

| Edmonton Catholic Schools |

LEADERSHIP FORMATION AND SYSTEM LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN ECSD – UPDATE

| May 2026 |



LEADERSHIP FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

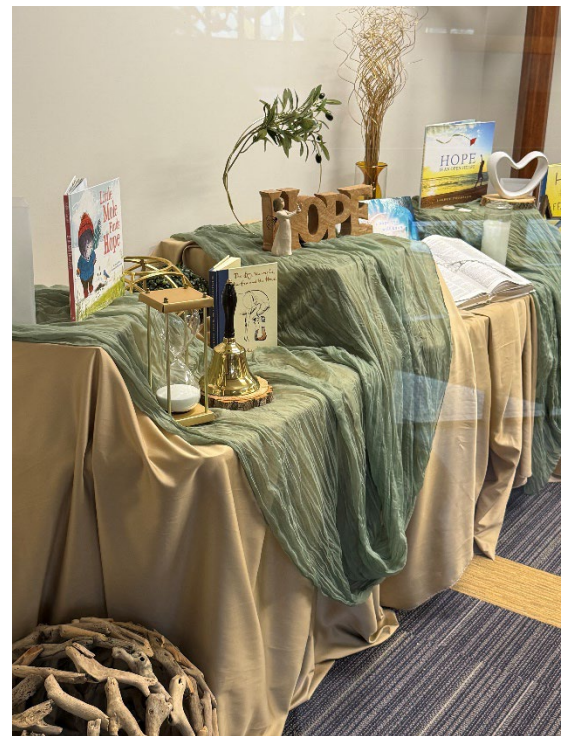
Edmonton Catholic Schools places a strong and intentional emphasis on the formation and development of its school and system leaders. Leadership Services supports this priority through a comprehensive, faith-centred leadership development model that is designed to strengthen system leadership capacity, deepen social connection, and advance organizational priorities. Leadership development within the Division is grounded in Catholic identity, aligned with Alberta Education’s Leadership Quality Standard, and informed by the lived realities of leaders serving in increasingly complex educational contexts.

Across the Division, leadership formation is approached not simply as skill development, but as vocational formation rooted in mission, faith, and service. Professional learning experiences intentionally combine faith-based formation, reflective practice, mentorship, and practical leadership development. This report outlines the structures, programs, and system supports that guide leadership formation within Edmonton Catholic Schools. It reflects a sustained commitment to nurturing leaders who are reflective, relational, and mission-driven, and who are equipped to lead Catholic learning communities with clarity, integrity, and hope.

FOUNDATIONS OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP

Leadership development within Edmonton Catholic Schools is anchored in Catholic identity and shaped by the Five Marks of Catholic School Identity. Faith formation is woven intentionally into leadership training rather than being treated as a separate or supplemental component. Across leadership programs, faith shapes how leadership is understood, practiced, and embodied, inviting leaders to reflect deeply on who they are called to be and how their beliefs inform the way they serve others and lead their communities.

Leadership formation emphasizes leadership as a vocation rather than simply a professional role. Through reflective practices such as prayer, guided reflection, and moments of quiet contemplation, leaders are provided space to consider the alignment between their personal values, faith commitments, and leadership actions. This reflective dimension fosters authenticity, humility, and integrity and encourages leaders to approach their work with discernment and intentionality.



Faith formation also provides a foundation for ethical and moral leadership. Leadership training draws on Catholic teaching, tradition, and moral principles to explore themes such as justice, dignity, service, responsibility, and care for others. These discussions help leaders navigate complex situations with compassion and moral clarity, ensuring that leadership decisions are informed not only by strategic thinking but also by deeply held values. Faith becomes a lens through which leaders understand accountability and the broader impact of their choices on individuals, school communities, and the system.

Engaging in faith-based dialogue and reflection together fosters a powerful sense of community and shared responsibility among leaders. This shared formation builds trust and reinforces the understanding that Catholic leadership is carried collectively. Through this approach, leaders are better equipped to create environments that reflect the values of Catholic education and consistently model those values in their leadership practices and relationships.

ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH MACNEIL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Archbishop Joseph MacNeil Leadership Academy is the Division's annual cornerstone professional learning experience for senior leaders. With approximately 130 principals and members of senior leadership participating each year, the Academy represents a significant investment in leadership capacity and organizational effectiveness. Named in honour of Archbishop Joseph MacNeil, whose influence on Catholic education within the Division was profound, the Academy is intentionally designed to be both professionally formative and faith-filled.

Delivered as a two-day, in-person learning experience, the Academy brings together principals, senior leaders from across the organization, Division chaplains, Bishop David Motiuk, and the Board of Trustees. The program integrates thought leadership, practical leadership skill development, and collaborative learning to support leaders in navigating an evolving educational landscape.

Central components of the Academy include faith-based experiences such as liturgies, opportunities for prayer and reflection, collegial connection, and the celebration of community through a full Eucharistic Mass. Together, these experiences provide spiritual nourishment while reinforcing the communal and vocational nature of Catholic leadership.

Dr. Santiago Rincón-Gallardo served as the keynote speaker for the 2026 Archbishop Joseph MacNeil Leadership Academy, anchoring the two-day experience in the Division's priority of advancing optimal teaching and learning. His keynote sessions focused on leadership practices that strengthen instructional quality, coherence, and collective efficacy, with particular attention to the leadership actions required to create the conditions for deep learning across schools and the system.

Academy learning emphasized the practical application of these ideas through a combination of expert instruction, structured dialogue, and reflection. Leaders examined what optimal teaching and learning looks like in practice, reviewed the Division's theory of action, and explored how leadership decisions shape culture, learning conditions, and improvement efforts. Stories of practice from Edmonton

Catholic Schools highlighted how joy and rigour are enacted within Catholic learning communities and reinforced connections between system priorities and local leadership practice.

Reflection and discussion were intentionally embedded throughout the Academy to support leaders in identifying key insights and clarifying next steps for their own contexts. Sessions led by Division leadership further supported implementation by connecting Academy learning to available resources and system supports. This year's Leadership Academy strengthened shared understanding, reinforced alignment with Division priorities, and supported coherence in advancing optimal learning across Edmonton Catholic Schools. While the overarching goal is to support leaders in responding to complexity and uncertainty, the faith-based experience also enriched the personal and spiritual lives of leaders through shared fellowship, collegiality, and joy.

LEADERSHIP FORMATION THROUGH FAITH AND REFLECTION

Faith formation is intentionally integrated into leadership development, ensuring that growth in practice is rooted in mission, vocation, and Catholic identity. Rather than functioning as a separate component, faith formation shapes how leadership is understood and exercised, inviting leaders to reflect on who they are called to be and how their beliefs inform their decisions, relationships, and service to school communities. Leadership learning is anchored in the Five Marks of Catholic School Identity and aligned with Alberta Education's Leadership Quality Standard, with particular emphasis on the Catholic Leadership Dimension.

Across leadership training, reflective practices such as prayer, guided reflection, and moments of contemplation provide space for leaders to engage their work as a vocation rather than simply a role. This reflective posture supports greater alignment between personal values, faith commitments, and leadership actions, fostering authenticity, humility, and integrity. Engaging in shared faith-based reflection builds trust, deepens relationships, and reinforces a collective responsibility for mission among leaders. This shared formation supports collaborative leadership and affirms that Catholic leadership is sustained within community rather than carried individually. Through this integrated approach, faith formation supports leaders who are grounded and reflective, and who lead Catholic learning communities with compassion, clarity, and hope.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND PATHWAYS

Edmonton Catholic Schools offers a comprehensive range of leadership development programs designed to support leaders at various stages of their leadership journey.

Principal Training Program

The Principal Training Program is designed for educators who are considering applying for a school-based principal position within Edmonton Catholic Schools. The program supports participants in developing the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective and faith-filled

leadership as a Catholic principal. Through a purposeful and reflective learning design, candidates are prepared to step into leadership with confidence, clarity, and a strong sense of mission.

The program consists of ten two-hour sessions, aligned with Alberta Education’s Leadership Quality Standard (LQS), with a distinct focus on the role and responsibilities of Catholic school leadership. In addition, four technology-focused sessions are provided to familiarize participants with key divisional systems and software essential to the principalship. With the guidance of a mentor, participants develop a comprehensive School Entry Plan to support a thoughtful and intentional transition into the principal role. Professional reading, personal reflection, and rich professional dialogue are integral components of the learning experience, supporting both personal and professional growth.

The Catholic Leadership Quality Standards anchor the program, grounding practice in faith, integrity, service, and a shared commitment to the common good. These principles are intentionally woven throughout each session, inviting participants to examine how Catholic leadership values inform decision-making, relationships, and leadership actions within school communities. Through discussion, reflection, and application, participants explore what it means to lead in ways rooted in Gospel values, responsive to community needs, and respectful of human dignity. As the course progresses, these standards evolve from theoretical concepts to lived practice, shaping mission-driven, authentically Catholic leadership.

Participants also design, implement, and reflect on a school-based leadership project rooted in one or more domains of the Leadership Quality Standard. Appropriately titled “Roots and Wings,” the project reflects the balance between providing stability and fostering growth. Roots symbolize a strong foundation grounded in values, belonging, and purpose, while wings represent encouragement to innovate, take risks, and grow in confidence as leaders. This experiential component allows participants to apply their learning in meaningful, context-specific ways.

Mentorship is a central element of the program. Participants intentionally identify and engage mentors within their professional practice, recognizing the powerful role mentors play in shaping leadership growth. Mentors provide guidance, feedback, and insight drawn from experience, supporting reflective practice and professional discernment. Through these relationships, participants are better equipped to identify strengths, address areas for growth, navigate challenges, and set purposeful leadership goals. Over the course of the program, participants shift from leading through position or title to embracing leadership rooted in shared values, relational trust, and a deep commitment to the Catholic educational mission.

First Year Principal Mentorship

This program is designed to support new principals in developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective leadership within Edmonton Catholic Schools. First-year principals participate in nine three-hour sessions, aligned with Alberta Education’s Leadership Quality Standard, with explicit attention to the unique responsibilities and vocation of Catholic school leadership. The

program balances foundational leadership learning with responsiveness to real-world challenges, ensuring relevance to the lived experiences of new principals.

Grounded in the Catholic Leadership Quality Standards, the program anchors practice in faith, integrity, service, and a shared commitment to the common good. These principles are intentionally woven throughout each session, inviting participants to reflect on how Gospel values inform leadership decisions, relationships, and actions within Catholic educational communities. Through professional reading, guided reflection, and meaningful dialogue, participants explore what it means to lead in ways that honour human dignity, foster community, and remain faithful to mission. As the program progresses, leadership standards shift from abstract concepts to lived practice, fostering leaders who are both mission-driven and authentically Catholic.

Mentorship is a key component of the program, providing new principals with individualized guidance and support. With the direction of experienced mentors, sessions remain flexible and responsive, addressing emergent needs as identified by both senior administrators and participants. The program also emphasizes collaboration with various departments within Edmonton Catholic Schools to ensure comprehensive and coordinated support. In addition, first-year principals attend the annual Blueprints Retreat, which brings together Catholic school administrators, central office leadership, trustees, and religious leaders to collaborate and explore current issues in Catholic education. Together, these elements create a coherent, reflective, and supportive learning experience that nurtures confident, values-based Catholic leadership.

Newly Appointed Principal Orientation and Transition

The two-day New Principal Orientation serves as a purposeful, affirming entry point for newly appointed principals as they step into school leadership. Designed to engage leaders at the very beginning of their transition, the orientation recognizes both the significance of the appointment and the responsibility it carries. It intentionally celebrates the success of each newly placed principal, affirming the experiences, gifts, and leadership strengths they bring to their new role, while acknowledging the trust placed in them by their school system and community.

Grounded in research identifying the leadership practices and conditions most closely linked to principal success, the orientation focuses on what matters most during times of transition. Participants engage in key activities that support early confidence, role clarity, and effective decision-making. Central to the experience is a strong emphasis on mentorship and relationship-building, reinforcing the understanding that impactful leadership develops through connection, support, and guided learning rather than in isolation. Through structured dialogue and shared reflection, newly appointed principals begin forming a cohort that will grow together, offering encouragement, insight, and professional support throughout their leadership journey.

The orientation places particular importance on leading with respect for context and community. Principals are encouraged to honour the story of their school and staff by listening deeply, valuing

existing strengths, and understanding the history, culture, and relationships that shape each learning community. This attention to transition, trust, and continuity creates the conditions for sustainable leadership and fosters a sense of belonging and purpose from the outset.

The experience culminates in a meaningful and symbolic transition moment, as the outgoing principal formally introduces the incoming principal to the school through a guided walkthrough of the building. This shared experience models collegial leadership, honours continuity, and provides an opportunity for the new principal to be welcomed into the life of the school with intention and respect.

Following the orientation, principals engage in a structured eight-week transition plan to support a successful, confident entry into the role. This plan outlines purposeful time spent at the new site and identifies the key “big rocks” for discussion and reflection during the early weeks of leadership. By balancing presence, learning, and relationship-building, the transition plan reinforces the orientation’s core messages and ensures ongoing support as principals establish themselves within their school communities.



Transition Protocol for All Principals

Each year, Leadership Services updates and provides principals who are moving between sites with a live, up-to-date guide to ensure continuity, stability, and clarity during a critical leadership change. A well-defined transition period helps safeguard student learning, staff morale, and school operations by reducing uncertainty and ensuring that essential information, relationships, and responsibilities are transferred in an intentional and organized manner.

This transition protocol guide establishes clear expectations about roles, timelines, and responsibilities for both the outgoing and incoming principal. It provides a shared framework for what must be communicated, documented, and completed before and during the transition, helping ensure that key operational, instructional, and community considerations are not overlooked. This clarity supports professionalism and accountability while minimizing disruption to the school community. The guide also supports the preservation of institutional knowledge. Schools are complex organizations, and much of their success depends on contextual understanding, established routines, ongoing initiatives, and community relationships. A transition protocol helps ensure that this knowledge is passed on

effectively, enabling the incoming principal to build on existing strengths rather than starting from scratch. This continuity supports sustained progress toward school goals and improvement plans.

Leadership transitions can create anxiety or uncertainty, particularly when they occur between school years. By outlining communication expectations and transition milestones, the guide helps ensure that the school community receives clear, consistent messaging and experiences a smooth handover of leadership. This transparency reassures stakeholders that the school remains stable, focused, and well-led.

Ultimately, the purpose of a transition protocol guide is to honour the work of the outgoing principal, support the success of the incoming principal, and protect the well-being and effectiveness of the school. By formalizing the leadership transition process, the guide reinforces continuity, reduces risk, and ensures that leadership change enhances, rather than disrupts, the educational environment.

Principal Catholic Educational Leadership Meetings

CEL brings together school principals, senior leaders, and departmental leaders to engage in shared learning, faith formation, and dialogue that supports system coherence and strengthens Catholic identity across all schools. Through this collective forum, leaders deepen their shared understanding of the Division's mission and direction while strengthening connections across schools and departments. CEL is intentionally designed to support leadership practice that is consistent, faith-filled, and responsive to the diverse contexts of school communities.

Within this shared space, CEL plays a key role in supporting principals and senior leaders to lead effectively in Catholic education. Each meeting integrates prayer and faith-centred reflection, professional learning aligned to the Alberta Leadership Quality Standard, and thoughtful discussion of Division-level priorities that impact schools. CEL also functions as a system-wide communication and sense-making forum, where Division work and emerging issues are introduced, clarified, and discussed. This allows leaders to ask questions, provide feedback, and understand how Division-level decisions connect to school-based practice, strengthening coherence while respecting local context.

CEL further supports effective system leadership through advocacy, shared problem-solving, and ongoing formation. It provides a structured venue for principals and senior leaders to raise matters of common concern, identify patterns across schools, and contribute leadership perspectives that inform the Executive Leadership Team. From a formation perspective, CEL reinforces leadership as a vocation rooted in faith, service, and community, while professional learning strengthens leadership capacity and supports principals and senior leaders as they guide staff, students, and families.

CEL agendas typically include a combination of the following elements:

- Prayer, reflection, and faith formation rooted in Catholic identity and leadership as vocation
- Professional learning aligned to the Alberta Leadership Quality Standard and Division priorities
- Communication and discussion related to Division initiatives, strategic directions, and emerging system matters
- Sense-making conversations to support consistent understanding and messaging across schools

- Leadership dialogue and shared problem-solving on issues impacting the system as a whole
- Stewardship time for the principals to connect directly with senior administration

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



Leadership Services, in collaboration with Human Resources, launched a new event, Step Forward: The Call to Lead, designed to inspire, engage, and recruit future leaders across the division. Grounded in the Division’s newly enhanced and collaborative leadership development model for 2025–2026, the event reflected a strong commitment to mentorship, relationship-building, and faith-centred leadership. Recognizing that many educators felt a quiet call to lead but hesitated due to uncertainty or self-doubt, the session created

a welcoming space to explore leadership pathways and deepen understanding of what leadership looks like in Catholic education.

The evening began with an opening address from the Chief Superintendent. Participants then engaged in a panel discussion featuring Division leaders who shared candid reflections on their own leadership journeys, including the challenges they encountered and the growth they experienced along the way. Questions for the panel were gathered in advance, ensuring the discussion was relevant and responsive to attendees' interests and concerns. This structure modelled the Division’s collaborative approach, drawing on the insights of multiple leaders to provide a richer and more supportive learning experience.

Attendees also participated in two breakout sessions, choosing from topics including navigating the leadership journey, understanding the application and selection process, supporting beginning leaders, and exploring leadership experiences such as the transition to principalship and the role of women in leadership. These sessions reflected the Division’s expanded mentorship model, where leadership development was supported by a network of principals, managers, consultants, and superintendents. Throughout the event, Catholicity was intentionally woven into the experience, reinforcing that leadership in Edmonton Catholic Schools is both a professional and faith-filled calling rooted in service, community, and ongoing growth.

SUPPORTING ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership development for assistant principals is supported through intentional mentorship and collaborative learning structures.

First Year Assistant Principal Support

A new program has focused on intentionally supporting the professional relationship between principals and newly appointed first-year assistant principals. This mentorship experience recognizes that a strong leadership partnership is essential to effective school operations, instructional leadership, and positive school culture.

The support is designed to lay the early foundations for trust, clear communication, and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities. Structured conversations support alignment on leadership expectations and clarify the assistant principal evaluation process, including feedback, supervision, and growth planning.

The mentorship emphasizes practical leadership development grounded in faith, service, and sound educational and instructional practices. Principals and assistant principals are supported in developing effective working routines, consistent decision-making approaches, and collaborative leadership practices that honour the context, staff, and students of their school community.

By intentionally supporting first-year leadership team formation, our Division aims to identify and establish best practices that strengthen leadership capacity, promote coherence, and support successful transitions for both leaders and schools.

New and Second Year Assistant Principal Mentorship

The New Assistant Principal Mentorship program is designed to support new Assistant Principals in developing the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for the role of a Catholic administrator within Edmonton Catholic Schools. Our 28 new Assistant Principals attended nine two-and-a-half-hour sessions aligned with Alberta Education's Leadership Quality Standard and the Catholic leadership competency, Embodying Catholic Leadership. With the support of a mentor, the sessions also address emergent needs as identified by senior administrators and principals. Professional reading, reflection and professional dialogue are integral parts of the program. Each month focuses on a specific leadership competency, with guest presenters from various departments within the Division invited to enhance the topics being explored.



The Second-Year Assistant Principal Mentorship Program is designed to provide continued support for new Assistant Principals as they progress in their leadership journey and prepare for their final evaluation in their third year. A key focus is on developing the skills needed to manage conflict effectively through critical conversations. All 31 second-year Assistant Principals participated in this program, which follows a community-of-practice model. The program is responsive to the group's needs, identifying areas for growth and drawing on both participants' collective expertise and Division specialists' knowledge to support these emerging leaders. This year, at participants' request, a school principal's expertise was utilized, and engaging presentations on instructional walkthroughs and inclusive education were very well received.

These mentorship and support programs play an essential role in building leadership capacity within Edmonton Catholic Schools, helping ensure that school-based administrators are well-equipped to lead and support their communities.

Assistant Principal Catholic Educational Leadership Meetings

Assistant Principal Catholic Educational Leadership meetings are held five times annually to support the professional and spiritual development of all assistant principals. These gatherings are collaboratively planned, organized, and facilitated by a committee of 16 assistant principals under the guidance of a Division principal, ensuring that the content reflects both system priorities and the lived experiences of school-based leaders.

Each meeting incorporates a strong faith-based foundation, including prayer, music ministry, and faith formation led by a Division chaplain. A key feature of the meetings is a testimonial delivered by an assistant principal, highlighting one of the Five Marks of Catholic Education and providing practical insight into how these principles are lived out within school communities.

The structure and content of the meetings are intentionally responsive to participant needs. Assistant principals play an active role in selecting topics and shaping agendas, resulting in relevant keynote presentations and breakout sessions that address current challenges and opportunities in leadership. This collaborative and reflective approach fosters professional growth, shared learning, and alignment with the Division's Catholic educational mission.

MENTORSHIP, TRANSITION, AND CONTINUITY OF LEADERSHIP

During the 2025–2026 school year, there was an increased focus on the role of mentorship within training programs, framed through the theme “Mentorship and the Power of Story.” An introductory mentorship meeting established a shared understanding of the mentor's role in fostering growth, connection, and professional renewal. Key messages emphasized the importance of individual professional journeys, recognizing that each path in education is unique, and that learning occurs through engagement with others. Mentors were encouraged to cultivate joy, laughter, and purpose in their daily practice, while also embracing continuous improvement and the belief that educators are

“enough” in their roles. The session highlighted the importance of reconnecting with the work's deeper purpose and sustaining passion for the profession over time.

The mentorship framework further defined expectations for mentors as facilitators of learning and dialogue, experienced guides, and reflective practitioners. Mentors were asked to actively engage in sessions, listen with intention, lead structured discussions, and create psychologically safe environments that support diverse perspectives and meaningful reflection. They were also encouraged to share personal classroom and leadership experiences, model vulnerability and adaptability, and provide constructive, empathetic feedback while maintaining professionalism and confidentiality. The use of storytelling was reinforced as a central leadership practice, with division principals sharing their own leadership journeys and inviting mentors to do the same. This approach strengthened relational trust and supported deeper reflection on leadership identity, practice, and purpose across the system.

SYSTEM COHERENCE AND LEADERSHIP SERVICES DELIVERY MODEL

Leadership Services has introduced a new delivery model for the 2025–2026 school year that emphasizes a more robust and collaborative approach to leadership development. Previously, the mentorship of prospective leaders, new principals, and assistant principals was managed by a single individual. Under the new model, this responsibility is shared among three Division principals, with additional support provided by other Division principals, managers, consultants, and superintendents. This expanded team approach strengthens the overall capacity and consistency of mentorship and training.

A key feature of the new model is the intentional relationship-building component, including visits by a Division principal to each principal and first-year assistant principal to foster trust, understanding, and ongoing support. The model also reflects a strong commitment to Catholic identity, with Catholicity intentionally integrated into every aspect of leadership development and mentorship. Together, these changes create a more comprehensive and values-driven framework for supporting school leaders.

LEADERSHIP COHORTS

Below is the cohort participation data for principals and assistant principals from 2015–2016 through 2026–2027, which reflects sustained engagement in leadership preparation, mentorship, and development and demonstrates the Division’s long-term commitment to leadership capacity building.

Principal Cohorts

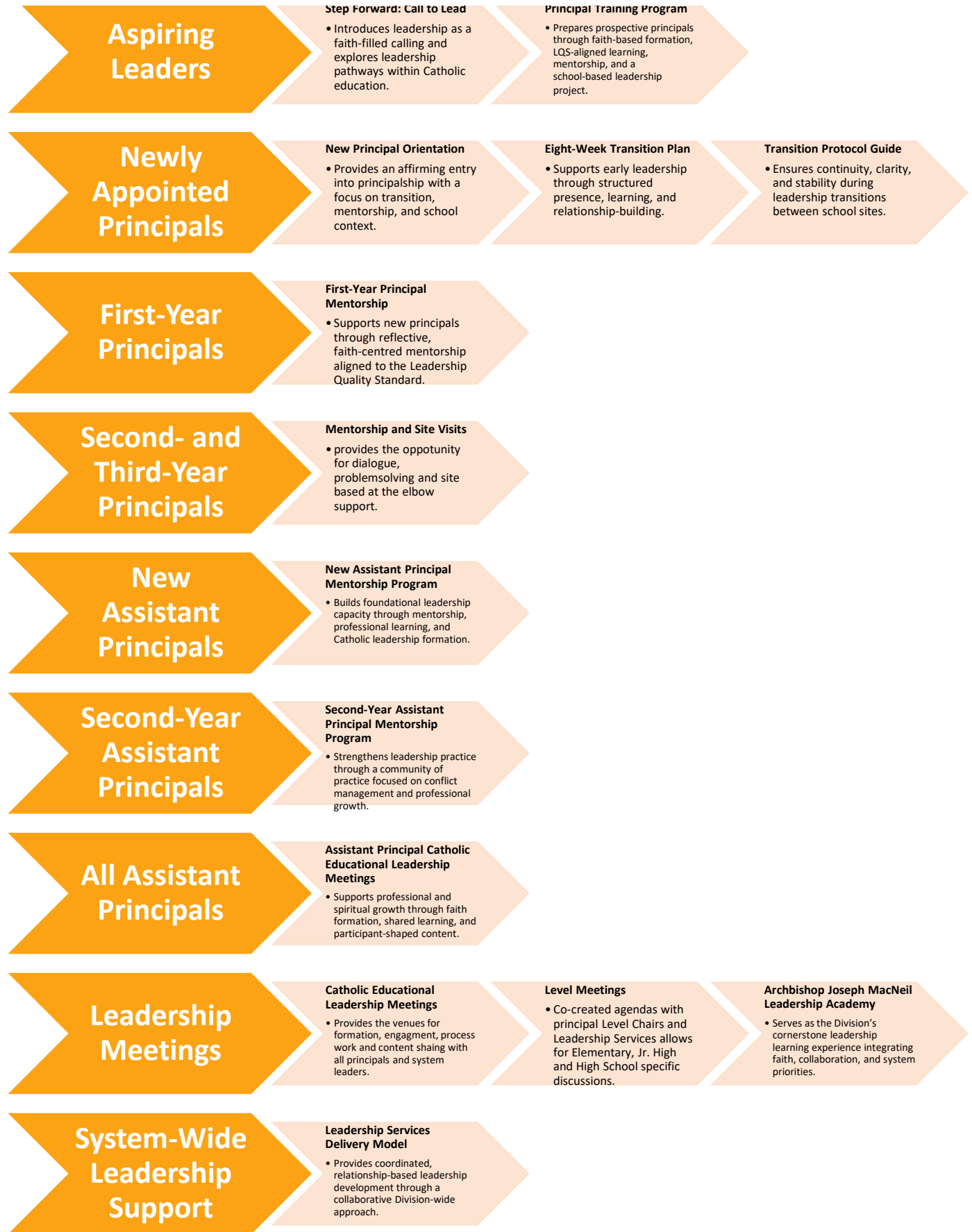
School Year	New Principals
2021–2022	17
2022–2023	8
2023–2024	13
2024–2025	14
2025 – 2026	10
2026 – 2027	7

Assistant Principal Cohorts

School Year	New Principals
2021–2022	22
2022–2023	17
2023–2024	18
2024–2025	31
2025 – 2026	28
2026 – 2027	12



LEADERSHIP SUPPORTS SUMMARY CHART



CONCLUSION

Leadership recruitment, development, orientation, and promotion within Edmonton Catholic Schools reflects a sustained commitment to forming leaders who are faithful to our mission, grounded in Catholic identity, and equipped to lead with clarity, compassion, and confidence. Through comprehensive professional learning, mentorship, transition supports, and faith-centred formation, leaders are supported in navigating complexity while remaining deeply rooted in values and vocation.

The programs and structures outlined in this report reflect an integrated, coherent approach to leadership development that strengthens individual leaders, builds collective capacity, and supports organizational effectiveness. Through continued investment in faith-filled leadership formation, Edmonton Catholic Schools nurtures leaders who contribute meaningfully to both educational excellence and the spiritual vitality of the communities they serve.





EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS