

THE ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

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In the late 19th century, Catholic school superintendents recognized the need for help in overseeing Catholic schools. Religious congregations established the role of community supervisor, which paved the way for the present role of the associate superintendent as a way to give support to teachers and administrators and to encourage accountability in Catholic education. This study was conducted to define and bring to light the critical importance of this role of leadership. For the purposes of this article, the term "associate superintendent" will be used, although the authors are aware that other terms for this role are used in various dioceses. This descriptive study of five dioceses located within one state, based in the four variables of leadership, power, organizational structure, and areas of responsibility, utilized a quantitative and qualitative approach to define this role. A definition for this role of leadership was constructed from the findings.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The history of the associate superintendency is embedded in the rich tradition of religious communities who provided the personnel for the role of community supervisor to assist the superintendent. The Third Plenary Council in Baltimore had "forged the policy that led to making parish schools mandatory in 1884" (Bokenkotter, 1990, p. 332). As the number of schools grew, it became apparent that some sort of centralization was needed. Immigration was increasing, but, according to McNamara (1996), the strict separation of church and state made the church exceptionally anxious to develop a school system that would ensure the instruction of Catholics. McNamara also noted that the needs of these immigrant groups were largely

answered by religious women "from among their [own] ranks" (1996, p. 621). Each community had its own rules and in effect was acting autonomously. How to supervise all these schools was a dilemma faced by all bishops. According to Augenstein (1996), "supervisors needed to be encouraged [to achieve] advanced degrees [in order to be able to provide such needed services to the schools]" (p. 44).

In 1889, Mother Clement Lannen, head of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia, wrote to Reverend Nevin F. Fisher, "newly appointed superintendent of schools, the first in the parochial school system," that "the want of some general and uniform superintendence had been much felt by us, that we had this year, in September, appointed a Sister to the duty of inspection" (as cited in Logue, 1950, p. 191). "Sister Sacred Heart Stewart, in the fall of 1889 was appointed the first community supervisor of the Sisters of St. Joseph" (p. 192).

According to Logue,

When Father John Shanahan took up his duties as superintendent in 1894 he noted that the community supervision was highly productive of improved teaching and he asked that each of the religious communities in the diocese appoint such an inspector, who would be burdened with no other task. (1950, p. 192)

The role of associate superintendent evolved differently in the public sector. In Blount's (1998) text, this role was created by city superintendents in the late 19th century "to facilitate increasing demands for administrative assistance with supervisory responsibilities" (p. 45).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to define the role of leadership of the associate superintendent in a Catholic schools office. The definition, which resulted from this study, will provide a substantive focus on the topic discussed in this article.

The role of leadership of an associate superintendent calls for a deeply spiritual person [who is] well-educated in human relations and the use of power, has a deep respect for the institutional Church, is able to provide visionary leadership in a variety of situations, gives nourishment to the psyche, articulates shifts in educational research, and is capable of completing a myriad of tasks simultaneously and in a timely manner. (Boland, 1999, p. 233)

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The seeds for this study were planted in 1991. At a Middle States School Accreditation meeting, a conversation with an associate superintendent centered on how the leadership of associate superintendents was effectively impacting the future of Catholic schools. This associate superintendent viewed the role as a catalyst for change, developing vision, and continuing the legacy of the contribution to Catholic education by religious congregations. Researching the topic of the associate superintendent revealed very little information about this role and its effect on Catholic schools. The questions that continued to surface were how could leadership of this caliber be ignored in research and why was this leadership role not recognized in Catholic educational research?

Tichy (1997) noted that new "research to clarify the unique role of the Catholic education[al] administrator would be a valuable gift to the [Catholic] Church, to Catholic institutions of higher education, and to...[all] who serve in these positions" (p. 81). The role of the associate superintendent is one that impacts the advancement of Catholic education, but is one that is seldom perceived as a distinct role of leadership in Catholic education or is seldom a subject of in-depth research. This study sought to unveil the perceptions of this role of leadership of the associate superintendent serving in a Catholic schools office.

The data for the study were gathered through the self-perceptions of associate superintendents, superintendents, and secondary and elementary principals. The five dioceses studied looked to hire associate superintendents who were well-educated, articulate, and knowledgeable in a variety of areas. Associate superintendents are often seen as generalists with expertise in such areas as government programs, financial issues, curriculum design and implementation, personnel issues, marketing and development, assessment, and strategic planning. These dioceses could be considered a microcosm of Catholic education in the United States. Table 1 lists the number of and types of Catholic institutions in the five dioceses and the number of students in those institutions.

Table 1

Number of and Types of Catholic Institutions in the State in This Study

Institutions	n	n of Students
Colleges/universities	10	20,498
High schools	75	36,859
Elementary schools	372	115,884
Total	457	173,241

Source: Dee, 1999, p. 541.

The study also investigated whether the four variables of leadership, power, organizational structure, and areas of responsibility would form the core of the definition of the role of leadership of the associate superintendent.

Previous research suggested that there are different organizational models for the diocesan educational ministry to review and implement in their central offices. However, this research did not separate the multiple areas of responsibility and how they should be divided in a Catholic schools office (*Those Who Hear*, 1995). If the associate superintendents are to influence the schools positively as they move into the 21st century, then it "is the responsibility of every diocesan bishop [to provide] diocesan [organizational] structures in which the priority of the local Church's educational and catechetical mission is clearly evident" (*Those Who Hear*, 1995, p. 8).

According to Konnert and Augenstein (1995), central office personnel constitute the superintendent's leadership team and often "represent the superintendent to the school community. The [team] plays a critical role in" supporting, "resourcing, and" implementing "the [school] system's goals and programs. To the degree that these [members] are empowered to achieve the goals of the school system, the superintendent and the educational community are well served" (p. 120). The superintendent of today relies on the expertise of the associate superintendent to actualize the vision of the superintendent and the mission of the Catholic schools office.

Schlechty (1990) maintained that most of those

in positions of leadership in education arrived there at a time when society seemed to be demanding what...Burns (1978) has called transactional leaders: people who can balance forces, deal with antagonistic groups, and somehow negotiate a course in a stormy sea. (p. 151)

Today, education needs transformational leaders: people who can build relationships, articulate the mission, and lead others to pursue excellence in Catholic education.

Research in education doubled during the time of renewal in the Church following the Second Vatican Council. Technology was improving and the world was becoming more accessible to educators. Information was easier to retrieve and school leaders were called upon to have expertise in areas that were expanding quickly. This meant that present, new, or aspiring associate superintendents must be highly educated and trained to accomplish what is being asked of them. Jacobs (1996) indicated that leadership formation must be "provided for superintendents, principals, and teachers" (p. xv). Hopefully, the concept of formation for the associate superintendent will be included in the future.

METHODOLOGY

According to Pajak (1989), the role of central office supervisor "is poorly defined in...practice and theory" (p. 2). Further, according to the document *Those Who Hear You, Hear Me* (1995), all leaders in the Catholic schools office need to have a clarification of their role of leadership. In attempting to achieve this goal, an original descriptive survey was designed in two parts. Part I was composed of 25 statements grounded in the four variables of this study. Each of the variables had a number of concepts that elicited a perception from the respondent. Part II of the survey asked the respondents to identify the skills needed in regard to interpersonal, managerial, and communication techniques for leadership (see Appendix). Before the study was inaugurated, a pilot study was conducted, using the same four populations named in the study (i.e., Catholic school superintendents, associate superintendents, elementary principals, and secondary principals).

The use of frequency charts to report the statistical data allowed the researcher to develop a visual framework to record the responses of *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree*, or *do not know*. Of the four populations in the study, the secondary and elementary principals were randomly selected (25%). Because of the limited number of superintendents and associate superintendents in the five dioceses studied, all members of this population were asked to participate. One hundred and forty-one surveys were distributed within one state and 94 were returned for a return rate of 67%.

Seventeen interviews were conducted with interviewees representing all four populations, taken from those who responded to the survey. This study used the interview guide protocol described by Patton (1990).

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

An analysis of the data gathered for each research question is described according to the variables of leadership, power, organizational structure, and areas of responsibility that were selected for this study. Limited space in this article precluded including every chart from each population; therefore the charts reflect the strongest differences in that variable among the selected populations.

LEADERSHIP

Question 1: Does the role of leadership of the associate superintendent critically impact the advancement of Catholic education?

An analysis of the responses of superintendents, associate superintendents, and secondary and elementary principals reveals their agreement that the role of leadership of the associate superintendent has a critical impact on the advancement of Catholic education. This influence is viewed within the con-

text of leadership, power, organizational structure, and areas of responsibility.

The superintendents who participated in this study consistently agreed that the leadership of the associate superintendent had a positive effect on improving the quality of education within Catholic schools. They accept the associate superintendents as authentic leaders who have expertise in their assigned areas of responsibility, who relate well, are well prepared, are visible, and whose message to principals and the broader school community is credible. Seventy-five percent of the superintendents believe that the influence of the associate superintendents flows out of their position rather than out of their personhood. They see the leadership of the associate superintendents more as transactional (*task* is important), than transformational (*person* is important). The superintendents agreed that a team leadership approach is more effective in enabling all involved to carry out the mission of a Catholic schools office. One of the superintendents who was interviewed believed that the present role has more autonomy now than in the past. A second superintendent remarked that the associate superintendent is the "glue" that holds it all together. This superintendent further said, "It is the associate who is asking the questions and challenging us all to move forward. They have an effect not only on the Catholic schools but on the whole Church." A third superintendent remarked that, "The associate superintendents are my foot soldiers, my eyes and ears, for what is happening in the schools." This superintendent also said that they represent the goals and direction of the Catholic schools office to the principals.

The associate superintendents themselves believed strongly that they have a critical impact on the quality of Catholic education, especially through their interactions with principals. They viewed their leadership as different from that of the superintendent and the principals, and take very seriously their responsibility for exerting a positive influence in the schools. One associate superintendent stated very simply, "We model leadership for all and we model service to all." Interestingly, 50% of the associate superintendents perceive their influence flowing from their *person*, while 45% see their influence flowing from their *position* (see Table 4). This split seems to engender some conflict in that all other responses from the associate superintendents indicate collaboration, team leadership, and empowerment. It would seem that these elements would flow more naturally out of the person rather than out of a position. A religious associate superintendent serving for many years in this role shared these thoughts:

I have helped all the schools move through the accreditation process as well as to raise awareness in assessment and finance areas. I have come to the conclusion after many years that I am different and serve in a different capacity than the superintendent.

The associate superintendents *agreed strongly* that they have expertise in their assigned areas of responsibility. They unanimously *agreed* that the team leadership approach is most effective in enabling them to function well in a Catholic schools office. This allows them to stretch their own leadership in different directions, thus increasing their impact on their work with the schools. It is important to the associate superintendents that the superintendent and principals see them as leaders in their own right, and not just as staff members in the superintendent's office.

The majority (91%) of secondary principals believed that the associate superintendents have an impact on Catholic education. Their influence would be even more effective if their role were clearly structured and defined. It is important to the secondary principals that the associate superintendents are well-prepared and willing to be of service to them. According to one secondary principal, "Principals need places where we can go to get information, to get assistance, to assist with coordination in curriculum, expansion, and the addition of new programs." They, too, are divided with regard to their viewpoints about the influence of position versus the influence of the person.

Because most elementary principals administer their schools without other supervisory personnel, they look to the associate superintendents for guidance and support. They all agreed that the associate superintendents impact the quality of education in their schools, primarily because they have strong working relationships with them. Eighty-five percent of the elementary principals expected the associate superintendents to be in touch with the day-to-day operations of their schools. Elementary principals, in contrast to secondary principals, have more of a dependent relationship with the associate superintendents. While they rely heavily on the expertise and guidance of the associate superintendents, they want to be recognized and respected as distinct leaders and do not want them to interfere in their decision making. The elementary principals also were divided with regard to whether the position or the person of the associate superintendent is more important. According to one elementary principal, "I look to the schools office, and in particular to the associate superintendents who are directly involved in particular areas of the educational process, to be trendsetters and to appropriately focus the schools toward a strong future."

Table 2 and Table 3 report the percent of responses from the secondary and elementary principals who related their perceptions to the descriptive survey, according to the eight concepts included in the leadership variable. The order of the concepts in the tables was determined in the development of the survey and the interview protocol. The descriptors are: *Strongly Agree* (SA), *Agree* (A), *Disagree* (D), *Strongly Disagree* (SD), and *Do Not Know* (DK).

Table 2
Leadership of Associate Superintendent as Perceived by
Secondary Principals

Concepts %	SA	A	D	SD	DK
Different from superintendent	35	59	6	-	-
Different from principal	47	47	-	6	-
Change agent	6	47	18	6	24*
Relevant	29	53	12	6	-
Listener	24	71	-	-	6*
Conflict resolver	35	59	6	-	-
Active partner	24	76	-	-	-
Authentic leader	59	41	-	-	-
Mean Percentage =	32%	57%	5%	2%	4%

*+ or - 1% rounding error.

Table 3
Leadership of Associate Superintendent as Perceived by
Elementary Principals

Concepts %	SA	A	D	SD	DK
Different from superintendent	22	55	20	2	2*
Different from principal	42	52	2	2	2
Change agent	22	61	12	2	4*
Relevant	50	35	12	-	4*
Listener	54	44	2	-	-
Conflict resolver	60	37	4	-	.*
Active partner	54	44	-	-	2
Authentic leader	71	29	-	-	-
Mean Percentage =	47%	44%	6%	1%	2%

*+ or - 1% rounding error.

Question 2: What are the leadership behaviors and characteristics of the associate superintendent that superintendents, associate superintendents, and secondary and elementary principals perceive?

According to Hersey and Blanchard (1988), behavior can affect the leader's personal or positional power as well as the readiness levels of the people the leader is attempting to influence. This was found to be accurate in the perceptions about this role.

The superintendents who participated in this research recognized the leadership of the associate superintendents as different from theirs and different from the leadership of both secondary and elementary principals. According to one superintendent, "No matter what their responsibilities are, they need to understand where they fit in the structure of things; they must

understand the differences in their role." The superintendents see skill in situational leadership as critical if the associate superintendents are to provide the necessary guidance and expertise in the varied situations that occur in the educational arena. It is also important that the associate superintendents be grounded in the arts of listening and relationship building.

One superintendent shared this thought about leadership behavior: "someone who really understands what it means to be collaborative, that is to share with other people what you know, what you do not know, what you need to do, and how you should go about it....somebody who is a person of integrity, who keeps confidences, and who is a worker." It is important to the superintendents that the associate superintendents demonstrate leadership that is driven by the mission of a Catholic schools office.

The associate superintendents saw their leadership as collaborative and kind. All of them believed they should be capable of solving conflicts within their areas of responsibility, and should have an active partnership with the principals in order to be of service to them. The majority (90%) of the associate superintendents responded that they should be expert listeners, and 95% perceive themselves as change agents for Catholic education. The associate superintendents see themselves as transformational or servant leaders, not enforcing rules, but rather sharing in the leadership needed for the schools.

The perceptions of the secondary principals regarding leadership behaviors and characteristics of the associate superintendents were somewhat different from those of the superintendents and associate superintendents. Only 53% of the secondary principals perceived the associate superintendent's role as one that effects change in Catholic education, while 18% *disagreed*, and 6% *strongly disagreed* that associate superintendents cause any change, and 24% *did not know* if the leadership of the associate superintendents leads to change in Catholic education (see Table 2). This highlights the fact that secondary principals generally believe that they do their work alone, independent of the Catholic schools office. At the same time, 100% of the secondary principals want the associate superintendents to be more present as active partners and willing listeners who provide them with the expertise needed to answer questions and solve problems that arise (see Table 2). Every secondary principal who participated in this research (100%) agreed that the associate superintendents must be authentic Catholic leaders, who provide them with the confidence and guidance that will help them develop their own leadership skills as administrators of Catholic high schools (see Table 2). Additionally, the secondary principals viewed associate superintendents as transformational leaders who focus primarily on people and work collaboratively with them. "I believe," said one secondary principal, "that if one associate superintendent works more closely with curriculum, then the superintendent would be working with that associate superintendent in facilitating, fostering, and enabling them to do their job."

The elementary principals viewed the associate superintendents as strong listeners and active partners in the education process. As one elementary principal put it, "I would think that the associate superintendent should embrace collaboration and welcome a flow of communication back and forth that will ultimately help a school." They expected the associate superintendents to have the skills and expertise to help them handle all conflicts and solve numerous problems they face on a daily basis. It is interesting to note that, while all four populations believe that the associate superintendents should provide the expertise and guidance needed to successfully address the various situations that occur within the schools, there is a definite percentage of each population (20% of superintendents; 25% of associate superintendents; 15% of secondary principals; 14% of elementary principals) that maintains the associate superintendents need not be aware of what is happening within the schools on a day-to-day basis. All of the elementary principals believed that the associate superintendents should be authentic Catholic leaders who openly and comfortably share their spirituality.

POWER

Question 3: How is the use of power by the associate superintendent perceived by superintendents, associate superintendents, and secondary and elementary principals?

Table 4 reports the percent of responses from the associate superintendents who received the descriptive survey. Their responses relate their perceptions about the power of the associate superintendents according to the six concepts included in the power variable.

Table 4
Power of the Associate Superintendent as Perceived by Associate Superintendents

Concepts %	SA	A	D	SD	DK
Influence	85	15	-	-	-
Presence	20	30	40	10	-
Impact on decision making	5	15	50	25	5
Person versus position	20	30	30	15	5
Empowerment	68	32	-	-	-
Authority	15	35	25	20	5
Mean Percentage =	35%	26%	24%	12%	3%

Associate superintendents used their power to influence the principals to update curriculum, implement policies appropriately, market their schools effectively, supervise the performance of the teachers, start development programs, collaborate with local public school districts to participate in govern-

ment programs, and ensure that the mission of Catholic education is kept viable in the schools (see Table 4). An associate superintendent described power as "infused into, interjected into, and intertwined with knowledge similar to a tapestry. In a tapestry you have a dominant color but there is an interwovenness, and that would be the ability to influence." By virtue of the power associated with their position, the associate superintendents collaborate with the superintendents to envision and implement strategic planning for the Catholic schools office and the Catholic schools as well. Though empowered with much influence, 75% of the associate superintendents did not see themselves making decisions for the secondary and elementary principals (see Table 4). In discussing the power of the title of associate superintendent, an associate superintendent commented:

You could have that title and you could really not impact anyone, just with your title. I think it is your service role that impacts whoever you are or whatever you are doing. You know there are five of us with the title in our department, but each person's title is fleshed out entirely different by their service. So whatever areas of service we deal in, I think people think of us as that rather than as the associate superintendent.

The superintendents all agreed that the associate superintendents had a high degree of power (exercised as influence or referent power), and they used this influence to effect change in Catholic education within their dioceses. The associate superintendents also used their influence in the decision-making process in the schools. "If you are going to give somebody responsibility for something, you have to give them the corresponding authority to do the job," said a superintendent. However, the same superintendent stated, "If school people see the associate superintendent as a policeman, . . . that is a terrible use of that person." Another superintendent said, "80% to 85% of the decisions are handled on the associate superintendent level." This fact pointed up the need for associate superintendents to be well-educated and well-informed in their areas of responsibility.

The secondary principals viewed the power of the associate superintendents as relational influence. This influence was dependent on the degree of expertise the associate superintendents had in their areas of responsibility. An associate superintendent who is a strong resource for the secondary principals will have much more influence than one who lacks pertinent information. These principals expect the associate superintendents to empower their leadership and to be present to them when they need them, but they do not want the associate superintendents to interfere with their right to make decisions in their schools. In keeping with this theme, a secondary principal said:

I think the person makes the position, but again it goes down to the concept that the power comes from influence the associate superintendent generates

and nurtures in relationship with the principals over time. That's significant; that creates power and influence, not the position.

The elementary principals, like the secondary principals, perceived the power of the associate superintendents as influence through the building of strong relationships. They welcomed the influence of the associate superintendents and had high expectations that this influence would be used to give them guidance and direction. They agreed with the secondary principals that they should make the decisions for their schools. In this one aspect regarding power, both secondary and elementary principals disagreed with the superintendents. One elementary principal expressed power of the associate superintendent in this way:

I see the power in the associate superintendent position as being if not a prime force in movement, certainly a parallel force. And there will be times when the superintendent and associate will be journeying together as power. An example of this could be the discussions I have had with our associate superintendent about assessment. Yes, I am the principal and the educational leader, but it would be a big boost to my power and authority to have the associate superintendent's presence and words saying yes, this is the direction or this is the strategy or action that needs to happen in this school.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Question 4: Does the organizational structure of the Catholic schools office limit or enhance the role of leadership of the associate superintendent?

Table 5 lists the percent of responses of the perceptions of the superintendents about the organizational structure of the Catholic schools office. Their responses relate to the six concepts included in the variable of organizational structure.

Table 5
Organizational Structure of the Catholic Schools Office as Perceived by Superintendents

Concepts %	SA	A	D	SD	DK
Closed system	-	25	75	-	-
Open system	50	50	-	-	-
Strategic planning	25	75	-	-	-
Flexibility	50	50	-	-	-
Mission	50	50	-	-	-
Collaboration	50	50	-	-	-
Mean Percentage =	38%	50%	13%	-	-*

* + or - 1% rounding error.

In the Catholic Church, the organizational structure is typically hierarchical. There is a real struggle, especially for laity and women religious, to function within a structure that supports division of labor, rules, and hierarchy of authority, as opposed to a structure that supports a workable arrangement of roles and the enhancement of leadership and viable relationships. Three of the five dioceses in this study provide an environment that enhances the leadership of the associate superintendents; two do not. Seventy-five percent of the superintendents surveyed, while recognizing their need to work within the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, do not want such a structure (closed system) in their own offices (see Table 5). Since the superintendents viewed the leadership of the associate superintendents to be primarily situational, they believed that the structure of Catholic schools offices should allow for flexibility and the opportunity for associate superintendents to work in collaboration with each other. It is within this type of structure that community is formed.

Because Catholic schools offices must function within the broader hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, the leadership of the associate superintendents could be somewhat limited. It is a challenge to the superintendents, and indeed to all leaders in Catholic education, to ensure that the organizational structure of Catholic schools offices fosters the building of relationships in community and provides opportunities for collaboration and the flexibility to free the associate superintendents to efficiently carry out their leadership roles.

The associate superintendents believed that their leadership is situational. They are strongly opposed to a hierarchical structure in the Catholic schools office. An associate superintendent noted:

If the structure is not hierarchical, I think there is a lot of room for the flowing of information, creativity, thinking, coming up with new ideas and motivation and it is the difference between everything coming outside of you...and everything coming from inside of you. You become the generator of new ideas, generator of thinking, information and conversation. It is just the whole difference of outside to in or from within and I would much prefer from within us in the office.

Since the associate superintendents viewed the person as more important than the position, they need a structure that is flexible, open, and situational; a structure which is horizontal or lateral, rather than vertical. Using a horizontal or lateral leadership model invites colleagues to work together, to free up creativity, to share responsibility, and to function as a team. This model also allows the associate superintendents to share information with the superintendent more effectively and to be a partner in the decision-making process. The reality of functioning as a team, thereby creating an atmosphere where responsibilities, information, and decisions are shared, could inspire leaders

in the hierarchical Church to be more open to this kind of organizational structure. According to one associate superintendent, the structure of the Catholic schools office could be designed to look, "like a lot of bubbles, which move all over the place." In other words, developing the necessary relationships for a program or a project would ensure the quality of those programs. This type of structure encourages creativity to evolve and vision and expertise to be respected and used.

A majority (88%) of the secondary principals believed that the Catholic schools office should be hierarchical in nature. At the same time, an almost equal majority (89%) agreed that the organizational structure of the Catholic schools office should be based on a team leadership approach. One secondary principal said:

It should be clear to people who come into the office that people in the office...reflect and live in community in some way, know that there is a sense that they pray together and spend time together nurturing themselves spiritually and professionally.

It seems that the secondary principals look for fluid leadership in a controlled environment which, for them, defines who is in charge. It is important for the secondary principals to know who is in charge, but they also want the structure of the Catholic schools office to enhance the leadership of the associate superintendents. A secondary principal commented, "Clearly the superintendent is in charge but yet he/she gets his/her authority from the collaborative relationship with the associate superintendents."

The elementary principals expected the associate superintendents to model team leadership, be heavily involved in strategic planning, and be very available to them. These principals were very opposed to a hierarchical structure in the Catholic schools office. They agreed that the organizational structure of the Catholic schools office should allow associate superintendents to work as a team and should encourage them to develop their own leadership style and that this is the best environment in which to enhance the leadership of the associate superintendents. An elementary principal observed:

Elementary principals live in hope that someday the entire office would structure itself to spend more time out of the office in the field so that eventual decisions and planning of the office would clearly reflect what is needed in the schools.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Question 5: How are the areas of responsibility of the associate superintendent perceived in relationship to expertise, training needed, and relevance to those served?

The superintendents agreed that the associate superintendents should have a high level of expertise in their assigned areas of responsibility and should be able to articulate that knowledge to everyone in the school community. All of the superintendents agreed that the associate superintendents had a critical influence on what happens in the Catholic schools, including making decisions related to their areas of responsibility. One superintendent who was interviewed shared these thoughts about responsibility of the associate superintendent:

I would be clearly against having associate superintendents assigned to particular schools so that it becomes...“these are my schools.” I would very much like to see the school office arranged in such a fashion that if the associate superintendent is clearly strong in finance and another is clearly strong in curriculum and a third might be clearly strong in leadership that those three would work together for the benefit of the total school.

The superintendents also agreed that the associate superintendents should have a mentor or some ongoing training for their role. At the time of this study, no one had designed a mentoring or training program for associate superintendents.

The many areas of responsibility of the associate superintendents serve as a means for them to greatly influence the quality of education in the Catholic schools. They provide support to the principals through leadership programs and have the expertise to deal with government programs, technology innovations, curriculum development, strategic planning, and personnel issues. Seventy-five percent of the associate superintendents agreed that a mentoring program would be beneficial for them. Fifteen percent saw no need for such a program, and the remaining 10% did not know if a mentoring program was needed. It was interesting to note that the longer-serving associate superintendents did not believe that they needed anyone to mentor them. They had always learned on their own, and were satisfied with the results of that learning. One associate superintendent said, “The important training of associate superintendents happens during ongoing committee work, but associate superintendents all must be self-learners in their areas of responsibility.”

Table 6 lists the percent of responses of the secondary principals regarding the areas of responsibility of the associate superintendents. Their responses relate to the five concepts included in the variable of areas of responsibility.

Table 6
Areas of Responsibility of the Associate Superintendent as
Perceived by Secondary Principals

Concepts %	SA	A	D	SD	DK
Realism	76	24	-	-	-
Expertise	71	29	-	-	-
Clarity of role	41	59	-	-	-
Mentoring	12	65	6	-	18*
Balance in role	41	59	-	-	-
Mean Percentage =	48%	47%	1%	-	4%

* + or - 1% rounding error.

All of the secondary principals agreed that the associate superintendents should have expertise in all areas of responsibility. These principals rely on the associate superintendents to give knowledgeable answers to their questions. They also expect that the responses or suggestions given by the associate superintendents are correct and have relevance for the needs of the school community. All of the secondary principals agreed that some type of training program would be helpful, and 77% agreed that a mentoring program should be in place for new associate superintendents. A secondary principal succinctly commented, "This role is important not just because the superintendent needs a couple of associates, but also because there is a need for a gathering of professionalism that can provide a much better service to the schools."

The elementary principals all agreed that the associate superintendents should have expertise in the areas of responsibility assigned to them, because they depend upon the associate superintendents for expert advice and ongoing support. They strongly agreed that there should be a mentoring program. One elementary principal sees the work of the associate superintendent in the field as a "disciple"; that is, having the characteristics of Jesus in providing leadership to the principals, teachers, students, and entire diocesan community.

Table 7 lists the summary of responses of the perceptions of all four populations based on the four variables of leadership, power, organizational structure, and areas of responsibility of the associate superintendents.

Table 7
Summary of All Respondents' Results of the Four Variables
in the Survey

Concepts %	SA	A	D	SD	DK
Leadership	49	43	5	1	2
Power	30	33	22	11	4
Organizational Structure	46	43	7	3	2*
Areas of Responsibility	57	40	2	-	2*

* + or - 1% rounding

QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

Question 6: What three outstanding qualities of leadership of the associate superintendents are perceived by superintendents, associate superintendents, and secondary and elementary principals?

In Part II of the descriptive survey the respondents in each population (superintendents, associate superintendents, secondary principals, and elementary principals) were asked to list in order of importance three qualities that made an excellent associate superintendent. For the purpose of this study, qualities of excellence were defined as attributes that enable an associate superintendent to excel. Although similar qualities of leadership were noted by the four populations, the order in which they were selected was different.

For the superintendents, the three outstanding qualities for the associate superintendents to have (in order of importance) were that they be qualified for the position, have a deep personal faith, and have strong interpersonal skills. These qualities connect with other perceptions of the superintendents, as they want the associate superintendents to be authentic Catholic leaders who strongly influence the future of Catholic education and complete the tasks assigned efficiently. The superintendents see the associate superintendents more as managers than as independent leaders who have a vision for Catholic education. According to one superintendent:

You need somebody who is committed to the mission of Catholic schools. I mean who actually in their deep heart's core is there for mission. I also believe that you need a self-starter. They need to be people who can go out on their own, take a project, and get it accomplished. They need to be good communicators and be able to build consensus behind the good idea. You need to keep all your publics in balance and keep all of those people on the same page, and that calls for a tremendous amount of patience and emotional stability. I also think you have to have a pretty secure sense of who you are and why you are here to function for any length of time. You need to have the courage of your convictions.

The associate superintendents believed that they are transformational leaders who because of their guidance and support of the principals have a critical impact on what is happening in Catholic education. For the associate superintendents, the three outstanding qualities (in order of importance) were that they possess visionary leadership, be professionally qualified for their work, and be deeply spiritual. These qualities connect with their other responses in the survey, for they see themselves as transformational leaders who possess a vision for the future of Catholic education.

The secondary principals, like the superintendents, viewed the associate superintendents as excellent managers. The qualities of excellence (in order of importance) for the associate superintendents were that they possess strong communication skills, be committed to Catholic education, and be very knowledgeable in their assigned areas of responsibility. These qualities connect with repeated expectations of the secondary principals that the associate superintendents not only be knowledgeable in their assigned areas of responsibility but also be able to communicate that knowledge to them. These principals also needed to know that the associate superintendents supported them in their commitment to Catholic education. A secondary principal who was interviewed stated:

I think that that individual needs to be the one who offers the shot in the arm to the principal in the trenches who may be struggling a little bit, that is a little lost, maybe feels a little alone and yet says, don't worry now, we can get you through this.

The outstanding qualities of leadership of the associate superintendents as perceived by the elementary principals were closely aligned with the self-perceptions of the associate superintendents. It was important to the elementary principals that the associate superintendent be a spiritual leader, have visionary leadership, and be very knowledgeable in the assigned areas of responsibility. These qualities connect with other responses of the elementary principals, that associate superintendents provide primary support and guidance, thus enabling the principals to provide spiritual leadership for the school community. Since many of the elementary principals are laypersons who do not always feel comfortable in sharing their spiritual leadership, this quality of leadership of the associate superintendents is especially helpful to them. "We require a leader to walk with us, be available to us, and counsel us at all times," shared one elementary principal. Most elementary principals are the sole administrators of their schools, so it is critical for them that the associate superintendents provide them with expert answers to their questions and assist them in articulating their vision for Catholic education through effective and careful strategic planning.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

An important outcome of this study is that there is now a current profile of the role of leadership of the associate superintendent that had not existed in a formal way. It is evident from the responses to the survey and the interview protocol that the associate superintendent is a viable, necessary leader in Catholic education. The research results showed that the role is comprised of three major components: leadership ability, relationship building, and expertise in areas of responsibility. It was clear that each population included in the study had its own perceptions about this role that had not been voiced previously.

Superintendents, who in the past relied on the religious communities to provide and train an associate superintendent, currently face the reality of searching for laypersons to fill this role. However, they now have a more delineated profile of the role, including the expectations of both the elementary and secondary principals whose needs are different, and are clearly identified in the study. This information will help in hiring staff to meet the needs of the diocese rather than merely filling a position.

Associate superintendents now have research from their own peers to help them develop a sense of their position in a diocesan office. The superintendent has always relied on the associate superintendent to complete tasks and represent him or her at meetings. However, this study indicates how strongly their leadership is needed not just to perform tasks, but also to initiate new ideas and to develop strong relationships with other leaders in Catholic education. Having a clearer understanding of this role will help the superintendent to develop an organizational structure, such as a team structure, that will use the leadership of the associate superintendents as well as their expertise to complete a task. In fact, it was clear in this study that the principals expect the Catholic schools office staff to be a team and to work as a team.

Elementary principals expect a relational affiliation with the Catholic schools office, where spiritual experience is present and time is allotted for them to discuss a topic in depth. In comparison, secondary principals prefer a succinct meeting; little in-depth discussion; and clear, factual material presented. Knowledge of these differences will help the associate superintendents to prepare comfortably for their meetings with the principals. Having a better understanding of the role can also help the superintendents to invite principals to think about aspiring to this role. Recognizing these differences should help associate superintendents to develop relationships that will lead to more support of diocesan programs and engender greater credibility of their leadership. It is evident that an internal strategic plan for the Catholic schools office is recommended. A vision for the needs of leadership in a Catholic schools office is just as critical as planning for the needs of the Catholic schools.

It is critical that more research be conducted about the effectiveness of this role of leadership because many laypersons do not have the supportive network that religious communities provided in the past. More and more administrators who are coming from the present Catholic school principals as well as the public sector need training and an understanding of the organization and structure of the Catholic schools office within the hierarchy of the Church. The leadership of the associate superintendent as well as the superintendent is being stretched in new directions. The blending of the knowledge of the corporate with the philosophy of Catholic education is becoming one of their greatest challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

This limited study provided many insights into a role that is seldom researched or acknowledged in educational literature as a separate role of leadership. While the document *Those Who Hear You, Hear Me* (1995) and the ASCD Task Force (Pajak, 1989) results provided a basis for this study, it was clear from the responses in the surveys and interviews that the position and the person of the associate superintendent were recognized as having a critical impact on the advancement of Catholic education and the associate superintendent was seen as a distinct leader in the Catholic schools office.

Subsidiary research surfaced during the interviews about the need for some kind of structured formation and training programs for aspiring, new, or inexperienced associate superintendents. Providing mentors who would guide new associate superintendents was also identified as a need.

Superintendents and associate superintendents both agreed that there were very high expectations placed on this role and little was being done in the way of ongoing professional development for them. Presently most of the training for associate superintendents is on the job. All agreed that this is not sufficient for this role.

It is realistic to say from this limited study that the secondary and elementary principals have dissimilar perceptions about the role of associate superintendents. Associate superintendents should be aware of and understand these differences and be prepared to deal with these two groups of leaders in different ways.

Finally, the associate superintendents are leaders who hold power as they implement the vision and mission of the superintendent and the Catholic schools office. The key to the core of the role of leadership of associate superintendents in Catholic education is held in understanding the intrinsic nature of this power and its implications.

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APPENDIX

DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY

LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

This survey is designed to gather data about your expectations of the associate/assistant superintendent's role of leadership in a Catholic schools office.

This survey should take 15 minutes to complete. Please respond to every statement in the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential and will be used only as data for this study.

Demographic Information

Please check your current position: Please complete the following statements:

_____ Superintendent

_____ Deputy Superintendent

_____ Associate Superintendent

_____ Secondary School Principal

_____ Elementary School Principal

_____ Number of years in present position

_____ Highest degree achieved

_____ How many people are in your Catholic schools office?

Name the position of the person in your Catholic schools office you call the most often to get answers. _____

Please check one of the following: ___ Religious ___ Lay ___ Cleric

Directions

This descriptive survey is divided into two parts.

Part I: This section has 25 statements about the role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent in a Catholic schools office.

Part II: This section has 2 questions that deal with the qualities, aspects, and skills of the role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent.

PART I

Please respond to the statements from your own perspective and not on your knowledge of a particular associate/assistant superintendent.

Directions: On the blank space next to the following statements, place the numerical value indicating your reaction to each item according to how much you agree or disagree with the statement, or indicate that you do not know. Please do not omit any items.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1	2	3	4	5

- ___ 1. The leadership influence of the associate/assistant superintendent should critically impact on the quality of education in the Catholic schools.
- ___ 2. The role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent should be different from the role of leadership of the superintendent.
- ___ 3. The major areas of responsibility assigned to an associate/assistant superintendent should be well defined.
- ___ 4. The organizational framework of the Catholic schools office should be hierarchical in structure.
- ___ 5. The presence of the associate/assistant superintendent conducting a school visitation should have a powerful effect on the behavior of the school administrator/principal.
- ___ 6. The role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent should be different from the role of leadership of the principal.
- ___ 7. The associate/assistant superintendent should have expertise in assigned areas of responsibility.
- ___ 8. The organizational structure of the Catholic schools office should enable the associate/assistant superintendent to carry out the role of leadership with creativity.
- ___ 9. Decision making by the principal should be affected by the degree of power the associate/assistant superintendent possesses.
- ___ 10. The role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent should be seen as a catalyst for change.
- ___ 11. The areas of responsibility of the associate/assistant superintendent should be clearly defined for school administrator/principal.
- ___ 12. The role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent should be critical to the formation and implementation of a long-range strategic plan in the Catholic schools office.

- ___ 13. The position of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent should have more influence than the personal characteristics of the associate/assistant superintendent.
- ___ 14. The associate/assistant superintendent in the Catholic schools office should be in touch with the day-to-day concerns of the Catholic schools.
- ___ 15. A mentoring program, as a support system, should be designed and implemented for a new associate/assistant superintendent.
- ___ 16. The organizational structure of the Catholic schools office should be flexible enough to respond to the expressed needs of the school administrator/principal.
- ___ 17. The use of empowerment by the associate/assistant superintendent should enable those they interact with to enhance their leadership.
- ___ 18. The role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent should open dialogue between the Catholic schools office and principal.
- ___ 19. The associate/assistant superintendent should demonstrate a balance between theory and professional practice in fulfilling areas of responsibility.
- ___ 20. The Catholic schools office should be structured around the statements expressed in the mission of the office.
- ___ 21. The title "associate/assistant superintendent" should be recognized as one of authority.
- ___ 22. The associate/assistant superintendent should be viewed as an active partner in the educative process.
- ___ 23. The organizational structure of the Catholic schools office should be based on the team leadership approach.
- ___ 24. The associate/assistant superintendent should be able to facilitate conflict resolution.
- ___ 25. The associate/assistant superintendent should be an authentic Catholic leader.

PART II

Please respond to the statements from your own perspective and not on your knowledge of a particular associate/assistant superintendent.

The role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent in the Catholic schools office requires many qualities in order to fulfill the role. In order of importance, list three qualities that make an **excellent** associate/assistant superintendent. (*qualities of excellence: attributes that enable an associate/assistant superintendent to excel*)

The role of leadership of the associate/assistant superintendent encompasses many skills. List three skills, in order of importance, in each of the categories listed below.

Interpersonal Skills (*types of skills that facilitate relationships*)

Managerial/Organizational Skills (*types of skills used to develop a systematic method to accomplish areas of responsibility*)

Communication Skills (*types of skills needed to share or exchange ideas or information*)

Please place the completed survey in the self-addressed, stamped envelope and return it to Margaret F. Boland as requested.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

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