

# THE PRESIDENT/PRINCIPAL MODEL IN CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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*The purpose of this research about the president/principal model was to examine this emerging model of dual leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the United States to determine its forms, functions, and perceived advantages and disadvantages. The study was qualitative and gathered data by use of a survey. Based on the information gathered, dealing with the ever-increasing complexity of administering a Catholic secondary school by dividing the multiple administrative roles and responsibilities between two individuals, and in some cases more than two individuals, is a strategy that works. This division not only provides for academic leadership and the daily operation of the school, but also provides for leadership in institutional advancement, management of financial resources, strategic planning, fidelity to mission, and vision building.*

In recent years a new structure for the administration of Catholic high schools in the United States has emerged. This structure, referred to as the president/principal model, features dual or shared authority and a division of administrative responsibility between two people as opposed to the traditional or autonomous model of administration for Catholic high schools where authority and responsibility rest with a single person. A small but growing number of schools are using this model. In its 1992 report on Catholic high school finances, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) stated that 20% of the schools responding reported having a president; in the 1994 report, 24% of the schools responding reported having a president (Guerra, 1995).

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Although research into leadership has not produced a common definition of the term, most authors agree that leadership is essential to a successful organization (Helm, 1993). However, research into school leadership has focused on the traditional model of principal as autonomous administrator. Therefore, this research on the president/principal administrative model in Catholic high schools in the United States was undertaken to examine this emerging collaborative model to determine what forms the model has taken, how it functions, why it was adopted, and its perceived advantages and disadvantages.

## METHODOLOGY

The model was examined from the perspective of those serving as presidents and principals in the model, and the data for this study were gathered by survey. Given the purposes of the study, using a survey sent only to presidents and principals was the most efficient way to gather the data. However, this perspective has limited the scope of input, and future studies would do well to expand the scope and include the views of other administrators, board members, faculty, parents, and students.

Two versions of the survey instrument were used, one for principals and one for presidents. The questions in both versions were essentially identical with the addition of sections on school background and authority and accountability to the president's version.

The items of the survey instrument were generated from sources in a review of the available literature on the president/principal model, Catholic school leadership, the corollary pastor/principal relationship, and the business field as well as a review of observations about the model from those functioning in the model.

The survey was sent to presidents and principals in all Catholic secondary schools identified as using the model in January of 1997. A total of 358 surveys were mailed: 179 to presidents and 179 to principals. Of the 216 or 60% returned, 204 or 57% were useable: 110 from presidents and 94 from principals.

Since questions about school background were included only in the version of the survey sent to presidents, background information about 110 schools using the model was obtained. These schools are located throughout the country: 6% in New England; 30% in the Mideast; 26% in the Great Lakes; 14% in the Plains; and 8% in the Southwest. In addition, the geographical distribution of these 110 schools is similar to the distribution of the 179 schools identified as using the model.

Of the 105 schools responding to the survey question about enrollments, 36% had enrollments in the 600 to 900 range; 23% in the 901 to 1,200 range; and 7% in the 1,201 to 2,000 range. At the other end of the spectrum, 28% of

the schools reported enrollments between 301 and 600, and in 7% of the schools the enrollment was 300 or fewer students. Of the 107 schools responding to the question about composition of the student body, 33% were all male; 16%, all female; and 50%, coeducational.

## FINDINGS

The report of the findings is presented in six sections: Purpose of the Model; Form and Functions of the Model; Authority and Accountability; Benefits and Problems; Recommendations; and the Conclusion.

### PURPOSE

In the survey on the president/principal model, the goal of the section labeled "Purpose" was to address the major reasons the model came into being. Presidents and principals were given a series of reasons for using the model and asked to indicate how important each reason was in their school using a four-point scale, *very important*, *important*, *somewhat important*, and *not a reason in this school*. Table 1 combines the responses of *very important* and *important* and indicates how important respondents perceive each reason listed to be.

**Table 1**  
**Rank Order of Importance of Reasons for Using the**  
**President/Principal Model Based on Percent of Presidents and**  
**Principals Responding**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Development and fundraising	97
Enable principal as instructional leader	92
Public relations	89
Business and financial management	87
Marketing	87
Strategic planning	85
Relieve overload of the principal	82
Maintain Catholic character/heritage	77
Provide administrator to work with board	70
Sponsorship	64
Prepare lay leadership for the school	49

The majority of presidents and principals agreed that the most important reasons for the model are development and fundraising along with the related activities of public relations, marketing, and strategic planning; enabling the principal to function as the instructional leader and the related purpose of

relieving principal overload; and business and financial management.

Agreement as to the importance of the other reasons listed was mixed. The least unanimity of opinion was about preparing lay leaders for the school. Only 21% of the respondents chose *very important* and 28% *important* for this reason, while 21% indicated *somewhat important*, and 30% of the respondents, more than for any other reason, marked it as *not a reason in this school*. Likewise, respondents had a mixed view about the importance of sponsorship, that is, maintaining the influence and identification of the founding religious congregation with the school, as a reason for implementing the model. This reason was considered *very important* to 46% of respondents and *important* to 18%, while 11% said it was only *somewhat important*, and 25% chose *not a reason in this school*. These results might be explained by the distribution of ownership of the schools included in this study. Of the 110 schools included, 57% are owned by a religious congregation, 31% by a diocese, 1% by a parish or parishes, and 11% by a lay board.

In this section of the survey, 18 respondents added comments. Four comments emphasized that the responsibilities of leadership in a Catholic high school have become too much for one person and, hence, a division of labor in the face of the increasingly complex and multiple concerns of administering a school was an important reason for implementing the model.

## FORM AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MODEL

Jaques and Clement (1991) noted that the pattern of role relationships in an organization defines organizational structure. Therefore, in order to understand the structure of an organization, role relationships should be examined. The next section of the survey, labeled "Patterns: Form and Functions of the Model," addressed the division of roles and responsibilities between the president and the principal.

Respondents generally agreed as to which roles and responsibilities belong to the president, which to the principal, and which are shared. Table 2 lists the roles presented in the survey in rank order according to the percentage of respondents who assigned them as the functions of the president, functions of the principal, or shared functions.

**Table 2**  
**Percent of Respondents (in Rank Order by Largest Percent) Who Assigned Various Roles to the President and the Principal**

Role	Percent
President's role	
Development	92
Executive for school board	87
Outside person/overall responsibility	81

Chief spokesperson	67 <sup>a</sup>
Business/financial management	66 <sup>a</sup>
Board policy development	66 <sup>a</sup>
Principal's role	
Inside person/day-to-day operations	82
Educational/academic leadership	76
Shared roles	
Spiritual leadership	85
Personnel management	83
Institutional management	60 <sup>b</sup>
Maintain identity of religious order	57 <sup>b</sup>
Board policy implementation	56 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The majority of respondents who did not assign these roles to the president indicated that they are shared functions. <sup>b</sup>The majority who did not choose shared functions for these roles assigned them to the president.

Table 3 lists the responsibilities given in the survey in rank order according to the percentage of respondents who assigned them as the functions of the president or as the functions of the principal or as the functions that are shared.

**Table 3**  
**Percent of Respondents (in Rank Order by Largest Percent) Who Assigned Various Responsibilities to the President and the Principal**

Responsibility	Percent
President's responsibilities	
Fundraising	85
Alumni relations	85
Partnerships with business	71
Public relations	57 <sup>a</sup>
Physical plant and facilities	54 <sup>a</sup>
Approve/monitor expenditures	48 <sup>a</sup>
Food service	44 <sup>b</sup>
Principal's responsibilities	
Supervise instruction	99
Evaluate student learning	94
Curriculum development and assessment	93
Supervise/evaluate faculty	92
Student discipline	90
Program scheduling	87
Student activities/athletics	84

Admit/dismiss students	75
Faculty/staff development	72
Program development and assessment	69 <sup>c</sup>
Service programs	66 <sup>c</sup>
Administer government programs	66 <sup>c</sup>
Hire/dismiss faculty	64 <sup>c</sup>
Religious education program	60 <sup>c</sup>
Transportation	47 <sup>d</sup>
Provide for liturgy/sacraments	45 <sup>c</sup>
<b>Shared responsibilities</b>	
Insure Catholic identity	90
Articulate Catholic vision	85
Philosophy and mission	83
Promote Christian community	83
Collaboration with diocese, others	81
Parent groups	73
Faculty/staff faith development	72
Faculty/staff morale	70 <sup>e</sup>
Supervise/evaluate support staff	63 <sup>c</sup>
School climate	63 <sup>c</sup>
Strategic planning	63 <sup>f</sup>
Hire/dismiss support staff	62 <sup>g</sup>
Technology development	58 <sup>e</sup>
Budget development	54 <sup>f</sup>
Student faith development	54 <sup>e</sup>
Hire/dismiss other administrators	50 <sup>f</sup>
Marketing	47 <sup>f</sup>
Supervise/evaluate other administrators	46 <sup>g</sup>
Facilities scheduling	39 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The majority of those who did not assign these to the president indicated that they are shared functions. <sup>b</sup>The majority of those who did not assign this to the president indicated that it is a function of the principal. <sup>c</sup>The majority of those who did not assign these to the principal indicated that they are shared functions. <sup>d</sup>The majority of those who did not assign this to the principal indicated that it is a function of the president. <sup>e</sup>The majority of those who did not choose shared function for these assigned them to the principal. <sup>f</sup>The majority of those who did not choose shared function for these assigned them to the president. <sup>g</sup>The majority of those who did not choose shared function for these split about evenly in assigning them either to the president or to the principal.

Of the 55 functions listed in the survey under roles and responsibilities, the majority of respondents assigned 6 roles and 7 responsibilities to the president; 2 roles and 16 responsibilities to the principal; and listed 5 roles and 19 responsibilities as being shared.

Many of the roles and responsibilities respondents assigned to the presi-

dent and to the principal are consistent with the top four purposes for the model, which are development and fundraising and related activities, instructional leadership by the principal, public relations, and business and financial management (see Table 1). Two of the six roles and six of the seven responsibilities respondents assigned to the president correspond to the top purposes for the model. And 1 of the 2 roles and 6 of the 16 responsibilities respondents assigned to the principal correspond to the top purposes for the model.

Forty-seven respondents added comments. Fourteen respondents noted that because consultation and collaboration are significant characteristics of the model, clear-cut divisions of roles and responsibilities are not always apparent or desirable. They pointed out that the model is a team approach. Concerns tend to overlap, and even where one administrator clearly may have ultimate responsibility on paper, in practice agreement between the president and the principal is usually reached before any action is taken. Ten respondents also indicated that where authority is shared, one of the two administrators is often primarily responsible, that is, in reality has more to say than the other, or at least is the primary coordinator of the area. In two instances, respondents indicated that the model as used in their schools is not really a dual model but that there are multiple officers serving below the president who are equal to each other and who all either have primary responsibility for some of the functions or share responsibility with the president or with some or all of the other administrators who serve directly below the president.

## **AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The survey section on authority and accountability addressed the power question. Sheehan (1985) points out the importance of clearly defining lines of power and authority in a structured authority relationship. Also practitioners indicate that clarity with regard to accountability and authority is a concern (Gnirk & Gross, 1995; Nick & Doyle, 1994; Vercruyssen & Englert, 1995). To discover how power flows in schools where the model is used, 15 items were included in the survey and only in the president's version since only one set of perceptions per school was needed. Therefore, in this section, respondent is synonymous with school, and 110 schools replied.

The first concern was the membership of the president and the principal on the governing board of the school. Table 4 indicates what the practices are in the schools responding to the survey by giving the percent of schools with presidents and principals serving on the governing board as well as the types of their membership.

**Table 4**  
**Percent of Schools in Which Presidents and Principals Are**  
**Members of the Governing Boards by Type of Membership**

<b>Type of membership</b>	<b>President<sup>a</sup></b> <b>Percent</b>	<b>Principal<sup>b</sup></b> <b>Percent</b>
Ex officio	39	18
Not a member	04	39
Voting member	08	04
Non-voting member	05	14
Appointed and voting	04	04
Appointed and non-voting	00	01
Ex officio and voting	29	05
Ex officio and non-voting	12	14

**Note:** Because of rounding, totals do not equal 100%.

<sup>a</sup>*n* = 103. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 104.

In schools using the model, it is common practice for the president to serve on the board, but it is less common to find principals serving on the board. Of the schools responding, 96% reported that the president serves on the board, while only 63% indicated that the principal serves on the board in any capacity. In addition, 15% of the schools reported that the president is a non-voting member, while 30% reported that the principal is a non-voting member.

The next concern was to identify the lines of authority in the school, that is, which administrative relationships are superior or subordinate and which are lateral and equal. Principals interviewed in other research on the model (Passi, 1995) viewed the president as the person with ultimate responsibility for the school and also saw the principal as immediately next to the president in terms of authority.

In this survey, 94% of the schools responding indicated that the president is the highest authority, 3% of the schools that the principal is the highest authority, and 4% other. Also, 90% of the schools indicated that the principal is the second highest authority, 1% that the president is the second highest authority, and 9% other.

In indicating whether the relationship between the president and the principal in the school is lateral and equal or whether one is subordinate to the other, 14% of the respondents indicated lateral and equal, 84% indicated that the principal is subordinate to the president, and 2% said that the president is subordinate to the principal. In indicating whether other administrators have a lateral and equal relationship to the president or to the principal, 98% of the respondents indicated no with regard to the president and 2% said yes. However, with regard to the principal, while 81% indicated no, 19% said that others did have a lateral and equal relationship to the principal. Others



listed most commonly as being equal to the principal were the business manager and the development director, both of whom are directly responsible to the president.

The common pattern in schools using the model, then, is that the president is the highest authority and the principal is the second-highest authority. However, in a few schools, rather than one being subordinate to the other, the president and the principal stand side-by-side.

In addition, respondents' comments described other variations. A half dozen said that the administration in their schools is organized with a president at the top and then immediately under him or her a series of vice presidents, all equal, one of whom is the vice president for academics or the principal. Also, two respondents noted that their schools are organized with a president as CEO and with multiple principals serving under him or her. Where the president and the principal stand in a lateral and equal relationship, rather than one being responsible to the other, one respondent reported that each is responsible to the superintendent of schools for the diocese, and another indicated that each is responsible directly to the board of trustees of the school.

The next concern of this study was to determine who hires the president and the principal, who evaluates them, and to whom each is accountable. The study undertaken by the Commission on Research and Development, Jesuit Secondary Education Association (1991) indicated that presidents consider themselves accountable to the board of trustees and religious superiors, and also that they consider the principals responsible to them. Table 5 illustrates current practice in schools using the model that participated in this study.

**Table 5**  
**The Various Agents Who Hire, Evaluate, and Hold Presidents**  
**Accountable: Percent of Schools Responding**

Agent	Hire <sup>a</sup> Percent	Evaluate <sup>b</sup> Percent	Accountable to <sup>c</sup> Percent
Board of trustees	36	50	46
Religious community	18	14	11
Diocese	17	14	16
Principal	00	00	01
Board and community	21	13	17
Board and diocese	05	04	05
Community and diocese	04	02	04
Community and principal	00	01	00
Diocese and principal	00	01	00
Board/community/diocese	00	00	01
Board/diocese/principal	00	00	01

**Note:** Because of rounding, totals do not equal 100%. <sup>a</sup>*n* = 107. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 106. <sup>c</sup>*n* = 107.

In the majority of the schools, the owners alone (35%), (that is, a diocese or religious community or a group of lay people that owns the school) or the owners in collaboration with others (30%) do the hiring. In the other 36% of the schools, the board alone hires the president. In 50% of the schools responding, the board alone evaluates the president, and in the other half of the schools, either the owner alone (28%) or the owner in collaboration with others (22%) evaluates the president. In most instances the collaborators are boards. In 46% of the schools, the president is accountable directly to the board, while in slightly over half of the schools the president is accountable directly to the owner alone (27%) or to the owner in collaboration with others (26%), and here, too, most of the collaborators are boards.

With regard to the president, then, in about equal numbers of schools, owners (a diocese or a religious community or a group of lay people) or boards or both in collaboration are the hiring agents. However, both with regard to evaluation and to accountability, boards alone or in collaboration with others are active in more schools than are owners alone.

Table 6 illustrates current practice in schools using the model that participated in this study with regard to the hiring, evaluation, and accountability of principals.

**Table 6**  
**The Various Agents Who Hire, Evaluate, and Hold Principals**  
**Accountable: Percent of Schools Responding**

Agent	Hire <sup>a</sup> Percent	Evaluate <sup>b</sup> Percent	Accountable to <sup>c</sup> Percent
Board of trustees	10	07	07
Religious community	09	04	01
Diocesan officials	06	07	03
President	56	58	79
Board and community	02	00	02
Board and diocese	01	00	00
Community and diocese	01	02	01
Community and president	01	04	01
Diocese and president	07	08	06
Board and president	03	08	02
Board/community/president	05	02	00
Board/diocese/president	00	01	00

**Note:** Because of rounding totals do not equal 100%. <sup>a</sup>*n* = 106. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 106. <sup>c</sup>*n* = 107.

While in all of the schools, either owners—that is, a diocese or religious community that owns the school—or boards or both in collaboration hire, evaluate, and hold presidents accountable, in the majority of schools, presidents hire, evaluate, and hold principals accountable. Presidents alone hire

the principal in 56% of the schools, evaluate the principal in 58% of the schools, and hold the principal accountable in 79% of the schools. Where owners and boards play a part with regard to the principal, they are active in hiring in more schools than they are active in either evaluation of the principal or holding the principal accountable.

The last concern with regard to authority and accountability in schools using the model was to identify who was directly accountable to the president and who to the principal. The study undertaken by the Commission on Research and Development, Jesuit Secondary Education Association (1991) found that presidents consider nonacademic administrators, as well as the principal, accountable to them. This same study also found that principals, while considering themselves accountable to the president, consider the faculty accountable to them. Table 7 shows who is accountable to the president and who to the principal in schools using the model that participated in this study.

**Table 7**  
**Positions Directly Accountable to the President or to the Principal:**  
**Percent of Schools Responding (N = 110)**

<b>Position</b>	<b>To President Percent</b>	<b>To Principal Percent</b>
President	00	01
Principal	86	00
Academic administrators	08	88
Faculty	02	95
Professional staff	05	94
Athletic director	07	87
Development director	95	02
Business manager	92	06
Classified staff	33	63
Support staff	43	25
Paraprofessionals	03	75
Nonacademic administrators	24	31
Alumni director	69	01
PR director	65	05

In the majority of schools, the principal as well as administrators associated with development and finance are accountable to the president. Likewise, in the majority of schools, staff members who function in the academic area or who are related to the day-to-day operations of the school are accountable to the principal. The accountability of other personnel is related to the area of the school in which they function. For example, classified staff who work in development or finance are accountable to the president, while

classified staff who work in the academic area such as guidance secretaries or attendance clerks are accountable to the principal.

## BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS

The section of the survey on benefits and problems was designed to elicit what respondents perceived as the important benefits of the model and as major problems with the model.

Educational practitioners who have written or spoken about the president/principal model have enumerated conditions and factors that they consider necessary for the model to be successful (Commission on Research and Development, Jesuit Secondary Education Association, 1991; Nick & Doyle, 1994; Passi, 1995). Theorists in the business world have also addressed the question of what factors in organizations contribute to effective functioning (Drucker, 1974; Jaques & Clement, 1991; Kotter, 1993). The survey attempted to discover how important to the successful functioning of the model current presidents and principals judged these conditions and factors to be; that is, were these conditions and factors present and contributing to success, or were they absent, and, if so, was this absence problematic?

The majority of the respondents agreed that all of the conditions and factors listed in the survey are at least important for the success of the model. Table 8 lists these conditions and factors according to the percent of respondents who indicated each was very important.

**Table 8**  
**Percent of Respondents Who Chose as *Very Important* or *Important***  
**Conditions and Factors Necessary for the Success of the**  
**President/Principal Model (N = 201)**

Condition/Factor	Very Important Percent	Important Percent
Mutual trust and respect between president and principal	95	05
Spirit of cooperation and collaboration	92	09
Compatible educational philosophies and values	90	10
Frequent, face-to-face communication	84	14
Flexibility	82	17
Clear understanding of accountability by faculty/staff	75	21
Strong commitment to model by president and principal	74	23
Clear and accurate job descriptions	71	23
Support of governance board	62	32
Compatible personalities of president and principal	57	35

Clear understanding by constituencies of purpose and function of the model	57	33
Complementary skills on the part of president and principal	44	44
Support of school community for the model	36	43

The three conditions at the top of the list, mutual trust and respect, cooperation and collaboration, and compatible educational philosophies and values, which all agreed are at least *important* and most agreed are *very important*, are all highly relational. By their responses, presidents and principals have indicated that how one relates to the other in the model is the major factor for the success of the model.

While Table 8 indicates which conditions and factors respondents judged to be important for the success of the model, Table 9 gives a picture of which of these conditions and factors presidents and principals perceived to be evident in schools and contributing to the success of the model. Respondents rated each on a four-point scale including *highly evident and contributes to success*, *evident but sometimes a problem area*, *not evident and the source of problems*, and *not evident and not a source of problems*. The conditions and factors are presented in Table 9 in order of the frequency respondents indicated each was *highly evident and contributes to success*.

**Table 9**

**Conditions and Factors Highly Evident in Schools and Contributing to the Success of the President/Principal Model: Percent of Presidents and Principals Responding (N = 202)**

<b>Condition/Factor</b>	<b>Highly Evident Percent</b>
Mutual trust and respect between president and principal	86
Spirit of cooperation and collaboration	83
Strong commitment to model by president and principal	81
Compatible educational philosophies and values	78
Support of governance board	77
Frequent, face-to-face communication	77
Flexibility	74
Compatible personalities of president and principal	71
Complementary skills on the part of president and principal	70
Clear and accurate job descriptions	55
Support of school community for the model	53
Clear understanding of accountability by faculty/staff	46
Clear understanding by constituencies of purpose and function of the model	37

The three conditions which respondents almost unanimously agreed are very important to the success of the model, that is, mutual trust and respect, a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, and compatible educational philosophies and values (see Table 8), are also perceived by a high percentage of respondents as being *highly evident in schools and contributing to the success of the president/principal model*.

While Table 9 gives a picture of which of these conditions and factors respondents perceived to be evident in schools and contributing to the success of the model, Table 10 indicates where the problem areas are. Table 10 presents the conditions and factors listed in the survey in rank order according to the frequency respondents chose *evident but sometimes a problem area* and *not evident and the source of problems*.

**Table 10**  
**Percent of Presidents and Principals Who Chose the Conditions and Factors Listed As *Evident/Sometimes a Problem Area* and *Not Evident/Problems* (N = 202)**

<b>Condition/Factor</b>	<b>Evident/ Problem Percent</b>	<b>Not Evident/ Problem Percent</b>
Clear understanding by constituencies of purpose and function of the model	46	08
Clear understanding of accountability by faculty/staff	45	07
Clear and accurate job descriptions	34	05
Support of the school community for the model	33	04
Complementary skills on the part of the president and the principal	23	04
Compatible personalities of president and principal	21	05
Flexibility	21	04
Frequent, face-to-face communication	18	04
Compatible educational philosophies and values	18	04
Strong commitment to model by the president and principal	16	03
Support of governance board	15	03
Spirit of cooperation and collaboration	13	04
Mutual trust and respect between president and principal	10	04

Although none of the conditions in the list has been judged by a large percentage of respondents as *not evident and the source of problems* in their

schools, the information presented in Table 10 does indicate which areas have a potential to be problems. And the three items at the top of the list all deal with perceptions: ambiguity about the purpose and function of the model, about who is accountable to whom, and about job descriptions.

Again those conditions which respondents agree are *very important* to the success of the model (Table 8) and also which respondents agree are *highly evident* in their schools (Table 9) are seen by respondents as least problematic. For example, *mutual trust and respect*, and *a spirit of cooperation and collaboration* are at the bottom of the list of potential problems, while *compatible educational philosophies and values* is very low on the list.

In the comments, respondents underscored how crucial the quality of the relationship between the president and the principal is to the success of the model. A synergy must exist. Mutual respect and trust as well as the ability and willingness to work together and communicate effectively are viewed as essential. Individuals who fill the positions of president and principal must be willing to share leadership, must be able and willing to function in their position, and must allow the other party to fulfill his or her job without interference.

Seven respondents commented specifically that major problems stem from having a president who was a former principal, particularly a former principal in the same school. Interference and turf wars can result, creating a very difficult situation not only for the president and the principal but also for faculty, students, and parents. And in the same vein, one respondent added that for the model to work, a school needs a president who does not want also to be a principal and a principal who has no desire to be a president.

In addition to indicating how important and how evident or problematic respondents judged conditions and factors that have been identified by educational practitioners and theorists in the business world as necessary for the success of the model, the survey also focused specifically on potential problem areas. The factors listed in the survey as potential problems were based on those identified by educational practitioners and business theorists as problems that may arise when leadership responsibilities are divided (Bennis 1989; Commission on Research and Development, Jesuit Secondary Education Association, 1991; Jaques and Clement, 1991; Kotter, 1993; Levinson, 1981; Passi, 1995; Vercruyse & Englert, 1995).

Of the 15 potential problems included in the survey, fewer than 6% of the respondents listed any as *a major problem area*, and fewer than 10% listed any as *a problem area*. Where respondents perceived a factor to be a source of problems, most listed it under *a minor problem area*. In Table 11 the responses for *a major problem area*, *a problem area*, and *a minor problem area* are combined and ranked in order of frequency to illustrate what factors from the list of potential problems respondents judged as being most problematic for the model in practice.

**Table 11**  
**Factors That Are Problem Areas With the President/Principal Model:**  
**Percent of Presidents and Principals Responding (N = 202)**

Factor	Percent
Lack of clear understanding of accountability by faculty/staff	47
Ambiguity about functions	44
Interference of one in other's area	43
Ambiguity about lines of authority	36
Poor communication	31
Faculty/staff play president and principal off against one another	31
Attitude of autonomy rather than collaboration	29
Inflexibility	20
Disagreement about philosophy, goals, policies	20
Personality conflicts	19
Isolation; failure to meet regularly	19
Competition between the two	14
Lack of mutual support	13
Lack of mutual trust	13
Faculty/staff lack motivation	13
Faculty/staff lack direction	12
Jealousy between the two	12
Faculty/staff caught in power play	08

The responses of presidents and principals clearly indicate that ambiguity about roles and responsibilities, ambiguity about lines of authority and accountability, and ambiguity about the purpose and function of the model on the part of those who are presidents and principals as well as faculty and staff and the various other constituencies of the school are the most problematic areas for the model in practice.

In their comments, four respondents emphasized that it is of key importance from the outset to communicate to all constituencies an understanding about responsibilities and lines of authority in the model. Individual respondents also pointed out that implementation of the model demands a readjustment of expectations by all involved; that there is a tendency for parents and the public to try to go to the president and bypass the principal; and that if a president interferes in the principal's area, it exacerbates an already ambiguous situation by further clouding an understanding of who is responsible for what.

The next area examined by the survey was conditions necessary for success of the model. The literature on management in business notes that whatever the administrative structure, for an organization to be effective, this



structure must enable or promote certain conditions (Bennis, 1989; Drucker, 1974; Jaques & Clement, 1991; Mintzberg, 1980). The survey contained 10 statements articulating these conditions, and presidents and principals were asked to assess the extent to which these conditions are present in their schools by giving their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

The majority of respondents agreed that in their schools the president/principal model is conceptually workable (98%), fits the situation of their school (95%), and fits their skills and experiences (93%). The majority also agreed that this division of roles and responsibilities not only makes the president's job and the principal's job more manageable (98%), but it also enables effective operation (93%). These findings are consistent with those of other studies (Commission on Research and Development, Jesuit Secondary Association, 1991; Passi, 1995) in which the majority of respondents indicated that the model can work and needs to work because the workload and complexities of administering a school are too much for a single person.

Although less broad, the majority of respondents also agreed that the model empowers effective decision making (89%), relieves administrators of the sense of being overburdened (81%), promotes harmony (81%), enhances the school's ability to adapt to change (79%), and diminishes superficiality (71%). Where respondents failed to agree with the statements about which conditions are present in their schools, they were neutral rather than in disagreement. There are two exceptions.

Ten percent of all respondents disagreed with the statement that the model relieves stress, and of that 10%, 7% were principals while only 3% were presidents. Principals then are somewhat less likely to see the model as diminishing the stress of their jobs than presidents. In commenting, one principal suggested that although the model does diminish stress, it may be inherent to these administrative positions and somewhat inevitable; there is still too much to do, even for two people.

Sixteen percent of the respondents chose *somewhat disagree*, and 49% *strongly disagree* with regard to the statement that constituents perceive the model as unnecessarily bureaucratic. Interestingly, 3% chose *strongly agree* and 23% *somewhat agree* with regard to this item, and recognized that some constituents are liable to see the model as creating a top-heavy administrative structure. However, one respondent commented that the perception of the model as top-heavy is an initial reaction that diminishes when constituents see the efficacy of the president and the principal working together. This perception is consistent with the observation by Nick and Doyle (1994) that the attitude about the model being top-heavy is likely to prevail when constituents do not see any visible benefits to the school as a result of the implementation of the model.

With regard to whether or not the president/principal model is conceptu-

ally workable, 90% of the respondents *strongly agree* and 8% *somewhat agree*. These data along with the comments indicate that, overall, respondents believed that when problems arise with the model, they are the consequence of a particular set of circumstances, miscalculations, or mistakes rather than a flaw inherent in using an administrative model where roles and responsibilities traditionally assumed by one person are now divided.

In addition to ascertaining a judgment about conditions necessary for the success of the model, the survey focused on identifying the benefits of using the president/principal model. Individuals who have worked as presidents and principals in the model have pointed out that one of the measures of the success of the model is the extent to which it brings visible benefits to the school (Nick & Doyle, 1994). In order to ascertain how successful the model has been, the survey was designed to elicit from practitioners what they perceived to be the visible benefits that have resulted from using the model. The survey contained a list of 17 potential benefits to the school. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent each was a visible benefit to the school as a consequence of implementation of the model. In Table 12 the responses to the choices *a major benefit* and *a minor benefit* are combined, and the items that respondents indicated are visible benefits as a consequence of using the model are listed in rank order.

**Table 12**  
**Rank Order of Visible Benefits That Come to the School as a  
Consequence of Using the President/Principal Model: Percent of  
Presidents and Principals Responding (N = 199)**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Successful fundraising	97
Improved attention to strategic planning	94
Better business and financial planning	91
Improved public image	90
Improved communication	87
Growth in endowment	85
Improved functioning of governing board	83
Improved personnel services	82
Strengthening of Catholic identity	79
Improved instruction	78
Improved curriculum	76
Improved student services	75
Developing lay leadership	73
Sustaining influence of religious congregation	67
Improved cocurricular programs	65
Increased enrollment	64
Improved extracurricular programs	62

The majority of respondents perceived that implementation of the model leads to successful fundraising (97%), improved attention to strategic planning (94%), better business and financial planning (91%), and improved public image (90%). That respondents chose these four benefits most often as being either *a major benefit* or *a minor benefit* is consistent with the way respondents chose purposes for the model as being *very important* or *important*. Of the 11 possible purposes for the model listed in the survey (see Table 1), development was chosen most often by respondents as either *very important* or *important* and ranked first (97%), strategic planning ranked sixth (85%), business and financial management ranked fourth (87%), and PR ranked third (89%). The fact that development was chosen most often as an important purpose for the model and that fundraising was chosen most often as a benefit is also consistent with the report that schools where the president/principal model is used tend to have successful development programs and report substantially larger income from fundraising (Guerra, 1995).

If the model generates more income, the next questions that come to mind are whether or not it also demands more personnel besides the addition of a president and whether or not it costs more. To address these issues, first the researcher tried to determine the impact implementation had on the number of subordinate administrators, if any. Subordinate administrators are those who serve under the chief administrator such as assistant principals, deans, and business managers. Second, the survey tried to discover if using the model had an impact on administrative cost, and, if so, to what extent.

The majority of respondents (63%) indicated that there has been no increase of subordinate administrators in their schools due to the implementation of the president/principal model; 30% indicated an increase; and 9% noted a decrease. Of the 30% who indicated an increase, 14% listed an increase of 1 administrator; 7% of 2; 3% of 3; 2% of 4; 1% of 5; 2% of 6; and 1% of 12.

In the comments, a dozen respondents attributed an increase in the number both of administrators and of support staff in their schools to the expanded services now expected of the administration, especially in the areas of development and fundraising and business management. Among the functions listed for the added administrators were financial management, development, alumni, public relations, marketing, and admissions. Five respondents also felt that the increase in the number of subordinate administrators in their schools had been a consequence of growth rather than implementation of the model and would have happened anyway.

Among the 9% listing a decrease in the number of subordinate administrators, 8% indicated that implementation of the model led to a decrease of one, and 1% to a decrease of six. Five respondents indicated that this reduction was of an administrator at the assistant principal level. In these schools, implementation of the model may have meant simply that the principal took

the title of president, the assistant principal became the principal, and the assistant principal's position was eliminated, while the responsibilities of each with the new title basically remained the same as with the former title. However, if this practice exists at all, it has not been the dominant pattern.

With regard to administrative costs, 87% of the respondents agreed that the president/principal model increases them, and of this number, 28% said that the increase was significant. Only 11% listed no increase, and 2% some decrease. Of the 66 respondents who wrote comments, 53 gave a brief explanation for the increase, and of this number, the explanation given by 40 or 75% of them was salary and benefits.

Individual comments noted that using the president/principal model means that a school must provide salaries and benefits for two top administrators rather than one, and for the additional support staff, from clerical personnel to development professionals, needed as part of the office of president. Also, where a stipend system had traditionally been used while a priest or religious served as principal, now, in schools where dividing the chief executive role has led to hiring a lay administrator at this level for the first time, market value salaries were being paid. While one respondent noted that the model is not cost efficient, five others added that benefits outweigh the costs, and increased costs are offset by the development income generated as a result of operating with this model.

The last item in the section on benefits and problems asked respondents to rate the model as it functions in their school. Table 13 indicates the overall rating of the model by all respondents, by president, and by principals.

**Table 13**

**Overall Rating of the President/Principal Model: Percent of Presidents and Principals Responding**

	Excellent Percent	Very Good Percent	Good Percent	Fair Percent	Poor Percent
All <sup>a</sup>	60	28	06	03	02
Presidents <sup>b</sup>	55	34	07	03	01
Principals <sup>c</sup>	66	20	05	04	04

**Note:** Because of rounding, totals do not equal 100%. <sup>a</sup>*n* = 201. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 108. <sup>c</sup>*n* = 93.

The overall rating of the model was very high with 95% of all those responding rating the model as from *good* to *excellent*, and only 5% as *fair* or *poor*. More presidents (96%) than principals (91%) gave the model a positive rating. However, more principals (66%) than presidents (55%) rated the model as *excellent*. At the other end of the spectrum, more principals (8%) than presidents (4%) rated the model as *fair* or *poor*. These ratings exceed

those noted in the study of the model by the Commission on Research and Development, Jesuit Secondary Education Association (1991), where 44% of those responding rated their experience of the model as *good* or *excellent*, 11% as *fair to poor*, 15% as *varied*, and 29% did not indicate a rating.

Comments by respondents addressed the issue of compatibility. Five respondents opined that the workability of the model depends heavily on the compatibility of the individuals working in the two positions, and the comments of four respondents indicate that lack of compatibility causes more difficulties for a principal than for a president, a major one being interference by the president in the domain of the principal.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The next section of the survey asked respondents to make recommendations to those considering the model. One hundred sixty-eight individuals or 82% of all respondents made recommendations. Of those individuals, 96 or 57% were presidents and 72 or 43% were principals. The recommendations fell into eight categories: Compatibility, Lines of Authority, Research, Communication, "Do it," Commitment to the Model, Sense of Purpose, and Inservice Constituencies. The analysis that follows begins with the category representing the largest number of recommendations and proceeds in rank order to the category with the smallest number.

### Compatibility

Both presidents and principals indicated that success with the president/principal model depends on the people involved, and 63% of respondents stressed that the key ingredient is to have individuals with compatible personalities, that is, individuals who can work together, whose personal chemistry is right, who are willing to share blame and praise, and who like each other. In addition, respondents noted that president and principal must have a common sense of mission, share a vision for the school, have a compatible educational philosophy, and possess complementary skills. Respondents also emphasized that mutual respect, trust, and support are indispensable to the success of the model. The number and extent of the comments in this area point to a consensus about the importance to the success of the model of harmony between the individuals who fill the two roles.

### Lines of Authority

The same number of respondents who mentioned compatibility as important to the model (63%) also indicated clear lines of authority as an important component for success. And in this regard 45% of all respondents stressed the necessity of establishing job descriptions beforehand and of being sure that those working in the model understood these job descriptions. Job descriptions should clearly and accurately define roles, responsibilities (including

areas of mutual responsibility), and accountability for both the president and the principal. It was noted that clarity with regard to authority was particularly important in personnel issues.

Many of the recommendations here reflect what has been shown by responses to other parts of the survey as already to be the case in the majority of the schools. Respondents advised that the president needs to be the CEO, that the principal reports to the president, and that the president is the final authority. Only two respondents advocated that the president and the principal should operate on an equal basis, and that the president should not hire the principal, but each should be hired by the board and be responsible to the board.

Ten respondents also indicated that a president should not simply be moved up from the position of principal. Rather, both the president and the principal should be new to the positions. And one president noted that at least the president should come from outside the current staff and that a president coming in should not inherit a principal.

In addition, respondents stated that having a president with skills appropriate to the position and clear goals and ideals for the role were good ways to prevent the president from interfering with the principal. The person who takes on the job of president needs to be willing to give up power. Two principals advised those considering the model to be careful not to undercut the authority of the principal, and two respondents even advised that the president's office should be in a separate building if possible.

Respondents cautioned that adopting the model is not a remedy for ineptitude on the part of the principal. Putting the model in place will not be an instantaneous solution to long-standing school problems. Two respondents pointed out the importance of having strong assistant principals and cautioned against eliminating the position of assistant principal in order to adopt the model.

## **Research**

Both presidents and principals (13%) advised that those considering the model learn from the experience of others by checking with schools that are using the model and by observing the model at work in schools that have successfully implemented it. Respondents cautioned those considering the model not to rush into it but to take the time to investigate the various options possible and to examine the ramifications of each, especially cost.

## **Communication**

The recommendations referring to compatibility and to commitment to the model as well as comments in response to other items throughout the survey about the collaborative nature of the model indicated that respondents believe that a president and a principal must maintain clear and open lines of com-

munication. Respondents (10%) who recommended communication added that presidents and principals must have clear expectations for interaction. Respondents advised that a president and a principal must meet regularly for planning and decision making, and several defined regularly as at least once a week.

### **Do It**

A recommendation from 10% of the respondents was "Do it" or something similar such as "Try it," "Go for it," or "Don't wait." Only one principal wrote "Don't do it."

### **Commitment to the Model**

The respondents (10%) who recommended commitment to the model mean that those working in the model must value what the model implies, that is, collaboration and teamwork. These respondents emphasized that collegiality is an indispensable ingredient for success. Presidents and principals must want to work in the model, must want to work together, must cooperate, must be willing to share power, and must want to make the model work. In addition, the board must also be committed to the model.

### **Sense of Purpose**

Eight percent of the respondents made recommendations which pertained to sense of purpose. These recommendations are closely related to those included in the research category. Before adopting the model, those considering it should have a clear sense of purpose for implementing the model and a clear set of expectations as to what is to be accomplished by using it. They also must be sure that the model fits the needs and expectations of their school. One president even emphasized that unless fundraising and institutional development efforts increase, implementing the model is pointless.

### **Inservice Constituencies**

Several individuals (8%) commented on the importance of informing those affected by the model about its implementation in advance. Respondents stated that the various constituencies of the school must be educated about the implications of the model, the perceived benefits of the model, and lines of authority and accountability, so that faculty, staff, board, parents, and students understand the two different administrative roles and their relationships. Before implementing the model, a broad consensus as to its desirability must also be developed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The information gathered by the survey showed a great deal of unanimity on the part of respondents in their views about the president/principal model,

and the advice that respondents offered for those who might be considering the model clearly clustered around themes which run throughout the responses to other parts of the survey.

Although respondents to the survey indicated many reasons for implementing the model, the major reason is to provide a person whose energies are devoted primarily to development and fundraising along with the related activities of public relations, marketing, and strategic planning. Consequently, respondents felt that the design of the model does relieve overloaded principals and enables principals to function primarily as educational leaders.

While the major function of the president is as the chief executive with responsibilities for the big picture, and while the major function of the principal is to act primarily as the educational leader with responsibility for day-to-day management, this division of roles and responsibilities is not always clear-cut. Many are shared, and because of the collaboration and consultation that are important in a team model, this sharing promotes flexibility and is desirable. However, sharing can be problematic. It can lead to confusion on the part of constituencies as to who is responsible for what, and it can lead to interference on the part of one administrator in the responsibilities of the other.

With regard to accountability and authority, in the majority of the schools the president is a member of the governing board, and in almost all of these schools, a voting member. However, principals serve on boards only in a little more than half the schools, and about a third of the time in a non-voting capacity. Also, in the majority of the schools, the administrative structure is a dual division of authority in which the president is the person with ultimate responsibility for the school and the principal is the second-highest authority and subordinate to the president. However, in about one fifth of the schools, while the president is still the highest authority, several subordinate administrators including the principal have an equal and lateral relationship to each other similar to the relationship among and between vice presidents and the president in a business corporation. And in a few schools, the president and the principal stand in a lateral and equal relationship to each other.

In all the schools reporting, either owners or boards or both in collaboration hire, evaluate, and hold presidents accountable, but in the majority of schools, presidents alone hire, evaluate, and hold principals accountable. Where owners and boards do play a part with regard to the principal, most participate in the hiring process rather than in evaluation or accountability. Likewise, in almost all of the schools, the principal and other administrators as well as classified staff associated with the main roles of the president are accountable directly to the president, while other administrators and staff members who function in the academic area or who are connected to the day-to-day operations of the school are accountable directly to the principal.



In the majority of schools reporting, then, there is a common though not exclusive pattern of authority and accountability. Powers flow from the owner through the board to the president, then through the president to the principal, and finally by each to those in the school who assist them in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Accountability follows the same pattern.

Individuals who serve as presidents and principals find that the model is conceptually feasible, and that, although the arrangement is not perfect, the benefits of implementing the model far outweigh the problems. The success of the president/principal model in a particular school depends very much on how well a president and a principal relate to one another. Those who serve together in the model must have mutual trust and respect, a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, and compatible educational philosophies and values.

Although none of the conditions listed in the survey as necessary for success was judged to be highly problematic, respondents did note potential problem areas: a lack of a clear understanding on the part of constituencies as to the purposes and function of the model, a lack of a clear understanding of accountability on the part of the faculty and staff, and a lack of clear and accurate job descriptions for each position in the model. Ambiguity in these areas is more problematic for a principal than for a president because it undermines the authority of the principal in the view of constituents. Therefore, for the model to function effectively, there must be clarity about the purposes for the model, the functions of the administrators, and who reports to whom and for what.

One of the most significant benefits the model offers a school is to make the jobs of both the president and the principal more manageable. The team approach at least offers the potential to relieve the problems of over-extension and exhaustion associated with being an autonomous principal today. Other major benefits are successful fundraising, better business and financial planning, and improved public image. However, while the model leads to successful fundraising, it also increases administrative costs. The main reason for the increase is the necessity to provide salaries and benefits for two top administrators rather than one. The additional support staff needed as part of the office of the president also increases cost.

The majority of individuals who fill the roles of president and principal have a very favorable view of the model, and it is also their perception that the various constituents of the school generally have a favorable view. However, presidents and principals responding recognize that some confusion or indifference about the model exists in all constituent groups and increases as groups are farther removed from the administrative workings of the school.

The model has emerged to respond to the press of the times. As Catholic schools have evolved from a ministry dominated by members of religious congregations subsidized largely by their contributed services to a ministry

of the laity with its associated financial demands, costs have skyrocketed. Consequently, Catholic schools have been forced to identify new sources of funding to meet these ever-increasing costs while at the same time meeting the always demanding challenges of providing a quality, Catholic education. The emergence of the model recognizes that meeting all the responsibilities of contemporary leadership in a Catholic high school has become too much for one person and addresses this conundrum by providing for a division of labor in facing the increasingly complex and multiple concerns of administrators, especially with regard to providing for adequate funding and quality instruction. Based on the information gathered in this survey, dividing the multiple administrative roles and responsibilities between two individuals, and in some cases more than two individuals, appears to be a strategy that works.

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