

Cultivating Faith-based School Leadership through a differentiated approach

Calgary Catholic School District

John “Gerry” McDonald, Deputy Chief Superintendent

Steve Petingola, Deneen Rycroft, Carrie Lodermeier, Area Directors

Creator,

We lift our hearts and minds to you with gratitude.

**We give thanks for this land,
for the teachings of the Elders and
Knowledge Keepers,
for the language of this land,
and for the sacred stories that guide us.
Help us to listen deeply,
to learn with humility,
and to carry these teachings in a good way.**

**As people of Treaty,
remind us that we are bound together;
not in words alone, but in relationship.**

**Teach us to live Treaty as a sacred
promise:
to share, to care, and to learn from one
another.**

**Bless this gathering,
and the work that we are called to do.**

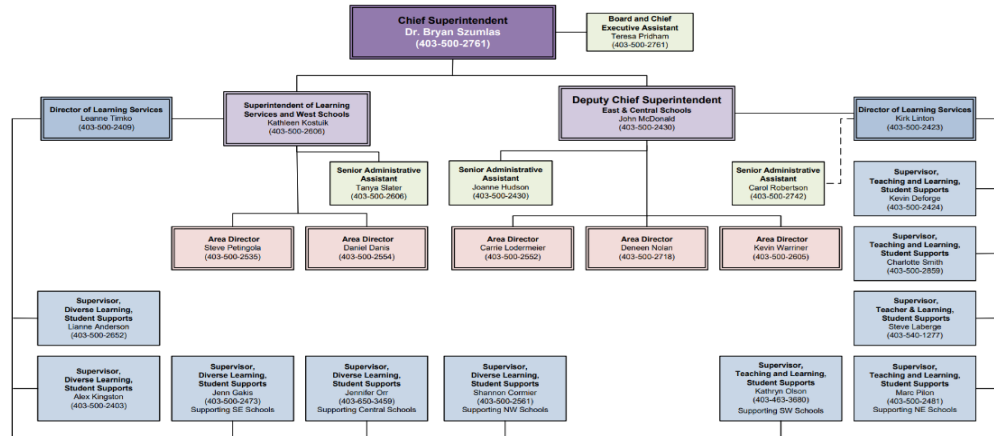
**May our minds be clear,
our hearts be strong,
and our actions be guided by respect,
courage, and truth.**

We raise our prayers in thanks.

Operational Framework of Calgary Catholic- *organizational background*

- Introduction of the presenters
- Organization Chart
- Centrally Managed

Learning Services





Mission
and
Vision



Living and **LEARNING**
in our **Catholic Faith**,
so that **STUDENTS**,
centred IN CHRIST,
realize **their full potential.**

Adopted by the Board of Trustees
on February 23, 2022



Board of Trustees
Priorities 2024-2027
Year 2
(2025-2026)



Living and **LEARNING** in our **Catholic Faith**, so that **STUDENTS**, centred IN CHRIST, realize **their full potential**.



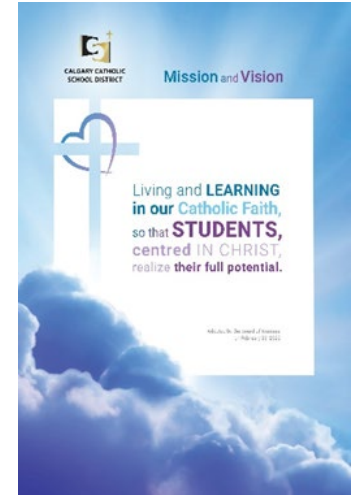
Networking

Networking - introduce yourself to the group. Introduce the person sitting next to you OR stand up, stretch and find someone you do not know.

- 1) If you weren't here today, where would you choose to be?
- 2) What are three things that are important to you about your work?
- 3) What is important to you in your life?
- 4) What do you hope to leave with today?

Our Vision for Leadership

- **Goal:** To move beyond mere "supervision" to a partnership that fosters **ever-growing experience, self reflection and continuous growth.**
- **Core Philosophy:** We believe leadership is a developmental journey, not a destination. Our role is to provide the **scaffolding** necessary for school leaders to transition from "competent" to "visionary".
- **Current Reality** - As the labour market changes so do our practices for supporting educational leaders.
- **Alignment:** Directly supporting Catholic [Leadership Quality Standards \(LQS\)](#) and professional practice competencies.



Leadership Development Frameworks

- Leadership Academy
- Mentorship
- Principal Carousel
- SLC/JPC
- Jr. Councils
- Family of Schools
- Principal Faith Breakfasts
- Public Works Courses (Financial Management, OH&S, Boundaries etc.)
- School Visits
- Centralized calendar

Professional Learning & Capacity Building

- **Leadership Academy:** Identifying and providing high-quality professional learning.
- Providing training to *potential* leaders in the district in critical operational areas with each of the 10 modules centered around the Catholic LQS
 - within each module, we focus on operational items that include tough/courageous conversations, political acumen, social acumen, self-awareness

Professional Learning & Capacity Building

Councils - Joint Principal Council, Vice Principal Council, Assistant Principal Council

- K-6, K-9, 7-9, High School, rural schools
- Purpose - instructional leadership, operational matters, professional growth, leadership capacity growth flowing through District Priorities
- Structure of executive - principal representation, Director Learning Services participation
- Core topics identified by senior leadership
- Long Range Plan annually - input from executives, all shareholders

Professional Learning & Capacity Building

Principal Mentorship

We provide a structured opportunity to build connections with our experienced principals and our newly appointed principals.

Two year program

- Year 1- 4 formal meetings
- Year 2-2 formal meetings

Topics include: What is on your radar?, Climate and Culture, Suspension and Expulsion, Scenarios, Best practice (teacher evaluations, SRT process, start-up, ATIP)

Professional Learning & Capacity Building

Principal Carousel

An additional opportunity for principals to hone their skills in different areas of operations within their building.

- 2 Principal Carousels a year

Topics include: ATA/Unifor leaves, Employee/Labour relations and their role, Teacher Evaluations, Custody orders and anything legal, Investigations, Accounting

Activity: What are your Leadership Development Frameworks?

- Share some of your organizational structures with the larger groups.





THE FOUR AGREEMENTS OF COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Guided by Living and Learning in Our Catholic Faith

1

Stay Engaged

Staying engaged means “remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually and socially involved in the dialogue.”

2

Discomfort May Be Experienced

This norm acknowledges that discomfort is inevitable, especially in dialogue about race, and that participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open. It is not talking about these issues that create divisiveness. The divisiveness already exists in the society and in our schools. It is through dialogue, even when uncomfortable, that the healing and change begin.

3

Speak With Courage and Hear Truth

This means being honest and about your thoughts and feelings while being respectful and open to learning from others.

4

Expect and Accept Non-Closure

This agreement asks participants to “hang out in uncertainty” and not rush to quick solutions, especially in relation to racial understanding, which requires ongoing dialogue.



Coaching principal leaders through differentiated supports

- Coaching Relationships: Moving into a **coach** role where we offer personalized feedback tailored to a leader's specific strengths and weaknesses.
- Identifying Blind spots and honing soft skills.
- School Plans and check in
- 360 Performance Survey

Principal Leader Experience Reality

0-5 Years -	58%
6-10 -	33%
11-15-	15%
16-20-	4%
20+ -	7%

Supporting the principal leader towards a greater self awareness



- Are you aware of your blind spot(s)? How did you become aware?
- What strategies have you used to help your principal leaders become more self aware?

Coaching the principal leader to identify their blind spots



- What is your approach for assisting your principal leaders in identifying their blind spots?
- Once identified, how do you offer ongoing support and encouragement?

School Plans - Coaching

CCSD Structure:

- School Plans Committee - two ADs plus 2 lead principals from each of the 5 areas. Any new content are updated/added each year.
- Lead teachers and Area Directors review at Family of Schools meetings
- One-on-one meetings with principals/admin teams
- Living document

360 Feedback Survey

- Strategic feedback surveys—as a focused tool for growth to identify blind spots.
- For principals and Area Directors, this feedback is powerful.
- Creates opportunity for transparent, meaningful conversations about strengths, areas for growth, and the support required to move forward.

Scenario #1 - High Standards

The Principal: Ms. Vance, an incredibly hard working leader who "lives" at the school. She is the first to arrive and the last to leave. She has successfully raised the school's PAT results and is seen by the district as a "star."

The Pattern: Elena believes that her high standards are the reason for the school's success. However, she has a habit of micromanaging every detail:

- She walks into classrooms and corrects teachers in front of students about minor [aesthetic details](#) like bulletin boards.
- She sends "urgent" emails at 9:00 PM on Sundays expecting immediate action by Monday morning.
- In leadership team meetings, she asks for "collaborative ideas" but then [interrupts](#) and diminishes any suggestion that doesn't perfectly align with her original vision.

Discussion Questions #1

- What are Ms. Vance's blind spots?
- How do you coach Ms. Vance to this realization?
- What steps would you take to ensure Ms. Vance continues to be self aware?
- What benefits (beyond strong PAT scores) might Ms. Vance see by becoming more self aware?

Scenario #2 - Leading with Skills of Heart

Context

Principal **Avery** is strong in operations and data: budgets balanced, timetables tight, and school plans polished. Yet, concerns are emerging about Avery's *soft skills*—particularly how she interacts with students, staff, and parents during moments of stress or disagreement.

A grade 8 student arrives late for the third time in a week Avery pressed for time says:

“You know the rule. This can't keep happening. Here is your late slip”.

After a classroom walk through Avery emails a teacher:

“Your transitions are inefficient; kids were off task. Please fix by next week.”

Discussion Questions #2

- How might Avery's current approach affect staff trust, student belonging, or parent relationships?
- If you were coaching Avery, where would you begin: mindset, awareness, skills, or systems?
- How would you help Avery reflect on how she wants students and staff to *experience* her leadership?
- What reflective questions might help Avery consider her tone, presence, and approach during stressful moments?

Scenario #3 - Checklist Principal

Principal **Dana** is known for being highly organized, efficient, and detail-oriented. Her office is immaculate, her email inbox is perpetually at zero, and her daily “to-do list” is legendary—colour-coded, prioritized, and non-negotiable.

However, Dana has developed a habit of prioritizing *task completion* over *relationship building* and *instructional leadership*. Staff, students, and even families have begun to describe her as “too busy,” “hard to approach,” or “always rushing.”

She feels successful when she checks off every item.

But when unplanned issues arise—student needs, parent concerns, teacher drop-ins—she becomes visibly frustrated.

Staff perceive these moments as dismissive. Students feel they are interrupting her. Parents often get short, transactional responses.

Discussion Questions #3

1. What are the dangers of task-driven leadership in schools?
2. How can a superintendent/Area Director help a principal build habits around presence and relational leadership?
3. Which coaching strategies could be used effectively?
4. What shifts in mindset does Dana need to make to grow as a leader?

Scenario #4: “The Seasoned Principal” – A Coaching Case Study

You are mentoring a highly experienced principal, *John Thompson*, who has served as a school leader for 21 years. He is respected for operational efficiency, strong instructional knowledge, and his ability to manage complex logistics. However, recent concerns have surfaced that highlight gaps in relational leadership, communication systems, and leadership capacity-building.

The Area Director contacts John after receiving several parent concerns:

1. Parents of a junior high student struggling with significant mental health challenges report that communication has been inconsistent. They state that:

- Not all teachers appear aware of the student’s safety plan.
- Some staff are unclear about classroom strategies to support the student.
- They feel they are “repeating the same information” to different teachers.

2. Additional parents have reached out regarding:

- Conflicting feedback from different teachers.
- Confusion about intervention plans and academic supports.

3. Several families report ongoing bullying concerns at the junior high level. A few have indicated they are considering transferring schools due to what they perceive as insufficient response or communication from the school.

- During informal conversation, junior high teachers mention they do not know most of the elementary staff in the same building. In a large K–9 school, divisions are functioning in silos. Cross-divisional relationships are minimal.

The most concerning element: ***John was unaware of the depth and volume of these concerns.***

Discussion Questions #4

1. What are the foundational concerns brought forward? What are the dangers of not addressing these concerns?
1. How can a superintendent/Area Director help a principal build habits around presence and relational leadership?
1. What would be your next steps within your Division?
1. What shifts in mindset does John need to make to grow as a leader?

Conclusion – The Path Forward

- **The Promise:** We are committed to a differentiated approach to coaching principal leaders built on **trust, transparency, and high expectations.**
- **Impact:** By investing in our people, we are ultimately investing in student success and a thriving school culture.

Thank you!

If you have any questions please feel free to contact us:

carrie.lodermeier@cssd.ab.ca

deneen.rycroft@cssd.ab.ca

steve.petingola@cssd.ab.ca

john.mcdonald@cssd.ab.ca