



Paul Lacalamita
President



Away from a Manager

The seasonal ring to the title of this article not only resembles the traditional Christmas carol but also the direction of the Ministry's *Ontario Leadership Strategy* for principals and vice-principals. The vision of the strategy is to:

support student achievement and well-being by attracting and developing passionate and skilled leaders in our schools and boards with the goals of attracting the right people to the principalship and helping principals and vice-principals develop into the best possible instructional leaders.

The Ministry is clearly on track with its understanding that the role of the principal is complex and requires support at many levels. In order to attain high levels of achievement and well-being for students, the Ministry acknowledges that the principal must become more engaged in instructional leadership with teachers in the classroom.

The challenge however continues to be moving from theory to practice. Despite the many solid offerings from the Ministry and the Leadership Development Branch, a less hopeful reality exists for our members in the daily operation of their schools. My visits across this province reflect similar stories of concern grounded in an oppressive workload that prevents the promotion of theory to exist in reality. Further complicating this is the lived experience of CPCO members that other employee groups in education are making considerable gains in their workload (i.e. teachers' decreased supervision responsibilities). These gains too often further burden principals with the very same managerial tasks that research has identified as being non-productive to student achievement.

The reality is that local boards, although sympathetic to the principals' plight, in large part have not been able to address these concerns in recently negotiated local terms and conditions. To quote one principal's comment from the 2009 member survey, "It seems that principals are in charge of everything and in control of nothing. Things keep happening to us and not for us." To this end CPCO is very hopeful that the Ministry's recently released guide to terms and conditions for principals and vice-principals (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/TC_Guide.pdf) will have a positive impact on setting parameters for future good faith bargaining; setting the framework for the right conditions to occur to allow for the development of authentic instructional leadership from principals.

The thrust to move principals toward instructional leadership needs to be supported by developing a relationship amongst directors, superintendants and principals that is so well mirrored in Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership. This tri-level model of decision-making promotes and ultimately sustains authentic leadership, allowing for integrity with respect to decisions, practices and

interactions. This trusting relationship creates the grace necessary for the Spirit to live and where the Spirit lives, great things happen.

Data from our 2009 member survey indicates that the average age of principals and vice-principals is becoming younger with less and less classroom experience. Therefore, the newly released *Principal and Vice-Principal Appraisal* system, which promotes a framework of mentoring and coaching, is seen by CPCO as a positive step to identifying and responding to the needs of our members. It is important to recognize that today's school leaders cannot rely on paradigms of yesteryear to see us through today's challenges. We are hopeful that the intended formation of trust and positive relationships between superintendents, principals and vice-principals (i.e. mentors and coaches) will continue to develop Catholic school principals and vice-principals who can lead our schools to unprecedented levels of success in student achievement, well-being and faith formation.

AWAY FROM A MANAGER

© CPCO 2009 (sung to the tune of Away In A Manger)

*Away from a manager the principals will go
Instructional leadership are winds that now blow
From knowing to learning our jobs are defined
Yet our workload and contracts still boggle our minds*

*School safety, supervision are still our issues
There seems no one out there who'll fill our big shoes
If only these tasks were reduced on our plate
Then succession and achievement would accelerate*

*We're hopeful and trusting you'll see to our needs
Before teachers to principals become dying breeds
We need the best out there who'll lead with their soul
For Ontario's schools to fulfill their role*

This month marks the end of Interim Executive Director Dan Tighe's formal association with CPCO. Dan will retire at the end of December. Clara Pitoscia will move from deputy director to executive director effective January 1, 2010. On behalf of all CPCO members, I would like to thank Dan for his leadership and personal sacrifices in accepting the call to the interim executive director's role. We wish him warmest congratulations and a future filled with continued passion and purpose – albeit most likely centred on golf!

As the blessed season of Christmas approaches, I would like to thank you all for being a gift to your school communities. Thank you for your compassion, creativity and your support. Warmest thoughts and wishes for a peace-filled Christmas season and a happy new year!