



We humans learn best when in relationship with others who share a common practice.

Margaret Wheatley

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LIFE LONG LEARNING

Patrick Mulvihill, Chair, Professional Learning Committee
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The Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO) has been involved in developing professional learning opportunities since its inception ten years ago. One of the association's goals is "to provide leadership development for principals and vice-principals." During 1999-2000 CPCO offered two workshops to its members, *Leading Implementation* and *Conflict Resolution*. Today members have access to a wide variety of professional learning opportunities from face-to-face sessions to consultations to online learning.

Anne Clement was contracted as the first Program Director of CPCO's professional development department. Under her leadership the Academy of Catholic Educational Leadership (ACCEL) came to life. She worked part-time and was instrumental in setting up the guidelines for the development of professional learning at CPCO.

At the same time as professional development programs were being created and delivered for principals and vice-principals, CPCO was aware of the need to address succession planning for principals and vice-principals. Who would train new leaders for Ontario's Catholic school system? The Ontario College of Teachers had opened the door for providers other than the faculties of education to deliver the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP). In 1999 CPCO entered into a pilot project with the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) and the Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO). The pilot project ended in 2000 and in 2001 CPCO developed and began delivering its own PQP courses from the Catholic perspective.

In June 2001 the government of the day announced the implementation of the Professional Learning Program (PLP). All educators would be required to take 14 credits in five years. CPCO became a provider for credits. The additional workload required hiring another staff member for the professional development department. Albert Michael was seconded from the Toronto CDSB

for a year to assist Anne with the growing demands for professional learning. During the 2002-03 year Paul Game, a retired principal from the York CDSB was brought on board as the Professional Development Coordinator for workshops at the local level.

In the fall of 2003 there were more changes to the professional development department. Anne Clement retired and Denis Maika was seconded from the Dufferin-Peel CDSB as the ACCEL Program Director. Nelly Kelders, seconded from the St. Clair CDSB, joined the staff as Member Services Coordinator. It was a busy time as more program development took place to meet the demands of the PLP requirements, Teacher Performance Appraisal and the increase in PQP sites. The PD staff became more involved in communications and in the organization of CPCO's annual conference.

Barbara McMorrow replaced Denis Maika and the role of Director of Professional Learning was created in September 2005. She arrived in time to assist with the implementation of a new initiative, *Leading Student Achievement* (LSA). This was an innovative project developed in partnership with ADFO, OPC and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to help principals improve student achievement in literacy and numeracy. CPCO also entered into an innovative partnership with the Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) in the design, development and delivery of the workshop and resource, *Engaging Parents: Improving Student Achievement*. Another project that kept staff busy was the development of the *Shaping Safer Catholic Schools* workshop in 2005-06 and its delivery to every principals'/vice-principals' association in the province in 2006-07.

The Principal's Qualification Program moved to Nelly's portfolio in the spring of 2005. Paul Game continues to assist her in the administration of that program. Part I and Part II courses are offered three times a year throughout the province in a variety of

locations, and often in partnership with Catholic school boards. More than 100 candidates participate in each session. The feedback from candidates is consistently very positive and is often cited as the best professional development they have ever taken.

CPCO entered into another major project in the spring of 2007. Together with the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA) and in partnership with the Ministry of Education, a mentoring and coaching initiative was introduced in six Catholic school boards. At the same time CPCO staff was in discussion with Ministry staff to develop learning opportunities for the *Learning to 18* initiative. Program development and delivery was at an all time high. Patty Orecchio was seconded from the Durham CDSB in July 2007 as Program Developer to assist with the development of learning opportunities for the LSA project and to head up its continued implementation.

Since 2003-04 CPCO has maintained a cadre of 25 or more workshops for its members. Workshops are updated regularly. In the 2007-08 catalogue, learning opportunities are being offered under the themes of *Nurturing the Soul, Building Relationships, Supporting Student Achievement, and Self Directed Learning*. The *Catholic School Administrator's Toolkit*, an online resource for school administrators was recently revamped to make it more user-friendly and up-to-date. More than two-thirds of Catholic boards have purchased site licenses for their principals and vice-principals.

Each program is designed, developed and delivered by practising Catholic school leaders for Catholic school leaders. CPCO has utilized the expertise of more than 200 of our members and those of partner groups to develop and facilitate workshops and professional learning. These opportunities are reflective of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and are rooted in our gospel values.

The professional learning department's budget for this work comes from two main sources, member fees and ministry grants. While their budget exceeds two million dollars this year, most of the money is expended in development and delivery costs. Every effort is made to ensure that members receive learning that meets their particular needs.

CPCO is committed to working with partners to develop and deliver professional learning opportunities for its 2,100 members. Partners include the Ministry of Education, the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE), OCSOA, community and corporate organizations and local principals' and vice-principal's associations. Through these partnerships professional learning:

- celebrates our distinct Catholic identity and gospel values;
- fosters the leadership development of Catholic school leaders;
- supports continuous improvement through ongoing learning;
- promotes equity, accessibility and diversity; and
- ensures learning opportunities which are grounded in

sound research, exemplary practice and adult learning principles.

In January 2008, the professional learning staff asked members to complete a survey on professional learning. The results of this survey will help to set direction for future professional learning. More than 50% of members responded to the questionnaire. Topics of greatest interest included:

- Promoting Catholicity;
- Shaping Safe, Caring and Healthy Schools;
- Targeting Literacy and Numeracy: High Yield Strategies;
- Differentiated Instruction;
- Current and Emerging Issues in Education Law; and
- Creating Effective Communications and Climate in a School Community.

Members told us that professional learning continues to be important to them. They particularly appreciate the opportunity to engage in conversation and to discuss best practices with each other. However, while they value learning, it is challenging to find sufficient time to engage in the learning opportunities offered.

Another source of support for the professional learning staff is the Professional Learning Committee. Each year the executive council appoints a standing committee on professional learning to provide advice on the direction of learning for CPCO members. The professional learning staff members are the advisors to the committee. The chair of the committee makes an annual report to the CPCO membership at the annual general meeting outlining their activities and recommendations for the future direction of professional learning for principals and vice-principals.

The Professional Learning website is a great resource for information on the work done in professional learning at the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario. Visit the site at www.cpco.on.ca. If you would like more information contact:

- Barbara McMorow at bcmorrow@cpco.on.ca regarding the *Mentoring and Coaching* project
- Patty Orecchio at porecchio@cpco.on.ca regarding the *Leading Student Achievement* project
- Nelly Kelders at nkelders@cpco.on.ca regarding the *Principal's Qualification Program* and the *Catholic School Administrator's Toolkit*.

