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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LAY EDUCATOR FORMATION AND CATHOLIC
IDENTITY IN CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial Fulfillment of
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Abstract

The decline in the presence of consecrated religious in Catholic diocesan secondary schools, and the emergence of lay educators as primary stakeholders in those settings, requires Catholic secondary school leaders to consider thoughtfully how to meet the faith formation needs of the educators that comprise the community. It is through this formation that Catholic school educators can more effectively champion the identity of the Catholic schools in which they work. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to identify efficient and meaningful strategies for lay educator professional faith formation that support the preservation of Catholic school identity. This was accomplished through a qualitative, grounded theory study of lay Catholic school educators in dioceses in the New England region. The careful codification and analysis of data collected through interviews with 11 participants in 6 schools led to the development of a theoretical framework for faith formation which identifies relationships between prayerful reflection and professional collaboration, relationships with students, and the outward expression of faith in the form of service. Additionally, the authenticity of the faith witness of school leaders, as well as their deliberate efforts to structure faith formation in their school communities, emerged as essential qualities of effective leadership. Finally, disruptive forces such as transition and crisis were identified by participants to be opportunities for spiritual growth within the context of a faithful community of Catholic school educators.

Keywords: Professional faith formation, reflective practice, collaboration, service, student engagement.

Dedication

This dissertation in practice is dedicated to the religious – teaching sisters, brothers, and priests – on whose shoulders was built the greatest system of schools in the world.

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I would like to express my sincere and genuine appreciation to my dissertation committee chair and adviser, Dr. Barbara Brock, as well as committee members Dr. Timothy Cook and Dr. Laura Hickman, for providing ongoing encouragement, wisdom, and inspiration throughout this dissertation process. Your support all along is a shining example of how the Jesuit charism of *cura personalis*, or care for the whole person, can be achieved within the context of an academic relationship.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the gracious cooperation of the superintendents and heads of schools of the Roman Catholic dioceses in New England who authorized my research in the settings over which they have oversight. These exceptional leaders allowed me to learn more about their schools through the eyes of their educators. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the participating educators whose deeply personal experiences within their school communities constituted the data upon which these results were founded.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Catholic schools are at a crossroads. The presence of religious sisters, brothers, and priests teaching in Catholic schools has declined steadily over the last 50 years (Miller, 2006; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). In 2015, 2.8% of Catholic school educators were men and women religious, and 97.2% were lay educators (McDonald & Schultz, 2015). Lay educators and leaders have emerged as primary stakeholders in Catholic schools. However, lay Catholic school educators' faith formation is often not as adequate as their professional formation in other areas (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014). The Catholic Church considers establishment and preservation of Catholic school identity to be of prime importance, and the extent to which this occurs depends upon the educators in the Catholic school (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

Ecclesial documents and scholarly research confirm the essence of an educator's faith witness in preserving Catholic school identity. This is especially timely given the emergence of lay educators as primary stakeholders in Catholic schools. However, there is little guidance available for Catholic school leaders to address this need. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to identify effective faith formation strategies as they are perceived by lay Catholic educators. Using data collected through interviews with secondary school lay Catholic school educators, this study proposes an evidence-based framework for professional faith formation that can be utilized by Catholic school leaders to provide for the faith formation needs of the educators who comprise the school community.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

When the presence of consecrated religious in diocesan Catholic schools was more prominent, that presence offered a built-in system of faith formation (Miller, 2006). The formative experiences that religious women and men received in their religious communities constituted an essential foundation for their ministry in Catholic education (Cook, 2001). Moreover, religious women and men who worked alongside lay educators modeled Catholic school identity through their selfless contributions to Catholic education (Jacobs, 1998). As lay educators assume their place as primary stakeholders in Catholic education, it will be without the rich faith formation that the presence of vowed religious brought to Catholic school communities of generations past (Cook, 2001).

This problem is made more complex by the experiences and motivations of lay educators entering into Catholic school ministries. In many cases, those educators have a limited understanding of the expectations that a Catholic school ministry requires (Cho, 2012). Additionally, studies have indicated that some Catholic school educators begin their career not out of a sense of ministry or vocation, but rather to circumvent training and certification requirements (Scheopner, 2010). To complicate matters further, high levels of teacher attrition in Catholic schools call into question the ability of schools to develop momentum with faculty faith formation efforts (Convey, 2012). The convergence of these issues calls Catholic school leaders to consider how they may develop strategies to form lay educators to take on the challenges of safeguarding the unique and distinctive identity of the Catholic schools in which the work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify efficient and meaningful strategies for lay educator professional faith formation which support the preservation of Catholic school identity. This was accomplished through a qualitative, grounded theory study of lay Catholic school educators in dioceses in the New England region.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify a strategic, evidence-based professional faith formation framework for lay Catholic school leaders to provide for ongoing educator faith formation in their school communities.

Research Question(s)

Catholic schools embody a unique mission and are an essential component of the evangelizing mission of the Church (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). The establishment and maintenance of this identity depends on the teachers and leaders of the schools (Cho, 2012). The role of lay educators and leaders in preserving Catholic school identity draws an overarching research question into focus – how can Catholic school leaders provide formation experiences for lay educators that will prepare them to promote the identity of the Catholic schools in which they work? An examination of this question was guided by the following two additional research questions:

Research Question #1: What is the role of Catholic school leaders in the formation of lay faculty?

Research Question #2: What types of professional development experiences lend themselves to ongoing professional faith formation for lay faculty?

Significance of the Study

Scholarly studies report the need for thoughtful consideration of the role of lay Catholic educator faith formation in Catholic schools. Nurturing the spiritual needs of a school community is most successful when those efforts are deliberate and ongoing (Earl, 2005). Some studies speak to narrower applications of specific professional strategies in a Catholic school setting, such as with teacher induction (Brock & Chatlain, 2008; Shields, 2008), mentoring (English, 1999), and professional development communities (Hackney, 1998). Other studies address the issue of Catholic educator professional development separately from that of faith formation (Kuchey, Morrison, & Geer, 2009; Lucillo, 2009). This dissertation proposes a much-needed research-based framework that connects such themes through a lens of professional faith formation.

Drawing upon existing research and best practices, this dissertation identifies critical dimensions of professional development design (i.e. what types of strategies, or combination of strategies, lend themselves to effective professional faith formation). Additionally, this dissertation identifies considerations for implementation of such strategies as well as assessment of professional faith development programming. By making these findings public through the dissertation process, this study will inform practice in a range of settings.

Methodology Overview

To better understand the nature of the research problem, the researcher employed a qualitative, grounded theory approach. By exploring this issue from a phenomenological perspective, Catholic school educators' experiences with various faith formation efforts in their professional lives were revealed. This approach was consistent

with the viewpoint that “[phenomenological design] culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Therefore, the researcher purposefully selected participants to be interviewed, and those participants provided personal insight into the significance of the research problem. Their lived experiences led to the development of a concrete professional faith formation framework that addresses the void in faith formation that currently exists in many Catholic secondary schools.

The researcher utilized a grounded theory approach to develop a theoretical framework for professional educator faith formation. Grounded theory involves the identification of emerging theory from data gained through social science research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Creswell (2009) identified grounded theory as an appropriate approach for phenomenological social science research. The application of grounded theory in this dissertation involved the interviewing of participants, verbatim transcriptions of interviews, and extensive codification of interview transcripts. Additionally, a critically reflective process of memo-writing, which is a staple of grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006), further guided the research process. The marriage of critical reflection and phenomenological research within the context of a grounded theory approach is highly aligned with the spirit of Creighton University’s Dissertation in Practice process.

Definition of Relevant Terms

The following terms were used operationally within this study:

Blessed Sacrament: “The Eucharist as one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ to be received by the faithful” (Hardon, 2013, p. 61)

Charism: Identifying characteristics of a Catholic school community which enliven its mission and define its community.

Collaboration: Interactions and encounters with others through which an educator can grow in his or her faith.

Campus Ministry: A department in a Catholic school charged with meeting the spiritual needs of the members of the school community.

Educator: A professional employed in a school (usually a teacher) whose role involves interaction with students. For the purposes of this study, the term educator also refers to school counselors and school administrators that support the head of school.

Eucharist: “The ritual, sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the paschal mystery of Christ” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.).

Head of School: The chief administrative office of a Catholic school. Usually a principal or president.

Lay Educator: A professional educator who does not identify as a member of the clergy or of a religious order.

Liturgy: “The official public worship of the Church” (Hardon, 2013, p. 270).

Mass: “The Sacrifice of the Eucharist as the central act of worship of the Catholic Church” (Hardon, 2013, p. 290).

Professional Development: “[activities] intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness” (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

Professional Faith Formation: The educator's growth in faith as it relates specifically to professional ministry in a Catholic school.

Reflection: The prayerful, inward examination on the part of an educator to develop a closer relationship with God.

Religious: Members of religious orders – brother, sisters, and non-diocesan priests – whose primary ministry was or is in education.

Secondary School: A school that serves students in grades 7 – 12.

Teacher: A category of educator whose primary ministry is classroom instruction.

Delimitations and Limitations

Given the scope and design of this dissertation, some delimitations come to the forefront. Chief among them is that the scope of this research was limited to the boundaries of the New England region. It was, therefore, important to consider that the demographics, enrollment trends, and economy of the region may vary greatly from other geographical regions. Factors such as these could have potentially resulted in shifted priorities for school administrators who are consistently called to balance elements of spiritual, educational, and managerial leadership. Additionally, participants were selected from diocesan secondary schools. This ruled out generalizability at the elementary school level. The rationale for this was that Catholic elementary school teachers are typically generalists who deliver religious education instruction on a daily basis, and their professional faith formation needs likely vary from those of secondary school educators whose content areas are often separate from religion. Moreover, the focus on diocesan schools ruled out generalizability among schools that are operated independently by religious orders and that ascribe to specific educational charisms.

However, this study was inclusive of some diocesan schools that claim at least a historical connection with a specific religious order.

The primary personal bias that affected this research is researcher's status as the Associate Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Manchester. In this capacity, the researcher has supervisory oversight over 21 Catholic schools in the State of New Hampshire. The inclusion of participants from the researcher's own diocese would have called into question the validity and reliability of the data. Therefore, the researcher refrained from seeking participants from diocesan Catholic schools in the State of New Hampshire.

Leader's Role and Responsibility in Relation to the Problem

In *Educating Today and Tomorrow, a Renewing Passion*, the Congregation for Catholic Education (2014) identified Catholic school leaders to be responsible for ensuring that Catholic education is a shared and living mission by supporting and organizing teachers and by promoting mutual encouragement and assistance. In fact, educators, including directors and school administrators, are crucial stakeholders who enliven the Catholic identity of the schools in which they work (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). Archbishop Michael Miller (2006), in his synthesis of Magisterium documents on Catholic school identity, concluded that Catholic school administrators are among the stakeholders needed to assess a school's Catholicity and to "strengthen its effectiveness in service of Christ and the Church" (p. 63).

As Magisterium documents often identify school leaders as stakeholders among a broader category of "educators" responsible for promoting Catholic school identity (Wallace, 2000), scholars have identified the independent nature of school leadership in

Catholic schools as an area in need of attention. The ongoing faith formation of lay Catholic educators is an important responsibility for Catholic school leaders (Cho, 2012; Hobbie, Convey, & Schuttloffel, 2010). However, Catholic school leaders' understanding of Catholic culture and identity has become fluid and unpredictable (Schuttloffel, 2012). The decline of religious in Catholic schools and the emergence of Catholic lay leaders with limited faith formation experiences has been identified as a threat to the identity of Catholic schools (Jacobs, 1998; Wallace, 2000).

Summary

Lay educators have emerged as important stakeholders in Catholic school classrooms and leadership positions. However, not much is known about how Catholic school leaders can provide educators with faith formation experiences that enhance the Catholic identities of the schools in which they work. The inexperience of many lay-leaders complicates matters, as they may lack the confidence or knowledge about their responsibilities concerning faith formation. Therefore, the goal of this dissertation was to provide a research-based framework for Catholic educator professional faith formation that will be of use to Catholic schools and the heads of school that lead them.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Catholic schools are consistently defined as an essential component in the evangelizing and salvific mission of the Catholic Church (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 1997, 2007; Miller, 2006; Paul VI, 1965; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982). Following the centuries of contributions that Catholic schools and educators made to the field of education, The Second Vatican Council [Vatican II] set out to frame the defining characteristics Catholic schools. In the resulting declaration on Christian education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, Paul VI (1965) declared that in addition to the pursuit of the same goals that ought to be held by schools in general, Catholic schools share a commitment to a unique charge. They are communities marked by an atmosphere enlivened by a Gospel spirit, a commitment to student formation, and knowledge that is illumined by faith so that students may become “a saving leaven in the human community” (§8). Teachers bear a great burden of responsibility in this mission, and their preparation has been identified to be crucial. Paul VI (1965) affirmed the need for these elements to be further developed by religious authorities, and such efforts were evident in years following Vatican II in post-conciliar Magisterium publications. These statements originate from the Congregation for Catholic Education – the Vatican office that has oversight over seminaries, houses of formation, and all schools and educational institutes (Congregation for Catholic Education, n.d.). The documents identify certain themes regarding Catholic school identity and the educator’s relationship to it, and the emerging themes have been explored in more detail in academia.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify efficient and meaningful strategies for lay educator professional faith formation which support the advancement of Catholic school identity. This was accomplished through a qualitative, grounded theory study of lay Catholic school educators` in dioceses in the New England region.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify a strategic, evidence-based professional faith formation framework for lay Catholic school leaders to provide for ongoing educator faith formation in their school communities.

The Formation of the Lay Catholic Educator

As the presence of teaching religious in Catholic schools declined in the later part of the 20th century, and as lay educators emerged as more prominent stakeholders, Church authorities and scholars began to consider the formational needs of lay educators. Church authorities affirmed the need for the authentic faith witness that lay educators provide, and thus their ongoing formation was identified to be essential. Scholars, in turn, have examined the teachings of Church authorities and the applicability of those teachings in Catholic school settings.

Catholic Educator Formation

Educators have a unique and privileged opportunity to form the hearts and minds of students in communion with the Catholic Church. Thus, educator preparation involves formation both in faith and in the content area to be taught. Consequently, the establishment and maintenance of this distinctive Christian atmosphere of a Catholic school depends greatly upon the educators who comprise the school community (Sacred

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). The importance of this task is consistently reflected in post-conciliar Magisterium documents as well as in emerging research. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) was deliberate in including faith and religious formation as part of an educator's overall professional formation. The process of formation is a continuous one that should not terminate at the end of teacher preparation programs.

Among the many magisterial documents on Catholic education, the theme of lay educator formation is especially prevalent in the document, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools, A Shared Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*. In this statement, the Congregation for Catholic Education (2007) identified that the mission of Catholic education is lived in community and shared between consecrated and lay faithful. In this sense, the Congregation for Catholic Education highlighted not only the importance of professional formation, but of faith formation as well. Therefore, there is a strong case to be made for the communal aspects of professional formation between consecrated religious and lay faithful within the context of a Catholic school setting (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007).

This communal approach to Catholic school educator faith formation was ever present in the life of the religious men and women who comprised the teachers and leaders of Catholic schools in previous generations. In their book *Pioneer Mentoring in Teacher Preparation: From The Voices of Women Religious*, Keating and Traviss (2001) completed extensive interviews with women religious to better understand the nature of their formation for a ministry in Catholic education. Keating & Traviss (2001) highlighted how women religious of generations past were formed in community, and

that their preparation was a lived ministry. And while the teaching sisters of previous generations advocated strongly for the same types of formalized teacher preparation programs that were available to their lay educator counterparts, it was through their shared vocation, and especially through mentoring relationships, that they grew in their faith and in their profession. These were cherished relationships, and as religious sister teacher preparation became more formal in later years, the teaching sisters saw the resulting diminished focus on community to be a loss (Keating & Traviss, 2001).

The Congregation for Catholic Education (2014) most recently addressed contemporary challenges facing Catholic education in the document, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*. Among those challenges, lay educator formation is prominent. The Congregation for Catholic Education (2014) focused explicitly on the role of leadership in lay educator formation, asserting that because school heads are both in charge of their schools and accountable to their bishop, proper attention must be given to their formation. Additionally, the relationship of the educator's authentic witness to the Catholic identity of a Catholic school requires special consideration. The Congregation for Catholic Education (2014) warned of a double population of Catholic school teachers who, without that authentic faith witness, would be unable to wholly support the educational project of the Church.

Along with the magisterial guidance that the Congregation for Catholic Education provides concerning Catholic education, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers guidance and insight. Issues of lay Catholic educator formation are directly addressed in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005) document, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third*

Millennium. Recognizing the rapidly changing educational landscape of the end of the second millennium, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005) affirmed the importance of the Catholic educational system and the role of the educators within it. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005) echoed the importance of lay educator formation found in post-conciliar Magisterium documents, and stated “the preparation and ongoing formation of new administrators and teachers is vital if our schools are to remain truly Catholic in all aspects of school life” (p. 10). Central to these formation efforts is the availability of ongoing faith formation and professional development programs for both administrators and Catholic school educators (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). In summarizing the teachings of the Catholic Church in the area of Catholic Education, Archbishop Michael Miller (2006) concluded that if students are to experience the splendor of the Church, every effort should be made to ensure that Catholic school educators provide the necessary the authentic witness and formative experiences for a faithful Catholic school community.

Catholic Identity Expressed as Charism

When Catholic schools were staffed predominantly by women and men religious, the identity of the Catholic school was often considered as an expression of a *charism* of a particular religious order. The contemporary use of term “charism” can be ambiguously defined and can take on multiple meanings, both theological and sociological. However, one relevant expression of this concept involves the lived story of a religious congregation – of its founders, culture, symbolism, and history, represented as a gift to the world embodied in all who comprise that community (Hilton, 1997). And while the idea of charism has been typically attributed to religious organizations, a more

progressive definition refers to a universal interpretation for Catholic education in general. In his book, *Charism and Culture: Cultivating Catholic Identity in Catholic Schools*, Cook (2015) suggested that a Catholic school community's charism can be defined in any or all of three dimensions:

- a) Special gifts
- b) Particular spirit
- c) Focused identity inspired by the Holy Spirit to distinguish and advance the school's evangelizing and educational mission (p. 9)

In this sense, a universal expression of charism for Catholic education has the potential to strengthen a Catholic school community's mission and sense of purpose (Cook, 2015).

As religious orders contended with the reality of a diminishing presence in Catholic schools and the emergence of lay educators as prominent stakeholders, it became necessary to plan for the *transmission* of charism to their schools' lay stakeholders. This transmission equips lay educators to preserve the charismatic identity of a Catholic school in the tradition of the sponsoring religious order. In a qualitative study regarding the transmission of charism, John Lydon (2009) examined essential characteristics of how Catholic school identity is handed down from religious to lay. As Jesus' teaching tool was his own life, evidenced by his call for his disciples to "follow me" (Matthew 4:9), so to must school leaders provide that example to those who follow. In this sense, transmission of charism is not just about simply passing on skills or knowledge, but rather it is about a dynamic culture – one in which the personal witness of stakeholders is most relevant (Lydon, 2009). In a school culture in which charism is

encountered through the active involvement of stakeholders and the relationships that exist between religious and lay, a religious order's charism is more readily transmitted.

Mark Hilton (1997) examined the transmission of charism in his doctoral dissertation, *Sharing the Spirit: Transmission of Charism by Religious Congregations*. Similarly, he found that the transmission of a particular religious order's charism involves a dimension of lived reality, one that is complimented by three other elements: story, experience, and spirituality. These can be framed within domains of *self* and *community*. Hilton (1997) proposed that these elements can be effectively linked by reflective practices such as individual reflection and communal reflection, allowing stakeholders to value the gifts inherent in those stories and experiences.

While the transmission of charism from religious orders to lay stakeholders is a matter of significant concern for religious orders (Hilton, 1997; Lydon, 2009), there is still a question of how Catholic identity may be promoted within the context of a school in which there is no presence of a religious order. In this sense, the idea of charism can be applied more broadly to Catholic education in general:

Charism is an evolving theological concept that once were gifts of the Holy Spirit mainly associated with saints and religious orders. Today charisms apply to lay faithful and groups whose endeavors advance the greater good and glorify God. Charisms are spiritual assets Catholic schools can draw upon to sharpen their Catholic identity, spiritually awaken their school culture, make a unique contribution, and further their evangelizing and educational goals. (Cook, 2015, p. 14).

Drawing upon ecclesial documents and emerging research, Cook (2015) proposed a process of discernment that involves linking a school's identity to its history, founders, impact, stories, and the needs of students. This discernment process can be expressed as a cyclical framework, as noted in Figure 1:

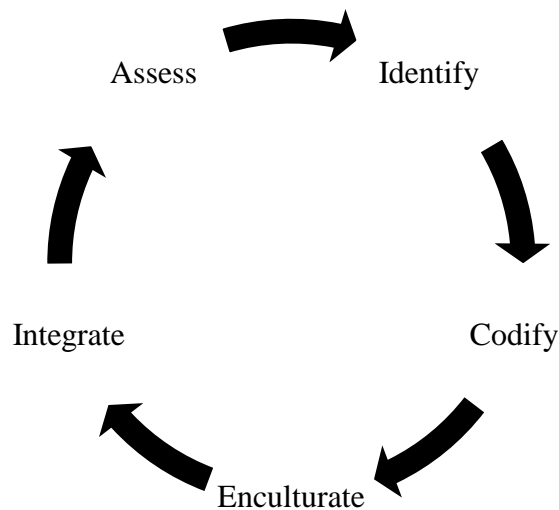


Figure 1. A Framework for Cultivating Charism. (Cook, 2015, p. 87).

Through this continual discernment process, schools can identify their own unique gifts and use them to illumine the Catholic identity of the school community.

Commitment and Motivation of Lay Teachers

The importance of Catholic lay teacher formation has been explored in more detail in academia. One emergent topic has to do with the motivation and commitment that Catholic lay teachers have to the Catholic schools in which they work. In a comprehensive study of the professional motivation of 716 Catholic school teachers from three dioceses, Convey (2014) found that religious factors are important motivators for teaching in Catholic schools. Also, while academic philosophy and school environment were rated highly by participants in this study, ministerial considerations were the

strongest predictors of internal satisfaction of Catholic lay teachers. This internal satisfaction was found to lead to more substantial commitment to the Catholic schools' mission.

Similarly, Cho (2012) sought to understand the relationship between Catholic teachers' faith and their professional commitment to Catholic education. In a quantitative study of 751 Catholic educators in 165 dioceses, Cho (2012) found a connection between the Catholic teachers' religious motivations and their professional motivations. It emerged in this study that existing Catholic high school faith formation programs are not yielding intended results. Cho (2012) concluded that there is a need for theologians and scholars alike to examine the effect of Catholic schools' current faith formation efforts for teachers. Such an examination would help to ensure the efficacy of existing programs, as such efforts have been identified to be crucial to the maintenance of Catholic school identity (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007, 2014; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005).

Earl (2005) examined the importance of faith formation for Catholic school educators in her article *Spiritual Formation for Catholic Educators: Understanding the Need*. Through a comprehensive literature review of pedagogical literacy strategies for elementary school students, Earl (2005) proposed that such strategies could also yield results for Catholic teacher faith formation. As was asserted by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982), the Congregation for Catholic Education (2007) and confirmed by Cho (2012), Earl (2005) affirmed that a teacher's personal faith experience is an important dimension of that teacher's overall professional formation. Earl (2005)

also highlighted the importance of the school leader in “nurturing the spiritual formation of both faculty and students” (p. 527).

The Context and Complexity of Community

The importance of educational communities and the relationships that comprise them is well documented in both pertinent ecclesial documents and emerging research. The culture of any organization is, in part, defined by its community. This is especially true in a school setting. In his book, *Building Community in Schools*, Thomas Sergiovanni (1994) identified community building as a significant consideration for school improvement efforts. Sergiovanni (1994) addressed two different sociological visions of life and relationships promoted by German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies: *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society). A central consideration for school community building is the idea that schools can often become organizations characterized by individualistic, contractual, transactional relationships (*gesellschaft*). Sergiovanni (1994) claimed that schools would be well-served to develop a culture in which community values take precedence over contractual values (*gemeinschaft*). In navigating these two extremes, it can be easy for professional formation efforts to be skewed in favor *gesellschaft*, which leads to a cellular, insulated community more focused on individual efforts than a communal vision. Sergiovanni (1994) noted that developing communal values can be an uncomfortable process for school communities, but in the end, that process can yield great benefits.

Sergiovanni (1994) asserted that the concept of community, characterized by *gemeinschaft*, is important for any community of learners. However, it is especially important in a Catholic school setting. The Magisterium of the Catholic Church has

identified the communal aspect of Catholic schools to be essential in faith formation and the establishment of Catholic school identity. “Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community” (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, §53). The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) further clarified the concept of the Catholic school community by specifying students, parents, teachers as other important stakeholders. Moreover, this theme of Christian community is expanded to include the Church in general and society as a whole, as a People of God. Lay educators hold an important place in this community, and they must accept that they share in the educational mission of the Church (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). A constant search for ways to bring about permanent and ongoing formation is required both of individuals and of community. The Congregation for Catholic Education (2014) noted this communal theme most recently in *Educating Today and Tomorrow, A Renewing Passion*, stating “what is needed . . . is unity among the teachers, who together are willing to embrace and share a specific evangelical identity” (§III). Miller (2006) similarly identified that this is not only a responsibility of a school, but of the ecclesial community, to see to the formation of the educators in a Catholic school community.

Cook and Simonds (2011) explored the theme of relationships within Catholic school communities in their article *The Charism of 21st Catholic Schools: Building a Culture of Relationships*. Noting a lack of a concrete and consistent framework in ecclesial documents, Cook and Simonds (2011) utilized the theme of relationships as an organizing principle for conceptualizing Catholic school identity (Figure 2). They identified a framework with five levels of relationships – self, God, others, community,

and creation – all leading to the preparation of students to evaluate culture critically.

This, in turn, prepares students to build meaningful relationships in the world:

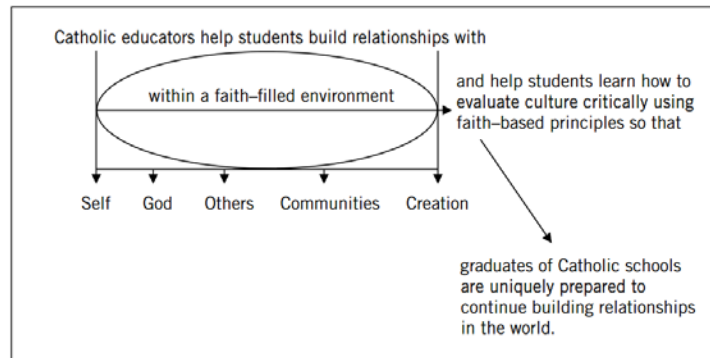


Figure 2. A Framework for the Renewal of Catholic Schools (Cook & Simonds, 2011).

While this model appears to be directly related to student relationship building, the references to these levels of relationship building refer to dimensions of community building and educator faith formation noted in Church documents. Adult educators are called to enter into a process of spiritual formation in order to bring this model to fruition (Cook & Simonds, 2011) and thus it can be inferred that an educator's experience in faith formation in a school community is coupled with the experiences of the students.

In her book, *A Call to Reflection: A Teacher's Guide to Catholic Identity for the 21st Century*, Gini Shimabukuro (1998) conducted a thorough examination of Church documents related to Catholic education to develop a reflective formation tool for individual teachers. Among the prevailing themes, Shimabukuro identified community-building as essential. She claimed teacher formation is a communal effort, and that this highlights the need for teachers to be invested in building community (Shimabukuro, 1998). She concluded through her analysis of the prevailing literature that it is through involvement in the school community that the teacher acquires his or her identity. In all,

Shimabukuro (1998) identified community-building as a crucial element of a Catholic school teacher's ministerial call.

Addressing Catholic identity from the standpoint of charism, Cook (2015) identified several dimensions for Catholic school leaders to address in working toward a distinctively Catholic identity. One such dimension was that of the enculturation and formation of community members. Regarding faculty formation, Cook (2015) highlighted the need for both orientation and induction strategies with an emphasis on ongoing formation. Reflection and community building are among the effective dimensions of a school faculty faith enculturation and formation effort. Cook (2015) also noted the importance of personal witness in Catholic school leadership, offering that Catholic school leaders ought to be deliberate in connecting their own faith lives with their outward behaviors in the school community.

Best Practices in Teacher Professional Development

While the scope of research in teachers' professional faith formation is limited, there is a wealth of research regarding teacher professional development. Teachers, in general, see the value in professional development strategies that are both formative and ongoing (Fullan, 1995). However, less effective strategies such as stand-alone workshops and isolated teacher in-services have permeated the educational landscape (Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Hill, 2009). Scholars have determined the value in alternative professional development strategies, two of which include collaboration and reflection (Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckingham, 2004; McArdle & Coutts, 2010; Weißenrieder, Roesken-Winter, Schueler, Binner, & Blömeke, 2015). These are common components to many promising educator professional development models, and

an understanding of these strategies may help to build a common language for lay leaders in Catholic school settings.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice has long been understood to be an effective strategy for teacher professional development. In her action research study, *Professional Development of Teachers and Student Teachers through Reflection on Practice*, Vladimíra Spilková (2001) examined the efficacy of reflective practice in teacher education settings. The study focused on the reflective practices of 59 students in their second year of teacher education preparation. Self-reflection in the participant group was categorized as either a) reflection on activity, which involved analysis of one's teaching attempts, or b) what is behind an activity, which led to the creation of one's conception of teaching. Participants engaged in written exercises and diary-keeping to complete reflective tasks. Spilková (2001) found that such reflective practices, guided by effective leadership, led to the greater development of students' professional identity, greater ability to substantiate teaching decisions, and enhanced facility in connecting theory and practice.

Mingren Zhao (2013) examined the issue of teacher reflection from the standpoint of technical, practical, and critical reflection as described by van Mannen (1977). Zhao (2013) completed case studies of four experienced educators from one Chinese elementary school. The studies involved detailed analysis of teachers' written reflections that were categorized according to the van Mannen (1977) levels of reflection. Zhao (2013) found that teachers whose reflective practice moved beyond mere consideration of the technical aspects of teaching achieved a higher level development for themselves as

well as a more open space for teaching for their students. Put another way, the results suggested that personal and critical reflection should not be marginalized at the expense of reflection on only the technical aspects of teaching.

McArdle and Coutts (2010) recalled current weaknesses and misconceptions regarding professional reflection in a teaching setting as identified in literature and as they have experienced in their professional settings. They stated “experience suggests that it is difficult to nurture and sustain reflection in practice settings, and reflection has come to be associated with overly technical concern with narrow aspects of individual practice” (p. 204). McArdle and Coutts (2010) also identified that typical teaching settings are ill-suited to ongoing professional reflection and that the lack of communal practices can inhibit reflection. They claimed that within a critically reflective community:

1. Both action and reflection are required, and both have individual and social dimensions
2. Both reflection and action are concerned with individual and social identity formation
3. Reflection must involve challenge and have a critical edge
4. Sense-making through engagement is necessary to integrate the dimensions of reflection and action
5. Sense-making and engagement are self-sustaining and lead to professional renewal (p. 211).

Through all of this, continuous professional development takes on a social dimension and growth as a professional school community occurs through shared experiences. Thus, the

social process of professional growth requires not only a critical individual approach but a deliberate, collaborative approach as well.

Professional Collaboration

In her article *Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success*, Judith Little (1982) examined the social structures within school communities and their bearing on professional learning. In her qualitative, ethnographic study of six urban elementary schools, Little (1982) sought to understand how the social organization of a school lent itself to “learning on the job” (p. 325). Her findings in this study led her to realize that school improvement and professional growth is a socially professional phenomenon, as opposed to a collection of individual efforts. Through insight gained from interviews with participants, Little (1982) found staff development efforts were most influential when they occurred in a collegial context. Additionally, staff development efforts must address both design and conduct as well as critical practices – especially within the context of a collaborative community – if they are to lead to a successful outcome.

Drawing upon the research of Little (1982) and others, Johnston, Markle, and Aehar (1988) examined a variety of findings regarding the promise of collaborative models in school settings in their article *Cooperation, Collaboration, and the Professional Development of Teachers*. The authors highlighted several common concerns, such as a) cellular structures of professional development that isolate teachers, b) territorialism about classroom space and academic freedom, and c) the disadvantage that this poses to new and at-risk teachers who could benefit most from professional collaboration. Johnston et al. (1988) advocated for structured efforts to make

collaboration possible, especially through interdisciplinary teaming. They cited several benefits to such deliberate structuring, such as a) positive interpersonal relations, b) enhanced communications between colleagues and parents, c) higher levels of professional self-esteem and self-worth, and d) closer alignment between theory and practice within the context of instruction and interactions with students.

In their article *Collaboration and Self-regulation in Teachers' Professional Development*, Butler et al. (2004) recounted their two-year case study of a collaborative professional development literacy initiative in a school district in the greater Vancouver area. Over the span of this project, teachers worked collaboratively with each other, and with experts, to gain skills both as individuals and as a school community. By design, the role of the teacher experts faded over the course the study, and teachers were left to continue collaboration with each other and to implement new skills independently. Butler et al. (2004) found that such a collaborative model led to greater teacher reflection, and teachers constructed new knowledge that led to meaningful shifts in practice, even after the presence of the experts diminished. Butler et al. (2004) described the changes in practice to be “deep rooted” (p. 453), transcending mere mastery of specific routines and leading to the construction of knowledge based on reflection on experience. Finally, Butler et al. (2004) found that teachers’ self-regulated learning, as both a social and a reflective process, can be linked to the ability to reconstruct conceptual frameworks within the context of a community.

Literature about the Professional Practice Setting

To understand the nature of Catholic education in New England, it is first important to understand the demographics. The report, *United States Catholic*

Elementary and Secondary Schools 2014-2015, compiled by McDonald and Schultz (2015), offered some clarity on the New England Region in general. These demographics provide a contextual understanding of the population of Catholic educators in secondary schools in New England.

McDonald and Schultz (2015) reported that there are 93 Catholic secondary schools in the New England region, comprising a 3% rise from the reported 91 secondary schools in the New England region in 2005. These 93 schools make up 7.7% of the total number of Catholic secondary schools in the United States. Among these 93 schools, 27 are single gender schools (11 male and 16 female). During the 2013 - 2014 school year, one secondary school closed. Enrollment in Catholic secondary schools in New England has dropped 12% over the last ten years. This rate of attrition is more favorable than the national rate of 23.5% over the same period. Regarding diocesan-level school leadership, McDonald and Schultz (2015) reported that there are four vicars for education, nine superintendents, eight diocesan directors of religious education, and 13 assistant or associate superintendents. The researcher's personal experience with many of these leaders is that their roles and responsibilities, and their manner of interaction with the schools within their diocesan boundaries, varies from diocese to diocese.

Of particular note in McDonald and Schultz (2015) is that of the faculty religious background of each region. In New England secondary schools, 70.1% of teachers identified themselves as Catholic. This was the lowest percentage of any geographical region reported, and well below the national average of 77%.

While the Roman Catholic dioceses in New England operate as separate juridical entities of their bishops ("Code of Canon Law," 1982), their diocesan Catholic school mission statements bear similarities. For example:

- The mission of Maine Catholic Schools is to strengthen the Catholic Church and to create an environment in which the faith is preserved, nourished, shaped and communicated to foster values that give meaningful direction to the Christian family and society (Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, n.d.).
- As part of the mission of the Catholic Church, our schools exist to instill faith values in our students and to create a desire to make a positive difference in the world. In addition to quality academic programs, opportunities are provided for the school community to grow in their relationship with God, the Church, self, and others (Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, n.d.).
- The Office of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Fall River is rooted in the gospel message of Jesus Christ. . . . The Office of Catholic Schools works collaboratively with diocesan school communities to provide a faith centered, holistic, values-based Catholic school experience (Diocese of Fall River, n.d.).

These examples mirror other Catholic education mission statements from the New England region in their focus on Catholic values and the overall mission of the Catholic Church. They also stress a deliberate, apostolic view that calls Catholic school communities to form students who will be a transformative presence in society and the world. Other concerns such as academics and athletics are captured under the scope of the overall Catholic identity of the schools in the dioceses.

Leadership Literature

The ongoing faith formation of Catholic school teachers is consistently identified as one essential and continuing task of Catholic school leadership (Cook, 2001, 2015; Miller, 2006). The United States Catholic Conference, working in cooperation with the National Catholic Educational Association and the National Catholic Graduate Educational Leadership Programs of Catholic Colleges and Universities studied the area of Catholic school leadership carefully. The fruits of their labor included three volumes of Catholic school leadership writing in the areas of educational, spiritual, and managerial leadership (Ciriello, 1996).

In the series, *Formation and Development for Catholic School Leaders, The Principal as Spiritual Leader*, Muccigrosso (1996) stated “the excellent Catholic school leader is intent on fostering both the religious and academic mission of the Catholic school” (p. 3). He divided this into two essential tasks: 1) to tend to faculty faith formation through the leader’s relationship with the Church, and 2) to secure the integrity of the academic program by monitoring teaching and learning in all areas (Muccigrosso, 1996). With the second point, Muccigrosso (1996) advocated for an approach in which spiritual formation was built into the culture and the identity of the school in such a way that it permeated all areas of school life. Thus, it is the leader’s personal witness, along with a comprehensive worldview of faculty faith formation, which leads to catechesis. In this sense, the leader walks with the faculty in his or her growth in faith, setting the stage for collaborative and communal faith formation processes.

This conceptualization of leadership is not isolated to Catholic education. Rather, leadership ideals of collaboration and personal witness exist in more research-based

normative leadership theories. One such theory is servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf (1977) developed the idea of servant leadership based on his reading of Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East*. Greenleaf (1977) stated that servant leadership:

begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. . . . That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions (p. 6).

Thus, servant leadership is a model in which the leader serves both another's and the organization's highest priority needs. This is in contrast to a leader-first model in which the service arises out of coincidence or "in conformity with normative expectations" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 6). This focus on the followers of an organization transcends individual disciplines and speaks to the heart of how Catholic school leaders should place the faith formation needs of their teachers, and the school community, ahead of other competing factors.

Another relevant leadership theory that has interdisciplinary implications and that has been well-studied by researchers is the model of authentic leadership. In their review of the history and theoretical underpinnings of various leadership models, Avolio and Gardner (2005) highlighted the importance of authenticity in the person of the leader. They identified several traits of authentic leadership, which included: a) positive psychological capital, b) positive moral perspective, c) leader self-awareness, d) leader self-regulation, and e) leadership processes and behaviors (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). When compared to servant leadership models, Avolio and Gardner (2005) claimed that while both authentic and servant leadership models address leader self-awareness, authentic leadership also takes into consideration dimensions of follower self-awareness.

Given the previous discussion on the role of reflection in teacher professional growth, authentic leadership theory offers a glimpse as to how the leader's authenticity might foster the spiritual growth of teachers. This would also seem to align with the idea that effective spiritual leadership requires authentic witness on the part of the leader (Muccigrosso, 1996).

Summary

It emerged in this literature review that there is agreement among scholars that the maintenance of Catholic school identity is placed at risk by the decline of religious in Catholic school communities. Additionally, the role of the Catholic school leader has been consistently identified to be critical in the professional faith formation processes for lay Catholic school teachers. These sentiments and concerns have been expressed in both Catholic Church documents and related research.

While the presence of research and resources regarding lay Catholic school teacher formation is limited, research regarding best practices in professional development abound. Among the range of emerging professional development best practices, two themes that seem to connect them are the themes of collaboration and reflection. By connecting professional development best practices with professional faith formation, teachers could be provided with a common understanding and a means to imbue Catholic faith formation into all other aspects of teacher professional growth.

Finally, from an interdisciplinary perspective, normative leadership theories such as servant leadership and authentic leadership support the essence of faith leadership as explained in research. Specifically, these theories prioritize the needs of the followers and establish the authenticity of the leader to be essential in effective leadership. Given

that research in these areas has been well documented in a variety of fields, it is reasonable to assume that they may inform how Catholic school leaders can best safeguard the unique and distinctive identity of the school through the careful and deliberate formation of the community members that comprise it.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to better understand the nature of the professional practice problem and identified research question, the researcher employed an inductive, grounded theory approach to acquiring, analyzing, and codifying data. Data were acquired from lay educators in Catholic secondary schools in the New England region through the use of a structured interview protocol. The data provided by the participants were interpreted through a three-stage process of coding that included open coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding. The researcher sought to understand the relationships between emergent codes and categories, and this understanding formed the basis for the development of a framework for faith formation for lay educators in diocesan Catholic secondary schools.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify efficient and meaningful strategies for lay educator professional faith formation which support the advancement of Catholic school identity. This was accomplished through a qualitative, grounded theory study of lay Catholic school teachers in dioceses in the New England region.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify a strategic, evidence-based professional faith formation framework for lay Catholic school leaders to provide for ongoing educator faith formation in their school communities.

Research Questions

Given the purpose and aim of this qualitative study, an overarching research question emerged – how can Catholic school leaders provide formation experiences for lay teachers that will prepare them to promote the identity of the Catholic schools in which they work? Participants provided data for this study through structured interviews. Those interviews were guided by the following two research questions:

Research Question #1: What is the role of Catholic school leaders in the formation of lay faculty?

Research Question #2: What types of professional development experiences lend themselves to ongoing professional faith formation for lay faculty?

Method Rationale

The issue of professional faith formation draws into focus a number of social considerations. These social, interpersonal concerns are highlighted in post-Vatican II literature. In this sense, the Catholic school community reflects the relational focus that is encouraged by Jesus (Milan, 1988). In a Catholic school setting, one in which lay faculty members are responsible for the formation of students, but are also participants in faith formation processes themselves, the communal nature of faith formation cannot be overlooked. In fact, relationships within the community are at the heart of what it means to be a Catholic school (Cook & Simonds, 2011).

Schools are complex social structures. According to Creswell (2009), a social-constructivist worldview of research calls researchers to understand better the world in which they work. The goal of this inductive model is to understand the experiences of others, and subjective meaning is negotiated through the interaction with stakeholders.

Social constructivism is understood to be one approach to qualitative research. For this dissertation, this qualitative approach, one that was informed by the experiential context of lay Catholic educators, was employed to collect data and examine the research problem.

The aim of this study was to develop a theoretical, professional faith formation framework for lay Catholic school educators and administrators. The development of this framework was guided by the experiences of lay educator stakeholders. Participant selection, data collection and interpretation, and the development of resulting framework occurred through a grounded theory approach to research. This involved the discovery of theory from the systematic analysis of social research, which is an appropriate strategy for studying social phenomena in the field of education (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Participants

Creswell (2009) and Siedman (2013) recommended that participants for a qualitative research study be purposefully selected. Creswell (2009) asserted “the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites . . . that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p. 189). Siedman (2013) also discussed qualitative sampling at length and recommended that while the selection of participants and sites should be fair to the general population, it is generally advisable to apply a sampling strategy that is representative of the general population studied. With this in mind, the researcher initially targeted lay educators in Catholic schools in the New England area, with the exception of New Hampshire. Teachers ranged in subject areas taught and in longevity. Sites selected were from urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The initial selection of participants was purposefully stratified so that the participants represented general demographic categories concerning Catholic and non-Catholic secondary teachers in the New England region. As theoretical categories emerged from beginning analyses, additional participants were included to add depth and breadth and to elucidate further connections between those themes.

Applicants for this study were initially sought from secondary schools that have demonstrated success in maintaining a vibrant Catholic mission. In the New England region, Catholic secondary schools are evaluated decennially by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges [NEASC]. The NEASC school evaluation and accreditation process involves a structured review of a school's mission and the extent to which the school's policies, culture, and decision-making processes align with the stated mission (New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 2014). Schools are initially evaluated by a visiting team comprised of school leaders and educators from other similar schools, and final decisions on school accreditation are made by the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools. At the time of this study, schools were rated on a four-tier scale in 15 different areas with an emphasis on school mission. Before 2013, schools were rated similarly on a six-tier scale. For this study, superintendents of participating dioceses identified those schools in their dioceses that have achieved the highest possible rating in the area of school mission. It was from those schools that participants were sought for this study.

Authorization to seek participants for this study was initially secured from diocesan superintendents [Appendix A]. Of the 11 dioceses in New England, six superintendents responded to an initial request to conduct research within the high

schools in their dioceses. A seventh superintendent provided authorization later in the process. However, it was determined through the course of participant selection that the Catholic high schools in one of the participating dioceses were not required to be accredited, and thus those schools were not eligible for this study based on the parameters established in this methodology. A detailed overview of diocesan and school participation is noted in Table I. Of the participating dioceses and schools, the depth and breadth of participating educators yielded a pool that was demographically diverse and representative of the overall population of secondary Catholic school educators in the New England region. This contributed to the validity and trustworthiness of this process and of the data that emerged.

Table I

Overview of Diocesan and School Participation

State	Participating Dioceses	Participating Schools	Participants
Connecticut	1	1	2
Maine	0	0	0
Massachusetts	1	3	5
New Hampshire	0	0	0
Vermont	1	2	4
Rhode Island	0	0	0
Total	3	6	11

Note: Private secondary schools in the Diocese of Portland (ME) are not required to be accredited and thus were not eligible for this study. This study deliberately excluded schools in Diocese of Manchester (NH) due to the researcher's administrative responsibilities in that diocese.

Upon requesting and receiving authorization from heads of school to recruit participants [Appendix B], those heads of school referred the researcher to specific educators in the school who were suitable for this study. The researcher forwarded to

those educators, via email, an invitation to participate in this study [Appendix C].

Teachers who were interested in participating completed a brief questionnaire for general stratification [Appendix D]. Their responses were compiled in a spreadsheet, and the results ensured a sample representative of the general demographics of the region as noted in Table II:

Table II

Overview of Participants

Characteristic	Number of Participants <i>n</i> = 11
Gender	
Male	6
Female	5
Average Experience in Education (in years)	
40+ Years	3
30 – 39 Years	1
20 – 29 Years	4
10 – 19 Years	2
0 – 9 Years	1
Average Experience in Catholic Education (in years)	
40+ Years	1
30 – 39 Years	3
20 – 29 Years	2
10 – 19 Years	2
0 – 9 Years	3
Primary Ministry	
Classroom Teacher	9
School Counselor	1
School Administrator	2
Faith Practice	
Catholic	10
Non-Catholic	1

Note: All participants who identified themselves as “Catholic” identified themselves as practicing Catholics. The participant who identified himself as non-Catholic identified himself as a member of a Protestant denomination.

Conducting this study required careful planning to ensure a representative group of schools within the region. Additionally, secondary school teachers have busy schedules, and coordinating interviews in a manner conducive to participant scheduling restraints required flexibility and efficient and timely communication. In most cases, this communication occurred through email.

Data Collection Tools

Data for this study were collected primarily through participant interviews. An interview protocol [Appendix E] served to establish norms in the interview process. In general, a welcoming atmosphere, open-ended questions, acknowledgment of laughter and silence, appropriate follow-up questions, and the limiting of the researcher's disclosure of personal feelings or experiences are appropriate strategies for interviewing (Siedman, 2013). These practices were carefully observed by the researcher in the interview process.

All interviews conducted for this study occurred in person in the participants' work settings. Interviews were digitally recorded and archived in a secure audio format. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and codified in keeping with accepted norms for grounded theory research. School visits and interviews were logged in a spreadsheet for future review.

The Researcher's Role

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2009, 2013). Creswell (2013) stated "qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. They may use an instrument, but it is one designed by the researcher using

open-ended questions” (p. 45). This required the researcher to consider carefully his personal biases and how they may come to bear in the interview process. Additionally, researchers and participants alike do not enter into a study untouched by the world (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, it was important to frame the collection of data appropriately within the context of the research questions and the problem identified in this dissertation.

Data Analysis Plan

Data for this qualitative, grounded theory study were obtained through interviews with lay Catholic educators. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim into written form. Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently through a structured coding process and reflective memo-writing. Memo-writing provided a framework and structure for determining the relationships between identified codes and categories.

The first step of data analysis in a grounded theory model of research involves open coding through which the researcher begins generating categories of information (Creswell, 2009). For this study, the researcher generally utilized a line-by-line coding approach for this initial step. Charmaz (2006) stated that line-by-line coding is an appropriate choice for data consisting of “interviews, observations, documents, or ethnographies or autobiographies” (p. 50). Line-by-line open coding leads to the development of initial theoretical categories and more abstract connections within the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Following the process of line-by-line open coding, focused coding provides for more directed, selective, and conceptual applications of the codes. Focused coding

allows for comparison between participants' experiences, actions, and interpretations (Charmaz, 2006). According to Charmaz (2006), "focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize . . . incisively and completely" (p. 57). As participants were interviewed and data were collected, focused coding led to comparisons between initial open codes and the eventual recoding of data based on emergent themes.

After the identification of focused codes and categories, theoretical coding provides for the conceptualization of how "existing codes may relate to each other as a hypothesis to be integrated into a theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 62). This integrative process lent form to the previously identified focused codes with special attention to the connections and relationships between identified theoretical categories. Ultimately, the process of theoretical coding led to the stated research aim, which was to develop a framework of professional faith formation for lay Catholic educators.

Quality and Verification

Reliability and validity are important dimensions of qualitative research, and there are no statistical tests that can measure these qualities in such a study. There are many researchers who advocate for the term *trustworthiness* when considering validity for a qualitative approach to research (Siedman, 2013). Therefore, appropriate protocols were observed to ensure the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the data. The researcher maintained an audit trail of all interviews conducted [Appendix F]. All interviews were transcribed verbatim before coding, and initial transcriptions were shared with participants to ensure accuracy. Triangulated data points between three or more

participants in more than one school validated major themes that emerged from the interviews. Finally, conferencing with members of the researcher's dissertation committee regarding the interpretation of the data helped to ensure a valid and reliable process.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration of this research study involved confidentiality. With focused, in-depth interviews about profession and faith, the potential existed for participants to disclose deeply personal perspectives and experiences. Proper attention to confidentiality was critical. To preserve confidentiality, the name of each participant involved in this study was replaced with a unique random index number between 1 and 100. Additionally, references to schools in which the participants worked and other identifiable data points were replaced with generic placeholders. Moreover, written transcripts were stored in a locked, fireproof cabinet. Audio files of interviews were saved on a portable hard disk drive, which also remained in a locked fireproof cabinet. Coding, which was completed in NVivo, was saved in a secure manner.

Consent from willing participants was obtained verbally, and participant rights were articulated through the use of an informed consent letter [Appendix G]. Consent was also acquired from diocesan superintendents and heads of school to recruit willing participants for this study. To avoid any confusion over the researcher's supervisory ministry over teachers and administrators in his own diocese the researcher recruited participants from dioceses in other states in the New England region over whom he held no supervisory responsibility.

Summary

The identity of Catholic education is now in the hands of lay educators and leaders who will determine the future of this essential ministry of the Church. Lay educators accept a unique vocation in this essential ministry to the Church. It will be through their preparation and formation that they will champion the identity of the Catholic schools in which they teach and lead.

This study examined the puzzle of lay educator faith formation through a qualitative, grounded theory approach. This inductive model involves the development of theory from emergent data from, in this case, participant interviews. Participants were purposefully selected to represent broad categories of stakeholders in diocesan Catholic secondary schools in New England. Through this process, the researcher designed and implemented an open-ended interview protocol which addressed the stated research questions. Participant responses were transcribed verbatim, examined, and coded according to accepted norms in the grounded theory process. Reflective memo-writing, a staple of grounded theory research, occurred concurrently with data collection and led to the identification of focused categories. These focused categories comprised the structure of the emergent theoretical framework.

This study was conducted with careful attention to accepted ethical norms in social science research. The anonymity of the participants was ensured by replacing their names with random numbers and by removing any identifying information from interview transcripts. Interview transcripts and audio recordings were secured, both physically and electronically. Additionally, triangulation of data points, conferencing with members of the dissertation committee, the maintenance of an audit trail, and the

confirmation of the accuracy of interview transcripts contributed to a valid and reliable study of the participants' experiences in faith formation in the schools in which they work.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The Catholic Church's system of schools, which grew through centuries of toil and sacrifice of women and men religious, is now in the hands of the lay leaders and educators who comprise most Catholic school communities (McDonald & Schultz, 2015; Miller, 2006). When Catholic schools were primarily led by women and men religious, their presence offered a built-in system of adult faith formation (Cook, 2001). Indeed, the women and men of the teaching orders that previously staffed Catholic schools viewed education as a life ministry, and formation occurred within the context of religious community (Keating & Traviss, 2001). As the presence of religious has declined, and as lay educators take their place as the primary adult stakeholders in Catholic school communities, it will be without unique spiritual formation that was present when religious were more present in Catholic schools (Cook, 2001). Without understanding how it is that lay educators can bridge that gap, and how lay school leaders can direct that process, Catholic educators run the risk of falling out of touch with the spiritual vision that has guided Catholic schools for centuries.

Previous scholarly research has identified the role of lay Catholic school educators and leaders to be essential in securing an appropriate identity for Catholic schools (Earl, 2005). Given the nature of the stated research problem and the significance of lay Catholic school educators and leaders in addressing that problem, an overarching research question emerged - how can Catholic school leaders provide formation experiences for lay educators that will prepare them to promote the identity of

the Catholic schools in which they work? An examination of this question was guided by the following two additional research questions:

Research Question #1: What is the role of Catholic school leaders in the formation of lay faculty?

Research Question #2: What types of professional development experiences lend themselves to ongoing professional faith formation for lay faculty?

Creswell (2009) identified qualitative research as an appropriate strategy for studying social phenomena in group settings. Therefore, the data acquired for this dissertation were gathered through interviews with purposefully selected participants. Additionally, a grounded theory approach allowed for a solution to the challenge of lay-educator professional faith formation to emerge from the data collected. In keeping with this model of qualitative research, statements made by participants during interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, categorized, and organized in such a way that illuminated promising strategies for addressing lay Catholic education faith formation needs. Through this careful review emerged an evidence-based framework for lay Catholic educator faith formation that addresses the stated research problem.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify efficient and meaningful strategies for lay educator professional faith formation that support the preservation of Catholic school identity. This was accomplished through a qualitative, grounded theory study of lay Catholic school educators in dioceses in the New England region.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify a strategic, evidence-based professional faith formation framework for lay Catholic school leaders to provide for ongoing educator faith formation in their school communities.

Summary and Presentation of the Findings

Data for this study were acquired through interviews with 11 purposefully selected participants. The selected participants worked as educators in Catholic diocesan secondary schools in dioceses in New England. The schools in which the participants worked were rated at the highest level in the area of school mission by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in their most recent decennial evaluations. Participants included teachers, department chairs, school counselors, and assistant principals. The participants were carefully selected to ensure an overall sample representative of a range of professional experiences and faith backgrounds.

Interviews with participants were conducted in a uniform manner through the use of a common interview protocol. Follow-up questions were used to clarify comments and to elucidate further the emergent themes related to the research questions. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher prior to coding. After the interviews were completed, interview transcripts were provided to the participants to ensure accuracy in the transcription.

The first step of coding data in a grounded theory approach is to complete an initial coding process, which allows for the early analysis of discrete qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006). In keeping with this principle, discrete pieces of data, usually lines or sentences from participant responses, were selected and interpreted, and an individual

code was assigned to each. The software application NVivo was used to codify all transcripts and to manage the emergent data. Interviews with all 11 participants yielded 2652 discrete data points and 544 initial codes.

Throughout the data analysis process, a process of reflective memo-writing allowed for the identification of trends, documentation of connections between codes and categories, and examination of the application of emergent themes. Memo-writing allows for a structured way to connect the collection and interpretation of data (Charmaz 2006). In this study, memo-writing usually occurred following the transcription and coding of interviews. Memos were associated electronically with interview transcripts using NVivo.

Data collection and data analysis occurred concurrently throughout the data collection process. As interviews were conducted and as data interpretation progressed, codes were triangulated between multiple participants in different schools. Codes that were not triangulated were omitted, as were those that did not specifically address the stated research questions.

As patterns within the initial codes arose from the interview transcripts, a focused coding process allowed for the grouping of like codes and the examination of initial relationships between them. This progression resulted in the identification of eight focused categories that lent themselves to an initial framework. These categories included:

- a) Christ, His Church, and the Educator's Relationship to It
- b) Experience Providing Context for Formation
- c) Reflective Practice to Draw from the Well of Personal Experience

- d) Encountering Others on the Path to Formation
- e) Connecting Formation with the Experience of Students
- f) Formation in Service as an Outward Expression of Catholic School Identity

Additionally, participants provided experiential feedback that answered the question of the role of leadership in fostering a faithful school community. In addition to identifying specific common traits, participants also identified additional focused categories that require consideration. Those categories included:

- a) Structuring Formation
- b) Building a Faithful Culture
- c) Managing Transition and Crisis

The composition, organization, and analysis of the memos, in conjunction with the analysis of the data, led to the development of a professional faith-formation framework representative of the interrelated focused categories as noted in Table III. The codes that comprised these categories occurred with at least three different participants in at least two different schools. In the presentation of the data, references to participants' comments are bracketed and can be found in the audit trail (Appendix F).

Table III

Focused Categories and Triangulated Codes

Category	Cases Coded <i>n</i> = 11	Schools Coded <i>n</i> = 6
Christ, His Church, and the Educator's Relationship to It		
Affinity for Eucharist and Liturgy	8	4
Personal Faith and Professional Faith Inseparable	5	3
Jesus as Model	4	4
Importance of Educator Faith Witness	4	4

Focused Categories and Triangulated Codes, Continued

Category	Cases Coded <i>n</i> = 11	Schools Coded <i>n</i> = 6
Experience Providing Context for Formation		
Recalling Childhood Experience	7	4
Family Members as Partners in Faith	5	5
Recalling a Providential Path to Current Ministry	4	2
Reflective Practice to Draw from the Well of Personal Experience		
Making Time for Reflective Practice	6	4
Reflection Leading to Collaboration	5	3
A Preference for Reflection	5	3
Prayerful Reflection Occurs in the Context of Work	3	2
Encountering Others on the Path to Formation		
Formation through an Encounter with Another	8	6
Community Dialogue Leads to Formation	5	2
Collaboration Occurs Informally	3	3
Collaboration and Reflection as Connected Processes	3	2
Connecting Formation to the Experience of the Students		
Acknowledging Students as Central Concern	8	4
Connecting Classroom Instruction and Formation	8	6
Student Experience Leads to Adult Formation	7	5
Encountering Students Outside of the Classroom	4	4
Formation in Service as an Outward Expression of School Identity		
Educator and Students Serving Together	7	5
Service Grounded in Faith	7	4
Stressing Service as Central to School Identity	6	3
The Role of the Leader		
Leading through Empowerment	8	5
Leader Modeling Faith	6	5
Leading through Collaboration	4	3
Leader Resourcing Campus Ministry	4	3
Structuring Formation		
Managing Distractions	7	3
Providing Meaningful Formal Experiences	6	3
Framing the Day with Prayer	4	4
Framing Professional Responsibilities with Prayer	4	4

Focused Categories and Triangulated Codes, Continued

Category	Cases Coded <i>n</i> = 11	Schools Coded <i>n</i> = 6
Building a Faithful Culture		
Affirmation of and Affinity for Colleagues	7	5
An Expansive Definition of Community	6	4
An Accepting Community	4	3
A Climate of Family	4	2
Freedom to Discuss Faith Openly	3	2
Parents as Partners	3	3
Managing Transition and Crisis		
Growing in Faith through Crisis	8	6
Community Outreach toward Colleagues in Crisis	5	4
Growing through Transition	3	2

Note. Codes that were not triangulated by three or more participants in two or more schools were omitted from this table.

Christ, His Church, and the Educator's Relationship to It

Over the course of the interviews, participants consistently revealed the centrality of Christ, his Church, and the relationship of the Catholic school educator to it.

Participants referenced a Christological foundation in nearly all aspects of this study at various times. There was discussion about direct implications for leadership as well as specific references to how it is that professional faith development emerges in all aspects of an effective school community:

Affinity for Eucharist and liturgy. The majority of the participants in this study expressed that a significant dimension of their professional faith formation was the availability of liturgy and specifically the Holy Eucharist, both personally and within the context of the school community. The presence of the Blessed Sacrament was described to be an essential and central piece of any ongoing faith formation effort. Participant 91, an experienced Latin teacher who is a practicing Catholic [1] stated “what feeds me now

on a daily basis is there's daily mass before at the beginning of each day. . . . I aim to get there because, some days more than others, I feel like I really need some grounding" [2].

Participant 75, a Catholic social studies teacher in the same school [3] echoed this sentiment. He recalled the presence of a chaplain who celebrated mass in the school community on a daily basis. For him, daily mass was important; he identified it as an important way that his faith is formed in the context of the school community [4].

Participant 33, an assistant principal and teacher coach [5], placed a similar priority on the liturgy, acknowledging that liturgy can help to frame other elements of the school day. She stated "receiving the Eucharist and then going back to work after having that community experience is really valuable to me" [6]. Participant 33 also noted that the availability of the Blessed Sacrament was important outside of liturgy, and that just having it present in the school chapel was an important resource for the school community [7].

Jesus as model. Over the course of the interviews that were conducted for this study, the centrality of Jesus – his teachings and his witness – were identified to be fundamental to various aspects of professional faith formation. Jesus was uniformly seen as a primary focus and a central figure in a school community. This sentiment, and its applicability to a Catholic school community, is aptly illustrated by comments from Participant 58, an experienced English teacher and department chair [8] in a suburban combined middle and high school. In discussing her school's success in honoring its mission, she stated "[one] thing is that we [have is], and you'll see it in every room in the school, there's a poster. And it says 'be it known by all here that Christ is the reason for this school'" [9]. During her interview, Participant 58 identified several examples of how

this statement is applied in the practice of her professional faith and in the school community at-large. Specifically, she identified the centrality of Christ as an essential underpinning in the completion of community service [10].

Participant 57, an assistant principal and social studies teacher [11] in the same suburban middle-high school made similar observations during his interview. He too affirmed that the school's service work was centered on the teachings of Jesus [12]. Participant 57 noted this focus to be present with his colleagues. In speaking of a colleague with whom he has an informal mentoring relationship, he explained how that relationship leads him to "see the Jesus in someone" [13]. Participant 57 also spoke of opportunities in which he could model Jesus' teaching with his students, and stated "I could be someone's Jesus today" and "that kid could be my Jesus today" [14].

Personal faith and professional faith inseparable. While most of the questions that the researcher used to guide the interviews were related specifically to professional faith formation, participants often found it difficult to separate their own personal faith formation from their experiences in professional faith formation. In many cases, the two concepts were intrinsically linked. For example, Participant 85, a practicing Catholic with seven years of Catholic school experience as an English teacher and department chair [15], explained, "I come to my profession as a believing person. That's not just an add-on for me, it is part and parcel of who I am" [16]. Similarly, Participant 33, in discussing her reflective practice, discussed how she uses the school chapel more and more for personal reasons and for when personal decisions need to be made [17]. Participant 23, a devout Catholic with over 40 years of experience teaching biology and health [18] connected her personal faith practice to her ministry in Catholic education.

She claimed, “my faith is very important to me, and I wanted to be in a place where that wasn’t just accepted, but really appreciated and fostered” [19]. Thus, participants connected their personal faith life to their profession; both in what drew them to it and in how they carry out their ministry on a day to day basis.

Importance of educator faith witness. Over the course of the interviews, educators recognized the importance of their own personal faith witness in the preservation of the Catholic identity of the schools in which they worked. According to the educators interviewed, their personal faith witness established a sense of authenticity in their relationships with others. Participant 71, an English teacher with only one year of experience in a suburban Catholic high school [20] stated:

I think it’s such a privilege to be able to stand in front of [the students] and . . . be a witness to the faith and . . . not just like the doctrine and the written word, but the love that comes through it . . . to be able to stand there and show them what it looks like in practice [21].

Moreover, teachers are able to encounter students outside of the classroom in the practice of faith, thus strengthening those relationships. For example, Participant 71 also stated, “I’ll see them at mass and I love it, because it’s just like here they see a young teacher going to mass on her own and to see them as students” [22].

It is notable that the educators interviewed in this study were not uniformly consistent in their practice of faith. Rather, participants ranged from non-Catholic to extremely devout Catholic. However, the importance of faith witness was consistently noted. For instance, Participant 77, a Director of Guidance in a high school in a rural community who identified himself as a member of a Protestant congregation [23]

acknowledged the importance of faith witness in the Catholic school community. He discussed how essential it was for him that his students know that he is not Catholic, that he appreciates them being Catholic, and that it is through his active participation in the faith life of the school that these understandings are fostered [24]. In this sense, Participant 77, who indicated no intention of converting to Catholicism [25], still found value in joining with students in the practice of their faith as an active and supportive partner in the school's Catholic mission.

Experience Providing Context for Formation

During the interview process, participants provided background biographical information that formed the contextual foundation for their experience in Catholic education. When asked to discuss formative moments in their professional lives, participants often drew deeply from memories spanning years. An examination of commonalities evident in participant feedback yielded the following themes:

Recalling childhood experience. When discussing their experiences on their path to a ministry in Catholic education, participants often drew upon memories from childhood, especially if those educators had experience as students in Catholic education. Participants who made these connections often identified such prior experiences to be the contextual underpinning for their professional ministry in Catholic education. For example, Participant 85 made comparisons between the school in which she works and the school that she attended as a child. She stated:

I went to a phenomenal [Catholic] high school in [another city]. . . . And the education I got there, it brings tears to my eyes; it was just unbelievable. The

motto of the school, the little moniker we used “chez nous,” our house. And indeed it was [26].

Similarly, Participant 91 recalled that he was a product of Catholic education, and his involvement in Catholic education as a student was what kept him connected with the Church [27]. Participant 33 echoed a similar sentiment, noting that she attended Catholic school for 12 years, that she loved Catholic school, and that it was “a part of me” [28]. In all, many participants drew upon their own experiences in Catholic education as students as formative moments in their preparation for a professional ministry in a Catholic school.

Family members as partners in faith. A number of participants explained the supportive role that family members play in their faith formation, personally and professionally, in the past and in the present. For example, Participant 23 noted that she was raised in a Catholic home and that the faith practice instilled by her parents sustained her through college in her adult years [29]. Participant 23’s focus on family continued to be expressed toward her immediate family members. She discussed her spiritual bond with her husband, and that they share daily scriptural reflections with each other [30]. Moreover, Participant 23 discussed how she has grown in a retreat setting that was provided by the school that connected the dimensions of home, church, and school with the thematic idea of the family [31]. Participant 23 referred to this experience as “profound” [32]. This connection to family was similarly noted by Participant 57, who explained how he engages in ongoing reflection with his wife regarding his place in Catholic education [33]. Participant 77, who is not a practicing Catholic, described how he grew in his understanding of the Catholic faith through a relationship with an extended

family member. This relationship helped him to understand the forms and practice of faith in the Catholic school community [34].

Recalling a providential path to current ministry. Over the course of the interviews, some participants referenced a providential path that led them to their current ministry in Catholic education. This sense of pondering the question “why am I here now” served as a starting point for meaningful reflection for these participants.

Participant 73, an experienced English teacher in a suburban Catholic high school [35], reflected upon his prior career as a broadcaster [36] and his unusual path to Catholic education. He stated:

Again, you could call it kismet; you could call it coincidence, you could call it intervention of the Holy Spirit, flip a coin, take your choice, having gained licensure . . . I immediately set my head into trying to find reciprocity someplace farther north [37].

Participant 73 acknowledged the possibility that his path to his current ministry might be a matter of divine providence, stating that he felt “guided by the [Holy] Spirit” and that “sometimes you have to take your hand off the wheel and go where you go to” [38].

Participant 33 similarly discussed a sense of being led to her ministry in Catholic education, and asked of herself “why am I here now” [39]. Participant 91, who connected his ministry in Catholic education to his faith practice, stated:

One thought I had was, what if I weren’t working here now? Would I be... you know... how would my faith look then... and this keeps me daily in the game, you know, that’s a good thing [40].

In any case, participants confirmed that their path to Catholic education had the potential to provoke and support reflective practice in their current ministry.

Reflective Practice to Draw from the Well of Personal Experience

Reflective practice has been identified in scholarly research to be an effective practice for teachers to achieve ongoing and enduring professional growth (McArdle & Coutts, 2010; Spilková, 2001; Zhao, 2013). The researcher in this study sought to better understand if such practices also lead to growth in faith, as perceived by the participants. Indeed, participants identified dimensions of reflective practice that influenced their overall formation in faith within the context of a Catholic school community:

Making time for reflective practice. Throughout the interview process, participants consistently discussed how difficult it is to find time to engage in prayerful reflection during the school day, and they recalled how it is that they make time for reflective practice within the context of those challenges. For example, Participant 73 discussed how he needed to make his own reflection time due to busy nature of the school schedule. He likened engaging in reflective practice during the school day to “[changing] the oil in a moving car” [41] and that as a result he used time out of school, usually weekends and vacations, to engage in such activities [42]. Participant 24, a math teacher in a suburban high Catholic school [43] also engaged in reflective practice outside of school. She stated:

Since I live alone, I have a lot of time to think on my own too, even though, you know, just sometimes just sit there and, I’m trying to think... where have I been? Where am I going? And how am I gonna do this [44]?

Likewise, Participant 23 noted that for 30 years, she engaged in reflective morning prayer before school, and that she carried that experience into school with her during her drive to work and even in walking up to her classroom [45].

While classroom teachers cited difficulties in finding time during the school day to engage in reflection, other educators who had some administrative responsibility and whose days were less structured noted that they were more able to avail themselves of opportunities for reflective practice during the school day. For example, Participant 77, a non-Catholic Director of Guidance, noted “the chapel is down the hall from me and when, generally, when I need some centering and some space, I’ll end up there” [46]. Participant 33, an assistant principal at a Catholic middle-high school, also noted that she is in a fortunate position to be able to access her chapel for prayerful reflection [47]. Overall, participants seemed to crave time to reflect. And while those whose days were filled with classroom responsibilities often found time out of school to engage in such practice, others with less structured responsibilities availed themselves of school resources and unstructured moments to access those resources during the school day.

Reflection leading to collaboration. A number of participants in this study expressed that reflective practice, whether practiced in a formal way or independently within the scope of one’s daily ministry, led to more effective faithful collaboration with colleagues. This relationship between reflection and collaboration is strong, and through that process the school community is strengthened. Participant 57 stated about a retreat experience:

. . . that day we reflected on “why” . . . “what do we do”. . . the group I was in, . . . I think we came up with catch phrases . . . of what we’re about. . . [By

listening to other people's perspectives] I have a little bit more appreciation of the entire value of the school [48].

Participant 33 spoke similarly of structured reflective efforts and discussed how faculty members in her school share ideas and written reflections following independent reflective activities [49]. Participant 91 explained his preference to “go . . . off by myself and try to figure things out, and then go back out a little bit and talk to others about it,” and referred to such practices as “healthy” [50].

A preference for reflection. Many of the participants in this study claimed that they craved more time to engage in deep, personal reflection. These opportunities are difficult to come by in a Catholic secondary school setting. Participant 58 discussed the brief nature of reflection time built into the morning community prayer, stating “it’s not like a meditation time really – it’s just like a question you can toss around in your head for a couple of seconds” [51], and that “I wish that I had that reflection time” during morning prayer [52]. Participant 58 was also deliberate in describing her preference for reflection. She explained:

I don’t necessarily want to share . . . with someone else, and I don’t think anyone else necessarily wants to hear what I have to say about that because I think reflection is really personal. So I like reflection, but I don’t like sharing [53].

Participants 57 and 91 also indicated a preference for personal reflection over sharing [54].

However, regardless of personal preference, participants agreed that collaboration is a useful endeavor and that reflective practice can enhance that. Participant 75, who also preferred reflective practice over collaboration [55] recalled “there was buy-in

among the faculty in [a previous school] that was a result of a felt participation in the faith life of the school” [56]. There was a level of agreement among participants that while collaboration and sharing may be uncomfortable, they were healthy exercises nonetheless.

Prayerful reflection occurs within the context of work. When discussing the role that reflection plays in the context of their overall faith formation, some participants noted that prayerful reflection occurs within the context of their workday and can be embedded in the routine tasks that comprise a ministry in classroom teaching. Participant 73, for example, made this sentiment clear by stating, “the day is a prayer” [57]. He explained:

there are some times when it is a little more vocal than others, and there are times of the day where it is less cluttered than others. But make no mistake what we’re doing here. [Prayer is] an ongoing process. It is an ongoing statement [58].

Other participants noted comparable experiences. Participant 75 made a similar observation, stating that he makes tedious tasks, such as email correspondence, prayerful and contemplative, and that doing so is his “interaction with the Kingdom” [59].

Participant 85 noted how she directs such reflective prayer towards her students. She explained “when I give a 10-minute quiz, or even longer, I just look at them sweating, working at their papers, and when I write their names, I pray for them each” [60].

Indeed, these educators seem to have found a way to embed meaningful prayerful reflection within the context of their work routine and daily responsibilities.

Encountering Others on the Path to Formation

The journey toward formation in professional faith in a Catholic school setting is marked by encounters with others. These encounters can include a range of different stakeholders, including students, parents, leaders, and colleagues. Participants discussed how their encounters and relationships with their colleagues added to their faith formation experience in a Catholic School setting, both in terms of the Catholic school community in general, and in specific encounters with specific colleagues.

Formation through an encounter with another. When asked about moments in which they felt most formed in their faith in the school community, participants often recalled a specific relationship with a specific person or group of people as crucial in their formation. These relationships and experiences were established early in their careers, many years prior to this study. In some cases, these encounters occurred when the participants were students in a Catholic school setting. For example, Participant 91, when asked about a formative encounter with another, discussed how a relationship with his Catholic high school Latin teacher had “a profound influence on my life, as a Catholic” [61]. For Participant 75, a similar encounter occurred with a chaplain in a Catholic school in which he previously worked. In this example, the chaplain helped the participant to understand how he could provide more authentic faith witness to his students through prayer [62]. Participant 58 spoke of encountering a specific colleague through a “prayer partner” strategy at her school. She stated that:

Every year, you, at the beginning of the year, you pick a prayer partner. And that person, you’re going to pray for that person that year. And someone else is

praying for you. And then at the end of the year you find out who it is. You know, so that I found very enriching [63].

Whether these encounters occurred in previous settings or within the educators' current ministry, educators noted clearly that such experiences led to their spiritual growth as ministers in Catholic education.

Community dialogue leads to formation. In addition to describing encounters with specific individuals, participants recalled how community-wide dialogue promoted individual faith formation. In several instances, participants noted how such dialogue could be structured in a community setting. To illustrate this point, Participant 75 discussed how a school-wide reading project led to group discussion about pertinent themes related to the Catholic identity of the school in which he worked. For him, this was an effective process that led to personal growth and a shared sense of ownership and connection with the school community [64]. Participant 58 discussed how listening to faculty members share stories of their faith was a meaningful growth process for her [65]. She shared one specific instance:

I found one particular experience, which I think is the highlight of my faith professional development. One year, right before Christmas, we had a sharing the faith session, and this time, we were in the foyer downstairs. And there were tables, and on the tables there were these small pieces of paper like this size [participant folds an 8 1/2 x 11" piece of paper in half to illustrate size] and there was the outline of a candle printed on it. And you wrote messages to your fellow faculty about the gifts that you saw in them and the wishes that you had for them that Christmas. And I thought that was very, very meaningful [66].

Participant 23 discussed how focused and structured group discussion questions following a communal viewing of a media presentation resulted in meaningful growth. In that process, small group discussions were led by a colleague, and the discussion questions were related to the themes addressed in the media presentation [67]. Participant 23 described this experience, which occurred during a retreat day, to be “worthwhile” in her ongoing professional growth experience [68].

Collaboration occurs informally. It was significant that several participants from different schools discussed how informal collaborative encounters with each other were the norm, and that growth occurs within the context of those encounters. Participant 24, for example, noted that in her school, opportunities to collaborate are not structured. However, she explained that colleagues will informally discuss written articles that speak to a spiritual theme applicable to the Catholic school setting. These articles came from colleagues, not leaders, and they were deliberately selected to challenge prevailing worldviews and mindsets (or to “stir the pot,” as she put it) [69]. Participant 77 described a healthy process of collaboration where he and his colleagues talk about a number of topics, including religion. Participant 77, who is not Catholic, noted those encounters to “include conversations about differences between the faiths that are in the building,” and he described such dialogue to be “healthy” [70]. Similarly, Participant 91 recalled that while informal opportunities for collaboration were infrequent, he did appreciate those opportunities when they arose. He stated that he was happy to be with those colleagues and that they can “talk about faith matters, you know, how something is affecting the mission of the school” [71]. While the nature and frequency of these unstructured

encounters varied in the experiences of each participant, participants echoed that such informal encounters do occur and that they are meaningful for their faith formation.

Collaboration and reflection as connected processes. Just as some participants noted that reflective practice led to collaborative encounters with colleagues, others found that it was those collaborative encounters that prompted deeper personal reflection. Participant 57, who claimed a preference for reflection over collaboration, identified value in internal reflection following encounters with others. He explained:

I think [reflection is] just more important, but I take into it my collaboration with other people, but my experience with other people, what effect that has on me. I always think that whoever you meet in your lifetime leaves something with you [72].

Participant 58 discussed a similar process and noted that she experiences personal growth when she encounters others in service and then reflects on those experiences alone. During these reflective moments, she ponders who she is and how she develops as a member of a school faith community [73]. Similarly, Participant 71 affirmed that collaboration with others allows her to grow personally when reflecting by herself [74].

It is notable that while some participants stated that it was their reflective practice that prompted collaboration, others shared that it was their encounters with others that led to deep reflection. However, most participants viewed those processes as intrinsically linked. Participants agreed that there is an important relationship between inward reflection and outward encounters and dialogue, and that both types of experiences were meaningful in fostering growth in professional faith.

Connecting Formation with the Experience of Students

Over the course of all 11 interviews, participants discussed, on some level, their connection with their students and how that connection enhances their professional faith formation. Educators' discussion of prayer, faithful encounters with others, and community all included consideration for students. Student considerations were prominent throughout all of the interviews, and several specific themes emerged:

Acknowledging students as a central concern. Participants in this study noted the centrality of their students to their ministry in Catholic education. Participant 33, for example, explained that it was the students who brought her back to Catholic education, and that she saw it as her role to provide to her students the same valuable spiritual experiences that she had as a student in a Catholic school [75]. Participant 75 also identified a spiritual connection with his students. He explained that from his perspective, "it's why teaching in a Catholic school is important, because . . . there's a deeper connection with the kids and [they're] connecting on that spiritual level" [76]. Participant 73 summarized this sentiment in similar way:

I get the privilege and the burden of meeting face-to-face with roughly 100 creatures of God. Every day. And they are all, as I am, dearly and deeply beloved by the Creator. Some of his best work [77].

Examples such as these abound among the comments offered by participants. There was uniform agreement about the importance of the students and how the relationship between the educator and the students should respect this importance.

Connecting classroom instruction and faith formation. Given the importance that educators placed on their relationships with students, a number of participants

discussed how they connected faith formation within the context of classroom instruction. The classroom environment was described as one setting in which teachers and students grew in their faith together. In this sense, some educators noted how they brought Catholic identity into the classroom. For example, Participant 33 discussed how a service project was framed with a reading assignment that was followed by a prayer service [78]. Participant 23, a health and biology teacher, noted a similar connection. She explained that while she did not teach a formal religion course, faith practice permeates all courses taught at her school [79]. She further recalled:

So, from 1998 to the present, I've been teaching the health course here. And all Catholic teachings that apply are discussed and taught and reinforced with what our theology department teaches. But everything we talk about, I talk about in context... "well, this is what the Church teaches, or this is what the Church teaches, and why...". And I just find that very effective [80].

This perspective was echoed by Participant 71, an English teacher in her second year of teaching. She too affirmed the connection between content and faith formation, stating that she is encouraged [by her principal] to do more than just teach the subject areas [81]. She explained that as English teacher, she is easily able to connect content with spirituality, and that she does so frequently. She explained:

I mean I'm an English teacher, so . . . the Catholic tradition and Christianity is so formative in literature. . . . I teach the Iliad and Dante's Inferno and all of these books that are laden with Christian allusion, and so it's something that just naturally comes up in class [82].

Encountering students outside of the classroom. Just as educators identified the classroom space as a forum in which to encounter students in a faithful way, they also identified encounters outside the classroom to be valuable opportunities to build relationships with students. These encounters allow students and teachers to see each other in different lights, deepening their relationships and interactions with each other. Participant 24 explained:

encountering students [outside class is] definitely, definitely a big thing that helps along the way. You know that's who you're dealing with. You're dealing with the kids all day, and you see them in a different light, and they see you in a different light [83].

Participant 23 made a similar observation. When discussing her encounters with students as the moderator of a pro-life club, she stated that such encounters give the teachers a different perspective through which a teacher has an opportunity to “see what’s going on and to be a witness to the kids, which is so important” [84]. Participant 71 explained how these encounters can occur less formally, outside the context of moderating a club or activity. She identified the benefit of attending events outside her paid responsibilities as it allows her to connect with the community and the families that comprise it [85].

Student experience leads to adult formation. As educators discussed the importance of students in their educational ministry in the Catholic school and as they identified formative encounters both in and out of the classroom, they were clear in connecting those experiences with their own professional faith formation. Participant 75, for example, stated simply “in terms of my faith life, understanding [that] for better or worse, my faith life is deeply integrated with the faith lives and life experience of the

students” [86]. He discussed his affinity for a group of 60 students with whom he attends mass in the morning, stating, “those relationships are probably . . . the most important teacher-student relationships I have here” [87]. Similarly, Participant 23, who has accompanied students on spiritual retreats for 24 years, recalled:

And so I think [the students’ presentations] are like “wow,” you know, I don’t do anything else that equates to that . . . I feel so privileged to be able to be there and to witness that and to be part of that and to be someone who allows that in my small way to occur. You know, in the transformative power that has on students [88].

Participant 24, in discussing her encounters with students during service opportunities, explained the transformation that she sees in her students over the service experience. In this sense, Participant 24 linked seeing the students’ growth with her own, stating that such experiences “definitely left a lasting impression on me too” [89].

Formation in Service as an Outward Expression of Catholic School Identity

While participants in this study noted that their relationships with their students are central to their own professional formation in faith, they also identified that it was through engagement in service ministry that relationships with students were especially meaningful. Participants also described how sharing in student service experiences strengthened the school community and helped them to appreciate their places in it. While participants identified a range of considerations having to do with service ministry, several emerged as most significant:

Educators and students serving together. Participants strongly affirmed the value of students and teachers engaging in service ministries together. And while the

nature and scope of the types of service completed in the school setting varied, most of the participants explained that on some level, engagement in service opportunities with students led to professional growth. For example, Participant 24 recalled that she has engaged in a number of different service initiatives in her school, including an overnight service trip to Appalachia. She explained how experiences like these developed a sense of solidarity and shared mission between students and adults in the school community [90]. Participant 85, a teacher in the same school, noted that service in that school is not just limited to a few individual faculty members. She stated “the faculty are always involved” in those experiences [91]. Similarly, Participant 77 described how all members of the community, including teachers, are involved with a food collection that serves a significant need in the local community. He stated “those types of [service opportunities] have significance to me from a faith standpoint in that we as an institution are offering that opportunity” [92]. Participant 71 reiterated this theme when she discussed her participation in a student service trip to Ecuador. She explained:

[This service opportunity] is about a ministry of presence – like where you can see the face of Christ; how you can be the face of Christ for others. . . . And that is . . . a huge experience for myself and the kids [93].

The types of service opportunities discussed by the participants varied as much as the schools and the participants themselves, but participants were consistent in highlighting the importance of service and in engaging in those opportunities with students.

Service grounded in faith. Participants also identified how service opportunities, in a Catholic school setting, are appropriately grounded in faith. It is this

spiritual perspective that makes such service opportunities unique to Catholic schools.

Participant 85 identified a strong connection here. She explained:

This school – we are always sending a group out somewhere to do something for somebody. And it's always in the name of faith; we've been given a lot – how can we give back? Really, it's in the air we breathe here. That sustains me personally. I could be teaching English anywhere. I have. But there's a very special character here and I know part of it is we're commanded to be a Catholic school. That's part of it [94].

While the connection of service to faith was a consistent theme among participants, the manner in which this occurred varied from participant to participant. For example, Participant 75 made this connection by starting a social justice club to “work on social justice issues in a relationship with Catholic relief services” [95]. Participant 33 discussed beginning and ending service projects with a prayer service or liturgy [96]. Participant 23 identified a required service-oriented graduation program based on the Blessed Mother's fiat [97]. However, all of the examples given included a spiritual focus.

It is notable that while the participants in this study were diverse in their own practice of faith, they were clear in connecting faith and service. Participant 77, who identified himself as a non-Catholic, made this point as well and attributed his own growth in faith to such efforts. He stated:

Every one of the public high schools has a project like this, but there's no faith component in it. There is a service component. There is a giving component. And those are all noteworthy, and good for everyone for doing those things. We

add in to that one additional important part, and that's the scriptural aspect to it. And I think that the good feeling that kids not in this building get from serving others is the same, but I think there's an additional faith-confirming benefit that our kids receive and as a result I sort of receive that too [98].

In all, participants, regardless of faith practice, school, or experience level, identified the faith foundation of service activities as an essential underpinning to their growth in faith.

Stressing service as central to school identity. According to several participants, growth in faith was not merely programmatic, it was central to the identity of the school community. Several participants noted the service focus of the culture of the school community. For example, Participant 33 stated, "we are big on service. Very big on service" [99]. Participant 85 echoed this sentiment and stated, "she's never seen a school [such as her school] that had such a signature of community service" [100]. Participant 77 noted an institutional focus on service, stating "those types of things have significance to me from a faith standpoint in that we as an institution are offering that opportunity" [101]. Participants were consistent in their assertions that their schools were places of service, that service was central to the schools' identities, and that they understood their role in it all.

The Role of the Leader

The participants in this study had an opportunity to discuss important traits of school leaders. Their comments were as varied as the leaders who led the schools involved in this study. However, similar feedback from different participants in different schools yielded a number of common interrelated themes that speak to effective leadership traits of Catholic school leaders in general. Moreover, participants identified

several important considerations for both the day-to-day and the long-term leadership of their schools.

Leader modeling faith. It was clear in participant feedback that the one leadership quality that transcended all others was that of the authentic faith witness of the leader. Participants agreed that the authenticity of how the leader models his or her faith was a non-negotiable trait; all other considerations were secondary. Participants articulated this point in several different ways. For example, Participant 75 mentioned a lay principal from his first years of teaching. He stated, “[this principal] modeled for me the way in which Catholic education could be – I mean he made me fall in love with this” [102]. Participant 77 discussed how “among other things, [his principal] leads by example. She is a faithful Catholic. . . . She puts family first. And as a result, she allows us to put family first as well” [103]. Participant 77 went on to state, “I would never question her faith and belief. And as a result of that, I think that she is a great lay leader for this institution because she is a solid, practicing Catholic whose children are raised in faith” [104]. Participant 23 echoed this sentiment and stated of his principal:

. . . he talked about being a role model, not only to the students, the way we all are, but I pointed out to the students, he’s got to be a role model to the faculty. You know, I mean, he’s got to walk the walk if he wants us to walk the walk. . . . so I think that’s huge [105].

Participants identified how their heads of school had different leadership styles. Some were outgoing and ever present in the community. Others were more reserved and delegated responsibilities. However, it was common among participant responses that

the authentic faith witness of the leader was the most important leadership trait that led to professional growth in faith.

Leading through empowerment. Participants spoke of how opportunities for them to take ownership of aspects of their faith formation were meaningful and effective. In many cases, these opportunities were provided by the school's leader either directly or through authority delegated to others. For example, Participant 33 stated:

I think [the school president] has trust in the individuals that are responsible for doing that, whether it's the principal or myself or the campus minister, she has faith and trust in us that we are going to provide for those kinds of experiences for – whether it's the teachers or the students, or extended community [106].

In discussing the president's role in a retreat day experience, Participant 33 added:

Rather than taking a leadership role she stepped back and allowed those that had those expertise to then lead the day. Very much a part of the day itself, but, did not, you know, take the stance of "I'm the president" [107].

Participant 91 discussed how, in the month of November, members of the faculty are empowered to lead morning prayer. Participant 75 stated, "faculty are encouraged to sign up and give the morning talk about a saint for the month of November. So I'm up Wednesday. I'll be talking about St. Jerome" [108]. Participant 77, a non-Catholic, similarly noted:

I don't know that anyone in the building thinks I'm ripe for conversion anyway, so, there have been moments when I have been called upon to conduct chapel, no one seems to have a difficulty with it [109].

These selected comments from participants echo other participants' comments regarding the value in being delegated some level of ownership in a school-wide faith formation effort.

Leading through collaboration. In addition to experiencing professional faith growth in taking ownership of faith formation activities, participants also noted that they responded well to leaders for whom collaboration was the norm. These participants indicated a preference for working with leaders who are open to faculty member input and who engage them in the design process. For example, Participant 23 discussed an encounter with her principal regarding a written spiritual focus on a strategic planning effort. She recalled:

And I went to him, I said, “[Principal’s name], did you write that”? And he goes “I wrote it with a lot of input from other people”. And I said, “it was very well done” and he goes “there were a lot of rewrites” [110].

Other participants described similar perspectives. Participant 24 stated, “[if] there’s anybody with a bright idea, [the principal is] open to [it]” [111]. Participant 57 also referenced a collaborative relationship with his principal. He explained:

I know her personally, and she does, she’s really involved with the Church, we go to the same church, and I think that when I listen in on planning of religious events or faith-based events, she really has great input [112].

In all, participants confirmed value in collaborative relationships with their leaders.

Leader resourcing campus ministry. While participants referenced specific opportunities to take ownership and collaborate to be formative, they also noted more structured efforts of their school leaders to access specific structures within the school to

assist with the design of faith formation activities. One such structure was the school's campus ministry department. For example, Participant 57 discussed such a relationship between his school's principal and the campus ministry team. He stated, "[the principal] will come up with the . . . thought process [for a formative effort] and the campus ministry [team] puts it together" [113]. Participant 24 shared this sentiment, stating, "[the principal] in collaboration actually with our campus ministry, are the ones that are providing the different [opportunities] for both the students and the teachers to do things" [114]. Participant 73 explained that the campus ministry department in his school was charged primarily with serving the needs of students, but that they also provide similar opportunities to the faculty [115].

Structuring formation. While participants reported that many formative moments in the school setting occurred informally, they also identified the various responsibilities of the leader necessary to structure formal faith formation activities. Specific strategies varied from school to school as described by each participant. However, the role of the leader in managing this process and providing these opportunities is important. Through the interview process, specific considerations for leaders emerged with regard to structuring formal faith formation efforts.

Managing distractions. Participants consistently noted that distractions during the day can inhibit well-intentioned faith formation efforts and that these distractions can take many forms. Usually, such distractions had to do with competing professional responsibilities. To that end, participants identified a need for managing these distractions within the context of a formal effort. For example, Participant 58 stated of a recent retreat experience:

One thing I didn't particularly find enriching was [a retreat experience] last year. . . . We had a few of those [videos] and some discussion questions afterward, and, you know, I consider myself a pretty spiritual person, but put me in a room on a Friday afternoon and shut the lights off and turn the video on, and I'm going to try my best to stay awake, but I couldn't always [116].

Participant 58 also discussed similar experiences in which retreats were planned right before vacation during a busy time of the school year, and that she was not properly disposed to engage in a spiritual growth exercise at that time [117].

Conversely, other participants discussed how being properly disposed for faith formation efforts led to spiritual growth. For example, Participant 24, who has the option to attend daily mass in her school during the school day, stated that such an opportunity allows her to disconnect from everything in the day, that led to having "time to think" [118]. Participant 75 also discussed how daily liturgy (for him, before school) allows for time for spiritual reflection [119]. Participant 73 identified similar challenges, stating that:

[morning liturgy occurs during] a time of day when there are some needs to be attended to that are not necessarily spiritual, but are wholly practical in terms of getting yourself up and ready to face the students day in and day out [120].

Providing meaningful formative experiences. Participants discussed the need for leadership and specific strategies employed by leadership for formalized spiritual formation efforts. The nature of these efforts varied from school to school. In some schools, full-day retreats were utilized at various points in the year [121]. In addition to

retreats, other formalized programs were identified. For example, Participant 75 recalled a school-wide reading project as an effective experience. He stated:

I remember my very first meeting we had; we had read a chapter of Parker Palmer's book, and – *The Courage to Teach* – as we had a discussion about it. And, I don't know, I guess for me, it is that learning and understanding that there are people who integrate faith into the mission every day and that they're present and been influential for me [122].

Formalized programs, especially retreats, were described to be both effective and ineffective. However, it was noted by Participant 23 that retreats and other formalized strategies can serve to reinforce themes over the course of the school year [123]. This sentiment was echoed by Participant 75, who also noted frustration with efforts that were not made directly relevant to the experiences of the educators. Participant 75 craved retreat experiences that validated the experiences of the educators by allowing for collaboration and discussion within the context of the retreat experience [124]. Overall, participants recalled that formalized retreat experiences, though varied, were most meaningful when they were relevant to the educators' roles, provided for collaboration, and served to frame ongoing themes throughout the year.

Framing the day with prayer. Daily prayer, as a staple of Catholic education, was often described by participants to be as formative to them as it was for the students. For example, Participant 33 stated, “[morning prayer is a highlight for her]. . . if we can just take out those two to eight minutes just to pray in the morning it sets off the day” [125]. Participant 85 noted, “every day we start with a common prayer. And I know that it's probably pretty common in Catholic high schools . . . but it means something in our

school” [126]. Participant 73 also discussed the authenticity of morning exercises. He described a common prayer for mission that is recited by every member of the school community. He explained:

But again, you hear in that, a mutual declaration in what it is that we do. When we plan an activity, for teachers, for students, for students and teachers, or just one... or parents for that matter. It’s about exploring the lens of God’s creation. It’s about learning and serving. And seeing people as the gifts [127].

Moreover, this participant identified this prayerful tradition as the “[the principal’s] legacy” [128]. In all, participants confirmed that morning prayer can be an effective formative opportunity that can be used to strengthen community and cultivate solidarity in mission.

Framing professional responsibilities with prayer. Finally, participants noted a connection with the Catholic identity of the school when leaders framed those responsibilities with prayer and a spiritual focus. In one example, Participant 75 noted a positive experience with a principal who integrated faith into every aspect of what they did as a school [129]. Similarly, Participant 23 noted how faculty meetings are framed with prayer [130]. Moreover, Participant 33 explained a commissioning ceremony that occurred at the beginning of the school year, the intent of which was to frame the finer points of starting the school year [131]. Overall, participants seemed to identify how framing such professional responsibilities in prayer connected them with the Catholic identity of the school.

Building a faithful culture. All of the participants in this study discussed the culture and climate of their school community. Participants felt a bond with other

members of the school community, especially colleagues and families. This all lent to an expansive definition of community that participants frequently described as family. In many cases, this is modeled by the leader who sets the tone for the culture and climate of the school community.

Affirmation and affinity of colleagues. Participants from a number of different schools identified a sense of affirmation and affinity for their colleagues. Participants and their colleagues, although diverse in background and experience, share certain experiences, struggles, and especially a commitment to their school's mission. For example, Participant 85 stated, "[her colleagues] are extraordinarily generous people. And the more I get to know the faculty personally, the more I know that" [132]. Likewise, Participant 58 had a level of admiration and respect for her colleagues. She stated, "I've worked with lots of people over the years who have come and gone. And, everybody says, there's no group like this one" [133]. Participant 91 tied in faith practice in his affirmation of his colleagues. He stated, "I admire a handful of my colleagues, to whom their faith is important" [134]. Participant 23 echoed this perspective, stating, "I've said to people many times, I work with saints, you know, the people I work with are kind, good, generous" [135]. To summarize, participants confirmed that professional growth in faith occurs within the context of a supportive community of colleagues.

An expansive definition of community. When discussing the theme of community, participants usually referenced a range of stakeholders beyond just educators and students. In addressing the idea of community, Participant 33 stated that her school community consisted of "the whole faculty, the administration, custodians, the food service, parents, students, alums, everybody... I guess that's touched by [the school]"

[136]. Similarly, Participant 24 identified a broad group including students, faculty, parents, alumni, and former parents in her definition of community [137]. Participant 57 also included parents and families in his definition of community [138]. In all, participants agreed that a faithful school community extended beyond schoolhouse walls and included the families of the students, alumni, and others not in the school on a day-to-day basis.

An accepting community. Participants consistently described their school communities as welcoming places, accepting of the diversity of the stakeholders that comprise it. This was especially true of the community's response to students and colleagues who are not Catholic. For example, Participant 85 noted:

Our school population . . . is not 100% Catholic by any stretch. People, both kids and faculty, we talk pretty openly and pretty frequently and easily and often about our belief. I think it's a common ground [139].

Participant 23 noted a similar characteristic. She stated of her students:

You know, and we take all comers, we have plenty of students here who are not Catholic. We actually have... I was telling my students; I had a student here who was Jewish. You don't have to be Catholic; you don't have to be Christian [140].

Participant 77, a non-Catholic educator, addressed this welcoming atmosphere as it related to non-Catholic colleagues. He stated of his colleagues, "there's never a dismissal of me of 'well, you're not Catholic, so you wouldn't understand or you don't need to do this'" [141]. In all, participants were consistent in identifying how an accepting community was important in the overall culture and climate of the schools.

A climate of family. Participants routinely identified their community as a family. This point was reinforced by Participant 33, who stated of her principal, “even though she has a family-family, we all know that this is her life, and that [the school community is] her family, and she takes that responsibility very seriously” [142]. Participant 57 also referenced the “family” atmosphere that was established in his school [143], and Participant 73 simply referred to his school as “home” [144]. Overall, the sense of family that was felt by the participants lent itself to the overall cultural climate of their schools.

Freedom to discuss faith openly. One common quality that was affirmed by participants was that they were able to discuss their faith freely within the context of their school environment. For example, Participant 57 noted, “I could talk about God. I could talk about faith” [145]. Participant 58 discussed how she could engage in these discussions with her students. She stated that:

[employment in a Catholic school] gives me an opportunity to talk to the kids about [faith] without worrying that somebody’s going to come from the main office and tell me that I can’t, you know, talk about that in school, that I can’t pray in school, and you know, that kind of thing [146].

Similarly, Participant 75 similarly that he was drawn to teach in an environment where he was free to express his faith. He stated:

It is, it’s one of the pillars for me of what’s important is being able to teach in an environment where I can, if not express my faith, always, I mean I can express my faith, but if I’m not always expressing my faith I can teach in the context of principles that are important to me [147].

Overall, participants agreed that they were drawn to a safe environment in which the open discussion of their spirituality and faith was not only tolerated, but was welcomed and encouraged.

Parents as partners. As participants identified the important qualities of a Catholic school community, they strongly endorsed the idea that they were partners with parents in the formation of students. Participant 58 explained:

I just really like the support system of parents – they’re paying tuition, so they care about their kids’ education. And when you call them and tell them that their child is not doing what he or she is supposed to be doing, they’re very grateful, and I like all of those things [148].

This sentiment was similarly expressed by Participant 77, who expressed his willingness and desire to work with students and parents with the students’ college placement process [149]. Participant 71 also identified the importance of the relationship between the parents and the teachers. She stated, “it’s such a strong community in our school, between the parents, between the kids, between the teachers, just like all three” [150].

Managing transition and crisis. One final theme that emerged from the participants’ interviews that relates to the responsibilities of the leader is that of managing transition and crisis. Moments of transition and crisis, while understandably difficult, stood out as formative moments for community members. Participants discussed how they grew in their faith through transition, crisis, and other disruptive forces in their personal and professional lives.

Growing in faith through crisis. Participants consistently identified examples of how they grew in their faith in times of crisis. These crises took many forms, but the

faith growth that occurred through them remained a common theme from participant to participant. For example, Participant 85 discussed how her school community came together in prayer following a recent school shooting that occurred only 12 miles away from her school [151]. Participant 23 discussed how the community coped and grew in a faithful way as a result of a freshmen suicide in her school community in a previous year [152]. Participant 24 discussed how days before her interview, her community came together to raise funds for families that had been displaced in a major fire that occurred over the weekend [153]. Participants seemed to agree that an awareness of and appropriate response to crisis in the greater community provided an opportunity to enliven their schools' mission through prayer and service when it is needed most.

Community outreach toward colleagues in crisis. When discussing the theme of crisis in the community, participants recalled not only outward expressions faith, but also a strong sense of supporting students and fellow colleagues through personal crises within the school community. These experiences were described to be growth experiences. Participant 85 noted:

Early on in my time here, we lost four faculty members in one year. It was really something. And faculty members who had been here a long time. And again, the expression of prayer and faith at that time was spontaneous – it was very meaningful to me [154].

This sense of experiencing the meaningful expression of faith in support of colleagues in crisis was also identified by participants who had experienced personal crisis and received the spiritual support of their colleagues. Participant 58, who fought through tears during this part of her interview, explained:

As a group... [whispering now] I'm going to get emotional... My daughter has been very sick for a long time, and you only get through something like this if you have the support of the people around you. They make meals. They offer prayers. They're always asking how my daughter is doing [155].

Participant 73 shared a similar experience:

I would have to say that one of the seminal moments came at the time that my wife passed away. That was in 2002. And the way in which the community of the school kind of coalesced was a very spiritually sustaining as well as emotionally sustaining experience [156].

In summary, participants were uniform in their observation that these prayerful expressions of faith were meaningful experiences both for those experiencing crisis and for those providing prayer and support.

Growing through transition. Participants discussed how transitions, while disruptive, can be growth experiences as well. Often times these transitions occurred on a personal level, such as with Participant 33 who struggled through the disruptive transition of Vatican II to rediscover her faith [157], or Participant 91, who grew in faith in his transition from another career path and an unhealthy lifestyle to a ministry in Catholic education [158]. The idea of growth through transition was also identified by participants who had experienced transition within the school community, such as with Participant 57, who discussed his personal growth and finding his place in the school community through the merger of his school and another area middle school [159]. Thus, transitions, both personal and professional, can be opportunities for educators rediscover their faith and their place in Catholic education.

Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

Among the emergent focused categories, it became apparent in interviews with participants that Christ and his Church are the foundation of any formative Catholic school community. The prominent codes identified within this theme were present in discussions about all aspects of educators growing as members of a professional faith community. Educators cited their relationship with Jesus and his Church to be significant in both their personal and professional lives, making for fertile ground for meaningful reflective practice. Educators also saw Christ modeled by both their peers and their leaders in their encounters with others. The infusion of Catholic faith within the context of classroom instruction provided for meaningful faith growth experiences for teachers and students alike, leading students to develop a love for service and commitment to Catholic social teaching. It is clear through the data analysis and from the discussions with the participants that Christ provides the essential underpinning to all aspects of a Catholic school community and a professional faith formation experience.

Personal reflection was an important component of faith formation for many of the participants interviewed. When discussing pivotal formative moments in their professional lives, educators often discussed encounters with others that occurred earlier in their lives. In most interviews, recall of specific formalized programming was sparse, and what remained were the stories of past encounters with others. Of particular note are the comments from some educators who recalled relationships with teaching religious sisters as significant formative moments in their lives. Prior experiences such as these, and the memories that remain, seem to comprise the context for deep and meaningful personal and professional faith reflection.

While some professional educators preferred reflective practice as a useful professional faith formation activity, others grew spiritually in their encounters with others. In some cases, this was fostered by a communal commitment to a certain identifying element of the school's mission (especially community service). In other cases, educators seemed to grow in their faith in solidarity with one another, particularly concerning the shared sacrifice that Catholic school educators make to their ministry and their students. This sense of solidarity and shared sacrifice provides common ground and a starting point for coordinated growth activities.

It is important to note that while many participants preferred reflection over collaboration, others preferred collaboration over reflection. Moreover, some preferred a balance between both. However, it was uniformly understood that both were related to each other. Participants recognized that their encounters with others added to the well of personal experience upon which reflection can continue. Participants also recognized that deep personal reflection strengthened their relationships with colleagues, students, and other stakeholders, and therefore, contributed to a faithful school community.

Participating educators consistently identified the centrality of students as their most important consideration. As educators in this study grew in their faith through personal reflection and professional encounter, they also grew closer to the students. Educators often identified shared experiences with students, such as prayer services, liturgies, and especially service work as formative for both students and educators. Additionally, the educators in this study who actively integrated faith-based components into the classroom claimed to have bonded on a spiritual level with their students, leading them to want to continue those efforts.

In their interactions with students, participants reported a level of both personal and professional satisfaction in the accomplishments of their students after they left the school. By providing students with a meaningful, formative educational experience, and by growing along with them, educators reported that students embraced service to the community and developed an orientation toward social justice. These personal encounters will eventually comprise the transformative experiences and rich story lines that will inform students' reflective experiences for years to come. For educators, these experiences and accomplishments add to the experiential context that provides the foundation for future reflection and faith formation efforts.

Throughout all of this, participants reported that transition and change, at various times in their lives, were transformative opportunities for professional growth. Some educators reported transitional events early in their lives to be pivotal and central to their professional identity. In other cases, it was through struggling with a transition in the present, such as in the merger of two schools communities, or by adjusting to a new ministry within the school, that educators grew in their professional faith. Some educators reported growth through moments of crisis in their lives, such as the illness or deaths of loved ones. These formative moments occurred through the support of a faithful community of colleagues. Transitions can be significant moments for students as well, especially at a period in their lives during which they are balancing all aspects of school and personal life while planning for college and adulthood.

As central as professional faith formation is to a Catholic school community, it is important to note competing interests can potentially distract from formative efforts. Participants in this study asserted that the daily schedule, especially at certain times in the

year, can make it difficult for one to dispose of him or herself to deep reflection or faithful encounters with others. Educators spoke of well-intentioned efforts that were thwarted because they were planned at inappropriate times. Participants also discussed the propensity to get consumed by the day-to-day life of a school community, and how difficult it can be to keep faith central while managing the many other professional responsibilities that come with Catholic school education. It is also important to consider that for both students and teachers, an increasingly pervasive relativistic and pluralistic society that is rife with technological challenges can seem to run contrary to the core values that any Catholic school should uphold. The pressures of contemporary society make it that much more difficult for Catholic school educators to make time for their professional faith life.

Synthesis of Findings Regarding Research Question One

The first research question in this study had to do with the role of school leadership in the faith formation of lay educators. Participants in this study offered their perceptions about effective and ineffective leadership practices concerning lay educator faith formation. Comments from participants reveal that there is no single acceptable model of leadership that is most effective. Rather, effective leadership depends on the traits of the leader, the characteristics of the school community, and the needs of the students. While participant perceptions of specific effective leadership qualities differed, some common themes materialized:

Leader as an authentic model of faith. One common trait that emerged regarding leadership implications was the manner in which the leader models his or her personal faith. The authentic witness that a leader provides adds to the level of credibility

on the part of the leader. When educators encounter leaders on this level, it often leaves a more lasting impression than more formalized programs or structured resources. When leaders are effective in modeling their faith, especially in individual encounters with educators, relationships grow and the community is strengthened.

Empowering and collaborating with others. Participants in this study reported that they felt formed in their faith when they were empowered to take on a leadership role or some other active part in a faith formation effort. Empowering teachers to develop prayer services, lead reflection groups, and coordinate service efforts are effective examples that were recalled by the participants in this study. Conversely, participants reported frustration with more didactic or lecture-based models if those were presented in isolation with no connection to an ongoing dialogue or encounter. Moreover, participants connected with professional faith formation more when they were involved in planning those experiences in a collaborative way. In short, the participants in this study craved dynamic experiences in which they could actively participate and take a leadership role of their own.

Cultivating solidarity. Throughout this study, participants expressed that the solidarity that exists among the educators in a school community contributes to the overall faith formation of educators as a whole. Participants spoke to the importance of a common understanding of mission as a guiding force in their professional faith formation. This common understanding can be fostered through the outward declaration of mission, the identification of symbols important to the school community, and in rituals and ceremonies that draw the adult community together in support of a unified purpose. While none of the participants specifically referenced the idea of a unifying

charism, some did discuss dimensions of the unique Catholic identity and culture of their schools in concrete terms.

Thoughtful structuring of formation efforts. Many participants reported that the demands of the school calendar year and the daily schedule made it difficult to find time for the essential tasks of faith formation. Participants identified the school leader as the key agent in coordinating efforts or empowering others to coordinate efforts to plan such activities in a thoughtful and deliberate way. Additionally, participants reported that when leaders provide for formal formation strategies to occur in appropriate settings, formation flourished. This was especially true in settings conducive to communal nature for faith practice. Conversely, the utilization of settings that were inappropriate to worship, prayer, or other forms of faith formation were reported to be less effective.

Managing transition and crisis. One of the strongest themes that emerged in this study was that of the potential for spiritual growth through times of transition and crisis. These moments of transition and crisis can take place outside the community or within the community. Additionally, educators connected spiritually in the identity of the school when responding to colleagues in crisis, and especially in receiving the support of colleagues when outreach is needed. Leaders were identified to be effective when they recognized these moments and the potential for spiritual growth that comes with them.

Synthesis of Findings Regarding Research Question Two

The second research question in this study had to do with the identification of effective professional development strategies that lead to educator faith formation. Similar to research question one, participants did not report one single appropriate strategy. Rather, proposed strategies varied based on the preference of the participant

and the needs of the students and the school community. With that, several general themes materialized that could be applicable in a variety of settings:

The role of formal programs and structured resources. Participants were uniform in their assertion that formal programs and structured resources, in isolation, are not wholly effective. When asked about meaningful faith formation moments in their professional experiences, participants often, and without hesitation, recalled a personal encounter or experience with another, often a colleague or a leader, and not a specific program and other structured formative effort. Participants rarely had a negative view of specific formal programs or curricula, but participant feedback confirmed that these types of experiences served to frame their ongoing reflective practice and their encounters with others, which is where their professional faith life flourished. These comments are consistent with research in their professional development in general, where it has been claimed that top-down, formalized models, when implemented in a vacuum, are usually less effective than when they are combined with other more reflective and collaborative efforts (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Reflective practice. Participants in this study routinely endorsed the importance of reflective practice as a meaningful growth activity. Educators craved opportunities for reflection, engaged in independent professional faith reflection outside of the school day, and made their own time for reflection when the daily schedule did not allow for a formalized approach. Those interviewed appreciated when opportunities for reflection were built into the schedule, such as a lengthy moment of silence after the daily morning prayer, or longer opportunities to reflect during a retreat setting. Whether embedded in

the context of the day or practiced independently outside of school, educators affirmed ongoing personal reflection as a formative strategy.

Collaborative engagement. Collaborative practice also emerged as a promising strategy for educator faith formation. Participants reported that collaborative moments can easily be built into faculty meetings and in other settings where educators gather. These opportunities for collaboration can be powerful moments for a community of educators, who, through their interactions with others, strengthen collegial relationships within the school community. While educators often identified a preference for reflection over collaboration, those same educators noted the essence of collaboration and that their encounters with others have the potential to inform and enhance their reflective practice.

Summary

Data from this qualitative, grounded theory study were collected from a range of participants representing the qualities and characteristics of lay Catholic educators in diocesan secondary schools in the New England region. Participant responses were transcribed and codified. Data analysis and development of theory occurred concurrently, and this analysis yielded several common interrelated focused categories. These categories addressed the participants' relationship to the Catholic Church, their previous experiences, the relationship between reflective practice and collaborative encounters with other, their relationship to students, and the outward expression of faith in service. Additionally, participants discussed effective leadership traits, highlighting specifically the importance of the authentic faith witness of the head of school. Participants also noted that effective leadership can occur through empowerment,

collaboration, the thoughtful structuring of formation efforts, and by building a faithful culture in the school community. Finally, transition and crisis, in the past and in the present, both in and out of the immediate school community were identified as opportunities in which spiritual growth could occur.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Catholic schools, which in previous generations were primarily staffed by religious congregations, are now mostly staffed and led by lay educators and leaders. The aim of this study was to identify a framework for lay educator faith formation that lay heads of school can use to provide for the spiritual needs of the school communities that they lead. This was accomplished through a grounded theory qualitative study of 11 educators in six schools in dioceses in the New England region. Through interviews with these educators, the researcher identified common themes, including the relationship between reflective practice and faithful encounters with others, the educators' orientation to students, and the importance of outward community service in the faith life of the school. Additionally, educators cited transition and crisis as disruptive forces through which they drew upon the spiritual focus of the school community for support and growth. Implementing the proposed framework requires specific considerations on the part of the lay Catholic school leader, and those considerations will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

Summary of the Study

Catholic education is at a crossroads. The decline in the presence of teaching religious and the emergence of lay educators as primary stakeholders in Catholic schools requires school leaders to consider how it is that Catholic school identity will be maintained. The role of lay educators in maintaining Catholic school identity is evident in various Vatican documents on Catholic education. However, not much is known about the praxis of such efforts, and the role of Catholic school leaders in all is a mystery.

However, scholarly research is rife with examples of effective professional development strategies regarding general school improvement. This study examined how such practices could inform lay educator faith formation efforts for the Catholic school leaders who lead them.

The question of lay Catholic educator professional faith formation was addressed through a grounded theory study of 11 educators who were employed in diocesan Catholic secondary schools in the New England region. Participant interviews were analyzed, codified, and arranged into a conceptual framework that is intended to provide Catholic school leaders with a blueprint for planning faith formation programming for lay educators. The intent of this framework is not to prescribe one single formalized strategy or program. Rather, the framework is intended to define the relationships between theoretical themes that can increase the capacity of lay educators to develop in their faith within the context of their day-to-day ministry in Catholic education in the schools in which they work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify efficient and meaningful strategies for lay educator professional faith formation that support the preservation of Catholic school identity. This was accomplished through a qualitative, grounded theory study of lay Catholic school educators in dioceses in the New England region.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify a strategic, evidence-based professional faith formation framework for lay Catholic school leaders to provide for ongoing educator faith formation in their school communities.

Proposed Solution

Through extensive analysis and codification of data, comments from participants were distilled into interrelated categories. The researcher examined relationships between categories, how they affect one another, and how they could lead to the formation of adult members of other Catholic school communities. This analysis led to the framework for professional faith formation noted in Figure 3:

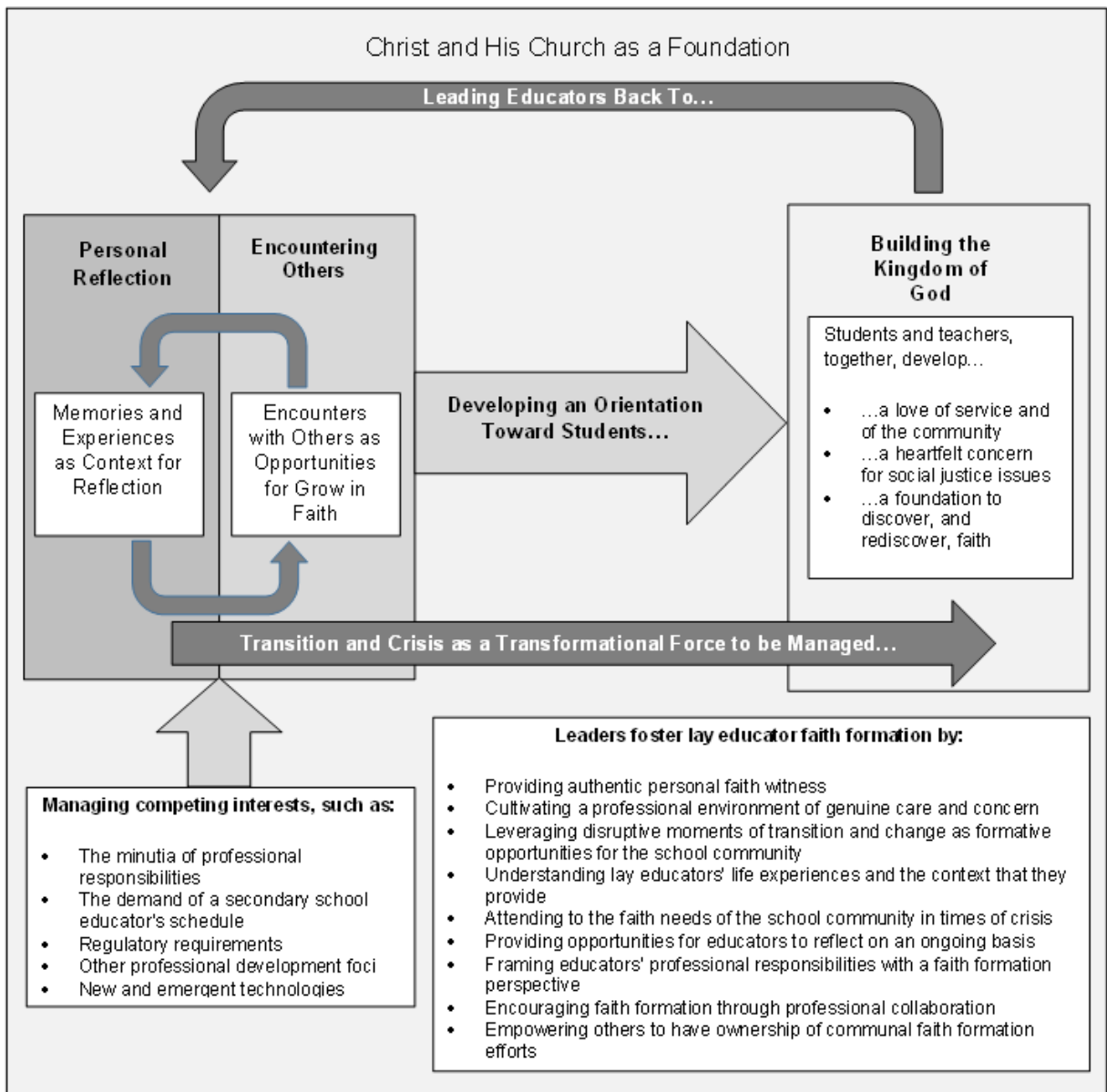


Figure 3. Framework for Lay Educator Professional Faith Formation

Support for the Solution from Data Collected

Interviews with participants revealed that professional formation in faith, both through formalized programs and in their informal interactions with others, was rooted in gospel values and reflective of Jesus' model. Interviews confirmed that participants felt formed both in moments of reflection as well as in interactions with others. While participants were not uniform in their preference of one strategy over another, they did agree that each enhances the other. The proposed framework reflects this relationship. Educators also agreed on the centrality of their students in their work, and that they felt more formed through experiences and encounters with students. This is all to lead students to becoming faithful adults oriented to social justice and creating the Kingdom of God on Earth. Through these processes and in their experiences with students, educators grow in their faith, all of which adds to a contextual foundation for future professional reflective practice. The proposed faith formation framework takes these themes, and their relationships to each other, into account.

Also, participants concurred that amid this formative process, crisis, transition, and change can be disruptive forces. However, it was noted that these forces can be formative if managed properly. The participants in this study recalled disruptive transition as transformative moments from childhood, their adult lives, and the present. Moments such as these were identified to be pivotal in providing context for reflection, in guiding their interactions with colleagues, and in framing their encounters with students.

Finally, participants noted that competing factors to the faith formation process must be considered and managed. For example, participants asserted that when the timing of a formal formation effort was not conducive to the educator disposing him or

herself to being formed, then that strategy yielded limited results. The setting of formation efforts should also be taken into account, as spatial limitations can distract from the communal aspect of formation, such as when a school liturgy is held in a gymnasium. Moreover, competing elements from the outside world must be carefully considered, especially when working with students. If both students and educators are overcome by the distractions in their school and personal lives, neither will grow in fully their faith and their relationship to God within the context of the Catholic school community.

Existing Support Structure and Resources

Diocesan Catholic school systems, and the schools that comprise them, operate with limited resources. This scenario is exasperated by downward trends in enrollment, decreased revenue from tuition, and even greater financial strains on schools. Adding new programming, purchasing new resources, and making these available for professional faith formation efforts can be difficult, especially given the competing needs of the school community.

However, participants in this study reported that the types of formative experiences that had the greatest effect on them were those that arose after deep personal reflection and after encounters with others. With creative planning and a focus on cultivating opportunities for these experiences, lay leaders can provide educators with opportunities to grow in their in their faith within the context of the school community. Building opportunities for educators to explore their professional faith, either alone or with others, presents little strain on a school's budget or physical resources.

Many participants asserted that time and availability is a limited resource and that the time that they do have is quickly consumed by the day-to-day minutiae that comes with secondary education. And while schools might set aside time for professional development, that time can easily be consumed with other professional development foci. Just as student faith formation and Catholic values can easily be neglected in the classroom, so too can professional educator faith formation be neglected in faculty meetings and during workshop days.

However, these challenges are not insurmountable. Indeed, Catholic educators, especially women and men of religious teaching orders, did so much with so little in generations past. Lay educator faith formation thrives when Catholic school leaders make a deliberate effort to provide such opportunities to the educators who comprise the school community.

Policies Influencing the Proposed Solution

The centrality of faith formation in the ministry of Catholic education is a reasonable assumption. This focus is highlighted in the Catholic Church's ecclesial documents on Catholic education. The desire for opportunities and experiences to grow in faith, within the context of a school community, was uniformly noted by the participants in this study. However, participants also noted experiences in which their spiritual needs were not nourished within the school community. Given both the importance of educator faith formation and the inconsistent application of strategies to achieve it, Catholic school leaders would be well served to consider policies to bridge this divide.

Hiring Educators

Participants noted an intrinsic, often inseparable connection between their personal faith life and their faith formation in the school community. In some cases, “personal” faith life was meant to represent the independent practice of faith. In other cases, it was described in the context of parish life. In either case, the connection between personal and professional faith praxis was evident.

Some Catholic schools require that educators be practicing Catholics. Other schools may not require that educators be practicing Catholics, but that an educator’s Catholicity is a preference in the hiring process. Considering the importance of a Catholic educator’s personal faith life to his or her faith development, as well as in the development of a faithful community, schools should be deliberate about expectations when hiring educators. Moreover, the term *practicing Catholic* must be clearly defined. As Participant 58 noted, “if you’re going to go to Church every Sunday and then you’re going to be a nasty person to everybody that you meet, you’re certainly not practicing your faith” [160]. Given that many of the educators who participated in this study connected their personal spiritual growth to the Catholic school community at large, those involved with hiring teachers should be clear as to how faith is authentically practiced and determine how that can be explored in the interview and hiring process.

Clarification of the Roles of Leadership

Throughout the interviews, one emergent theme had to do with the myriad tasks of the school leader, and how those tasks are understood by the educators in the school community. For example, in one school with both a president and a principal, participants reported that the president delegated faculty faith formation responsibilities

to the principal [161]. In another school in which there was only a principal, participants reported that the principal's need to manage the financial health of the school seemed to overshadow other efforts such as developing a faithful community of educators [162]. In other cases, educators reported that they weren't sure about who was in charge of the spiritual identity of the school, and amid a lack of opportunities to reflect and grow, educators made their own opportunities independently within the context of the day [163].

In Catholic secondary schools, job descriptions for leaders should clearly state expectations regarding the spiritual leadership responsibilities of the head of school. These expectations ought to be made clear to the constituents of the school community. Additionally, diocesan school superintendents or educational leaders should regularly assess the performance of the school leader and the development of the school as a faith community. Through regular dialogue and reference to the importance of the spiritual dimension of leadership, professional faith formation will remain at the forefront and can frame all of the other roles that the school leader has within the school community.

Scheduling

Participants were consistent in acknowledging that the demands of the secondary school schedule make the planning of collaboration and reflection difficult. Participants also noted that poorly timed formation efforts yielded limited results. Leaders would, therefore, be well-served to consider carefully how opportunities for faith formation could be built into the school day. For example, Participant 73 discussed how a minute and a half to two minutes of reflection time in the morning has little effect on an instructional day but yields dividends in providing regular opportunities for reflective

practice and spiritual growth [165]. Similarly, Participant 33 stated, “I know that everybody’s lives are very busy here, and if we can just take out those two to eight minutes just to pray in the morning it sets off the day” [166]. As a matter of policy, Catholic school communities will grow in faith as a result of deliberate efforts of leaders to provide the time for educators to be able to engage in personal reflection and professional collaboration. This time should be built into the daily schedule and accounted for in the annual calendar.

Potential Barriers and Obstacles to Proposed Solution

As noted elsewhere in this study, both educators and leaders are called to commit themselves to the development of a faithful Catholic school community amid distractions and competing interests. Navigating these issues presents a real and significant challenge for Catholic school leaders. On a personal level, educators experience distractions and barriers in their lives, and they bring these to bear in the Catholic school setting. Through encounters with educators, leaders can become more aware of these personal challenges and respond appropriately. Organizationally, more systemic barriers exist that also demand the attention of the leader:

A Crisis of Identity

Catholic schools are made up of diverse stakeholders often with differing views of what a Catholic school should be. Participant 75 discussed the presence of a “crisis of identity” [167], and that there is a competing need for Catholic schools to market themselves to these various constituents. Participant 75 stated:

I just think that there is a danger when private Catholic schools become *private* Catholic schools – you know, that kind of shift, and even if you’re not owning it . . . then I’m worried you begin to lose that identity” [168].

If Catholic schools lose sight of their Catholicity and focus instead on other factors such as the quality of their athletic programs or the strength of their academics as a single identifying characteristic, then the spiritual dimension runs the risk of being marginalized. However, these competing dimensions do not need to exist in an either-or context. Schools can celebrate their Catholic identity and position themselves so that it is precisely the spiritual identity of the school that leads to such success in other areas.

Pervasive Secularism and Relativism

Society is becoming more and more secular and relativistic, and this strain was reflected in participant interviews as a threat to Catholic school identity. Diverse societal value systems and the perceived absence of truth can sometimes stand in opposition to a school’s Catholic identity. These pressures exist for both students and adults. As educators often connect their spiritual formation to their experiences with students, these pressures can potentially influence the spiritual growth of the adult community. For example, participant 75 stated, “a lot of my faith interactions are with [students] who are not necessarily mature in their faith, so I miss those interactions” [169]. This all makes the ministry of Catholic education that much more important as the modeling that educators provide constitutes an important component in the formation of students.

Financial/Budget Issues Related to Proposed Solution

Downward trends in enrollment and the decline in the presence of teaching religious have made for a difficult situation for Catholic education. And as Catholic

schools struggle to pay a fair wage to their lay employees, tuition rises, making Catholic education less accessible to those families who desire it. This cyclical pattern threatens the financial viability of many Catholic schools.

Fortunately, participants in this study identified faith formation strategies and experiences that can be provided for at little to no cost to schools. Providing time for regular reflection and making opportunities available to educators to collaborate and share mostly requires the deliberate effort of the leader and the support of the Catholic school community. Participants were consistent in their assertion that while formal programs and published resources which may bear a cost can yield some benefit, spiritual growth occurred more through reflection, collaboration, and especially in interaction with students. Creativity, ingenuity, and strategic thinking are the currencies that can be used to secure a meaningful formation effort for educators in a Catholic school.

Change Theory

Catholic schools are incredibly complex social structures that are comprised of a broad array of invested stakeholders. Interrelated systems of relationships exist on many levels – among students, within the classroom, between colleagues, and with outside structures such as diocesan and governmental authorities. Catholic education can also become an insular process, one in which educators close the doors to their classrooms and to the world around them. It is precisely this insular culture that can make change a difficult proposition in a school environment. For a school in which faith formation is not a focus, the framework proposed by this research can be novel, foreign, and potentially difficult. Thus, it is reasonable that Catholic school leaders carefully consider

how change will be implemented, especially if the proposed change is significant for the school community.

If the development of a Catholic school community's capacity to grow in faith is an innovation, then it is important to consider how that innovation will take root. Rogers (2003) discussed innovation in terms of *diffusion* or "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). Careful attention to this diffusion process within the context of a school community can help leaders to avoid the pitfalls and obstacles of organizational change. Rogers (2003) cited four dimensions of diffusion: a) innovation, b) communication channels, c) time, and d) social systems.

Innovation

If a focus on the faith formation of the educators in a Catholic school community is new, then it takes on the form of an *innovation*. An innovation is "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 2003, p. 14). In the case of lay educator faith formation, the innovation might be a more formalized structure for reflection or collaboration, a new focus on service with students, or a renewed emphasis on infusing Catholic identity in the classroom. Rogers (2003) recommended that those responsible for bringing about change consider the "newness" of an innovation, as the perception of newness can affect a person's decision to adopt or reject an innovation.

It arose in this study that when formalized opportunities were not made available for Catholic school educators to engage in ongoing reflective practice, educators often made those opportunities available to themselves independently. Participants described

how they reinvented the strategies that they used, from reflecting in the moment, to setting aside time outside school, to engaging with students outside the classroom.

Rogers (2003) addressed this idea of *reinvention* and suggested that innovation takes root more effectively if stakeholders can adapt it based on their needs. Thus, a flexible approach that validates the educators' unique applications of proposed structures will facilitate the adaptation of the community to the new strategy or system. This, in turn, will help educators to build the capacity to employ such strategies independently in a personally relevant way.

Communication Channels

Rogers (2003) noted that communication channels, which are the means by which information is transferred from one individual to another, are important to consider. This is particularly true in a Catholic school setting given the complexity of the system and the relationships that comprise it. The nature of the relationships between individuals plays a crucial role in how organizational innovation is adopted, especially when it comes to how that exchange occurs between two parties. Rogers (2003) asserted that individuals will evaluate an innovation based on their interactions with others, and not necessarily in response to mass media in which a message is communicated to a community by one or a few individuals. Therefore, it would seem that leading by decree may not be the most effective strategy for effecting change and promoting diffusion. Rather, change is a social process that requires dialogue, collaboration, and strong relationships that are nurtured by the school's leader.

Time

Rogers (2003) also identified time as a crucial factor in evaluating the diffusion of an innovation. The consideration of time takes several forms, which include:

- a) the innovation-decision process, which is the amount of time it takes for an individual to implement or reject an innovation;
- b) the categorization of adopters, which include innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards;
- c) the rate of adoption, which is the relative speed in which an innovation is adopted by the system.

Leaders ought to consider the individual educator stakeholders in the school community carefully. Early identification and engagement of innovators and early adopters can lead to targeted pilot efforts empowering those groups to lead discussions and model appropriate behavior. Additionally, later adopters and laggards should also be encountered early in the process. By providing these educators with opportunities to engage in dialogue with leaders early on and to invest in the effort, it is more likely that they will adopt changes earlier in the process.

Social System

The social system at play is the “set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal” (Rogers, 2003, p. 24). In a school, these may be departments, professional learning communities, or other collaborative groups that exist within the organizational structure of the school. It is within these social units that diffusion occurs most readily. Rogers (2003) indicated that leaders can begin by identifying social groups in which the anticipated changes to be brought about by the

innovation are most desirable. Thus, Catholic school leaders may consider piloting programs and strategies within a department or collegial group that is well-poised to encounter more immediate success with the structured faith-formation strategy.

Internal/External Issues Related to Proposed Solution

Schools are complex social systems that are affected by a variety of forces, both internal and external. Catholic school leaders are tasked with managing these challenges with limited resources and support. Catholic school leaders need to understand the nature of the extended influences in their efforts to nourish the faith development needs of the lay educators in their school communities. These influences can take many forms, both internal and external.

Among the various internal issues affecting lay Catholic educator faith formation, one that must be carefully considered is the attrition rate of Catholic school educators. The economic strains that confront Catholic schools make it difficult to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Scheopner (2010) found through an extensive literature review that attrition rates in both public and Catholic schools are rising. In schools in which the turnover of Catholic school educators is high, leaders must be aware of the effect of the influx of new members of lay educator community. And as Catholic school leaders continue to work to address the systemic issues that lead to teacher attrition, they must also be cognizant of the spiritual needs of the new members of the community and how those needs can best be met. With that said, educator retention can be improved in an environment of encouragement and support, leading to “improved school cultures and greater commitment as teachers form emotional attachments and share a common set of beliefs” (Scheopner, 2010, p. 275). It would stand to reason then that the implementation

of a faith formation framework such as the one proposed in this study might mitigate those very factors that can contribute to Catholic school teacher attrition.

Additionally, trends in education, both public and private, can influence a Catholic school community. New state and national curriculum standards, emerging technologies, and developments in best practices in instruction drive school improvement discussions. Mooney and Mausbach (2008) warned of disjointed, haphazard responses to such trends and the limited results that those uncoordinated approaches provide. They recommended instead a systemic alignment of school improvement efforts to achieve system-wide goals. Shimabukuro (1998) asserted that as lay educators take their place as the primary stakeholders in Catholic schools, leaders need to attend to educator spiritual formation in an ongoing manner. With a strategic view of professional development in general, it becomes easier for Catholic school leaders to build in time for spiritual formation for lay educators, not only independently, but within the context of broader, coordinated school improvement efforts.

Finally, multiple participants in this study reported that when scandal and controversy affect the Catholic Church as an institution, it can shake the very foundations of their faith. These are indeed critical moments for faithful lay Catholic school educators. And as the Church continues to respond to the sexual abuse crisis of the early 2000s, victims continue to come forward about their experiences and the crimes committed against them. Catholic school leaders should be keenly aware of these factors, both globally and locally, and be prepared to respond to the needs and concerns of the educators if necessary.

Implementation of Solution Processes and Considerations

It became evident from participant responses that there is no one school that embodies all elements of the proposed framework uniformly. It is possible that other schools in the New England region, or nationally for that matter, vary in what strategies are currently being employed to nurture the faith development of the educators who comprise their school communities. Therefore, it is important that leaders, with the participation of other appropriate stakeholders, carefully consider the state of current efforts, the efficacy of those efforts, and especially the needs of the educators and students. All of this should lead to a thoughtful and deliberate implementation plan. The implementation of the plan should be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Players in Implementation

A Catholic school is a complex social system that is comprised of a variety of different kinds of stakeholders. The needs of these stakeholders must be considered in the implementation. While no two school communities are identical, there are certainly stakeholder groups that are common among schools and that have specific roles in the implementation process. These key players include:

The head of school. Different schools have different leadership structures. These structures can also vary from diocese to diocese. However, most schools have a head. In some settings, the head of school may be a principal whose all-encompassing ministry involves spiritual, academic, and strategic leadership. In other schools, the head of school may be a president whose responsibility centers on institutional advancement or development. Whatever the case, the leadership structure should be made clear to the other stakeholders, especially in regard to who is responsible for directing the spiritual

development of the school community. The data collected in this study bore out that some heads of school, such a president, delegate the spiritual leadership to another, such as a principal. Delegated leadership responsibilities ought to be clearly outlined for the stakeholders that comprise the school community.

The chaplain. Several participants in this study affirmed that the presence of an invested chaplain is a significant resource to Catholic schools. In an era where lay leadership is prominent in Catholic school communities, the chaplain provides essential sacramental nourishment that cannot be provided by a lay stakeholder. This nourishment, especially through liturgy and the Eucharist, was cited by participants as an essential underpinning of any comprehensive school-wide faith formation effort.

The educators. The relationships that exist among a community of lay educators comprise a formative community of solidarity and support. Participants in this study consistently identified the strength and solidarity of the community of educators as an inspiration and source for spiritual development. Educators must be amenable to growing in their faith and to engaging in the types of practices involved in the implementation of this framework. They must also be invested in their students' formation and growth, not just inwardly, but in how students take action to create the Kingdom of God on Earth. Finally, Catholic educators must provide authentic faith witness, not only to students, but also to each other, to strengthen the Catholic identity of the schools in which they teach.

The role of the non-Catholic educator must be carefully considered by leaders of Catholic schools. Miller (2006) explained that whenever possible, schools should hire practicing Catholics to provide authentic faith witness. However, Catholic secondary

schools in the New England region employ a significant percentage of non-Catholic educators. In this study, the non-Catholic participant who was active in his Protestant faith was also wholly supportive of the educational project of the Catholic school. And despite his faith affiliation, this participant confirmed the formative characteristics of the framework proposed in this dissertation. When discerning the needs of the educators in the school as a whole, Catholic school leaders should take care to provide for the unique needs of the non-Catholic educators who participate in professional faith formation efforts and who are partners in mission in the Catholic schools in which they work.

Campus ministry. All of the participants in this study worked in schools with an active campus ministry department. It is possible that in other schools there exists a similar resource. In some cases, the campus ministry department was an extension of the religious studies program. In other schools, it was a separate entity. The role of the campus ministry department varied from school to school. Some were involved in the formation of both students and educators, yet others were focused solely on the formation of students.

Campus ministry departments have the potential to serve as an excellent resource to support the faith development of educators and students alike. Through the ongoing formative programming offered by campus ministry departments, educators can strengthen relationships with students outside the classroom in a faithful and personally relevant way. Participants stated throughout the interviews that they felt a strong connection to their students, and given that such a connection led to a feeling of spiritual growth, a robust campus ministry department may be an already existing resource to help bridge that gap.

The students. Students are central to any school community, and their needs in all of this must not be overlooked. Any faith formation effort in the school community must be responsive to the lived experiences of the students, their needs, and their potential. The educators who participated in this study confirmed the essence of the connection between the faith development of their students and their own faith development. The needs of the students must be thoughtfully considered when planning for the spiritual needs of the school community as a whole. In a constantly changing society, and given the rapid emergence of new technology, those needs must be reviewed in an ongoing manner to ensure that the faith development of the community remains meaningful and relevant.

Leader's Role in Implementing Proposed Solution

As is the case with any organizational change initiative, the leader plays a crucial role as the primary change agent. With thoughtful planning and anticipation of challenges, the leader can address issues early on before they can disrupt any coordinated effort. There are specific considerations of which the head of school should be aware before, during, and after the implementation of any lay educator faith formation effort. For this discussion, any coordinated faith formation effort would occur according to a typical school year, beginning in August, and ending in June.

Before the school year. Before the school year begins, the leader would be well-served to evaluate the current state of the educators' faith formation efforts. What current strategies are being employed in the school community? How do they fit into the proposed framework? In what ways are existing strategies successful or not successful? It is also important that leaders take inventory of any resources on hand. Leaders ought

to consider what resources may need to be purchased, how that is accounted for in the budget, and if existing sources of funding need to be reappropriated.

The participants in this study affirmed the limited value of formalized processes such as retreat experiences and formation days. However, the participants were also uniform in explaining that these types of experiences can be useful to frame day-to-day ministry, and that actual spiritual growth occurs more in personal reflection and in ongoing encounters with others. Therefore, at the beginning of the year, the leader ought to determine how time will be appropriated to a) accommodate specific formal programs, and to b) allow for day-to-day reflection and encounter. Participants consistently identified the density of secondary school teaching schedules as an ongoing challenge to faith formation efforts. Therefore, any specific times that are appropriated for faith formation efforts, either in the calendar or the context of the daily schedule, should be made known to the community well in advance of the start of the school year.

During the school year. Participants consistently emphasized that the authentic personal witness of the school's leader is an important leadership trait. School leaders provide this witness in their relationships and through their encounters with educators. Therefore, as the school year commences and as leaders contend with balancing the multifaceted responsibilities of Catholic school leadership, it is important that leaders view the decisions that they make through the lens of mission. It is also important that the leader is present in the community and in encounters with educators, as it is through these interactions that the leaders' authentic faith witness and focus on mission is most aptly displayed.

Throughout this study, the participants confirmed the importance of the leader framing professional responsibilities with a spiritual focus. As the school year progresses, the leader should be mindful of the need to make this connection explicit to the educators. Whether it be in the development of new policy, the rationale for a decision, or even in providing a short amount time in a faculty meeting for educators to encounter each other about a spiritual topic relevant to the school community, behaviors such as these can cultivate the ongoing spiritual growth of a community of educators.

After the school year. At the conclusion of the school year, leaders should consider carefully the manner in which the plan was implemented. Were strategies implemented according to the plan that was established before the start of the year? If not, what led to the adjustment(s)? Have any new needs emerged? Did the implementation of the plan yield the intended results? How would one know? Through careful review of the implementation of the plan, and by considering changes in the school community and the needs of the students, the leader can direct additional adjustments for future faith formation efforts. All of this should occur in consultation with stakeholders.

Critical Pieces Needed for Implementation and Assessment

Over the course of the interviews, it emerged that educators felt that they grew in their faith in personal reflection and their encounters with others. Formalized programs, resources, and curricula were not identified by participants to be wholly ineffective. However, participants did confirm that formalized resources and programs were more useful in framing less formal encounters and personal reflection. Given that the strength of an overarching lay educator formation program lies in both inward reflection and

encounter with others, the primary resource that needs to be managed is time. School leaders must be both strategic and creative about how time can be appropriated to provide opportunities for such experiences. For example, if time is built into a daily school schedule for reading and reflection, expectations for the use of that time must also be made clear. The provision of reflection topics and discussion questions that align with a mission-related theme can help to sharpen the focus of such efforts on the results that the leader intends to achieve. Participants uniformly confirmed that time in a secondary school daily schedule is a limited resource, and when it is made available for teachers for faith formation, direction and leadership must be provided to ensure its appropriate use.

Knowledge is also a resource, and leaders, especially those new to Catholic school leadership, often lack the theological background and understanding of Church doctrine to be able to coordinate and lead a faith formation program. In cases such as these, the leader should identify partners in the school community with the skills and experience to fill this void. Social structures such as a campus ministry team or a group of theology teachers can provide much-needed theological and catechetical skills to assist in the formation of lay educators. Additionally, by enlisting the help of other stakeholders in the development of formative strategies, the leader will cultivate buy-in among educators in the school.

One important consideration that emerged during this research is the importance of liturgy and sacraments. Even the most well-trained and experienced lay leaders cannot provide this much needed spiritual nourishment. Therefore, lay Catholic school leaders should be mindful of the need for a chaplain; one who can be available to both educators and students to foster their spiritual growth within the school community. Moreover, the

involvement of the chaplain in the planning for the faith formation needs of the community throughout the year will add to the credibility of the model.

Convincing Others to Support the Proposed Solution

The implementation of any organizational change requires buy-in from invested stakeholders. In the context of a Catholic school community, buy-in must be sought from lay educators. It is precisely this population to whom faith formation strategies are targeted, and lay educators must be properly disposed to engage in the formative strategies designed by the school leaders and others involved with planning.

From a change theory perspective, stakeholders can be grouped into categories such as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 2003). Catholic school leaders should take care to consider thoughtfully the educators to whom faith formation efforts are targeted to determine their disposition. Those identified as innovators and early adopters could be tapped to help design strategies, pilot programs, and assist in the assessment of interventions. Educators who fall into these categories may eventually be viewed as experts among their peers. Given that a stakeholder's adoption of an innovation occurs more readily through social interactions with others (Rogers, 2003), the early investment of this select group can be leveraged to gain buy-in later in the process.

Later majority and laggards should also be encountered early in the process. By taking a more proactive stance in learning about their potential concerns and objections, Catholic school leaders can better anticipate the social challenges that lie ahead. This strategic approach can also allow leaders to engineer heterogeneous social groups, such as prayer groups or reading communities, in which later adopters can interact with early

adopters early on. This social connection would facilitate buy-in from a range of educators in the school community, thus drawing the community together in support of a common goal.

Internal and External Implications for the Organization

The implementation of the proposed framework, and especially the service component, has the potential to strengthen the position of the school within the school community. When educators participate in such service opportunities with students, it provides powerful witness which leads educators develop in their faith as well. This engagement with the community increases the likelihood of positive publicity, stronger connections with service organizations within the community, and the development of an overall sense of goodwill. Educator and student orientation to service is a strong proclamation that Catholic education is alive and well, especially for the school community that is providing the service.

One external implication has to do with the increasing need for Catholic schools to market themselves to families and the community. Family values may not always mirror the values of the Catholic school. As leaders contend with marketing their schools to such families, it is important that the school remains true to its Catholic identity, both in its internal relationships and how in how the school presents itself to the community. Participants in this study noted that when Catholic schools marginalize Catholic identity in favor of other aspects of school life from a marketing perspective, that marginalization can also occur internally among educators.

Implications and Considerations for Leaders Facing Implementation of Proposed Solution

Comments and contributions from participants yielded useful data regarding possible implications for leaders facing the implementation of the proposed framework for lay educator faith formation. Chief among them is the power of personal witness on the part of the leader. Indeed, the faithful example that the leader provides to the educator community is an important dimension of Catholic school leadership. This is especially true when the leader provides this example in one-on-one encounters with others. Therefore, as the leader considers the task of nourishing the faith needs of the educators in the school community, he or she should also reflect inwardly on ways in which he or she can effectively model his or her faith. Ideally, the leader could avail himself or herself of the same opportunities that are provided to educators throughout the annual faith formation cycle, modeling faith and growing along the way.

Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation and Assessment

Just as leaders should consider their roles in the implementation of a plan in stages, so too should they consider how it is that the plan will be evaluated and assessed. Unlike other organizations, schools operate cyclically with a definite beginning and end to the school year, as well as an extended break in between for evaluation and necessary adjustments. This rhythm to the academic year is familiar to educators and students, and it would be reasonable to conclude that by coordinating implementation and evaluation efforts according to this cycle, stakeholders will begin the process with a sense of familiarity. Therefore, a feasible timeline is one that is annual and that aligns with the school's calendar.

As the school leader takes inventory of necessary resources, it is important that he or she gains a clear picture of the needs of the community. This all must be viewed through the lens of mission. Preliminary assessment can assist leaders to strategically design opportunities for both structured activities as well as less formal daily encounters to encourage ongoing faith formation of the educators that comprise the community. Participants in this study confirmed the importance of their connection to students, as well as the benefit of engaging in service opportunities with students. These dimensions should also be accounted for in the preliminary planning process.

As strategies are implemented during the school year, it is important for leaders to evaluate, in an ongoing fashion, the efficacy of those strategies. This evaluation process should be timely and inclusive of those educators who were involved in a planned activity or other strategy. It is important that an evaluation of an activity occur as close to the implementation of the activity as possible, as it is easier for educators to provide constructive feedback while the memories of those experiences are fresh. There is no one single strategy that is appropriate for every school community, and, therefore, no one single assessment tool can be used to evaluate every possible strategy. However, an in-year assessment process would allow for educators to provide both positive and constructive feedback such that the evaluation results can be used to inform future planning efforts.

Finally, as the year closes, the school leader would be well served to thoughtfully evaluate the overall success of the program. This evaluation should take into account the experiences of the educators who comprise the community. As leaders thoughtfully and strategically consider the efficacy of new and existing strategies, and as evolving needs in

the school community are identified throughout the process, the leader will be prepared to make well-informed changes in those strategies for future years.

Implications

The aim of this study was to identify a practical, research-based framework for professional faith formation to guide Catholic school leaders in nourishing the faith needs of the educators in their school communities. Because all schools are different, and because different teachers in different schools differ in their preference and needs, it is not possible to identify one single strategy that could be employed in any setting. Rather, the proposed framework is intended to develop the capacity in a school community, and in the educators that comprise it, to grow in their faith within the context of their day-to-day responsibilities. This carries with it some practical implications and it draws into focus areas in which future research can further illumine the mystery of Catholic secondary school lay educator faith formation.

Practical Implications

The data from this study, and the interrelated themes that emerged, highlight the manner in which lay secondary Catholic school educators grow in their faith. By understanding how this process unfolds in a school community, and by taking into account mitigating factors in a strategic manner, a Catholic school leader can begin to understand how school-wide professional faith development strategies might be designed, planned, and arranged to best meet the needs of the school community. Participant feedback defined the core elements of the framework, and these elements mirror research-based best practices in the area of teacher professional development in general.

Lay educators and leaders have emerged as prominent stakeholders in Catholic school communities. Lay leaders are charged with the task of being not only the academic leaders of the school communities, but the spiritual leaders as well. Catholic schools can be spiritually rich communities in which educators can grow in their faith on a day-to-day basis. However, educators look to lay leaders for guidance and leadership. If lay leaders, because of inexperience or disinterest, fail to tend to the spiritual needs of the educators in the school community, then a powerful opportunity for solidifying the Catholic identity of the school will be lost. Even worse, the faith witness that educators provide is a powerful formative component of the student experience, and without it, students will not experience Catholic education as it was intended to be experienced.

The framework that emerged from this study aims to provide a blueprint for lay leaders to understand how it is that educators grow in their faith, and for leaders to begin to develop strategies to meet those educators' needs. It is not about one program or promising strategy, but rather it is about understanding how the application of any strategy may or may not contribute to the formation of the lay educators who comprise a secondary Catholic school community. This research-based solution was based on interviews with a variety of educators in different schools located in different dioceses in the New England region, and the proposed framework was informed by common trends, successes, and challenges in those settings. The application of this framework in those settings can help those school communities to understand better and to respond to the various challenges that were identified during the interviews. While the results of this study are not generalizable outside of the region or of the settings that were studied, this

framework proposes a logical starting point for schools in other settings to begin to address the challenge of lay educator faith formation in a strategic and thoughtful way.

Implications for Future Research

As this study was qualitative in nature, and given the limited number of participants, the findings are only generalizable to those institutions in the region studied. The applicability of these findings in a broader setting could be further confirmed by a wider quantitative study. Such a study would capture a more inclusive set of participants representative of the diversity of Catholic school educators in other schools and other regions. Additionally, while the intent of this framework is to improve faith formation programming in diocesan Catholic secondary schools, it is important that Catholic education scholars learn more about how to assess faith formation. Research regarding faith formation assessment will contribute to how Catholic school leaders can determine the efficacy of faith formation efforts, thus ensuring that the appropriation of time and resources yields intended results. Moreover, this study was limited to diocesan secondary schools. However, lay educator faith formation is important in other Catholic school settings. Further research is necessary to learn more about how the process of lay educator faith formation unfolds in Catholic elementary schools, and especially parish schools, in which both the available resources and present challenges can be very different than in the schools studied for this dissertation.

Finally, while the authentic faith witness of Catholic educators is essential in the establishment and maintenance of Catholic school identity, educators who do not identify themselves as practicing Catholics represent a significant proportion of educators employed in Catholic schools in the New England region. Some of these educators may

ascribe to other faith practices, both Christian and non-Christian. Yet others may not ascribe to any structured system of beliefs. The population of non-Catholic educators in Catholic schools calls leaders and scholars to look more closely and specifically at those educators' needs and how they can be formed to connect with the Catholic school community and support the educational project of the Church.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

As noted in Chapter Two, research agrees that a servant-leadership model of leadership is effective in a variety of settings. This is especially true in a Catholic school setting in which leaders are school heads who ensure that the educational project in a Catholic school is a shared endeavor and that promote among stakeholders “mutual encouragement and assistance” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007, §III). This is consistent with the fundamental idea that leaders should serve, and serve first (Greenleaf, 1977). Participants in this study confirmed the value of servant leadership in a Catholic school setting with regard to faith formation efforts. Additionally, participants spoke of the essence of the leader's authenticity and personal faith witness, thus validating major themes and components of the normative leadership theory of authentic leadership, as discussed in more detail by Avolio and Gardner (2005).

Summary of the Study

Catholic education faces a critical moment in its history. With lay educators and leaders comprising the majority of Catholic school faculty, the time is now to consider the effect of the decline in teaching religious and its effect on Catholic school communities. When teaching sisters, brothers, and priests were more prominent in the Catholic school community, the formation of the faculty and the authentic faith witness

that they provided could be reasonably assumed. In the present day, and for the foreseeable future, faculty formation must be a deliberate effort on the part of lay Catholic school leaders. This will ensure that the lay faculty is growing in its faith such that educators can provide the authentic faith witness that is essential for a Catholic school community.

This qualitative, grounded theory study examined the formative experiences of lay secondary Catholic school educators. Through the comments that the participants provided, this study proposes a framework for lay educator faith formation that can serve as a blueprint for lay leaders tasked with the spiritual leadership of a school community. The object of this framework is to build capacity within the educating community to grow and develop in faith through deep reflection, encounters with others, and especially in experiences with the students. Transition, change, and crisis were identified in the framework to be opportunities for growth, and Catholic school leaders ought to seek out these moments to strengthen their communities. All of these components are interrelated and grounded in Christ's Church.

A Catholic school community will not form itself. The process requires faithful leadership and authentic witness. It is an essential process; the identity of a Catholic school depends on it. Effective lay faculty faith formation necessitates a meaningful examination of current practices, the needs of both the students and the educators, and relevant societal implications. The evaluation of any professional faith formation effort must be an ongoing, central focus for any Catholic school leader.

There are many challenges ahead for Catholic education, but this will not be the first adversity that Catholic education has faced. For centuries, Catholic education has

responded to the challenges of the times through authentic, service-oriented leadership, resilient community, and an unwavering and irrepressible commitment to the identity of schools that bear the name *Catholic*. This responsibility now lies with the lay leaders charged with the future of Catholic education. As lay Catholic school leaders begin to understand the importance of nourishing the faith needs of educators, Catholic education will not just survive, it will thrive – remaining a transformative force in this world for students to encounter their full human potential, serve mankind, and build the Kingdom of God on Earth.

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Appendix A: Superintendent Authorization Letter

Date

Address of Superintendent

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Ron Fussell, and I am a doctoral student in the Ed.D. in Interdisciplinary Leadership program at Creighton University. I am currently in the dissertation phase of the program, and my research will address the void in faculty faith formation left by the decline of religious in Catholic high schools. My study will utilize a grounded theory approach and will involve interviews with teachers in Catholic high schools in New England.

I am writing to you to request permission to conduct interviews in diocesan high schools in your diocese. With your approval, I will contact the heads of schools at selected interview sites to obtain their permission, and from there I will recruit participants.

The names of the participants in my study will be replaced with pseudonyms, as will the identities of the schools. Any other identifying information will be redacted. Recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim, with all paper files secured in a locked cabinet and all electronic files encrypted. A copy of my interview protocol is attached.

I would be happy to discuss this with you further. Please let me know if there is a day and time that we could speak to discuss how we can partner together with the common goal of strengthening Catholic school mission of our many high schools in the region. I can be reached at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Best,

Ronald D. Fussell, Jr.

Appendix B: School Head Authorization Letter

Date

Address of Head of School

Dear Head of School,

My name is Ron Fussell, and I am a doctoral student in the Ed.D. in Interdisciplinary Leadership program at Creighton University. I am currently in the dissertation phase of the program, and my research will address the void in faculty faith formation left by the decline of religious in Catholic high schools. My study will utilize a grounded theory approach and will involve interviews with teachers in Catholic high schools in New England.

I am writing to you because your school has been identified to have strengths in the area of school mission as documented through the NEASC accreditation process. With your permission, I would like to invite teachers from your school to participate in my research. A sample of my interview protocol is attached. I would anticipate that an interview could take place within confines of a teacher's preparatory period, or before or after school.

The names of the participants in my study will be replaced with pseudonyms, as will the identities of the schools. Any other identifying information will be redacted. Recorded interviews would be transcribed verbatim, with all paper files secured in a locked cabinet and all electronic files encrypted.

I would be happy to discuss this with you further. Please let me know if there is a day and time that we could meet and discuss how we can partner together with the common goal of strengthening Catholic school mission in our many high schools in the region. I can be reached at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Best,

Ronald D. Fussell, Jr.

Appendix C: Participant Invitation

Date

Dear Catholic School Educator,

My name is Ron Fussell, and I am a doctoral student in the Ed.D. in Interdisciplinary Leadership program at Creighton University. I am currently in the dissertation phase of the program, and my research will address the void in faculty faith formation left by the decline of religious in Catholic high schools. My study will utilize a grounded theory approach and will involve interviews with teachers in Catholic high schools in New England.

I am writing to you to invite you to consider participating in this study. Your experience in Catholic education will be essential in achieving the goals of my research.

If you are interested in participating, please complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me via email to (ronaldfussell@creighton.edu). As I identify interested participants through this process, I will identify interview subjects based on responses to the questionnaire to ensure that my sample is representative of the overall population.

The names of the participants in my study will be replaced with pseudonyms, as will the identities of the schools. Any other identifying information will be redacted. Recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim, with all paper files secured in a locked cabinet and all electronic files encrypted.

I would be happy to discuss this with you further. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at ronaldfussell@creighton.edu.

Best,

Ronald D. Fussell, Jr.

Appendix D: Participant Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Your answers on this questionnaire will help to ensure that those selected for interviews will be representative of the overall population. Your responses will be kept secure and confidential.

Name: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Diocese: _____

Years of experience in education (in general) _____

Years of experience in Catholic education _____

Subject area(s) you teach: _____

Do you teach, or have you taught, religious education or theology?

_____ Yes _____ No

I am a:

_____ Catholic (practicing)

_____ Catholic (non-practicing)

_____ Non-Catholic

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Please return this questionnaire, by email, to ronaldfussell@creighton.edu.

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Thank you for speaking to me today about your experiences with professional faith formation in this Catholic school setting. You were selected because you have been identified as someone whose experience with faith formation in a Catholic school setting can shed some light on what lay teachers need and desire to be prepared to safeguard the identity of the Catholic schools in which they work. Your comments will help to address the main question of this research, which is: how can Catholic schools provide formation experiences for lay teachers which will prepare them to promote the identity of the Catholic schools in which they work?

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may end the interview at any time. The interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be generated for detailed review. Both the recording and transcript will be held in strict confidence and only be accessible by the interviewer. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym, and any identifying information that you provide will be redacted.

Name: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Position: _____

Interview:

Tell me a little bit about yourself and how you arrived at your current ministry.

Take me back to a time when you felt that you grew in your faith in an experience provided by your school. Describe that experience for me.

Tell me about how your faith formation in this school occurs within the context of the school community.

What is the role of personal reflection in your faith formation in this community?

How has collaboration with your peers impacted your professional faith formation?

Do you grow in your faith more in personal reflection or in collaboration with your colleagues? Why?

What is the role of your school's leadership in providing for your faith formation?

Thank you for your assistance in participating in this research study. I will be in touch with you to review my summary of your transcript to ensure that I understand your answers correctly.

Appendix F: Audit Trail

Ref. No.	Participant	Location
1	91	Stratification Questionnaire
2	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 125 – 127
3	75	Stratification Questionnaire
4	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 156 – 157
5	33	Stratification Questionnaire
6	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 137 – 138
7	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 192 – 193
8	58	Stratification Questionnaire
9	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 541 – 543
10	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 547 – 549
11	57	Stratification Questionnaire
12	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 157 – 159
13	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 356 – 357
14	57	Interview Transcript: Line 621
15	85	Stratification Questionnaire
16	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 192 – 193
17	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 181 – 183
18	23	Stratification Questionnaire
19	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 155 – 156
20	71	Stratification Questionnaire
21	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 78 - 81
22	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 171 – 172
23	77	Stratification Questionnaire.
		Interview Transcript: Lines 89 – 92

24	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 319 – 320
25	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 551 – 552
26	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 13 - 16
27	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 49 – 53
28	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 54 – 56
29	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 11 – 12
30	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 359 – 368
31	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 172 – 175
32	23	Interview Transcript: Line 175
33	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 273 – 274
34	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 203 – 205
35	73	Stratification Questionnaire
36	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 11 – 19
37	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 30 – 33
38	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 81 – 83
39	33	Interview Transcript: Line 282
40	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 507 – 509
41	73	Interview Transcript: Line 251
42	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 252 – 253
43	24	Stratification Questionnaire
44	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 233 – 235
45	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 351 – 354, 369 – 374
46	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 374 – 375
47	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 179 – 185
48	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 328 – 332
49	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 140 – 146

50	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 406 – 408
51	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 344 – 345
52	58	Interview Transcript: Line 220
53	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 333 – 335
54	57	Interview Transcript: Line 472
	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 370 – 373
55	75	Interview Transcript: Line 250
56	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 100 – 101
57	73	Interview Transcript: Line 166
58	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 167 – 169
59	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 216 – 217
60	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 234 – 235
61	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 52 – 53
62	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 102 – 106
63	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 134 – 138
64	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 48 – 51
65	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 100 – 103
66	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 106 – 111
67	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 465 – 536
68	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 73 – 78
69	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 280 – 286
70	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 482 – 484
71	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 222 – 230
72	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 476 – 479
73	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 430 – 437
74	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 402 – 406

75	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 111 – 113
76	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 183 – 185
77	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 186 – 188
78	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 248 – 254
79	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 56 – 58
80	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 67 – 71
81	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 64 – 66
82	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 70 – 73
83	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 134 – 136
84	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 103 – 106
85	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 163 – 169
86	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 179 – 180
87	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 174 – 177
88	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 183 – 186
89	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 112 – 118
90	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 48 – 53
91	85	Interview Transcript: Line 418
92	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 356 – 361
93	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 259 – 263
94	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 125 – 129
95	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 157 – 159
96	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 238 – 240
97	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 588 – 590
98	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 361 – 366
99	33	Interview Transcript: Line 238
100	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 123 – 124

101	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 359 – 361
102	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 35 – 38
103	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 646 – 649
104	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 654 – 656
105	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 673 – 676
106	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 504 – 507
107	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 513 – 515
108	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 246 – 249
109	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 248 – 251
110	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 691 – 694
111	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 360 – 361
112	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 517 – 519
113	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 556 – 557
114	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 354 – 355
115	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 265 – 270
116	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 138 – 143
117	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 490 – 492
118	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 76 – 79
119	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 194 – 196
120	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 145 – 147
121	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 508 – 511
	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 370 – 374
	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 315 – 317
122	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 48 – 51
123	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 573 – 579
124	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 140 – 150

125	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 131 – 133
126	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 104 – 105
127	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 474 – 477
128	73	Interview Transcript: Line 490
129	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 43 – 44
130	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 377 – 378
131	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 520 – 527
132	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 417 – 418
133	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 255 – 256
134	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 223 – 224
135	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 288 – 290
136	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 134 – 136
137	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 215 – 216
138	57	Interview Transcript: Line 220
139	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 106 – 108
140	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 427 – 250
141	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 314 – 315
142	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 493 – 495
143	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 347 – 348
144	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 57
145	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 629 – 630
146	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 50 – 52
147	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 19 – 22
148	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 53 – 55
149	77	Interview Transcript: Lines 81 – 84
150	71	Interview Transcript: Lines 165 – 166

151	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 109 – 111
152	23	Interview Transcript: Lines 60 – 69
153	24	Interview Transcript: Lines 361 – 368
154	85	Interview Transcript: Lines 117 – 120
155	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 256 - 260
156	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 107 – 109
157	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 86 – 90
158	91	Interview Transcript: Lines 81 – 85
159	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 25 – 29
160	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 224 – 226
161	57	Interview Transcript: Lines 515 – 517
162	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 288 – 290
163	58	Interview Transcript: Lines 472 – 474
165	73	Interview Transcript: Lines 277 – 279
166	33	Interview Transcript: Lines 131 – 133
167	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 342 – 346
168	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 356 – 359
169	75	Interview Transcript: Lines 181 – 182

Appendix G: Informed Consent Letter and Bill of Rights

Dear Participant,

You have been asked to participate in an interview which will comprise part of a grounded theory study about the faith formation experiences of lay educators in diocesan Catholic high schools in the New England region. The aim of this study is the development of a framework for professional faith formation for Catholic school leaders as they work to safeguard the unique and distinctive identity of the Catholic schools which they lead.

Your interview will occur in the span of about one hour and will consist of open-ended questions regarding your faith formation experiences in your school. The interview will take place in a semiprivate location of your choosing. The interview will be digitally recorded (audio only) and will be transcribed verbatim as part of the coding process.

Your benefit to participating in this study is that you will be adding to a body of research regarding Catholic teacher faith formation and Catholic school identity. Apart from that, there are no direct benefits to you, the participant, for participating. Participation in this study poses no risks.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will not be compensated for your participation in the study.

Questions regarding this research can be directed to me. I can be reached by phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by email at ronaldfussell@creighton.edu. If you have questions about your research rights, you may contact the Creighton University Institutional Review Board at (402) 280-2126.

Sincerely,

Ronald D. Fussell, Jr.
Student - Ed.D. in Interdisciplinary Leadership

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.
4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.
9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
 - a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
 - b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.