



The Institute for Education Leadership
L'Institut de leadership en éducation

Modeling Collaborative, Tri-level Leadership

By **Barbara McMorrow**, Professional Learning Director

In December 2005 a ministry discussion paper, *Leading Education: New Supports for Principals and Vice-principals in Ontario Publicly Funded Schools* announced a number of initiatives including the creation of the Institute for Education Leadership (IEL). The Institute was described as a virtual organization that would build on the efforts of principals' associations and school boards in developing a framework to support school leaders in professional learning, provide opportunities for research and knowledge sharing, and ensure overall coordination of leadership initiatives. The IEL held its first meeting on February 14th, 2006. Since that inaugural meeting, significant progress has been made in establishing an effective committee structure, a set of guiding principles, key goals and a series of action steps to address these interconnected goals.

Key Goals

The IEL began with a steering committee and then developed five subcommittees: Research Advisory, Finance, Implementation, Communication and a Francophone Advisory Committee. CPCO has representatives that sit on each of these working committees. The IEL's guiding principles include operating on a consensus model of decision making, recognizing the need to be responsive to each of the four sectors of public education, seeking expert advice from multiple sources, and evaluating and reporting annually on its activities.

The IEL has articulated four key goals: development, research, practice and communication. Development includes defining leadership, identifying the necessary skills and competencies and "staying on the leading edge of leadership knowledge." The IEL supports research on effective leadership practices both in the Ontario context and internationally. By re-examining current practices in response to emerging research, they hope to align more closely theory and practice. A focus on creating a network or a genuine community of practice for educational leaders that is supportive, sustainable and reflects the diversity of Ontario is highlighted under the goal of practice. The fourth key goal is communication. Promoting dialogue, inquiry and disseminating meaningful information in a timely, comprehensive and coherent manner is recognized as an ongoing challenge. This must be met through a variety of communication tools to ensure positive

change and to enhance understanding both within the educational community and in the larger community.

The IEL brings together representatives from the principals' associations, the supervisory officers' associations, councils of directors of education and the ministry of education to work in collaborative partnership and model high calibre tri-level, strategic leadership. The main goal is to assist school and system leaders in maximizing the achievements of all students. The emphasis is on listening, learning and moving forward together. This has created a deeper understanding of the urgent necessity of a more coherent, connected and coordinated approach to the design, development and implementation of new initiatives. The cumbersome and bureaucratic structures of our boards and the ministry often mitigate against the goal of operating as a learning community and this adds to the sense of disconnect and frustration that school leaders experience. Establishing an organization where the voices of principals, who ultimately have the role of implementing the many initiatives and policies of the ministry and the boards, can be heard and respected has proven to be a significant step forward. It has begun to move us beyond the rhetoric of tri-level collaboration and systems thinking to actually putting it into practice. The challenge now is to move it beyond the IEL table and make tri-level collaboration a reality in districts across the province.

Catholic Leadership Framework

A significant step of the IEL has been the embracing of the *Ontario Leadership Framework*. The framework is rooted in research by leading experts and extensive consultation with educators. It is designed to inspire a shared vision and promote a common language for leadership in schools and boards. In identifying the key practices and competencies of effective leadership, it will inform the development and delivery of professional learning for educational leaders across the province. In order to ensure that the Leadership Framework reflected the core beliefs and values of the Catholic community, a distinct *Catholic Leadership Framework* for principals and vice-principals was developed through significant input from practicing principals, vice-principals, supervisory officers and directors. The Catholic Leadership Framework is shaping the design and delivery of CPCO's professional learning resources and enhancing the content and instructional practices of the Principal's

Qualification Program. It is very important to view the practices and competencies of principals and vice-principals as clearly interconnected and supported by the six domains of the *System Practices and Procedures* table. Both charts are essential components of the Catholic Leadership Framework.

The Catholic Leadership Framework is organized into six domains: *Catholic Faith, Community and Culture; Setting Direction; Building Relationships and Developing People; Developing the Organization; Leading the Instructional Program; and Securing Accountability*. Under each of these domains specific practices, skills, knowledge and attitudes have been identified. The System Practices and Procedures domains are *School and District Improvement, Fostering a Culture of Professionalism, Leadership Development, Administrative Structures, Parent and Community Supports, and Succession Planning*. Under each of these headings, specific indicators are listed to provide a touchstone for self-reflection, as well as, collegial dialogue and learning. It is not intended as a job description or as a checklist for assessing performance, but rather as a clear recognition of the complexities and tremendous breadth and depth of leadership that we are called to as Catholic school and system leaders. Its purpose is to inspire a shared vision of educational leadership, promote a common language and understanding of leadership at the school and system level, guide the design and implementation of professional development for vice-principals, principals and supervisory officers, and provide a framework for growth. The Catholic Leadership Framework for supervisory officers has yet to be completed but the ministry framework can be accessed on the IEL website.


The Catholic Leadership Framework for principals and vice-principals can be accessed on the CPCO website. The Catholic Leadership Framework is a working document that will continue to evolve as the result of ongoing research and consultations with practitioners. The term *framework* may connote a mechanical and fixed notion, but current research and scholarship in leadership learning would strongly encourage an approach that is more flexible, evolving and organic in nature. To assist in an appropriate interpretation and to support boards in using the framework as a significant tool for growth, development and sustainability of effective leadership, the IEL has designed a workshop and resource. The workshop will be piloted with four school boards in early spring in western Ontario. The feedback from this session will help to further shape the content and delivery of this learning opportunity.

Moving from theory to practice


The Institute for Education Leadership has the potential to shape a more robust and energetic leadership strategy that clearly recognizes and reflects the diversity and complexities of the four publicly funded systems of education. It holds the possibility of a more coordinated, coherent and connected approach to policy development and implementation that would more effectively support the concept of schools and systems operating as authentic learning communities. The Institute for Education Leadership could have a powerful and positive impact on sustaining and improving Catholic education in the province of Ontario.

For further information, visit the IEL website: www.education-leadership-ontario.ca or the CPCO website: www.cpco.on.ca.

Principal's Qualification Program



**THE CATHOLIC
PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL
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This program is designed to prepare candidates for the principal's role in Ontario's Catholic and public schools. The program will prepare future school administrators to manage efficiently and lead effectively in contexts that are diverse, changing and complex.

PQP Part I and II Locations		NEW - Friday evening and Saturday sessions	
Barrie	Ottawa	Summer 2008	Fall 2008
Chatham	Peterborough	May 30, 31	Sept. 26, 27
Hamilton	Thunder Bay	June 13, 14, 20, 21, 30	Oct. 17, 18, 31
Mississauga	Timmins	July 2, 3, 4	Nov. 1, 14, 15, 28, 29
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	York	London and Toronto	
		June 30	
		July 2-4, 7-10, 14-17	

** Sites may be cancelled due to low enrolment.*

The Ontario College of Teachers recognizes CPCO as a provider of accredited programs

Contact Information

Nelly Kelders, <i>Member Services Director</i> 1.888.621.9190 or 416.483.1556 ext. 38 nkelders@cpco.on.ca	Vanessa Kellow, <i>PD Assistant</i> 1.888.621.9190 or 416.483.1556 ext. 31 vkellow@cpco.on.ca
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"The Principal's Qualification Program Part 1 has been a gratifying experience for me personally, professionally and spiritually. I consider this course to be thought-provoking professional development."

"This has perhaps been the best professional development of my career. This course is excellent and is of incredible value to all teachers."

"I will recommend this course to all interested in administration. I have learned so much. The network of people that I have met will be an asset to my leadership pursuit."

"The Catholic content and focus in the PQP was exceptional. The emphasis on the vocational aspect of the role of principal as well as the discernment process was extremely evident and presented in a positive and faith-filled manner."