

Appointing

A

Catholic School Principal



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

## **STEPS TO APPOINTING A PRINCIPAL**

### **Confidentiality**

It is essential that all information regarding applicants must be kept completely confidential. Any matter regarding appointments shall be handled by the Designated School Pastor, in collaboration with the Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

### **Interview Committee(s)**

It is recommended that the candidate be interviewed by representatives of the stakeholders of the parish and school communities. Members of the interview committee may include, but are not limited to:

- Superintendent of Schools
- School Pastor(s)
- School Board (Advisory Committee)
- Staff
- Parents
- Students
- Athletic Committee Representative
- Home & School Committee Representative

# **THE INTERVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS**

## **INTERVIEW STRATEGIES**

- Make questions brief, with applicant talking as much as possible.
- Use open ended and “why” questions.
- Adopt a neutral position. Try not to reveal personal feelings.
- Sequence a few questions to explore topics in depth.
- Avoid unnecessary prying – keep ethics in mind.
- If answers are superficial and lack depth, prompt her / him for more information.
- If the applicant finishes his/her reply but it is thought to be insufficient, pause and wait.
- Prepare questions in advance. Many of these will arise from the applicant’s papers.
- Make written notes during the interview.

Interview Committee members will be given a copy of the “selection sheet” for each candidate and taken through it. A decision will be made on how the procedures will be structured by the Designated Catholic School Pastor, in collaboration with the Superintendent of Schools. How will the candidate be welcomed, introduced and put at ease? Who will lead the panel? Who will cover what areas of questioning? How will the time be allocated? All aspects of the interview process will be outlined by the Designated Catholic School Pastor and/or the Superintendent of Schools prior to beginning the interview process.

## **CRITICAL FACTORS**

Critical factors represent the major elements of knowledge, experience, skills and attributes without which an individual could not perform the functions of the job in a competent manner. Use these critical factors when assessing the resume and interview information. A sample is given below.

Candidate Name:

Catholic Culture	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Educational Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Mission Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Community and Political Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Strategic Leadership	1	2	3	4	5

1 is lowest to a high of 5 in each of the categories. Score and compare your rating against the highest possible score of a 30.

## **HOW TO IMPROVE SELECTION INTERVIEWING**

### **Preparation**

- Be well briefed on the position to be filled – job descriptions, person specification, job, context, requirements, organizational structure, policies, and relationships. This reduces the impact of irrelevant attributes and increases reliability.
- Be familiar with the resume of the applicant.
- Make brief comments on each applicant on the selection sheet.
- Prepare the interview setting – seating, material, privacy and atmosphere, professional attire.
- Prepare a structured interview guide to improve the organization of the interview, to standardize it across candidates and to encourage a measured process of decision making.
- Timetable interviews to permit sufficient time for an adequate assessment of each candidate.
- Allow time for quiet reflection between interviews.

### **During the Interview**

- Review the Critical Factors quickly if this has not been seen prior to the interview.
- Do not hurry the rapport stage – attempt to relax the applicant.
- Once the interview begins start note-taking. Record what is said rather than evaluate. This comes later.
- Stop note-taking when sensitive points arise.
- Develop a question strategy which emphasizes:
  - Succinct questions. The applicant should do most of the talking.
  - The use of open-ended and “why” questions.
  - Probing beyond the initial response if necessary.
  - The avoidance of unnecessary prying.
  - A logical sequence of questions.
  - Linking each new question to the applicant’s last response.
  - Asking one question at a time.
  - Giving the applicant time to think and to develop an answer.
  - Don’t be afraid of silences.
  - Avoid leading questions – ones which suggest an answer.
  - Avoid criticism.
  - Delay awkward or personal questions until rapport is well established.
- Look interested, listen and focus your attention on the applicant.
- The Superintendent of Schools will close the interview smoothly by:
  - Summarizing the interview
  - Outlining the actions which will be taken subsequently or the next steps in the procedure
  - Indicating when the applicant will be informed of the decision
  - Dealing with any remaining questions which the applicant may have.

### **Post – Interview Decision-making**

- Always complete summary notes/evaluations as soon after the interview as possible.
- Notes should be the basis for the post-interview evaluation. This should cover all relevant dimensions.
- Each interviewer should assess independently and then they should come together for a joint decision-making session.
- Ensure that final decisions are made and communicated promptly to the applicants.

## MAKING A DECISION

- Since no single interviewer will have all the information, decision-making should proceed by point-by-point discussion.
- Each interviewer, beginning with the least experienced, should speak about each applicant.
- Re-advertise as many times as you need to get an outstanding Principal.
- The first decision should be by general agreement and one which is acceptable to all. The Superintendent shall take the pivotal role.
- Do not appoint any candidate that will not be the **best** for your school.
- The Interview Committee will, on the completion of their deliberations, complete a recommendation for appointment which will be passed onto the Superintendent of Schools for review.
- Unsuccessful applicants should be advised promptly and with consideration. Help in preparing them for future interviews is appreciated. If all interviewees feel they have had an adequate opportunity to present themselves and their views, it is the hallmark of a well-run selection process.

## **CHARACTER CRITERIA FOR APPOINTMENT TO PRINCIPAL POSITION**

- **Religion:** Roman Catholic
- **Catholic Practice:** active in parish or diocesan life.
- **Understanding of Catholic Culture:**
  - Being willing and having the professional qualities to
    - be responsible Religious Education program of the school and for its religious observances;
    - take Religious Education classes whenever as suggested by the Designate Catholic School Pastor and/or the Superintendent of Catholic Schools;
    - recognize how Catholic Culture permeates every aspect of school life, decisions and relationships.
- **Leadership living Catholic Culture**
  - ability to carry out professional responsibilities in a Catholic school and community;
  - ability to integrate Catholic Culture with decision making and school climate;
  - be a suitable role model for staff, students and parents in a Catholic school;
  - assume an appropriate leadership role in liturgies.

## **PROFILE OF A PRINCIPAL**

### **Key tasks of a Principal are:**

- To maintain and enhance the Catholic Culture of the school
- To promote bicultural sensitivity and awareness.
- To give policy advice to the School Board and School Committee
- To work within the policies set by the School Board/Advisory Council
- To manage curriculum delivery and assessment practices
- To make recommendations to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools on the appointment of staff
- To oversee staff performance management systems
- To manage financial and material resources
- To maintain relationships with associated organizations
- To put in place strategies to advance and enhance the school's public profile in the community especially vis a vis Catholic Culture
- To establish and maintain positive links between school and parishes.

### **Qualities of an Effective Principal**

The following qualities may assist with the preparation of specification and criteria for appointment:

#### **Personal Qualities**

Fully committed Catholic; integrity; flexibility; ability to relate to young people and adults; interest in cultural activities and sport; sense of humor; ability to chair meetings; a well-articulated philosophy of education; dedication to the job; ability to continue to learn and develop; ability to listen; approachable.

### **School Leadership**

- ability to maintain and enhance the Catholic Culture of the school
- guidance and leadership in Religious Education and religious observances throughout the school
- awareness of and commitment to Catholic social teaching
- strong administrative example
- support for staff
- creation of an environment in which teachers can work effectively
- high levels of parent/teacher and Principal/parent contact
- balance between strong leadership and maximum autonomy for teachers
- strong instructional leadership in effective teaching skills, classroom management and professional development
- firm positive discipline and behavior model for teachers and pupils
- ability to create an atmosphere of order, purpose and pleasure in learning
- control over the school program
- collaborative leadership with peers

### **Basic Skills**

- commitment to the mission of the school
- commitment to fostering pastoral care in the school and community
- purpose and direction
- ability to foster image of the school
- consensus-style decision making
- professional skills
- high expectations of quality

**Spiritual Leadership:** provides good example of active, personal participation in Catholic practices including Liturgy, prayer and the use of other religious input.

**Human Leadership:** the best use of human and material resources; building and maintaining morale; encouraging personal growth and creativity; support for staff and maximizing skills; delegate to those with individual skills to manage the school.

**Technical Leadership:** sound management techniques; planning; organizing and coordinating skills.

**Educational Leadership:** expert knowledge about education; capacity to diagnose pupil needs, develop curriculum, provide supervision and conduct evaluation; love of learning and young people.

**Symbolic Leadership:** focus on priorities for school; touring the school; visiting classrooms; presiding at ceremonies; knowing students; providing a unified vision.

**Cultural Leadership:** the building of a unique, strong school culture and high standards of service to the school and its mission to the community.

**Bicultural and Multicultural:** awareness and sensitivity.

## **Position Description**

- The Principal assumes a major leadership role in the school and because of this undertakes an important religious, pastoral and professional responsibility in the Catholic Community. The person appointed must therefore be a fully committed Catholic, committed to Catholic religious practices and to the furtherance of Catholic Education.
- A willingness and ability to take part in religious instruction appropriate to a Catholic school is a condition of appointment.

### **The Principal shall:**

- Accept and recognize a responsibility to maintain and preserve the Catholic Culture of the school.
- Be responsible to the Superintendent for Catholic Schools for ensuring that the school provides a structured and systematic course in religious education in accordance with the syllabus.
- The Principal is expected to take an active leadership role in liturgies that involve the whole school.
- Take in consultation with the Superintendent of Catholic Schools and School Counsel whatever steps are necessary or useful to enhance the school's Catholic Culture.
- Be required to report to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools and School Council each month on the above matters.



## **Selection**

### **DECISION MAKING**

**Definition:** “The meeting point of prayer and action.”- Thomas Green

**Background:** From the time of Solomon, discernment has been associated with wise leadership. The Ignatian model of discernment was developed by a group of active people already involved in a busy lifestyle. They accepted the additional requirements for personal and communal preparation for important decisions.

#### **Personal Preparation**

- Make a commitment to personal prayer and reflection throughout the appointments process.
- Agree not to discuss information about applicants with any other member at this point in the process so as not to be persuaded by each other.
- Consider all the material available to be as fully informed as possible.
- Be clear about your own preference(s) and be prepared to share your point of view.

#### **Communal preparation: Sharing, hearing and treasuring wisdom are critical at this stage.**

- Gather and pray together for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Each member shares the negative factors for each applicant.
- Each member shares the positive factors for each applicant.
- Take time to reflect and pray about all the reasons given and against and decision.
- Discuss the reasons for and against the decision.
- Try to reach a consensus about the decision.
- Complete the rubrics and submit them to the Superintendent of Schools.

# Catholic School Leadership Framework

## **Personal Attributes**

- Strong faith and morals
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Servant Leadership
- Lifelong learning relationships
- Awareness of ministry
- Passionate commitment
- Commitment to social justice
- Empowerment / Delegation
- Vision for Catholic schools
- Ability to inspire
- Patience and flexibility
- Valuing of persons and relationships

## **Leadership Capabilities**

*An effective Catholic school leader demonstrates capability in each of the six specialized domains listed below:*

### **Faith Leadership**

- Articulates and models active faith and morals
- Leads the community in worship and prayer
- Builds school faith community
- Generates a positive Catholic culture and environment in the school
- Facilitates the systematic mission formation of personnel

### **Organizational Leadership**

- Understands site-based management in relation to Catholic schools
- Understands Catholic school governance structures; especially the role of the parish pastor, pastoral council, parish finance committee, school board, Catholic Schools Office, and state Department of Education
- Promotes shared leadership in school administration and governance
- Demonstrates effective stewardship of school resources

### **Educational Leadership**

- Inspires and leads the school community toward educational excellence
- Fosters a professional learning community that values lifelong learning and involves families
- Recruits, selects, supervises, and evaluates school personnel in light of mission
- Ensures that Catholic teaching and religious values are infused throughout the educational program
- Provides a high quality religious education program staffed by qualified teachers

### **Mission Leadership**

- Knows the fundamentals of Catholicism
- Conversant with Catholic teaching, especially in relation to current moral/ethical issues History and Philosophy of Catholic Education
- Knows the evolutionary story of Catholic schools locally, nationally, and worldwide
- Understands the distinctive mission and philosophy of contemporary Catholic schools as promulgated by Church documents and scholars
- Communicates the Catholic identity and mission of the school verbally and in writing at every opportunity

### **Community and Political Leadership**

- Positively influences relationships between the school and its communities
- Uses public relations strategies to promote the school and its mission to all publics
- Advocates the support of Catholic schools by the entire Catholic community
- Collaborates and networks with others who share in the mission of Catholic education
- Works with the local Catholic diocese, local public-school district, other government agencies, and school parents to access available public funds
- Mobilizes the school community to seek additional public funding

### **Strategic Leadership**

- Knows current trends and directions in Catholic school education
- Inspires all toward a shared vision for the future
- Initiates, monitors, and evaluates the strategic planning process to fulfill the school's mission, actualize its vision, and position the school for the future (e.g., marketing, student recruitment)
- Promotes innovation, change, and collaboration in achieving the Catholic educational mission
- Creates a development plan that explores additional sources of revenue (e.g., alumni giving, grants)

# Appendix

### Sample Interview Questions:

1. Tell us about yourself
2. Why do you want to be Principal of this School?
3. How would you express your understanding of what our school stands for and how does this fit with your personal educational philosophy?
4. What do you think is the most important task of a Principal?
5. What do you consider to be your greatest contribution to the schools, you have worked in, in light of that, what do you feel you can bring to our school?
6. What is the role of technology in education?
7. Discuss the balance between academics, athletics, the arts, and other extracurricular?
8. In what ways are you a visionary?
9. Describe your knowledge of finance and experience with budgeting?
10. What experience do you have in development, fundraising and endowments?
11. How do you provide for your own spiritual growth?
12. How would you foster and strengthen the spiritual growth of this school and its Catholic Culture?
13. How do you envision the Principal-student relationship?
14. What is the Principal's role in helping students develop character and virtue?
15. Tell us about a difficult discipline situation you have dealt with.

16. How will you bring out excellence in others?
17. How will you approach staff morale?
18. What do you consider to be the characteristics of an excellent teacher?
19. A teacher does not measure up to expectations. How do you address the situation?
20. What has been your experience with parental involvement in schools?
21. When you have an important decision to make, how do you make it?
22. What questions do you have for us?

# Selection Sheet

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Notes:



