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A Standards-Based Approach to Catholic Principal Preparation: A Case Study

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Illinois' recent redesign of the principal certification program requires the integration of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure (ISLLC) standards as well as the Southern Regional Education Board Critical Success Factors standards into the coursework and internship, establishing a focus on preparation for instructional leadership. The alignment to secular standards poses a challenge for Catholic institutes of higher education who seek to prepare aspiring Catholic school principals to be instructional, managerial, and faith leaders (Ciriello, 1994). During their own redesign, Loyola University Chicago utilized the National Standards and Benchmarks of Effective Catholic Schools to create Catholic School Principal Competencies, a list of skills that principals will need in order to effectively lead a Catholic school. The Catholic School Principal Competencies are embedded in course work, field experiences, and the internship. Other program features including coaching from veteran principals and frequent reflection allow the candidates to gain confidence as well-rounded Catholic school leader. Collaboration with other Catholic universities will help to solidify the Catholic School Principal Competencies and further streamline their integration into the program.

Keywords

principal preparation, leadership, principals, standards, Catholic schools

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (2006) issued the following statement on the importance of Catholic schools and the need for universities to continue to prepare qualified teachers and leaders for the schools:

We must provide a sufficient number of programs of the highest quality to recruit and prepare our future diocesan and local school admin-

istrators and teachers so that they are knowledgeable in matters of our faith, are professionally prepared, and are committed to the Church. These programs will require even more active involvement and cooperation by our Catholic colleges and universities in collaboration with the diocesan educational leadership. (p. 272)

As Catholic school leadership continues to transition from religious to lay with religious or clergy representing only 2.8% of the teaching staff in Catholic schools (McDonald & Schultz, 2014), the Church has acknowledged the need to develop principal preparation programs that intentionally cultivate the candidates as spiritual leaders (USCCB, 2006). Furthermore, the professional expectations of the job have been ever-increasing, including analysis of instructional data, responsiveness to individual learners, teacher evaluation, financial management, and community partnerships (Rieckhoff, 2014) The Catholic school principal needs to have the skills and competencies to be the faith-based instructional leader (Ciriello, 1994).

Concurrently, the State of Illinois has recognized the need for improvement in principal preparation. Research documented the lack of quality of principal preparation programs (Levine, 2005) and Illinois principals reported feeling ill-prepared (White & Agarwal, 2011). The state responded by rewriting the requirements for principal preparation so as to align with the expanded professional expectations of the job. The new law (Illinois Public Act 96-0903) detailed a more rigorous program with a strong emphasis on leading public, or nonreligious, schools. All universities in the state had to redesign their principal preparation program to comply with the new legislation. The redesign process was demanding for all universities, yet Loyola University Chicago, a Jesuit-Catholic institution, took on a greater challenge. How can institutions of higher education create a Catholic principal preparation program that abides by state mandates while fulfilling its obligation to the Church to prepare mission-driven leaders?

The Illinois Story

Even before Levine's (2005) report on the poor state of principal preparation across the nation, the State of Illinois had begun investigating the redesign of programs leading to certification for the principalship. In Illinois, the Type 75 general administrative certificate had been the requirement for becoming a building principal in a public school and the preferred requirement

for the principalship in the Catholic school for the past several decades. This certificate, however, was not specific to the principalship and allowed educators to serve in various administrative capacities including athletic directors, department chairs, and special education directors. The number of educators holding Type 75 certificates far outnumbered principal positions. In 2012, there were 43,568 people holding a current Type 75 license while there were only 3,754 principal positions in the state (Center for the Study of Education Policy, 2013). Because of the broad scope of the certificate, the preparation programs were not addressing the specific skills, knowledge, and dispositions that could lead to being a successful school principal. In fact, more than half of the principals surveyed by the Illinois Education Research Council listed instructional tasks as a very important part of their job yet less than one-third rated themselves as effective in this area (White & Agarwal, 2011).

The incongruence between the Type 75 process and the specific skills and dispositions of effective principals prompted the Illinois state legislature to investigate redesigning the administrative certificate to make it role-specific. A task force was commissioned in 2007 to develop an action plan for improving principal preparation in the state (Baron & Haller, 2014). The recommendations of the task force included requiring “specific preparation for school improvement through instructional leadership” (Illinois School Leader Task Force, 2008, p. 7) to include rigorous standards for preparation programs, university-district partnerships, and oversight and on-going assessment of the programs (Baron & Haller, 2014).

Redesign efforts led to the passage of Illinois Public Act 96-0903 in May of 2010, which has been lauded as innovative and exemplary (Baron & Haller, 2014). In fact, the recently released University Council for Educational Administration’s (UCEA) Policymaker’s Guide for principal preparation and licensure (Anderson & Reynolds, 2015) identified Illinois as one of only two states in the country whose legislation includes all five of the research-based high leverage policies defining a high-quality program: program standards, explicit selection process, clinically rich internship, university-district partnership, and program oversight (Figure 1).

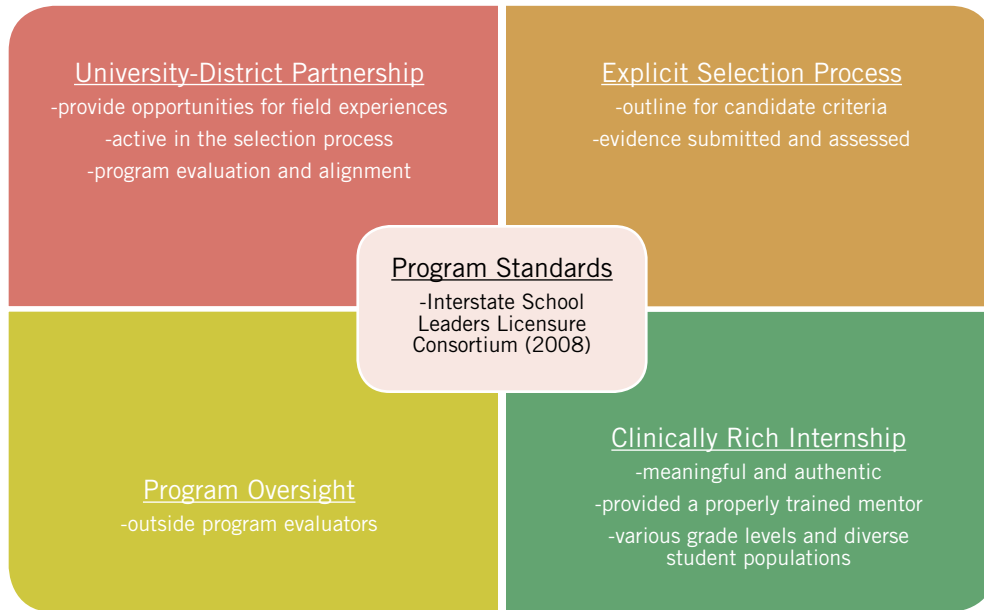


Figure 1. Illinois's high leverage policies for principal preparation adapted from Anderson & Reynolds (2015).

Requirements of Principal Preparation Programs in Illinois

The passage of the new preschool through 12th-grade Principal Endorsement enacted in 2010 mandated that all preparation programs throughout the state apply for program approval under the new requirements. The key elements of the law intentionally correlate with evidence-based practices for effective leadership development (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007), therefore aligning with UCEA's high-leverage policies. The Illinois Principal Endorsement includes the following high leverage policies, as cited in Title 23 of the Illinois School Code, Part 30:

- *Program standards.* It is a requirement for all programs to meet the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (2008) standards as well as utilize the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) 13 Critical Success factors and 36 related competencies to assess the on-going development of the candidates. The candidate must complete a leadership task

aligned with each competency and be assessed as “meeting the standard” in order to complete the internship.

- *Explicit selection process.* The approved selection process must include the submission of a portfolio with artifacts of the candidate’s achievements, an interview with two full-time faculty members in which the portfolio and a written response are reviewed.
- *Clinically rich internship.* Each candidate must participate in an internship at one or more school sites. The experiences must include—but are not limited to—instructional leadership activities, engagement with all grade levels (PreK–12) and diverse populations with various needs, and fostering community and stakeholder relationships. The focus of the internship must be on instruction, and therefore may not include activities such as supervising students during recess. Candidates are assigned a mentor principal within the school as well as a faculty supervisor who provides feedback and support.
- *University–district partnership.* An agreement must be signed between the university and district with details regarding each entity’s role in candidate selection, internship and field experiences opportunities, mentor training, as well as program evaluation for continued improvement.
- *Program oversight.* The main source of oversight for the program is the Illinois State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board. In order to receive program approval, the universities need to provide evidence that the program is aligned with state regulations, which include admissions requirements, course syllabi, assessments and rubrics, and documents to track the progress of SREB Critical Success Factors and competencies. Approved programs are reviewed on a regular basis.

Catholic Principal Preparation Program-Loyola University Chicago

Like many of the principal preparation programs across the state of Illinois, Loyola University Chicago responded to the new state legislation by redesigning its Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Administration and Supervision and Principal Endorsement. The elements of the redesigned program, which will be expanded upon in later sections, included comprehensive alignment to the ISLLC standards and SREB Critical Success Factors, the integration of a two-year internship, and intensive on-site coaching. Prior to the redesign, Loyola University Chicago had sponsored several cohorts

of Catholic school principal candidates within the M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision. Courses and requirements were identical to those of non-Catholic cohorts, yet, by taking classes together, the candidates from Catholic schools were able to share common experiences. As the needs of the Catholic cohorts of school leaders were considered in light of the new Illinois state principal preparation regulations, the decision was made to create a separate, yet aligned, Catholic Principal Preparation Program (CPPP). This comprehensive cohort program is specific to candidates currently serving in Catholic schools and committed to leading Catholic schools in the future. The Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education (GCCE), a division of the School of Education at Loyola University that supports the mission of Prekindergarten–12th grade Catholic education, led the development of the CPPP and currently manages and supports the program.

Rooting the Program in Standards

Illinois state regulations require that principal preparation programs utilize the ISLLC standards (2008) and SREB Critical Success Factors to anchor programs by embedding the standards in coursework, field experiences, and the internship. Standards are effective at providing a clear description of the role of the principal, an organizational frame to the program (Manna, 2015), and a means for assessment. However, in the early stages of program development of the CPPP, GCCE faculty noted the incomplete nature of the ISLLC standards and SREB Critical Success Factors when considering the role of the Catholic school principal.

The role of the Catholic school principal has been defined as being an educational leader, a managerial leader, and a faith leader (Ciriello, 1994). Yet the ISLLC standards and SREB Critical Success Factors do not equally represent these three categories. Educational leadership is highly represented in both sets of standards, with three out of six ISLLC standards and eight out of thirteen SREB Critical Success Factors relating to instructional leadership. Managerial leadership is also represented, with two ISLLC standards and four SREB Critical Success Factors devoted to this part of the principal's job. The remaining two standards do not directly relate to the principal as a faith leader but do reference acting with integrity and fairness (ISLLC 5) and creating a school culture in which staff value and care for each student (SREB CSF 4).

The principal as faith leader is essential to upholding the Catholic iden-

tivity of the school. Faith leadership includes establishing structures to ensure high-quality religious instruction, sacramental preparation and participation, and Church traditions and cultural celebrations (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). Equally important as managing the religious aspects of the school, Catholic school principals must be models to the community so that their attitude and actions transmit the Gospel message and the values and beliefs of the Catholic school (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). Given the transition from religious to lay leadership in Catholic schools, explicit faith formation is increasingly important. Preservice leaders may not have experienced Catholic schooling themselves and may have limited participation in Catholic rituals (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

The ISLLC standards and SREB Critical Success Factors list many valuable indicators of success that apply to both public and Catholic school principals, and Illinois state law mandates that principal preparation programs align to these standards. However, the ISLLC standards, by their very nature, do not address the Catholic principal's role as faith leader and address some, but not all, of the unique responsibilities within educational and managerial leadership. Considering this disconnect, how can Loyola University Chicago, an institution of Catholic higher education, ground the CPPP in standards that would be representative of the necessary skills and responsibilities of a Catholic school principal while meeting the legal mandates to lead candidates to licensure?

National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools and the Catholic School Principal Competencies

Although not specifically a set of leadership standards, The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools (NSBECS) can offer guidance for the development of necessary skills and competencies relevant to the development of the Catholic school administrator. NSBECS presents a holistic view of the policies and practices that should be in place in Catholic schools in the areas of mission and Catholic identity, governance and leadership, academic excellence, and operational vitality (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2013). NSBECS was designed through a two-year collaboration among stakeholders from PK–12 Catholic schools, the Church, diocesan offices, universities, educational networks and partnerships, and funders (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2013). The purpose was to develop a universal set of characteristics and criteria to define how “mission-driven, program ef-

fective, well-managed, and responsibly governed Catholic schools operate” (Ozar & Weitzel-O’Neill, 2012, p. VI). Of all four domains, governance and leadership are central and determine the level of success in all other areas (Ozar & Weitzel-O’Neill, 2013). Therefore, a strong principal must possess an understanding of all of the standards of excellence as well as the skills to lead school improvement across all four domains.

The NSBECS describe effective school functioning and are not specific to the skills and responsibilities of the principal. The faculty of the GCCE, in collaboration with the veteran Catholic school principals acting as coaches in the program, examined each standard and benchmark and determined the requisite skills and experiences the candidates would need to gain in order to meet the standard of excellence. For example, the NSBECS Standard 3 states, “An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice” (Ozar & Weitzel-O’Neill, 2012, p. 6). The GCCE team then explicitly defined actions necessary to achieve this standard, such as having the ability and confidence to “lead the community in worship, prayer, and service” (Catholic School Principal Competencies 1.3).

The result was the Catholic School Principal Competencies (Figure 2), a list of skills and competencies of a Catholic school principal that are linked directly to the NSBECS. These competencies articulate the unique responsibilities of the Catholic school principal due not only to the faith-based mission but also to differences in governance, staffing, and funding structures. To illustrate how the Catholic School Principal Competencies accurately reflect the responsibilities of the Catholic school principal, there are six competencies under the domain of Operational Vitality: developing long-term and short-term financial plans, creating a comprehensive development plan, developing marketing and enrollment strategies, accessing public funds, and facility management. The ISLLC and SREB Critical Success Factors do not include any mention of development, marketing or enrollment; they make limited reference to financial and facility management. The Catholic School Principal Competencies illuminate the important differences between public and Catholic school leadership and provide direction for all aspects of Loyola’s Catholic Principal Preparation Program.

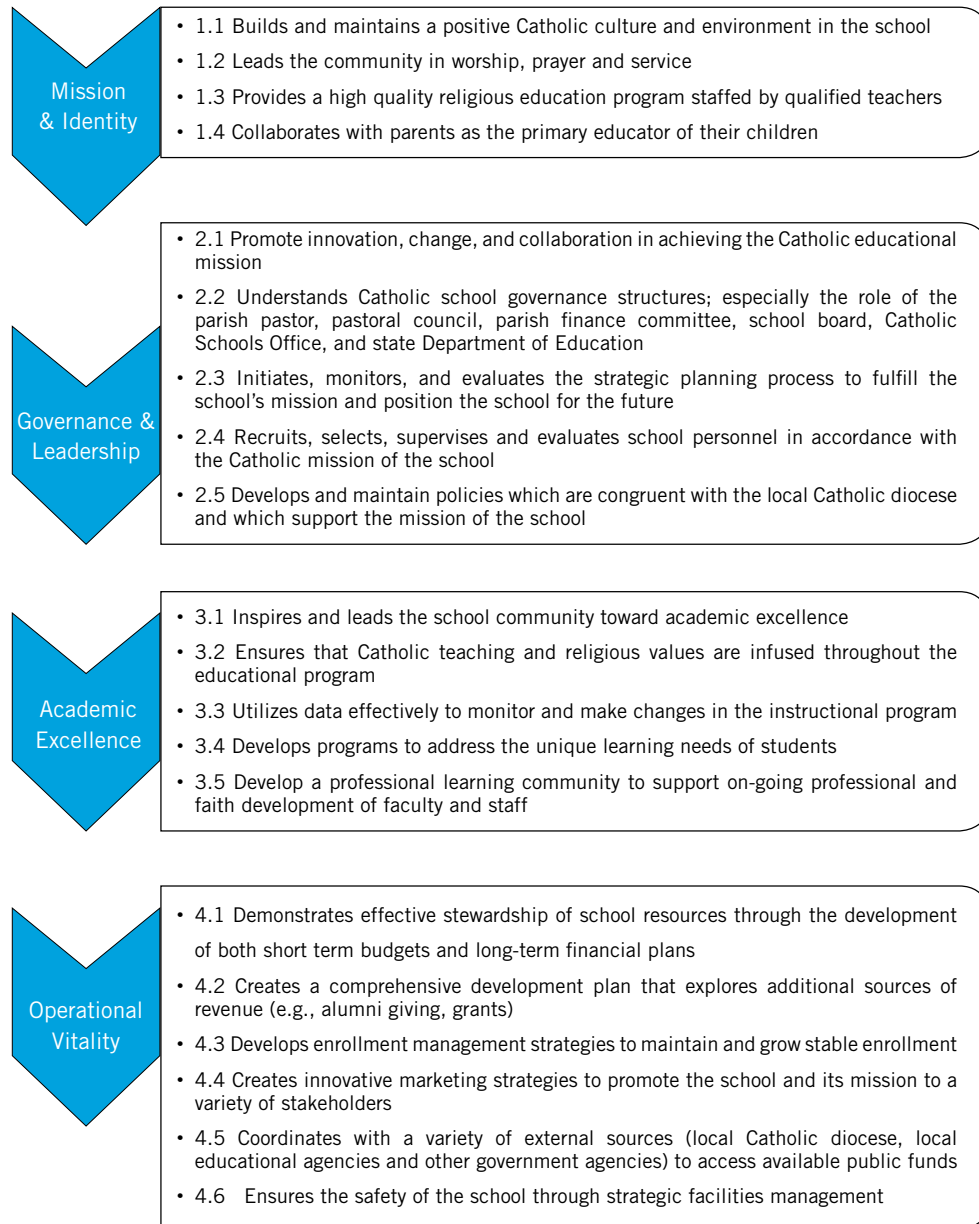


Figure 2. Loyola's Catholic School Principal Competencies (Boyle, Morten, & Guerin, 2013).

Standards-Aligned Program Development

The Catholic School Principal Competencies are the anchor of Loyola's CPPP. The GCCE team worked to align all aspects of the program with the state legislation requirements as well as with the Catholic School Principal Competencies.

Program standards. In order to comply with state regulations, the ISLLC standards and SREB Critical Success factors must direct the curriculum and program. For the GCCE team, it was equally important that the program be based on the Catholic School Principal Competencies. The team first created a cross-walk between the two sets of standards and recognized the congruence. There is particularly strong alignment between the standards on instructional leadership. Identifying the overlap assisted both faculty and candidates to develop a common understanding of the leadership skills that all principals must have in common as well as the different expertise necessary for Catholic school principals.

Course Alignment. The Catholic School Principal Competencies were then aligned with all courses within the CPPP (Table 1). Utilizing the *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2004) curriculum framework, course instructors created discussion prompts, activities, assignments, field experiences, and assessments to develop the specific skills outlined in the competencies. The alignment ensured that the courses were meaningful and practical, considering the candidates' commitment to serving within the Catholic school system. Furthermore, based on the NSBECS, the focus is not on developing Catholic school leaders, but on preparing *highly effective* Catholic school leaders.

Knowledge application through field experiences is emphasized within all courses. Specific field experiences are linked directly to the Catholic school competencies. For example, within the Mission Driven Leadership for Principals course, candidates are asked to develop and lead a prayer service with students or faculty as an assignment. Many candidates have no prior experience with this task, therefore, the course assignment provides access to the opportunity. Additionally, with guidance from the instructor and a veteran principal coach, the candidate is supported through the experience. Through this and similar standards-aligned field experiences, the candidates gain confidence performing Catholic school leadership duties.

Table 1

Course Alignment with Catholic School Principal Competencies

Course	Mission and identity	Governance	Academic Excellence	Operational Vitality
Mission-Driven Leadership	1.1, 1.2, 1.5	2.1, 2.3	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5	
Curriculum Development and Implementation			3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
Literacy and Numeracy			3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
School Supervision for Principals	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4	2.4, 2.5		4.6
Three-Tiered Interventions: Advance Primary Supports	1.1, 1.2, 1.5	2.1, 2.3	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5	4.4
Introduction to Educational Statistics			3.3	
Data-Based Decision Making		2.1, 2.3	3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5	4.2
Human and Fiscal Resources for Principals		2.2, 2.4, 2.5	3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5	4.2
Foundations for Teaching English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education			3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5	
Instructional Leadership Cultural Context for Informed Decision Making	1.1, 1.2, 1.3			
Instructional Leaders of Multicultural Schools	1.5	2.1	3.4	
Three Tiered Interventions: Secondary and Tertiary Support	1.1, 1.2, 1.5	2.1, 2.3	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5	4.4
Law, Policy and Community for Principals		2.2, 2.5		4.1, 4.5, 4.6

In addition to coursework, candidates participate in three evening seminars per semester focused on topics important to the Catholic school administrator to supplement the material presented in the courses. Seminars are planned and facilitated by coaches and faculty of the CPPP. Topics have included best practices in marketing and development for Catholic schools, participation in a teaching Mass to better understand the parts of the liturgy, and the budgeting process.

Explicit selection process. The NSBECS was also used as a foundation for developing the interview guide and writing prompt for candidates for the CPPP. During the interview, prospective candidates are asked to articulate the role of the Catholic school leader in maintaining both academic excellence and faith formation. Candidates are also asked to solve situational problems that are reflective of common scenarios found within a Catholic school context. Additionally, prospective candidates are asked to develop an essay in response to a prompt that specifically reflects the realities of Catholic schools. It is important that those selected for the program demonstrate both professional and spiritual competence (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

Clinically rich internship. The NSBECS-aligned Catholic Principal Competencies also play an important role in the candidate's internship. A four-semester internship is a required component of the CPPP. The candidate works under the supervision of a practicing administrator and is assigned administrative duties and responsibilities. The majority of the internship takes place at the candidate's home school with specific experiences conducted at other schools to gain experience in school settings that represent diverse economic and cultural conditions.

The goal of the internship is for candidates to gain experience and continually reflect on the practices of highly effective principals. They track their activities using an on-boarding plan that has been aligned to the SREB Critical Success Factors, ISLLC Standards and Functions, and the NSBECS-aligned Catholic Principal Competencies. Candidates must provide evidence of activities they have observed, participated in, or led that align with each SREB Critical Success Factor and ISLLC standard as well as all Catholic Principal Competencies. They are further challenged to practice leadership, as they must provide evidence of leading 80% of these activities. The candidates must gain experience with school improvement efforts at all grade-levels (pre-school through grade 12) and address the needs of various subgroups, including students with special needs, the gifted population, and English language

learners. This requires partnerships with other Catholic schools within the diocese so that candidates can experience diversity beyond their own school setting.

Coaching and reflection. The coaching component of the Catholic Principal Preparation Program brings meaning to the standards-aligned activities and facilitates the transformation of the candidates to Catholic school leaders. Each candidate in the program is assigned a coach through the university who visits the candidate at school for weekly coaching sessions. The coaches are experienced, often retired, Catholic school principals with strong records of leading successful schools. During weekly meetings, coaches and candidates discuss application of their courses to their work, specific field experiences and assignments, or internship activities. Often, the candidate relies on the coach as a sounding board for handling current challenges or inspiring new ideas.

The coach's role includes establishing a positive relationship, communicating effectively, and focusing the conversation on best practice for Catholic school leaders (Wise & Hammack, 2011) as defined by NSBECS. All coaches are trained in specific techniques to lead professional conversations that include committed listening, asking powerful questions, and reflective feedback (Battle & Fahey, 2014). Coaches assist candidates in finding opportunities to identify and complete the activities of the on-boarding plan. Yet, more important than the completion of activities is the development of the candidate's identity as a Catholic school leader as a result of these experiences. The reflection guided by the coaches facilitates the transformation of experiences into beliefs that will direct their decision-making as leaders.

Ignatian pedagogy inspires the approach to reflection within the CPPP. Through intentional questioning, candidates become more aware of the internal operations that direct their decisions (Hartnett, 2009). The four steps of reflection include experience, reflecting on the experience by asking questions that surfaced from the experience, making a judgment, and finally, choosing an action or commitment that aligns to the judgment (Hartnett, 2009). The candidate's experience of leadership broadens rapidly through the intense and varied activities of the program. Deliberate reflection on these life experiences leads to a more developed personal, Catholic identity (Schuttloffel, 2013), a vital leadership characteristic for Catholic school principals. Further, demonstrating coherence between a leader's beliefs and actions establishes credibility and fosters a shared Catholic identity for the school community (Schuttloffel, 2013). Coaches utilize the Ignatian model by frequently ask-

ing questions like, “Why do you think you should make that decision? What message will it send and will it align with the school’s mission?” (Schuttloffel, 2013).

University-district partnership. Illinois state law requires that principal preparation programs formally create partnerships with districts to ensure that the programs are meeting the leadership needs of the district. To fulfill Loyola University Chicago’s mission of serving the inner city and the Church, the CPPP has partnered with the Office of Catholic Schools within the Archdiocese of Chicago. Diocesan officials have assisted in recruiting and selecting candidates as well as mentor coaches for the candidates. Candidates working within Archdiocesan schools receive a one-third mission scholarship from Loyola and a one-third scholarship from the Archdiocese of Chicago and make a commitment to serving as a leader within the Archdiocese following graduation. Five of the six graduates from Cohort 1 have assumed principal positions in the Archdiocese within their first year of eligibility—evidence of their commitment to the system and the benefits of the partnership.

Program oversight. The CPPP utilizes an ePortfolio (electronic portfolio) as a system to capture the growth of the candidate and to showcase the candidate’s skills, abilities, values, experiences, and competencies across all the standards of the program. The ePortfolio is organized to mirror the on-boarding plan, listing activities aligned with all ISLLC standards, SREB Critical Success Factors, and Catholic School Principal Competencies. The candidate describes experiences significant to each standard, uploads relevant artifacts, and reflects upon their leadership and learning (Figure 3). The coach reviews the ePortfolio regularly to provide feedback to the candidate to prompt further reflection and to assess whether the experience demonstrates mastery of the standard. The ePortfolio documents the candidate’s ongoing application of skill, and the dialogue between candidate and coach continually deepens their learning. The ePortfolio serves as a holistic representation of their experience of the program and is utilized as evidence to the state’s Principal Preparation Review Board of fidelity to the legal requirements.

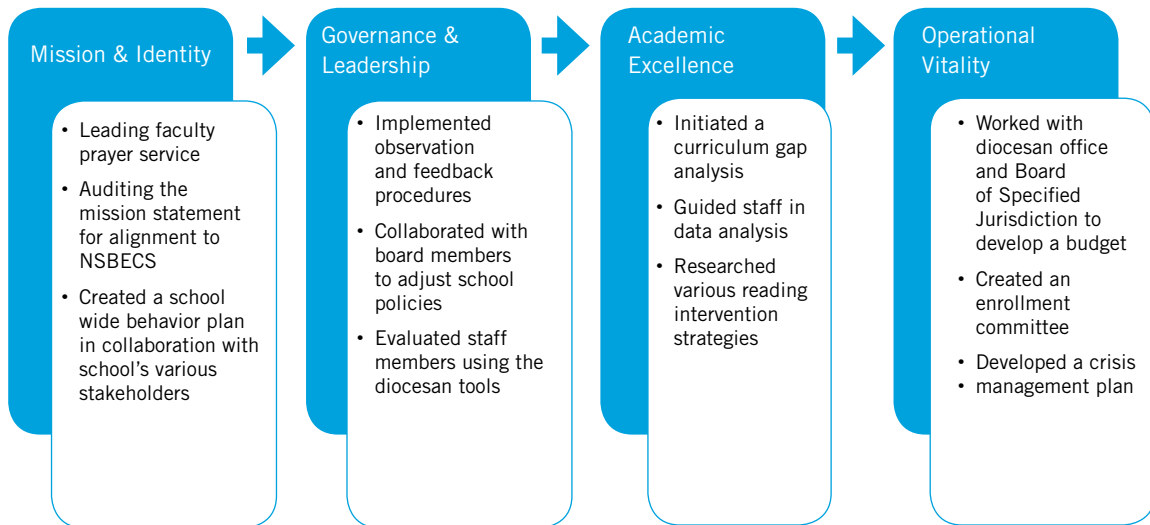


Figure 3. Examples of activities aligning with Catholic School Principal Competencies.

Future Directions

Using the NSBECS to guide the development of the CPPP appears to have helped to explicitly address the competencies required of a Catholic school principal. This initial step of aligning the program with the NSBECS raises additional questions. As the content of courses is refined, there will be increased need for designing field experiences and assignments that align directly with the Catholic Principal Competencies across the program. The question becomes how to be systematic with the integration of these experiences across courses. Additionally, CPPP faculty will need to further monitor the program using the cross-walk of the SREB Critical Success Factors, ISLLC standards, and NSBECS to revise the on-boarding plan to be more focused and coordinated.

The skills listed in the Catholic School Principal Competencies are only a starting point. Further work is needed to validate the items in an effort to determine if these competencies accurately reflect the job of the Catholic school principal and to determine if other competencies have not been identified. After this step, it will be essential to revise and refine the Catholic School Principal Competencies. This process can be the genesis of important conversations between principal preparation programs among Catholic colleges and universities. It could be instructive for a consensus to be developed about the kinds of important skills that effective Catholic school principals demonstrate. In this process, feedback from diocesan offices of Catholic education,

current Catholic school principals, and CPPP candidates will help validate the competencies and inform improvement.

Although the process of aligning the CPPP with the NSBECS was borne out of a response to ensure that candidates would be strong in the areas of data-informed leadership and faith leadership, the long-range impact of the program needs to be evaluated. The initial anecdotal evidence is promising. Candidates have reported tremendous growth, as evidenced in their ePortfolios, since the beginning of the program. Further, anecdotes from the principals of the candidates' home schools suggest that the standards-aligned program has created change in their buildings. The candidates have become involved in various school improvement initiatives including initiating family literacy events, curriculum review teams, and new marketing strategies. As the CPPP continues, other data points (students achievement, NSBECS surveys, etc.) can be used to identify the kind of impact that the program is having on individual Catholic schools.

Lastly, this framework addresses the development of the competencies of the Catholic school leader but does not formally address the development of dispositions toward faith-based leadership. One could argue that effective faith-based leadership requires a combination of competencies and dispositions toward spirituality. The coaches of Loyola's CPPP have anecdotally shared shifts in attitudes and beliefs of the candidates as a result of the program. But more intentional efforts to identify and develop the dispositions of a mission-driven leader could lead to Catholic school principals who are more confident spiritual leaders of the community. Systematizing dispositional formation is even more important, considering the transition from religious to lay leadership in Catholic schools (Shuttlofel, 2013). Catholic principal preparation programs may fill the void in the spiritual development of leaders that religious orders formerly occupied.

The NSBECS-aligned Catholic Principal Competencies ensure that Loyola's CPPP is explicitly and intentionally developing the skills needed by today's Catholic school principals. While many states require principal preparation programs to be standards-based, the secular nature of the standards such as ISLLC and the SREB Critical Success Factors focus almost exclusively on instructional leadership and do not represent the managerial and spiritual competencies required of the Catholic school principal (Ciriello, 1996). Leveraging the NSBECS to define excellence in Catholic school leadership can provide university principal preparation programs a guide for consistent, rigorous, and meaningful training for the Church's future leaders.

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