to the Faith and roadmap for the harder parts of a principalship.

Like Principal C, Principal E worked with a principal when he was a teacher. This principal was acknowledged as a Distinguished Principal by both NCEA and NAESP. Principal E shared that he learned a great deal from this principal and that many of these lessons have stayed with him throughout his 18 years as a principal. Principals F and G credited their confidence in their ability to take on the principal role to the modeling of previous principals whom they worked side by side with. Principal F shared that this principal “encouraged me daily, served as a mentor, trusted me with opportunities to lead and provided helpful feedback in the process.” The powerful effect of supportive and strong leaders on the leadership style of others was identified by the majority of principal participants. Just as strong leaders can have a major impact on leadership styles, Principals B and F acknowledged that weak leaders can as well.

Principal B shared that “working for leaders that struggled leading others because of an unwillingness to ask for help or to delegate work... had a direct result in my becoming a leader.” Similarly, Principal F shared that her experience working for one principal “was not as positive and solidified (her) belief in the effectiveness and benefit of a collaborative and supportive leadership style.” Principals B and F shared that they

learned a great deal from their experience in working with principals who struggled. These lessons helped them to better identify what mattered to successful leadership.

Additional patterns were recognized when looking at the professional experiences of principal participants. Principals C and G shared that their experiences with fellow colleagues provide professional learning communities that encourage their leadership practices. Principal G shared that the people she has served with have “formed a wonderful network of educators” that she has learned from over the years. Additionally, Principals D and G acknowledged that their daily experiences continue to guide them in their leadership practices. Principal D shared that he learns something everyday that he uses. He shared that these “cumulative experiences have a daily impact” on his leadership practices. Principal G agreed that “experience is a wonderful teacher” that has helped to form her leadership style. Finally, Principals B and F shared that their leadership practices have been impacted by their early teaching careers. Principal F shared that her “teaching positions, especially serving as a resource teacher, assisted in forming good relational, instructional, communication, managerial and data analysis skills” that she continues to use regularly as a principal.

Factors that Contributed to Leadership Style. All principal participants were asked what factors have contributed to the leadership style utilized. Two major patterns were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe these factors. The theme of working alongside strong principals was re-established. This theme and its findings was discussed in detail above. The second theme that was identified by Principals B, C, and G was the importance of faith. Principal G shared the role that faith has played in her leadership style:

My faith is probably the biggest contributing factor to my leadership style. I try to be a model of our faith to everyone I work with. I pray before every "hard" conference and difficult decision. I even pray before I enter the school each morning.

Principal C explained how this faith plays a role in her leadership style:

An unwavering belief that God is good, that His mercy is endless and that everything and everyone that He created deserves respect and dignity is my core principle. We often laugh that our lives run by "God's will, not mine." The truth is that once you put your life and the lives of those you care for (and are given care for) in His hands, everything else falls in place.

For Catholic school principals, faith is a major factor that encourages their leadership practices.

Support from Department of Catholic Schools. All principal participants were asked how the Department of Catholic Schools have supported their leadership development. A variety of responses were shared. Two patterns were identified after examining key words and phrases used to describe this support. Principals C, E, and F shared that they are supported by the Department of Catholic Schools by being allowed to be their own communities. Principal C shared that her local Department of Catholic Schools “has always found a great balance between allowing site based management for principals in balance with good guidance and policy.” Principal E shared that he strongly believes that “our Catholic school system succeeds so well due to the principle of subsidiarity (in that) we are allowed to do our job without interference from the central office, like public schools often have to deal with.” Principal F acknowledged that the Department of

Catholic Schools “support(s) schools while still allowing each individual school community to cultivate and live their own charism.” Principals C and E shared that the Department of Catholic Schools provide them with Legal and HR support. Principal participants shared different ways their local Department of Catholic Schools support them. These include providing spiritual formation (Principal C), sharing plans (Principal A), holding principal retreats (Principal G), forming committees (Principal B), and helping with job postings (Principal E). One principal participant shared that the local Department of Catholic Schools does “very little”.

Additional Findings

Upon closer examination of the data collected, three additional themes emerged: (a) importance of the pastor-principal role, (b) importance of the Department of Catholic School support, (c) the importance of Catholic education to future Catholic educators, and (d) the importance of professional development centered around spiritual leadership.

Pastor-Principal Role

Though no questions specifically asked principal participants to speak to their pastor-principal relationship, all principal participants acknowledged its importance in their ability to be effective leaders. Principal C shared that “the relationship between pastor and principal is essential for the success of the school and its mission.” Principal E believed that Catholic education is more effective when “pastors and principals are working together.” Principal G shared that the “Catholic culture and identity of a school starts with the Principal and Pastor.” She discussed the partnership she has with her pastor and how he assists her in educating the faculty as well as hiring them in order to keep the mission at the center of the school. Principal H shared that a spiritual leader

“acts on behalf of their pastors,” and as such she relies on her pastor to guide her in the mission. Principal A shared the importance of developing “a good relationship with the pastor and the parish.” Principal B agreed and shared that she and her pastor have a very strong relationship. As a result the pastor is present all the time to the students and stakeholders of School B. Principal D acknowledged the importance of the pastor’s involvement with the Principal and School Board in advising and leading. Principal E shared that like the schools of the other principal participants, that his school is lucky to have the support of a strong pastor. All principal participants spoke of the importance of having strong communication with their pastors and keeping them informed of all school decisions and events. All principal participants shared that whether the principal was hands-off or more involved, that having the trust and the support of the pastor is critical to their confidence in their decision-making skills and to the success of their leadership and therefore the success of their schools.

Department of Catholic School Support

Catholic schools are governed through their local (arch)dioceses. Within these (arch)dioceses are Departments or Offices of Catholic Schools. These departments are meant to guide and support the local Catholic schools in their ministry of Catholic education. Though all principal participants acknowledged that their local departments hold regular principal meetings for principals of Catholic elementary schools to meet and discuss concerns and upcoming needs, principal participants were limited in sharing how these departments expressly support their daily leadership practices and development. Three principal participants shared that they would welcome greater support in terms of

human resources and legal guidance. Additionally, two principal participants shared that they do not always follow what their local departments request of them.

Importance of Catholic Education to Future Catholic Educators

Though no question asked principal participants why they chose a career in Catholic education versus public education, all principal participants acknowledged the role that their own Catholic education had on their careers in Catholic education. Catholic education breeds future Catholic educators. Principal A shared how her high school experience was influenced by the Sisters of Mercy who were “pretty inspirational and strong women (who)...were inspiring young women to make social change and to be a force to reckon with.” Principal H shared that attending a Catholic high school formed the “foundation of (her) faith...and the call to serve.” A strong Catholic education encourages a deep faith formation that encourages a life of service. The desire to give this gift of Catholic education and faith back to other students was discussed by a majority of the principal participants.

Importance of Professional Development Centered around Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership has been identified as one of the main roles of a Catholic school leader. Though this role was identified as being one of the most important to the success of Catholic education, very little was mentioned by principal participants as to how this role is supported and fostered.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices of NCEA-identified Catholic elementary school principals in their roles as instructional, spiritual, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study explored the 21st century challenges that

they face and how they effectively manage them. Finally, the study sought to identify the shared experiences and backgrounds of these distinguished Catholic elementary school leaders. The six research questions were answered using the data gathered from online questionnaires, principal interviews, and faculty focus group interviews. Effective instructional, spiritual, and managerial leadership practices were identified. The overall findings of this case study suggest that there is greater support needed in the role of spiritual leader. Findings support the growing concerns within Catholic education that the role of the Catholic elementary school principal is becoming too much for one person. As a result of the growing managerial responsibilities placed on the Catholic elementary school principal, the roles of the spiritual and educational leaders are often sacrificed.

Conclusions and implications are discussed in the following chapter. Finally, recommendations for future research and practice is presented.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Overview

Chapter V summarizes and discusses the findings that were presented in Chapter IV. The six research questions introduced in Chapter I will be individually discussed followed by a general discussion of the research study. Following the discussion, implications and recommendations for future research and for the profession of the Catholic elementary school principal will be shared.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the life experiences (personal and educational) of eight distinguished elementary Catholic school principals formally recognized by NCEA through its annual Distinguished Principal Award. The study sought to identify their leadership practices and how they were demonstrated in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study sought to identify the major 21st century challenges that the eight NCEA-Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced and how they addressed them. Finally, this study set out to identify how the eight NCEA-Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices. The results of this study showed that the role of the Catholic elementary school principal is a complex one that includes responsibilities within three main roles: educational, spiritual, and managerial (Ciriello, 1998). Though these three roles have remained constant for over twenty years, the responsibilities within each area

have grown exponentially and become more demanding of school leaders in terms of their time and their necessary skillsets and competencies (Peterson, 2016).

No two days are ever the same for a Catholic elementary school principal. Within the various duties and challenges that they respond to in their educational, spiritual, and managerial roles, Catholic elementary school principals must display various leadership styles that best adapt to the situations they are faced with. As a result, principals rely on a variety of leadership styles including servant leadership, transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and instructional leadership. The various components of these leadership styles come alive through the daily effective leadership practices of Catholic elementary school principals as they engage colleagues, inspire others, lead by example, and lead from the heart. These findings strongly supported the Hersey and Blanchard's (1976) Situational Leadership Theory. All principal participants shared how they adapt their leadership approach to meet the needs of the various stakeholders and the various challenges that they face. As the role of the Catholic elementary school principal continues to expand there is a need to further explore this role as well as the support it needs to be sustainable for future generations.

Discussion and Research Questions

Data was collected through initial online principal questionnaires, principal interviews, and faculty focus group interviews. Data was collected and leadership practices were coded and shared in Chapter 4. Each research question will be individually discussed in this chapter. Following these individual discussions will be a conclusion that ties together the six research questions.

Research Question 1

How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as educational leaders?

Findings from this study revealed that NCEA-identified Catholic elementary school principals define educational leadership as collaborating with key stakeholders while providing curricular leadership and professional development to faculty members. Principal participants shared their effective leadership practices in terms of how they support classroom teaching and student learning, evaluate classroom instruction, remain up-to-date in their knowledge of curriculum, and monitor the rigor of the academic programs of their schools as educational leaders. The effective educational leadership practices that were identified support the literature on instructional leadership, specifically that educational leaders should be “directly involved in the teaching and learning life of the school” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 269). Catholic elementary school principals shared a variety of educational leadership practices that effectively allow them to do just that.

Support Classroom Teaching. Effective educational leaders support classroom teaching through providing teachers with meaningful professional development, providing students and teachers with needed resources and materials, and maintaining a budget that provides for these items. Seven of the eight principal participants acknowledged the importance of providing professional development to their teachers and five principal participants recognized the importance of providing whatever the teacher needs to be successful in supporting classroom teachers. The importance of educational leaders offering frequent professional development opportunities to faculty as

a way to encourage and implement new practices was shared by Lunenburg (2013).

Effective educational leaders do whatever they can to provide necessary training and resources to teachers and students as they recognize that these things can enhance classroom teaching. To invest in one and not the other would not allow for educators to properly introduce and utilize educational materials. There is no question that the needed professional development and resources to support classroom teaching is costly. Three principal participants acknowledged that in order to effectively support classroom teaching that they need to meaningfully budget these items and areas. As such, it is critical for Catholic elementary school principals to take the time to regularly review their school budgets to ensure that resources are available and possible.

Support Student Learning. Effective educational leaders support student learning by encouraging collaboration, developing professional learning communities (PLCs), identifying student learning needs, differentiating learning, ensuring meaningful scheduling, and providing specialized staff and strong faculty. Three principals of the eight principal participants acknowledged that encouraging collaboration and developing PLCs are critical to supporting student learning. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as effective educational leaders by making the time to work with one another to discuss the needs of the students through various Leadership Teams that form internal PLCs. In these PLCs distinguished leaders provide opportunities to identify student needs, differentiate learning, and provide the needed learning tools to support student learning. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals spoke of the benefit that specialized staff is able to provide

to students. Educational leaders host conversations centered around students needs to determine school and personnel needs.

Evaluate Classroom Instruction. Effective educational leaders evaluate classroom instruction through formal and informal observations. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are committed to evaluating classroom instruction. Though principal participants recognized the importance of regular evaluations to student learning, they acknowledged that this is an area that is often sacrificed due to the many managerial roles that consume the principal role (Peterson, 2016). As a result, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are creative in their classroom evaluations so that they can maximize the time they do have. This comes in the form of pop-ins, verbal feedback, evaluations during school tours, and reviewing tests.

Remain Up-to-Date in Knowledge of Curriculum. Effective educational leaders remain up-to-date in knowledge of curriculum through their engagement in regular reading and professional development as well as through their colleague relationships. Four principal participants shared their commitment to reading scholarly articles. Additionally, five principal participants remained committed to professional development through attendance at workshops and/or conferences. Finally, five principal participants identified their colleague relationships as avenues that help them to remain up-to-date with curriculum. Regardless of how they do it, an effective educational leadership practice of NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals is that they remain committed to their professional development. Distinguished Principals are

lifelong learners, and they enjoy sharing their passion of education with other colleagues while also learning from them.

Assess the Rigor of Academic Programs. Effective educational leaders assess the rigor of their academic programs through the analyzation of a variety of data including standardized tests and through evaluating the high school success rates of their former students. This finding supports previous works of literature that effective educational leaders should use research and data to drive curriculum and instruction (Ciriello, 1996, 1998). All NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals identified their use of standardized testing as a way to assess the rigor of their academic programs. Six principal participants also recognized other data points as ways to review the strength of their programs. Two principal participants shared their relationships with local high schools and their checking in on student progress. Distinguished principals are committed to assessing the rigor of academic programs. This analysis of their programs allows effective educational leaders to make future decisions regarding curriculum and any necessary changes that might be needed to ensure the continuance of strong academic programs.

Summary of Research Question One. Findings from this study clearly indicate that NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as instructional leaders through their collaboration with various stakeholders to ensure that students and teachers have the necessary resources they need to be successful. Distinguished leaders are committed to supporting classroom teaching and student learning through the regular evaluation of instruction and programs as well as through the regular analysis of data. These findings support those of Marks & Printy (2003) and

Blase and Blase (2000) that principals as instructional leaders **must** facilitate teacher growth through regular support, feedback, and professional development. Principal participants commented time and again that they simply do not have enough time to do everything they want in their roles as school principal. Due to the many managerial demands that suck their time away, Catholic elementary school principals must provide teachers with the necessary tools and support they need to ensure successful and rigorous classroom teaching and student learning is occurring (Lunenburg, 2013).

In their role as educational leader, Catholic elementary school principals rely on instructional and transformational leadership styles. The focused decision-making practices shared by principal participants supported Jenkins' (2009) findings that instructional leadership practices are reflected in the decisions and actions of principals that are focused around student learning. Catholic elementary school principals must constantly make decisions on how to further grow the academic programs of their schools. These decisions include deciding what materials to purchase, what communication styles to use, and what professional development to offer. Principal participants shared that due to their time constraints, their actions as educational leaders must be both direct and indirect in order to effectively support student learning (Sergiovanni, 2006). Catholic elementary school principals utilize transformational leadership practices as they attempt to inspire their colleagues to work towards a common goal and vision (Zamora, 2013). Collaboration was mentioned over and over by principal participants as an effective educational leadership practice that engages all stakeholders to work together to achieve student learning. This finding supports numerous research that has been published on transformational leadership.

Research Question 2

How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders?

Findings from this study revealed that NCEA-identified Catholic elementary school principals define spiritual leadership as modeling faith while providing opportunities to others to nurture their own faith development. Principal participants shared their effective spiritual leadership practices in terms of how they model spiritual leadership, impact the Catholic identity of the school's mission, build Catholic faith communities, and support the faith formation of their faculty and students. The effective spiritual leadership practices that were identified support the literature on spiritual leadership, specifically that spiritual leaders have a ministry to spiritually lead others through their modeling (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013). Catholic elementary school principals shared a variety of servant, authentic, and transformational leadership practices that effectively allow them to do just that.

Modeling spiritual leadership. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals model spiritual leadership through “walking the walk and talking the talk.” Seven principals shared the importance of their daily actions and words which supports the findings of Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt (2013) that spiritual leaders must model the religious aspect of their role. As the faith leader of the school, the Catholic elementary school principal sets the tone for the school's culture and Catholic identity. Distinguished leaders acknowledged that this role is not taken lightly as they recognized the effect of their practices on the students, teachers, and parents. Catholic elementary school leaders bring a moral authority to their leadership which brings “to the forefront a

form of normative rationality that places everyone subordinate to a set of ideas, ideals, and shared values and asks them to respond morally (Sergiovanni, p. 13, 2006). Setting the tone of the school by bringing the Catholic values alive through practice is essential to the success of the spiritual leader. A major spiritual leadership practice shared by NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals was the importance of being visible in the faith life of the entire parish community. Principal participants shared that they do this by attending mass regularly and by serving as a Eucharistic minister. Seven of the principal participants also acknowledged that they act as spiritual leaders by providing opportunities to others to nurture their faith formation. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals shared a variety of effective leadership practices in doing this including teaching doctrine, providing service opportunities, organizing prayer services, and providing liturgical experiences. The key to modeling spiritual leadership is being genuine and visible in all words and actions. All principal participants acknowledged the importance of sharing the Catholic faith and its traditions with those they encounter. These shared experiences allow NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals to effectively model spiritual leadership.

Impacting the Catholic identity of the school's mission. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals impact the Catholic identity of the school's mission by setting the tone of the specific culture of the school and honoring the school's roots. The identity of the elementary Catholic school rests in the spiritual leadership of the Catholic elementary school principal (Earl, 2005). Three principal participants acknowledged the importance of the tone they set. NCEA- Identified

Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders by focusing all decisions around the mission of the school and the children. Additionally, they honor the charism and early traditions of the school and parish. The history of most parish schools lies in the leadership of brothers and sisters. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals recognize the roots of their schools and place special emphasis in preserving the unique traditions of their schools.

Building Catholic faith communities. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders by building Catholic faith communities through Catholic traditions and professional development. Effective spiritual leaders should develop the faith of their faculty and students while also building community through faith celebrations and community service (Ciriello, 1996, 1998).

Five principal participants shared how they build Catholic faith communities through the shared Catholic traditions and teachings. Through shared liturgies and prayer as well as participation at traditional Catholic services such as Adoration, Stations of the Cross, and May Crowning, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as effective spiritual leaders. Additionally, five principal participants shared how they provide meaningful catechetical professional development opportunities for their faculty. Through providing meaningful professional development opportunities, distinguished leaders act as spiritual leaders who support faith formation. In their role as spiritual leader, Catholic elementary school principals display practices of servant leadership.

“The principal as minister is one who is devoted to a cause, mission, or set of ideas and accepts the duty and obligation to serve this cause” (Sergiovanni, p. 19, 2006). Catholic elementary principals gain the trust of their colleagues by proving their commitment and

devotion to the school and its mission. Forming a faith community within a school is dependent on the commitment of the Catholic school principal to serve the school and act as a servant leader to all stakeholders of the school.

Supporting the faith formation of faculty. Principal participants shared that they constantly strive to provide faith formation opportunities to their faculty members. This commitment to supporting the faith development of others supports Kaya's (2013) finding that spiritual leaders should foster an environment that provides a safe place for the development of the spiritual needs of others. Six NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals shared that they provide regular catechist training for their teachers. This focused professional development allows distinguished principals to set aside time to offer faculty members opportunity for faith formation. Principal participants shared that catechist training can be developed using a number of resources including guest speakers, prayer series, and materials provided by the local (arch)diocese. Three principal participants also shared that they act as faith leaders through providing faculty members with opportunities to be involved in Catholic traditions. Whether it be an Advent reflection, a prayer service, or a witness to Adoration, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals acknowledged the importance of providing faculty members with the opportunity to be immersed in Catholic tradition. Distinguished leaders act as faith leaders by providing opportunity for prayer. Taking time to stop the day through a PA announcement and beginning meetings in prayer are examples of how distinguished leaders encourage prayer to be a regular part of the faith formation experience of their faculty members.

Supporting the faith formation of students. Ciriello (1998) shared that the effective Catholic elementary school principal encourages, supports, and advances the faith and spiritual growth of its students, and principal participants supported the importance of this finding through their shared best practices. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals support the faith formation of students through providing Catholic experiences similar to how they do for the teachers. Additionally, four principal participants shared that they stress the importance of being a good person. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are not afraid to speak openly about their faith and what they believe that looks like through the actions and words of individuals. The constant modeling and discussion of Catholic values by spiritual leaders encourages and supports the faith formation of students.

Summary of Research Question Two. Encouraging the development of spiritual leadership skills is one of the greatest duties of the Catholic elementary school principal, and this was recognized by principal participants who placed a strong emphasis on providing various faith formation opportunities to their faculty (Moreno & Waggoner, 2010). NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders by providing opportunities to faculty and students to partake in Catholic traditions and experiences. Additionally, distinguished leaders act as spiritual leaders by modeling the lived virtues of the Catholic faith through their own words and actions. Distinguished leaders place a strong emphasis on the power of prayer, and they are not afraid to speak of their faith openly. Each principal participant shared the importance of actively, consistently, and meaningfully modeling spiritual leadership which supported

the idea that “the greatest method for passing down a person’s faith is through example” (Moreno & Waggoner, 2010).

In their role as spiritual leader, Catholic elementary school principals display characteristics of servant, authentic, and transformational leadership styles. As the model of spiritual leadership, Catholic elementary school principals take on the role of servant leader in all they do. Helping others lies at the heart of what they do, and they enrich the lives of others simply through their presence (Greenleaf, 1970, Northouse, 2010).

Catholic elementary school principals are able to gain the trust of those they serve by bringing alive the servant leader characteristics of active listening, empathy, genuine motivator, and humility (Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). Catholic elementary school principals, in their spiritual leadership role, build on their servant leadership through the meaningful incorporation of authentic leadership practices. In all of their modeling and doing, spiritual leaders must be genuine and real. The daily modeling of Catholic faith and traditions must be honest and genuine (Northouse, 2010). Principal participants shared that their success in their spiritual leadership roles comes from their awareness of who they are and their desire to be transparent with their morals (Northouse, 2010). Effective Catholic elementary school principals have a real sense of purpose and remain loyal to their morals even in the most difficult times. Through the success of their authentic and servant leadership practices, Catholic elementary school principals also bring a transformational element to their spiritual leadership. Through transformational leadership practices, they are able to inspire and motivate their subordinates to a shared commitment of upholding the Catholic traditions and values that form the foundations of their schools. Without spiritual leadership, which inevitably ties

in the religious leadership, Catholic schools risk losing their Catholic identity (Sergiovanni, 2004). Effective spiritual leadership practices are essential to ensuring that Catholic schools remain Catholic at heart.

Research Question 3

How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as managerial leaders?

Findings from this study revealed that NCEA-identified Catholic elementary school principals define managerial leadership as maintaining facilities, managing budgets and finances, and developing strategic plans. Principal participants shared their effective managerial leadership practices in terms of how they address their managerial responsibilities, maintain the operational vitality of their institution, adhere to government and (arch)diocesan policies and rules, and provide school safety. The effective managerial leadership practices that were identified support the finding that effective organizational managers can have a significant impact on their organizations (Horng & Loeb, 2010). In their role as managerial leader, Catholic elementary school principals find that no one style of leadership can be applied to all managerial tasks and challenges. Due to the wide variety of situations that managerial leaders find themselves in, Catholic elementary school principals must adapt their leadership styles to meet the demands and needs of each given situation. This necessary chameleon approach to leadership supports Hersey and Blanchard's (1976) Situational Leadership Theory.

Address Managerial Responsibilities. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals shared how they address the many managerial responsibilities they face on a daily basis. Six of the eight principal participants

identified delegation as an effective managerial leadership practice. There are simply too many managerial leadership duties that Catholic elementary principals face every day (Leonard, 2010). Simply put, Catholic elementary school principals need help. For them to be effective spiritual and educational leaders, they need to learn to delegate the managerial responsibilities. One principal participant acknowledged being more meaningful in hiring practices as a way that he can better delegate. By hiring people with the skillsets that allow him to pass on duties, he is effectively managing his responsibilities. This supports the belief of Horng and Loeb (2010) that embracing the managerial leadership role in paying special attention to being selective in hiring practices can in turn have a significant outcome on student learning. Four principal participants shared how they have a strong administrative team. There is no doubt that extra personnel support helps NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals to be effective managerial leaders. Principal participants shared how additional staff members and effective leadership teams allow them to better focus on the more important roles of the Catholic elementary school principal- namely, the spiritual and educational roles. Three principal participants shared that an important leadership practice is to make decisions. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are not afraid to make tough decisions. As the ones with the most information they often need to commit to a decision to manage their responsibilities. Being brave and making these decisions is an effective managerial leadership practice.

Operational Vitality. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as effective managerial leaders by holding regular meetings, creating short and long term goals, regularly reviewing the finances, and establishing Administrative

Teams. Though meetings take up a huge amount of the school day, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals agreed that meetings are essential to ensuring work is being done and communication is in place. When distinguished leaders delegate work they have a responsibility to stay in touch with what those they have trusted are doing. Regular meetings allow distinguished principals to keep a pulse of the school. To ensure for the operational vitality of their schools, it is also important that distinguished leaders create short and long term goals. Strategic plans allow Catholic elementary school principals to develop an ongoing vision that is centered around the mission of their schools. In their managerial role, Catholic elementary school principals must be responsible in making plans and being committed to the financial planning of their schools (Ciriello, 1998). Reviewing finances is key to these plans as well as the operational vitality of the school. Reviewing finances allows NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals to know what they have and what they need in order to turn plans into lived realities. As such, four of the principal participants recognized the need to review the finances regularly as an effective managerial leadership practice. Finally, four principal participants found that the establishment of an Administrative Team helps to stay on top of the day-to-day operations of the school. Distinguished leaders involve others in ensuring the operational vitality of their schools.

Adhere to Government Rules and Regulations. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals shared that they adhere to government rules and regulations by complying with them. Distinguished leaders act as effective managerial leaders by honoring state and national regulations and meeting all deadlines. This aligns

with Ciriello's (1996) findings that effective managerial leaders must adhere to all local and state policies.

Adhere to Archdiocese Rules and Regulations. Similarly, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals adhere to Archdiocese rules and regulations through meeting deadline and following policies (Ciriello, 1996). When it comes to policies and rules, it is pretty black and white- you follow them or you don't. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals effectively adhere to rules and regulations to the best of their abilities.

School Safety. School safety has become increasingly more popular to the many daily duties of the Catholic elementary school principal (Peterson, 2016). As the world continues to develop into a place where schools are not safe from the random crimes of the world outside its walls, principals have an increased managerial duty of ensuring school safety. It can be overwhelming knowing that "the ultimate responsibility of keeping students safe from the dangers that lurk outside the campus rests with the principal" (Peterson, p. 97, 2016). Five of the eight principal participants shared that they hold regular safety drills and have security systems with safety cameras. Additionally, four principal participants maintain an up-to-date disaster/safety plan that is regularly reviewed. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals provide effective safety plans that they review with local and federal agents. Distinguished leaders provide opportunities to practice these safety plans through regular drills.

Summary of Research Question Three. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have taken on a greater managerial leadership role in recent

years. Distinguished principals delegate duties and collaborate with others in ensuring the budget, facilities, and resources are operational and effective. Distinguished leaders comply with regulations and policies to ensure their schools are effective. Above all things NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals ensure that their schools are safe through regular safety drills and updated safety plans. Though principal participants identified effective practices in managing the various responsibilities that arise with their managerial roles, the reality is that the managerial role is unrelenting. Horng, Klasik, & Loeb (2010) found that Catholic elementary school principals spend one-fifth of their time on organizational management activities and a third of their time in administrative management tasks. Principal participants shared that the role of managerial leader has grown significantly through the years and has developed into a role that takes away from their ability to consistently serve as instructional and spiritual leader. It is here that the problem lies for the Catholic elementary school principal as managerial leader.

In order to meet the many demands that the managerial role brings with it, Catholic elementary school principals must be ready to alter their leadership style and approach at any moment. In the managerial role, principals interface with a variety of individuals including faculty, parents, students, community members, local officials, (arch)diocesan officials, and public workers. As such, they must communicate appropriately and effectively. The acknowledgement of how to move forward in different situations requires effective Catholic elementary school principals to be aware of the knowledge, commitment, and attitude of each individual (Blanchard, 1985). Weyers (2002) further supported this idea in explaining that leadership elasticity requires

a leader to be able to change the direction and style of his or her leadership to the situation and individual at hand. Effective leaders must adapt their leadership styles to meet the needs of their employees, and this leadership practice is imperative to the success of Catholic elementary school principals as they face numerous and varying responsibilities in their managerial roles.

Research Question 4

What major 21st century challenges have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced?

This research study defined 21st century challenges as the new and changing problems that require educators of this century to rethink their priorities and how to address them. All principal participants were asked, “What challenges are you currently facing as a 21st century Catholic grammar school principal?” The similar responses of principal participants helped to identify themes and the major 21st century challenges facing our leaders today.

Findings from this study revealed that NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals recognized the 21st century challenges they face to be school finances, social media and technology, meeting the increased needs of students with learning differences, enrollment and retention, and the changed family dynamic. Though NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals identified the challenges that were unique to their school communities, the challenges remained similar across the United States.

Four of the principals identified social media and technology and the many components of its implementation (i.e. financing, professional development needs, etc.)

as a major 21st century challenge. The technological advances as they relate to education have proven to be never-ending over the last few decades. Though technology can greatly enhance the learning experience of students if implemented properly, it can also prove to be a major challenge. With new social media apps being created everyday, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are faced with a never-ending list of what they need to learn. A major challenge that technology has brought with it includes the social media aspect and how students communicate with one another. Today's students have access to technology that often goes unsupervised by their parents. When students are caught using accounts inappropriately and immorally, often off school campus, it somehow becomes the school's responsibility to deal with this behavior. Principals are faced with handling unique discipline concerns that once would have been the parents issue to handle. Though a few principal participants discussed this directly, it was surprising that not all principal participants shared this due to all of the press this issue has received over the past decade.

Three principal participants discussed the challenge of meeting the needs of the increased student population of students with learning differences. More and more students are diagnosed with learning differences each year. These identified learning needs require more specialized staff in schools. Keeping up with these learning needs can be expensive as principals are required to expand their staffs and/or train their teachers who might not be equipped to provide the tools necessary to meet the unique learning needs of their students. Three principal participants discussed their challenges with enrollment and retention. Enrollment continues to be an ongoing challenge for NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals. This finding

supports the number one theme found in the Notre Dame Study of U.S. Catholic Elementary School Principals (2013) that “recruitment and retention of students are currently the most vital concerns for Catholic education” (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, p. 24, 2013). As local public schools are strengthening, it is becoming more difficult to convince families to pay for an education that they believe they could receive the equivalent of for free down the street. There are many “high-quality, local educational options in the public sector, including charter schools” that are becoming more and more appealing to parents, especially as the cost of higher education continues to rise annually (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, p. 24, 2013). Many families are choosing to enroll their children in these thriving public grammar schools as a way to further save for the inevitable costs of their children’s college years. Additionally, Catholic parents no longer feel strongly that a Catholic education is needed for their children to develop a deep faith. As a result of these two things, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have been challenged with keeping enrollment at a healthy number. Two principals acknowledged that the changing family dynamic has brought new challenges to the role of the Catholic elementary school principal. As divorce rates are increasing, parents are taking on multiple jobs, and Catholic morals are not being lived and practiced by parents, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are challenged to adapt to the additional needs of today’s Catholic elementary student.

Though principal participants did not outwardly state financial challenges when asked what major 21st century challenges they faced, they did each address this challenge throughout the data collection process. This indirect concern over finances was visible in

all areas that were discussed by principal participants. Insufficient financial resources are greatly straining schools and principals. A Catholic elementary school budget is directly linked to enrollment. Low enrollment results in less income and less money for various budget areas. The ability of the Catholic elementary school principal to meet the specific learning needs of students, to bring in needed technology and professional development, and to update and maintain school facilities is directly dependent on the school's enrollment. As principals worry about how to meet the many needs of students and how to maintain a healthy enrollment, they are faced with the ongoing challenge of how to be financially stable (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2013). Budgetary challenges plague principals and affect their daily decision making. Principal E was an anomaly in that his parish school follows a tithing model in which families are not asked to pay tuition. His thriving community is faced with the unique challenge of continuing to develop and grow. For School E, money is not an issue. The challenge that lies ahead for School E is that they must use their resources to continue to raise the bar. Knowing that they are blessed in having all the necessary resources to do this, Principal E shared that any failures in meeting their challenge is on them. His shared interview responses confirmed just how important money is to the success of a Catholic elementary school- as long as there are healthy finances, schools have ample opportunities to thrive, flourish, and grow. As such, it is imperative for Catholic elementary schools to maintain healthy budgets that allow for the sustainability of necessary programs and resources.

Finally, the the challenge of the changed family dynamic was very present throughout this research study. Though only two principal participants spoke directly to this as a specific 21st century challenge they face, other principal participants discussed

this indirectly. When Catholic elementary schools were initially developed, most children were raised with two heterosexual parents, yet this traditional family structure is not the norm today. Today's students bring with them a variety of family structures. With divorce rates at a high, many students are living in two homes as they shuffle back and forth between their parents. This divorce rate has also led to an increase in the amount of students who are living in a single parent household as well as an increase of students who are living with stepparents and stepsiblings. Divorces have increased the challenges that educators face. Educators are sometimes brought in on legal matters and can be required to refrain communication with one parent or can be asked to ensure equal communication between two guardians. Additionally, when students are coming from single parent households, there is often the challenge of the parent not being available due to the sole work schedule and parenting responsibilities.

As the family dynamic continues to change in America, Catholic educators are also seeing an increase in students who are being raised either by homosexual parents or single parents, many of whom used in vitro fertilization or surrogacy- two family dynamics that are often at the center of Catholic debates. These nontraditional family structures require Catholic educators to be sensitive to these family dynamics. Every person who works in a Catholic school must be sensitive to these situations, particularly when these topics arise in conversation and religion classes, in order to ensure that all students and their families are respected and included equally. Regardless of what Catholic doctrine says on persons who are gay or whom have a child out of wedlock, the fact that is indisputable is that each person must be looked upon as someone created in the image of God and treated as Jesus would have treated them.

Research Question 5

How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals addressed 21st century challenges?

This research study defined 21st century challenges as the new and changing problems that require educators of this century to rethink their priorities and how to address them. The responses of principal participants in principal interviews helped to identify school finances, social media and technology, meeting the increased needs of students with learning differences, enrollment and retention, and the changed family dynamic as the major 21st century challenges that our leaders are facing today.

NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals and members of their faculty identified the leadership practices that have assisted them in addressing the 21st century challenges that they face via their responses to the question “How have you effectively managed these 21st century challenges?”. The leadership practices that were identified by principal participants include increasing available support staff, being meaningful in hiring practices, developing parent education programs, and maintaining a strong pastor/principal role.

Of the eight principal participants, four of them responded to 21st century challenges by increasing the available support staff and being more meaningful in who they are hiring in relation to the skill sets these employees can bring. As the learning needs of students become more demanding, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals must shift their finances to budget for a larger personnel staff. There is a greater need today for staff members with specialized skills and training such as learning specialists and therapists. These specializations are often costly, and as

such, principals must place a greater percentage of the overall budget towards staff. These increased budget expenses cause principals to be more aware of other hiring decisions. For example, principals must be more meaningful in their hiring practices and more cognizant of the whole person whom they are hiring. This hiring practice helps principals to meet various needs of the students and school while trying to minimize the expenses. When a school has a need, for example, for a new science teacher and an after school robotics club, the ideal candidate becomes a science teacher with a robotics background who is hired as a Science Teacher and Robotics Club Moderator. These practices lead to greater expectations being placed on teachers.

Four participants also identified the development of parent education programs as solutions and responses to the changing family dynamic and their involvement expectations. Parents are in more need than ever for educational opportunities to help them in knowing how to address 21st century parenting challenges such as social media. Parent education programs that bring in guest speakers or that lead a discussion on pertinent parenting topics were identified as a way to better support parents in the parenting challenges that they face. By offering these opportunities principals are able to relieve some of the pressure parents often place on the school to manage these concerns.

NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals effectively manage their 21st century challenges by relying on the pastor/ principal relationship. All NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals acknowledged the importance of the pastor/ principal role and its relationship to effective Catholic principal leadership. The pastor and principal work together as the faith leaders of the parish and school. Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt (2013) recognized the importance of

the pastor in supporting the principal and the success of the Catholic elementary school. In order for these two bodies to be successful in ministering a shared mission, the pastor and principal must have a strong relationship that is grounded in trust and regular and honest communication. Peterson (2016) affirmed the importance of this relationship in stating that a positive pastor/principal relationship is essential to a school's success. Since the hierarchical structure of the church places the pastor in ultimate control of the parish school, the relationship between the pastor and principal becomes integral to school success. Those principals who feel most supported and trusted by their pastors are more likely to develop programs for the school as they feel a freedom in making decisions and leading the school.

Research Question 6

How are the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices?

NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals defined effective leadership as collaborating to work with one another for the common good through servant leadership and lifelong learning. Principal participants valued collaboration and recognized its importance in managing the many expectations of the position. The spirit of collaboration is an integral piece to the mission and Catholic identity of Catholic elementary schools. As such, it is valued and promoted by distinguished leaders. Additionally, all principal participants recognized the importance of their role as a learner. Through their lifelong learning, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals were able to serve as inspirations to their faculty and staff. The ability of principal participants to regularly engage in

learning opportunities has helped them to gain the respect of their peers and students. Despite how busy their schedules get, they always make time for learning, and the modeling of this helps to set the tone of the school community.

There is no doubt that colleagues have had a major impact on the leadership practices of NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals. Every principal participant acknowledged the impact early leaders had on their lives. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals were inspired by colleagues who taught them various leadership lessons. Likewise, earlier experiences with weak leaders provided them with equally important leadership lessons in what not to do. Distinguished leaders gained confidence and mentoring through their experiences with principals prior to their own principalships.

All NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals recognized their role as servant leader. Each principal participant spoke to the responsibility they play in building a faith community and modeling spiritual leadership. A common thought that tied into this responsibility was the fear that they were never doing enough in their role as spiritual leader. Many principal participants felt there was always more they should be doing as a lay leader of a Catholic school. This was a particularly interesting finding considering that all NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals had received some degree of Catholic education.

Principal participants had similar backgrounds in their experience as students of Catholic education and their feelings of not being fully prepared for the role of spiritual leader. While some NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals had attended Catholic elementary schools, others had attended Catholic higher

education, and others, Catholic leadership programs. Regardless of the level of education they received in a Catholic setting, they all had the experience of being a Catholic school student and receiving religious instruction. Despite this shared Catholic educational experience, principal participants shared that they struggled in feeling prepared for the many expectations placed on them as spiritual leaders. Instead of seeing everything they accomplished in their role of spiritual leader to be successful, many NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals focused on what more they should be doing. This self-reflection of feeling that they should be doing more in their overall roles of being Catholic elementary school principals seemed to echo throughout the various components of this research study.

Conclusions

This study revealed the complex roles of a Catholic elementary school principal, the challenges these leaders face, and the effective leadership practices that distinguished leaders use to meet the many demands and challenges of the role. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals must serve their communities as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. The various expectations of these roles add up to be exhausting and unrealistic of one person's ability (Ciriello, 1998).

As educational leaders, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals regularly collaborate with the school's various stakeholders to ensure their schools meet all student needs. This is accomplished through ongoing professional development, consistent observations, analysis of a variety of data, budgeting, and through providing access to a variety of materials. As spiritual leaders, NCEA- Identified

Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals regularly provide meaningful opportunities to their faculty and students to experience the Catholic faith while also providing them with daily examples of what faith is. This is accomplished through consistent modeling of Catholic values. Distinguished leaders provide ample opportunities for a faith life. As managerial leaders, NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals are faced with the ongoing challenge of delegating in order to maintain facilities, budgets, strategic plans, and personnel. Distinguished leaders must comply with all rules and regulations, and they must establish effective processes to ensure their schools are safe.

Each of the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals in this study acknowledged the wide range of the principal duties and the daunting responsibilities that entailed each role as well as the many 21st century challenges that they continue to face. These challenges include maintaining enrollment, managing finances, monitoring technology, meeting the increased learning needs of students, and responding to the changed family dynamic. NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals meet these challenges by seeing themselves as master teachers who are life-long learners and models of their vocations in words and deeds. At the heart of their leadership practices and their abilities to manage the many duties of their roles, lies a deep respect for and comfort in their Catholic faith and their prayer life. There is no doubt that Catholic elementary school principals have a deep commitment to their vocation and a deep love for their students and colleagues. Though the passion for and commitment to Catholic elementary school leadership is

present, the reality is that this can only sustain the position and its many expectations for so long.

The role of the Catholic elementary school principal is exhausting as it requires the leader to serve in educational, spiritual, and managerial roles. This study identified that the position of the Catholic elementary school principal has expanded over recent years as additional managerial duties have been added to the role (Peterson, 2016). These added duties have significantly impacted the Catholic elementary school principal's ability to effectively meet the needs that the three roles require. There is simply not enough time to manage the curriculum, build a faith community, and maintain the day to day managerial responsibilities. This finding supported what Peterson (2016) found in her study that focused on the minute allocations of Catholic elementary school principals in their roles as instructional, spiritual, and managerial leaders. Peterson (2016) found that 73% of the Catholic elementary school principal's work day is consumed by managerial tasks. Furthermore, she found that 47% of their work day was spent in their offices. Peterson's findings suggest that Catholic elementary school principals are only left with 27% of their day to effectively fulfill and split their educational and spiritual leadership responsibilities. The managerial role of the Catholic elementary school principal has become one that is defined by duties that take the educational leader out of the classroom and into the principal's office. Peterson's study added to the research of Horng, Klasik and Loeb (2010) who found that school principals spend a fifth of their time attending to organizational management duties and a third of their time responding to administrative managerial tasks. Simply put, this current model of the Catholic elementary school principal role is not a sustainable nor healthy model. Catholic

elementary schools need to have leaders who are available to work directly with faculty and students in ensuring a rigorous and successful curriculum while also having time to meaningfully develop the spiritual component of the school.

Recommendations

This section presents recommendations for the Catholic elementary school principal in its three roles, for (Arch)dioceses and Departments of Catholic Schools, and for future research. Recommendations are meant to encourage future conversations, action, and research so that the role of the Catholic elementary school principal can continue to be explored and supported.

When asked about the many duties that they are tasked with, many of the NCEA-Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals laughed. The job of the Catholic elementary school principal seems to be a joke to many distinguished principals in that the expectations of it are so unrealistic and that no day can ever be fully prepared for or planned. The Catholic elementary school principal's day is filled with decision making second after second as leaders take on the duties of principal, assistant principal, dean, counselor, janitor, development director, fundraiser, spiritual leader, registrar, weather reporter, nurse, learning specialist, activities director, and teacher. In my experience as a Catholic elementary school principal, most days I wake up with a plan and by 7AM that plan has already proven to be unattainable due to faculty calling in sick, newly discovered leaks in the roof, parents popping in for unscheduled meetings, toilets overflowing, immediate student social and emotional needs, and so much more. Furthermore, the expectations placed on Catholic elementary school principals are unrealistic given the education we have received.

I went to school to learn how to be a Catholic educator and administrator, yet somehow I find myself in charge of a major seismic construction project that requires me to raise close to 4 million dollars. Nowhere in my studies was I educated on how to run major capital campaigns or how to manage construction projects. At no point was I taught about hollow clay tiles and how to reinforce them, yet my job, the job of a Catholic elementary school principal, has somehow become defined by the managerial roles expected of us instead of the spiritual and educational roles our education was centered around. The managerial role of the Catholic elementary school principal is beyond overwhelming.

Catholic elementary school principals spend a majority of their day dealing with managerial duties from hiring employees and undergoing water sampling to maintaining records and staying up-to-date with labor laws. As a Catholic elementary school principal I often find myself buried in paperwork and burdened by the thought that I am not a strong principal due to my inability to get into the classroom and spend more time developing faith formation programs for the faculty, staff, students, and parents of our school community. Somehow the role of the Catholic elementary school principal has transformed into a managerial one that has added tremendous responsibility onto the leader without taking off any expectations. For the success of the Catholic elementary school principal to be maintained, something must change in the structure of Catholic elementary school leadership.

Recommendations for the Hierarchical Structure of the Catholic Elementary School

There is no doubt in my mind and the mind of my Catholic elementary principal colleagues that the tremendous expectations and responsibilities being placed on us will

only grow. If the “best of the best” principals who were awarded the NCEA Distinguished Principal Award are feeling the burden of the role, then we can only assume that those leaders who do not have natural leadership abilities must be struggling greatly. The bottom line is the position has become too much for one person regardless of how strong and confident a leader is. There is a need to re-explore how Catholic elementary schools are being run and why this same burden is not being felt by Catholic secondary schools.

Currently, the Catholic elementary school principal spends most of his or her day tending to the various managerial tasks that arise on a regular basis (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). Compared to Catholic high school principals, elementary school principals tend to have greater managerial roles placed on them. This discrepancy often arises due to the lack of support staff that results from the limited funding that is typical of Catholic elementary education. Where Catholic high school leadership personnel often includes, but is not limited to, heads of school, presidents, principals, assistant principals, deans, human resource directors, finance directors, admissions directors, marketing directors, alumni directors, and athletic directors, Catholic elementary school leadership is often under the sole discretion of the principal. Furthermore, many Catholic secondary schools structure their leadership following a President/ Principal or Head of School model. Both of these models separate the leadership roles and responsibilities between at least two main leaders; one leader takes on the educational responsibilities while the other takes on the development and financial responsibilities of the school. Together, the leaders share managerial and spiritual responsibilities. Even with this shared responsibility, there is

still significant support staff to help the leaders in their already minimized duties when compared to those of the Catholic elementary school principal.

When considering the increased managerial responsibilities placed on the Catholic elementary school principal as well as the increased need to focus on fundraising, marketing, and admissions, the president/principal structure seems to be a hierarchical structure that could be very successful in the Catholic elementary school system. By having a president, the Catholic elementary school principal would gain an equal partner who could take over many of the managerial duties that are focused on fundraising, building and grounds, and admissions. With these responsibilities removed from their workload, the Catholic elementary school principal would once again be able to focus a majority of his or her day on the educational and spiritual responsibilities that the position was traditionally created for.

Currently, the Catholic elementary school principal struggles to find time to get into the classroom. The role of the instructional leader is important to student learning and student achievement; however, the time required for Catholic elementary school principals to be effective and successful in meeting these demands is not currently achievable given the time constraints of the position (Sergiovanni, 1998). Stronge (1988) found that only one-tenth of a principal's time is spent acting as an instructional leader. Many factors including lack of time, increased managerial duties, and lack of training have led to this decreased time allocation (Flath, 1989). "The twenty-first century school leaders are finding it difficult to keep up with the pressures brought to bear on their profession," and Catholic elementary school principals simply do not have the time they

need to be consistent and effective in their educational leadership practices; however, a president-principal model could change this (Leonard, 2010, p. 1).

As Catholic schools continue to get more and more competition from their local tuition-free schools, the need for the Catholic elementary school principals to be able to be actively present and engaged in the school's curriculum and academic programs also increases. Catholic elementary schools must offer superior academic programs in order to encourage families to pay for an education they could otherwise get for free at local public schools. In order for the principal to be effective in evaluating student learning and in order for schools to continue to offer competitive and superior educational programs, the role of the Catholic elementary school principal as educational leader must be re-established. In order to do this, managerial responsibilities must be passed on to an equal leader in the school. The president/ principal model would allow the Catholic elementary school principal to be more visible in the classrooms and be more available to support the students and teachers while developing both academic and spiritual programs.

Though this model would increase the expenses of the school, the increased focus on fundraising would ultimately help the school to be more financially stable as the current structure does not offer Catholic elementary school principals the time needed to research and apply to grants and various federal resources. Though I know there are grants available to my school and though I know I should be applying to them, I simply do not have the time. If there was another me who could focus on this and reach out to various fundraising opportunities, my school would no doubt be more financially sound and the added personnel cost would therefore be well worth it.

Recommendations for Catholic Higher Education Leadership Programs

Wallace (1995) found that many lay principals are uncomfortable with the role they play as faith leader due to the overall lack of training they receive for this role. As spiritual leader the Catholic elementary school principal assumes the responsibility of leading students and faculty in faith formation (Moreno & Waggoner, 2010). For Catholic elementary school principals to do this effectively, they must have a strong understanding of Catholic pedagogy and ample opportunity to engage in their own faith formation practices. Recent studies have found that Catholic elementary school principals are lacking in formal theological education and spiritual leadership skills (Schuttloffel, 2003). This is an interesting finding considering that many Catholic elementary school principals, including this research study's participants, are former students of Catholic education. Though each level of Catholic education brings with it a varying degree and intensity of theological education, the fact is that all Catholic students should receive this in some manner. If those Catholic elementary school principals who received Catholic education do not feel prepared to meet the expectations of the spiritual leader, then what does this say about the Catholic education our Catholic schools and programs are offering? Is the Catholic education we are offering students of all ages not as successful as we think it is in providing students with formation opportunities? Is Catholic education not preparing future Catholic educational leaders? As a K-12 and higher education Catholic student, this potential finding saddens me as I have nothing but the utmost respect for Catholic education, its mission, and its educators. Most concerning to me, however, is the finding that Catholic elementary school principals do not feel

prepared despite their attendance at Catholic leadership programs that set out to develop the Catholic leader.

As a graduate of Catholic leadership programs at both the masters and doctoral levels, I do not feel my education came close to preparing me for my role as a **Catholic** leader. I learned about leadership styles and theories, but I did not learn how to develop and live out spiritual leadership. I learned about the importance of community, but I did not learn how to meaningfully build a faith community. Though a variety of leadership areas were discussed throughout my Catholic leadership education, there was no depth to my education in terms of how to be a successful **Catholic** leader.

Catholic programs must honestly reflect on the courses they are offering to ensure the end result is aligned to the education their program descriptions promise to deliver. In order to fully understand if the leadership programs are successful, Catholic elementary school principals must be given a voice in the creation of higher education leadership programs. We know what we need, yet no one is asking us. Not only do we know what we need, we want what we need. If programs listened to Catholic elementary school principals and made changes to better support current and promising Catholic elementary school leaders, programs would be more successful and enrollment would increase.

“Formation is indispensable; without it, the school will wander further and further away from its objectives” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, §79). There is an immediate need for Catholic universities and Church leadership to address this issue and to develop meaningful programs, courses, and /or trainings that allow Catholic elementary school principals to both learn more about their role as spiritual

leader and to engage in faith formation practices that can be shared with students and faculty. Catholic educational leaders deserve access to programs that can help them to gain the confidence and knowledge needed for them to be successful leaders in their roles.

Recommendations for (Arch)dioceses and the Department of Catholic Schools

Under the current leadership structure, Catholic elementary school principals are in need of greater support, and the natural place for that to come from is the top. There is a need at the local level for (arch)dioceses to provide their Catholic elementary school principals with increased support. Until Church leadership establishes guidelines and formation in spiritual leadership, local (arch)diocese should look at offering these opportunities to their respective Catholic elementary school principals. These opportunities should include a focus on defining spiritual leadership and what these practices look like in action. Suggestions include:

- Development of a spiritual leader formation curriculum
- Monthly newsletters that share various practices that encourage faith formation

The importance of the pastor/principal role to the effectiveness of a school is undeniable. Nuzzi, Holter & Frabutt (2013) affirmed this by recognizing the pastor as being necessary to a Catholic school's very existence. Pastors play a critical role in the success of Catholic elementary schools, and their outward support of Catholic schools is needed for this success. I have witnessed the importance of this role time and again through my own relationship with my pastor compared to those of my colleagues with their pastors. I am blessed to have a pastor that trusts me wholeheartedly and is willing to collaborate with me on anything. My pastor has given me his blessing to build programs

and to be creative, and as a result, my school has grown. On the other hand, I have heard stories of pastors who clip the wings of their principals by questioning everything they do and forcing them to get approval for the tiniest purchases and decisions. Though the principal who receives less support from his or her pastor shares the same love for Catholic education, their ability and even their zeal in making change is remarkably decreased due to the lack of pastor/principal partnership. The unique relationship between the pastor and principal must be positive and strong as this relationship guides the Catholic elementary school, and as such, the (arch)dioceses should care about developing the pastor/principal relationship. (Arch)dioceses should explore how to better support and foster the growth and development of this relationship on a **consistent** basis.

Suggestions include:

- Annual pastor/ principal retreats
- Exploration of best practices in the pastor/principal roles
- Quarterly pastor/principal formation meetings

The importance of having a principal mentor to learn from is critical to the confidence and effective leadership practices of Catholic elementary school principal leaders. Each principal participant acknowledged the tremendous influence mentors had on their leadership styles, and this should be acknowledged and affirmed. In my own educational career, I have been blessed to work with inspiring leaders who took chances on me and encouraged me into a career of Catholic educational leadership. The impact my mentors have played in my personal and professional life is tremendous, and at times, it was these relationships that gave me the support and courage to continue when faced with the greatest challenges. (Arch)dioceses should recognize the importance of mentors

and provide opportunities for principals to share effective strategies with one another.

Suggestions include:

- Time to share best practices during principal meetings
- Development of a mentorship program that places principals in their first five years of a principalship role with those who have at least ten years of experience as a principal

The role of the elementary school principal is never-ending. Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt (2013) affirmed that the role of the Catholic elementary school principal is consistently demanding due to responsibilities that are overwhelming and unending. The current governance of Catholic elementary schools must be re-evaluated to ensure more realistic job responsibilities are created. For this to happen there is a need for (arch)dioceses to better understand the challenges their local elementary school leaders are facing. Until a new governance structure is established, (arch)dioceses must explore the current resources that could be shared and assist in building partnerships between Catholic elementary and secondary schools. The Catholic elementary school I work for is surrounded by no less than four Catholic secondary schools. Each of these schools has a counseling staff, campus ministry teams, students looking to fulfill service hours, and more. There is no reason why we should not be partnering more with one another to receive additional support and resources for our Catholic school students. Greater support from (arch)dioceses could significantly alter the support and resources the Catholic elementary schools receive. Suggestions include:

- Confidential survey focused on identifying the major challenges local Catholic elementary school principals face

- Evaluation of school site resources and personnel to determine if there are shared staffing opportunities
- List of resources available to Catholic elementary schools through local Catholic high schools

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for Future Research that Replicates this Research Study.

There is a need to continue to explore the specific leadership practices of Catholic elementary school principals. Refining the methodology to include school-site observations and analysis of principal-developed documents is recommended in order to better understand specific leadership practices and what they look like in practice. Future research should consider introducing a list of leadership practices that are put into a survey to better compare and contrast the many leadership practices of distinguished principal leaders. Finally, a larger sample size is encouraged to gain additional data points for analysis.

The continued exploration of the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory in its relationship to Catholic elementary educational leadership can help to provide important information to Catholic elementary school principals as they balance the many expectations placed on them in their unique roles as spiritual leader, educational leader, and managerial leader. Further research is needed to understand how decision-making puts this theory into practice. Specifically, future research should focus on how principals “triage” their work and how principals can be supported in their decision-making dilemmas.

Recommendations for Future Research in the Spiritual Role of the Catholic Elementary School Principal.

There is a need for further research in spiritual leadership as it relates to the Catholic elementary school principal role. An in-depth study of what defines spirituality and the role it plays in Catholic educational leadership is essential to ensure that the Catholic elementary school principal's spiritual role is defined, developed, and supported. There is a need to look at how a spiritual leader encourages faith formation in the six areas of faith formation identified by the Church and how this formation is put into practice (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998; USCCB, 2005b).

Though there was not enough data to support a conclusion that the age of a Catholic elementary school principal affects his or her understanding of and confidence in spiritual leadership, future research is needed to explore this possible age correlation. As the baby boomer generation continues to retire there is a need for a new generation of leaders. To deepen the understanding of the spiritual leadership needs of these future leaders, additional research is encouraged to identify how different generations understand the Catholic teachings and traditions and how these relate to their role as spiritual leader and their leadership practices.

Recommendations for Future Research in the Managerial Role of the Catholic Elementary School Principal.

Further research is needed to explore the managerial role of Catholic elementary school principals. Compared to Catholic high school principals, Catholic elementary school principals have greater managerial roles placed on them due to a lack of support staff that results from the limited funding that is typical of Catholic elementary education. The

contrast between the leadership pools is daunting and brings to light the need for future research on the governance of Catholic elementary schools. Special attention should be paid to comparing and contrasting the leadership role and expectations placed on both the Catholic elementary school leader and the Catholic high school leader. A comparison study of Catholic elementary school principals and Catholic high school principals in their time spent on managerial duties could better identify this personnel discrepancy. Furthermore, this research could help to encourage changed leadership models at the Catholic elementary school level that would allow the Catholic elementary school principals to have more time to act in their spiritual and instructional leadership roles.

Recommendations for Future Research in Catholic Leadership Programs.

Further research of Administrative Credential and Educational Leadership Programs is needed to better understand how programs prepare Catholic elementary principals for their leadership roles. Research that compares these programs as they are offered by public, private, and Catholic colleges can help to identify what programs better prepare educators for a future in Catholic elementary school leadership. As a graduate of Catholic leadership masters and doctoral programs, I do not feel my education prepared me for my role. Though areas were discussed, there was a depth to my curriculum that was missing. A national research study should focus on the various programs that exist and how their graduates feel in their preparation for their many leadership roles.

Recommendations for Future Research in Defining 21st Century Challenges.

Further research is needed on a larger scale to evaluate and define the 21st century challenges that elementary school principals face. Research in this area is needed at both

the local (arch)diocese level and a national level. Local research on this can help (arch)dioceses to better understand the challenges their respective Catholic elementary school principals are facing. Continued exploration of the needed resources and support for elementary school principals to be effective is essential to understanding how best to support these leaders.

Concluding Remarks

The role of the Catholic elementary school principal is an exhausting and overwhelming one. With spiritual, managerial, and educational leadership roles and expectations, the Catholic elementary school principal faces many responsibilities, and it appears that these expectations are only becoming more and more demanding as the list of duties continues to grow.

As a Catholic elementary school principal I feel very confident in making the bold statement that the Catholic elementary school principal position is near impossible as it is filled with unrealistic expectations that cannot be fulfilled in an 8 hour work day let alone a 24 hour day. The vast array of duties leaves me constantly feeling like I am failing or disappointing others. Even though I know I am for the most part successful in my role, the inability to complete my never-ending to do list leaves me constantly feeling like a failure, and this is not a sustainable model. Constantly feeling anxious and struggling to live out the work-life balance I try so hard to promote to my colleagues and students is beyond frustrating.

Catholic elementary school principals are constantly juggling the many spiritual, managerial, and educational expectations placed on them, yet they find themselves with less and less time to focus on what matters the most to them. The managerial role has

quickly become the main focus of the Catholic elementary school principal's work day. As Catholic leaders are finding themselves stuck behind their desks to keep up to date with the managerial expectations of their role, they are unable to effectively serve their students, faculty, and school as educational and spiritual leaders. For Catholic elementary schools to remain true to their Catholic roots and committed to their promise of offering a successful educational program, something must change.

There is an immediate need to further study the role and the expectations placed on the Catholic elementary school principal. It is critical that this role be looked at through the lens of "is this a viable role for the long-term success and sustainability of Catholic elementary education?" In its current state, burnout, frustration, and isolation will be the face of Catholic elementary school principals, and the focus on fostering the Catholic identity of the school will be lost amid stacks of papers and meeting deadlines. The urgent need to re-evaluate the expectations placed on the Catholic elementary school principal is even furthered when looking at the many 21st century challenges that current Catholic elementary leaders are facing.

Enrollment, finances, marketing, technology needs, social media, changing family dynamics, and perceptions on Catholics are some of the many challenges that Catholic elementary school principals identified as major areas of concern that they are facing. Though there are effective leadership practices that can help to manage and address these challenges, the reality is that there is not enough time for Catholic elementary school principals to commit to meeting these needs given the current job description of the Catholic elementary school principal and the traditional governance structure of Catholic elementary schools.

There is no doubt that Catholic elementary school principals believe their leadership role is a vocation that they are called to. This belief is what most likely has allowed the apparent failing structure to continue unchanged and not prioritized as long as it has. Despite the known weaknesses of the role and expectations, Catholic elementary school principals remain committed to their duties as they are rooted in their Catholic faith. Catholic elementary school principals share a genuine passion and love of serving their communities, and they remain loyal to the challenge their faith calls them to serve. Regardless of how committed and successful these Catholic leaders strive to be, they cannot help but to find themselves regularly overwhelmed by the sheer amount of expectations placed on them.

For Catholic elementary school principals to be successful, they must receive additional support from Church leadership, be offered continued renewal and professional growth opportunities, and have realistic expectations placed on them. Catholic elementary schools must find a sustainable governance model that allows Catholic elementary school principals to be successful in building faith-based academic programs and communities that honor and cherish Catholic traditions for years to come.

As a Catholic elementary school principal who is facing the challenges and the frustrating feelings that are discussed in this research paper, I must share that greater than my exhaustion and frustrations are my feelings of sadness. When I try to encourage others to consider a position as a Catholic elementary school principal, they laugh at me or look at me like I am crazy. Why would anyone want to take on the role that they see is near impossible? The greatest tragedy in this downward spiral of the Catholic elementary school principal position is that the beauty of the position is being tainted by the

workload. Nobody wants it, and it is evident in the lack of qualified candidates each year as pastors struggle to fill Catholic elementary school principal positions.

The Catholic elementary school principal is a noble career that brings joy like no other career I can think of. The impact a distinguished Catholic elementary school principal can have on students, parents, and colleagues is immeasurable. A solution must be identified to ensure this position remains and that Catholic elementary schools survive. Without a committed effort to address the needs of Catholic elementary school principals, the future of Catholic elementary education is at risk as schools will be forced to close due to unqualified leaders leading poorly or the overall lack of leaders.

As someone who was raised in the Catholic educational system and who has committed my life to the system, this is simply an unacceptable possibility. As Catholics we are taught to have faith and to discern our troubles, and while I fully believe we must lean on these beliefs, I also believe that we must act with greater, if not immediate, urgency. We are at a critical point in Catholic elementary education.

As the Baby Boomer generation is retiring we are facing an unprecedented teacher shortage of which we can only imagine the impact. As public schools are preparing to combat this shortage with increased benefits and bonuses, Catholic education risks losing educators to the public sector. As generations of Catholics are turning away from the church, the pool of potential Catholic educators who are more focused on the vocation than the pay continues to decrease. We are at a critical point in Catholic education, and without proper leadership, our Catholic educational systems are at risk.

For the mission of Catholic education to thrive, it must survive. We must address the unbalanced expectations placed on our Catholic elementary school leaders and re-evaluate how to support them through increased support staff and updated governance structures. The Catholic Church, its leaders, and its educators must come together with thoughtful urgency to discern, discuss, and act to ensure the work of our past Catholic educators continues for the centuries to come.

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APPENDIX A- LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Principal
Name of School
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Principal,

My name is Natalie Cirigliano, and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco working under Dr. Patricia Mitchell.

The purpose of my research study is to explore the life experiences and leadership practices of distinguished elementary Catholic school principals formally recognized by NCEA through its Distinguished Principal Award. The study seeks to identify what leadership practices these distinguished leaders have demonstrated in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study seeks to identify the major 21st century challenges that the NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have faced and how they have addressed them.

As an NCEA Distinguished Principal Award recipient, I am seeking your participation in my research study. Data will be collected through an online questionnaire and in person through interviews and on site shadow observations. Additionally I request your permission to hold a faculty focus group on your campus.

All information gathered will be anonymous and confidential. Principal, faculty, and school names will not be used.

I am excited about this study, and am hopeful that you are willing to be a participant. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at 650-245-1381 or ncirigliano@holynamesf.com. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of San Francisco, which monitors and protects volunteers involved in research projects. The email is IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

Thank you for your attention and I hope you will agree to participate in the study. I will contact you in the next week to see if you are interested.

Sincerely,

Natalie Cirigliano

APPENDIX B- INITIAL PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE

General Questions

1. What do you consider your leadership strengths to be?
2. What do you consider your leadership areas for growth to be?
3. What is your definition of effective leadership?
4. Do you consider your leadership style to be effective with those you interact with such as a) the pastor, b) the faculty and staff, c) the students, d) the parents, and e) school board members?
5. Please give an example of how your leadership style has been effective with each of the shareholders you interact with: a) pastor, b) the faculty & staff, c) the students, d) parents, and e) school board members.
6. What educational experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
7. What family experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
8. What personal experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
9. What professional experiences do you perceive have had a major impact on your leadership style, in general?
10. What factors have contributed to the leadership style that you utilize, in general?
11. In what ways has the Department of Catholic Schools in your respective (arch)diocese supported your leadership development?

12. What leadership practices do you consider to be most important to your effectiveness as a Catholic elementary school principal?

APPENDIX C- INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**Instructional Leader**

1. What does “Instructional Leadership” mean to you? Specifically, what do you perceive its components to be?
2. How do you support classroom teaching?
3. How do you support student learning?
4. How do you evaluate classroom instruction?
5. How do you remain up-to-date in your knowledge of curriculum?
6. How do you evaluate the rigor of your school's academic programs?

APPENDIX D- SPIRITUAL LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**Spiritual Leader**

1. What does “Spiritual Leadership” mean to you? Specifically, what do you perceive its components to be?
2. How do you model spiritual leadership in your school?
3. How does your spiritual leadership impact the Catholic identity of your school’s mission.
4. How do you build the Catholic faith community at your school?
5. How do you nurture faith formation in your faculty?
6. How do you nurture faith formation in your students?

APPENDIX E- MANAGERIAL LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Managerial Leader

1. What does “Managerial Leadership ” mean to you? Specifically, what do you perceive its components to be?
2. How do you address the many managerial responsibilities within your school as it is?
3. How do you address the four National Standards regarding their school’s
 OPERATIONAL VITALITY:(a) Long-term financial/fiscal planning (b)
 Published compliance policies for expectations, responsibilities, and
 accountability (c) Long-term planning regarding facilities, equipment, &
 technology Institutional advancement plans?
4. How do you adhere to the rules and regulations placed on you by the government?
5. How do you adhere to the rules and regulations placed on you by the
 (Arch)Diocese?
6. How do you ensure that your school is safe?

**APPENDIX F- PRINCIPAL 21st CENTURY CHALLENGES INTERVIEW
QUESTIONS**

21st Century Challenges

1. What challenges are you currently facing as a 21st century Catholic grammar school principal?
2. How have you effectively managed these 21st century challenges?
3. What support/ resources do you need in order to effectively manage the 21st century challenges?

APPENDIX G- FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How does your principal act as an instructional leader?
2. How does your principal act as a spiritual leader?
3. How does your principal act as a managerial leader?
4. How does your principal respond to 21st century challenges?

APPENDIX H- INTERVIEW VALIDATION RUBRIC

Interview Validation Rubric

Criteria	Operational Definitions	Score			
		1- Somewhat Effective (some modifications needed) 2- Effective (no modification needed but could be improved with minor changes) 3- Highly Effective (no modifications needed)			
		Initial Principal Questionnaire	Principal Questions- First Interview	Principal Questions- Second Interview	Focus Group
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions are specific Questions are clear 				
Wording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions are concise Questions are asked in a positive tone 				
Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions are unbiased Questions do not encourage a certain answer 				
Use of Technical Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of technical language is minimal The use of technical language is appropriate 				
Application to the role of the Catholic school principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions appropriately relate to the role of the Catholic elementary school principal The questions appropriately 				

	relate to the duties of the Catholic elementary school principal				
Relationship to Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The questions will allow the researcher to answer the research questions • The questions will allow the researcher to obtain the purpose of the study 				

Comments and Suggestions:

APPENDIX I- VALIDATION PANEL LETTER

Dear _____,

I hope this email finds you well. I am reaching out in hopes that you might be willing to serve on the Validation Panel for the interview questions I have created for my dissertation research.

Attached are the questions that I plan to ask the participants (Catholic elementary school principals) as well as the Interview Validation Rubric that you can use in your evaluation of the questions I have designed.

Below you can find the purpose of my research study as well as the research questions I will be investigating.

If you are able and willing to help, please return the attached Interview Validation Rubric to me by Monday, April 24th.

Thank you in advance for your help in validating the questions for my research study. I value your expertise and experience in Catholic Educational Leadership, and I look forward to reading your comments and suggestions.

Thanks,

Natalie

APPENDIX I- VALIDATION PANEL LETTER

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my research study is to explore both the life experiences (personal and educational) and the leadership practices of two distinguished elementary Catholic school principals formally recognized by NCEA through its Distinguished Principal Award. The study seeks to identify what leadership practices these distinguished leaders have demonstrated in their roles as educational leaders, spiritual leaders, and managerial leaders. Additionally, this study seeks to identify the major 21st century challenges that the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have faced and how they have addressed them. Finally, this study seeks to identify what the eight NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals have in common.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be investigated in order to examine the successful leadership qualities of NCEA- identified distinguished Catholic elementary school principals.

1. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as educational leaders?
2. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as spiritual leaders?
3. How do NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals act as managerial leaders?
4. What major 21st century challenges have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals faced?
5. How have NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals addressed 21st century challenges?
6. How are the two NCEA- Identified Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Principals similar in their backgrounds and leadership practices?