

## **Abstract**

The Catholic Church has established the importance of a high-quality Catholic school as an essential opportunity for parishes, pastors, parents, teachers, and school leaders to pass the Catholic faith on to the next generation. To ensure an excellent Catholic education for all students, each school must have a strong principal in place who is an excellent faith and instructional leader. Strong principal leadership is an essential element in school success, and schools across the country, both public and private, are experiencing a principal shortage. A shortage of qualified principals means that schools and students are challenged as they look for high-quality leaders to move their schools forward. High-quality principal leadership increases the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom and impacts the ability of the school to attract high-quality teachers. Because of the high demand for Catholic school principals, the increasing demands on principals, and the qualification that a Catholic school principal must be a practicing Catholic, Catholic schools are experiencing a significant principal shortage. This dissertation addresses this problem of the Catholic school principal shortage by providing insight on why Catholic school principals seek principal positions, why they remain principals, and why they might leave. The research design is a narrative inquiry, including interviews with six principals and six pastors from a Catholic diocese in the Midwest. The analysis of the data sheds further light on the essentials of recruiting and retaining strong principal leaders in Catholic schools.

**Keywords:** Principal leadership, Catholic schools, principal recruitment, principal retention