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# Improving Teacher Preparedness and Capacities: Narrowing the Gap to Support Youth Mental Health in a Catholic High School

Philip Anthony Capobianco

Western University, pcapobia@uwo.ca

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## **Abstract**

A significant proportion of youth enrolled in Ontario high schools struggle with mental health challenges, and educators lack the necessary readiness and capacities to address these issues. To address the problem of practice (PoP), this dissertation-in-practice (DiP) endeavours to create subject-specific professional learning communities (PLCs) with the dual objective of improving teacher preparation to effectively deal with student mental health challenges and foster collective teacher efficacy (CTE) at Central Catholic High School (CCHS). There is a definite correlation between the recent global pandemic, student well-being, mental health, and academic achievement. Considering this, CCHS must increase teacher interventions, engage policies that promote greater equity, and enhance coordination across its teaching staff and student support systems. The DiP is framed by critical social justice and Catholic social teaching (CST). The combined framework is incorporated into Kotter's (2014) eight-step change model, which is supplemented by collaborative teacher inquiry (CTI) and appreciative inquiry (AI), to facilitate a comprehensive, school-wide improvement plan in order to enhance collective teacher efficacy (CTE) and support student mental health. The implementation and communication strategies are guided by the Kotter change model and AI to promote learning throughout the change process.

*Keywords:* appreciative inquiry, Catholic social teaching, collective teacher efficacy, collaborative teacher inquiry, critical social justice, faith-based leadership, transformative leadership

## **Executive Summary**

The problem of practice (PoP) seeks to improve teacher efficacy, preparedness, practice, and leadership support to address students' mental health and wellness issues while integrating faith, new teaching strategies, and professional learning methods at Central Catholic High School (CCHS). Through this integration, the CCHS community can strive toward a more equitable and inclusive learning environment rooted in pursuing the common good and advancing student wellness. The lack of teacher training concerning mental health is problematic and corresponds to the gap in teacher preparedness that has formed at CCHS.

The dissertation in practice (DiP) is structured as three chapters. The first chapter introduces the organizational context, the leadership POP, and the vision for change. The second chapter discusses the leadership approach to change, the framework for leading the change process, and potential solutions to the PoP. The third chapter outlines the CIP, monitoring and evaluation strategy, and communication plan.

The unique characteristics of Catholic high schools stem from their emphasis on the spiritual realm (Wright, 2017). A vital quality for a Catholic educator is the capacity to integrate faith and learning effectively. Catholic social teaching (CST) and the Gospels, frequently described as Christ-centred, form the foundation of Catholic education. In addition, a mandate to serve the community's most vulnerable members and equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving society underpin Catholic education (Fincham, 2021). Combining critical social justice principles with CST offers a robust framework for addressing the PoP and student wellness at CCHS. By integrating critical perspectives on power, privilege, and systemic injustice with the ethical principles of Catholicism, a school can promote equity, solidarity, and human dignity (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). This synergy fosters a holistic approach to social

change, emphasizing personal transformation and structural reform while aligning with Catholic social doctrine values of justice, compassion, and love. Critical social justice and CST share common ground in advocating for social justice and human dignity. Critical theory emphasizes systemic change to address power imbalances (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Freire, 2000/1970).

Catholic social teaching, rooted in principles like the dignity of the human person and solidarity, calls for action to end oppressive situations and structures. It highlights themes such as the dignity of the human person, life, family, rights and responsibilities, care for people experiencing poverty, the dignity of work, solidarity, and environmental stewardship. Both critical theory and CST focus on empowering individuals and collectives to work toward justice within institutions and society. The alignment between critical social justice and CST underscores the shared commitment to addressing social inequalities and promoting a more just and equitable world (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Freire, 2000; Ryan & Rotman, 2007).

Geographically situated in Ontario, Canada, Central Catholic High School (CCHS) is a sizable suburban institution. Because of Catholic education's fundamental obligation to develop the whole learner, it infuses faith formation with daily learning (Institute for Catholic Education, 2018). Central Catholic High School is among many high schools overseen by the Trinity Catholic School Board (TCSB). As its principal, I assume responsibility for the problem. I will employ communication strategies to collaborate with community partners, such as system leaders, consultants, the Catholic School Council, and School Mental Health Ontario, to serve as change partners to support teaching staff to expand their knowledge and capacity to serve students. A combined worldview of CST and critical social justice will guide the PoP. This worldview inspires my faith and leadership. This blended lens of critical social justice and CST

promotes a sense of personal agency, individual freedom, and responsibility to collaborate with teachers and improve interventions and collective efficacy at CCHS. Closing the gap and maintaining sustainable change requires teachers to collaborate and expand their knowledge of faith and learning through a professional learning community (PLC). As the primary solution, a school-based, subject-specific PLC will enable teachers to engage in ongoing inquiry to develop a framework for integrating faith-based leadership, teaching, and mental health awareness.

The PoP is examined through faith-based and transformative leadership frameworks (Fincham, 2021; Shields, 2019). Both approaches focus on the leader's organizational performance and ability to support, develop, and motivate community members toward a common goal. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and weaknesses) analysis will be used to understand the PoP better. A CIP will be developed using John Kotter's (2014) change model and CTI (Donohoo, 2017a, 2017b).

Sustaining change efforts will be led by the school principal and a guiding coalition. The deployment of appreciative inquiry (AI) within the context of school leadership and daily practices will offer a transformative approach to monitoring and evaluating the change improvement plan at CCHS. Through AI, the focus shifts from problem-solving to amplifying successes and fostering innovation. This method encourages active participation and ownership among teachers, promoting sustainable change and fostering a sense of agency and empowerment. By integrating AI, the guiding coalition can effectively monitor and evaluate progress toward positive student mental health, social justice, and CST goals, ultimately creating a more inclusive educational environment where students belong and thrive.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## Acronyms

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
CCHS	Central Catholic High School
CIP	Change Implementation Plan
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
CTE	Collective Teacher Efficacy
CTI	Collective Teacher Inquiry
DiP	Dissertation-in-Practice
KMb	Knowledge Mobilization
KMbP	Knowledge Mobilization Plan
PoP	Problem of Practice
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TCSB	Trinity Catholic School Board
TLT	Transformative Leadership Theory
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
VUCA	Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity
VUCA Prime	Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Agility



## Definitions

**Catholic social teaching:** A Catholic doctrine that emphasizes the importance of human dignity, unconditional love for humanity, and the common good (Fincham, 2021; Wright, 2017).

**Coherence:** A comprehensive understanding of the nature and objectives of the work that takes multiple perspectives into account to achieve those objectives (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

**Collective teacher efficacy:** The collective self-perception that teachers in a particular school community can positively influence students, regardless of the backgrounds and experiences of those students (Donohoo et al., 2020).

**Critical social justice:** A distinct and critical theoretical approach that aims to identify and address the forms of prejudice and discrimination that individuals and groups face based on their characteristics (Ryan & Rotman, 2007).

**Critical theory:** A social justice-oriented epistemology that challenges organizational inequity, oppression, and marginalization by disrupting the status quo (Capper, 2019).

**Equity:** The principle that all students, regardless of their individual histories and circumstances, should have equal access to academic and personal success (Shields, 2019).

**School administration:** The school's leadership team comprises the principal and vice-principals.

**School culture:** A process whereby the shared approach of a school's staff evolves to influence morale, reinforce values and beliefs, and determine how things are done in specific situations (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Lewis, 2019).

## **Chapter 1: Narrowing the Gap to Support Youth Mental Health in a Catholic High School**

This dissertation-in-practice (DiP) examines how an Ontario Catholic high school principal and other staff members can address a dramatic rise in student mental health issues by fostering a culture of professional learning, improving staff capacity, and supporting students.

During the global pandemic, Central Catholic High School (CCHS) adopted virtual platforms to advance the academic program, allowing students to continue learning during the global emergency. However, many students struggled socially and emotionally due to the pandemic and public health mandates. CCHS now faces long-term challenges. The main priorities of this DiP include enhancing relationships between staff and students and understanding student mental health complexities.

### **Leadership Positionality, Agency, and Lens**

The Catholic faith influences my values and professional practice. One of my daily responsibilities at CCHS is using faith-based leadership to implement Catholic social teaching (CST) and engage students.

### **Positionality and Leadership Lens Statement**

Positionality is a researcher's fundamental standpoint during a research investigation (Rivera-McCutchen, 2021). In contrast, personal reflection entails introspection and recognizing the various facets of one's positionality, including identity, beliefs, values, and placement within a societal framework. This statement outlines my positionality and priorities, focusing on how my Catholic values are to be actualized, my agency exercised, and my capacity to enact change optimized. As a Catholic school leader, I prioritize student-supportive wellness while affirming human dignity and interdependency (Fincham, 2021; Lopez, 2020a; Shields, 2019). The PoP will

be examined from the perspective of the lived experiences of a current Catholic high school principal.

### **The connection between Catholic Social Teaching and Critical Social Justice**

The connection between Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and critical social justice lies in their shared emphasis on human dignity, social equity, and the preferential option for the poor, advocating for systemic changes to address social injustices and inequalities. While CST grounds its principles in Catholic teachings, critical social justice utilizes a secular framework to analyze and challenge power dynamics and oppression within societal structures (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Freire, 2000; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). Through its emphasis on human dignity, I believe CST meshes effectively with critical social justice, encouraging hope for a better future for struggling students. Please see Appendix A.

### **Identity**

One's identity and overall positionality constitute the points from which transformative agency is exercised (Deszca et al., 2020). My identity stems from an intersection of faith, CST, cultural values, lived experiences, and beliefs. Furthermore, as a leader, I recognize the importance of intersectionality, which makes each person unique (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Crenshaw, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2019).

I am a middle-class Caucasian male of Italian descent whose great-grandparents arrived in Canada in the late 19th century. I am also a practicing Catholic who attended public elementary and secondary Catholic schools in Toronto. My identity will help centre the problem of practice (PoP) and create a benchmark to measure and check for personal biases. I am a leader who combines faith-based and transformative leadership approaches to support social justice, equity, and inclusive education. However, I am also cognizant of my power and privilege. I am

committed to unlearning one's biases and to new learning regarding student mental health and wellness.

### **Epistemological Lens and Perspective**

My perspective comes from a critical worldview seeking equitable learning environments for marginalized students. Critical thought calls for transformative action, and asserts that hope exists for improved student wellness and outcomes (Capper, 2019; Shields, 2019). I utilize a critical approach to knowledge in combination with CST, which ensures a culture of faith, social justice, high staff expectations, and student engagement (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Capper, 2019; Fincham, 2021; Halstead, 2014). My passionate commitment to Catholic faith formation, equity, and communal belonging guides my professional practice. This DiP is grounded in CST and critical social justice.

### **Agency**

As an Ontario high school principal, my agency aligns with the Catholic school-level leadership competencies outlined in the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) (Leithwood, 2017). As a principal, I have agency and positional authority in some aspects of my work but limited choice in others (Deszca et al., 2020), particularly around provincial and school board directives. An essential part of my critical thinking is questioning the status quo by assessing people and events contributing to oppression (Rexhepi & Torres, 2011). This approach provides a framework for analyzing the PoP, addressing inequities, and supporting marginalized youth.

As a transformative leader, I can articulate a vision that enables a whole-school approach to positive student wellness. As a principal, I can facilitate organizational learning and change. I have the authority and responsibility to implement strategies to enhance the mental health and

well-being of CCHS students. As a leader, my position in the organizational hierarchy gives me authority and positional power to influence staff, students, and other stakeholders.

I possess personal authority and credibility due to my two decades of experience in school administration (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Lewis, 2019; Northouse, 2016). In this leadership position, it is understood that power must be used ethically and with care (Lewis, 2019; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021). My faith-inspired moral compass is robust, and I make decisions in the best interest of the staff, students, and families (Duignan, 2020; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021).

### **Leadership Approach and Philosophy**

My leadership philosophy is rooted in the Catholic faith and imbued with integrity, ethics, and moral purpose. In addition, as a settler, I am cognizant of my privilege and am committed to decolonization, serving struggling and underserved students (Khalifa et al., 2016; Kuehn, 2020; Tuana, 2014). In my professional practice as an ethical leader, I strive to be equitable, inclusive, and ethical (Gupta & Rous, 2016; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021).

Public education must change to support underserved communities and transform all students into critical thinkers, responsible citizens, and agents of social change (Khalifa et al., 2016; Kuehn, 2020). The Catholic school system recently acknowledged the importance of supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ staff and students. This significant step within the system's structures will positively affect communities. Catholic schools must continue outreach strategies to promote social justice, tolerance, and inclusion for all individuals.

### **Leadership Lenses**

I am inspired by social justice and faith-inspired leadership to support underrepresented communities (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Bruce et al., 2019; Fincham, 2021; Halstead, 2014). Moreover, I believe an inclusive school community is possible through a praxis of faith,

inclusive education, and interdependence.

Catholic social teaching aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its Calls to Action (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; TRC, 2015). As the school leader, these calls require me to lead reconciliation and community restoration (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). However, a surging teacher workload at CCHS and drawn-out provincial contract negotiations have led to a challenging school culture characterized by numerous students in distress and staff struggling with their own mental health issues (TCSB, 2023a). My focus on faith, shared values, and transformative change seeks to reshape the culture at CCHS and improve teachers' collective well-being and efficacy (Donohoo et al., 2020; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Lopez, 2020b; Tuana, 2014).

### **Faith-Based Leadership**

Faith-based leadership devoted to the teachings of Jesus Christ centers on principles of love, humility, service, and justice. Leaders are called to embody Christ's example by prioritizing compassion, selflessness, and care for the marginalized and oppressed. This leadership style emphasizes activist leadership, where the leader's primary role is to serve others, fostering a community rooted in mutual respect, support, and empathy. It also upholds the importance of integrity, ethical behaviour, and a commitment to truth and justice, reflecting Jesus' teachings and actions (King, 2021; Wright, 2017). Additionally, faith-based leaders are guided by a sense of divine purpose and moral accountability, striving to inspire and uplift their communities while working towards the common good.

Christ's teachings are inherently student-focused. They emphasize the importance of human dignity and nurture and guide individuals in their personal and spiritual growth.

He employed parables and practical lessons that were relatable and accessible, meeting people where they were in their understanding and experiences. Christ's approach is inclusive and compassionate, valuing each person's potential and encouraging them to develop their faith and character (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018). By fostering a supportive and caring environment, he empowered his followers to ask questions, seek deeper understanding, and grow in their discipleship. This focus on individualized attention, encouragement, and personal development aligns with my principles that prioritize Catholic faith-formation and student wellness.

At CCHS, faith-based school leadership is embedded in the school's culture, and this leadership style emphasizes the significance of a person's relationship with Jesus Christ. One of my daily responsibilities is conveying and applying CST to the school community. This leadership approach places students' needs at the centre of all decision-making (Fincham, 2021; Halstead, 2014; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021). In Ontario, Catholic teachings are integrated throughout the K–12 Ontario curriculum, and Catholic schools are moral and spiritual institutions that honour and celebrate human dignity (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Fincham, 2021; Halstead, 2014).

### **Transformative Leadership**

I am inspired by transformative leadership (Shields, 2019), a constant practice that demands continual refinement and reflection on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The transformative leader challenges the status quo, dismantles learning barriers, engages diverse voices, and identifies strategies for marginalized students. As the transformative principal of CCHS, I embrace my calling to serve students, their families, and their communities.

Transformative Leadership Theory (TLT) is a critical leadership paradigm that fosters inclusion, equity, and social justice within organizations and communities. It challenges traditional hierarchical leadership models by advocating for participatory and collaborative approaches that empower all group members, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds (Shields, 2019). Central to TLT is the commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and promoting an inclusive culture where diverse voices are heard and valued. Leaders practicing TLT prioritize creating environments where equity is a foundational principle, ensuring that opportunities and resources are distributed fairly and all individuals have the support they need to thrive.

At its core, TLT recognizes that social justice is integral to effective leadership. Leaders are responsible for achieving organizational goals, addressing societal injustices, and contributing to the greater good. TLT emphasizes ethical decision-making, critical reflection, and a proactive stance against discrimination and inequality. It encourages leaders to be change agents who inspire and mobilize others toward positive social change (Bruce et al., 2019). By fostering a sense of shared purpose and collective responsibility, transformative leaders help build resilient, equitable communities where everyone has the opportunity to succeed and contribute meaningfully. This theory underscores that effective school leadership involves a steadfast commitment to justice and the transformation of school structures for the betterment of all students.

According to Shields (2019), the tenets of TLT mandate that the school principal initiate a change process that requires knowing oneself, one's organization, and the community. Research indicates that transformative leadership can foster a learning environment that benefits all students (Shields, 2019). This position aligns with my organizational vision and praxis of



faith and care. Bruce et al. (2019) explain that transformative leadership enables leaders to reframe the world, inspire change, and enhance the lives of learners. A central tenet of transformative leadership currently employed at CCHS concerns engaging and valuing student voices.

Due to Christ's teachings on outreach, TLT synchronizes well with CST and faith-based leadership. Through transformative action, TLT encourages school leaders to disrupt inequitable school cultures, deficit thinking, and unconscious bias (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Shields, 2019). As the school's diversity increases, the twin concepts of critique and possibility embedded in a transformative leadership stance become more urgent and applicable (Bruce et al., 2019). Transformative leadership theory, conceptualized as an individual and collective practice, can facilitate teacher participation and agency in planning and implementing socially just change (Bruce et al., 2019; Ryan & Rottman, 2007; Shields, 2019). Transformative leadership is critically educative (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). It recognizes not only the current conditions in the school but also the need to reconceive possibilities to achieve student success, wellness, and belonging. According to research, TLT can foster an inclusive learning environment for all students (Shields & Hesbol, 2019). This position is consistent with my leadership philosophy and core values.

### **Organizational Context**

Schools have educational, civic, and social responsibilities to promote the development of children and youth. The mission of Catholic high schools in Ontario is to teach, lead, and learn according to the teachings of Jesus Christ (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018). The primary mission of CCHS is to provide students with Catholic faith formation in an inclusive and innovative learning environment.

## **Background**

CCHS is a grade 7–12 suburban high school that has operated for over 40 years. There are 1,200 students and 120 teachers and support staff at the school. The high school has a long tradition of community leadership, social justice, and faith-inspired character development (TCSB, 2023b). From a system leadership perspective, the Trinity Catholic School Board (TCSB) governs CCHS and 14 other Catholic high schools in Eastern Ontario, Canada. The TCSB is a publicly funded separate school board. The board operates schools in a large urban area, with a total student population of approximately 50,000. The board's executive council is led by a director and 11 superintendents who supervise schools across the system.

## **Location and Urban Dynamics**

CCHS is located in an urban area in Eastern Ontario with approximately one million inhabitants. Tourism, public service, and technology contribute to the stability of the regional economy. CCHS is in an affluent suburb with a mix of single homes and townhouses. However, the city has a housing affordability problem, exacerbated by rising mortgage rates. Due to a large French-speaking population in eastern Ontario, CCHS has attracted families from French-speaking regions worldwide. Many families have arrived from war-ravaged communities in Africa, Central America, and Haiti (TCSB 2023a, 2023b).

Each day, high school students are instructed by subject teachers for four 75-minute blocks. The school environment also provides opportunities for the social and emotional development of students within a faith-based environment. In 2021, after many months of outreach to students, I created the Black Students Association and the Indigenous Students Group. Although in its early stages, engaging student voices at CCHS is essential for advancing

positive mental health, belonging, and student wellness (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Mitra, 2018).

Creating the Black Students Association and an Indigenous Students Group aligns with CCH's mission of inclusion and Catholic faith formation by fostering a supportive and respectful environment that honours the dignity of every student. These student groups provide crucial social justice platforms for marginalized voices, ensuring that the unique cultural and historical experiences of Black and Indigenous students are acknowledged, recognized and celebrated. This initiative reflects the Catholic values of solidarity, justice, and the preferential option for the marginalized, as it actively works to address systemic inequalities and promote equity within the school community (King, 2021). By encouraging intercultural dialogue and understanding, these groups help cultivate a sense of belonging and unity, reinforcing the school's commitment to forming compassionate, socially responsible individuals who live out their Catholic faith in service to others.

### **Culture of Well-Being**

CST and critical social justice highlight wellness, inclusion, dignity and engaging other voices (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). When prioritizing well-being, a school must create an environment where students feel safe, supported, and valued (Mitra, 2018; Shields, 2019). This sense of security and belonging is fundamental for reducing stress and anxiety, which are common among high school students due to academic pressures and social challenges (TCSB, 2023a). By implementing comprehensive well-being programs that include mental health literacy, counselling services, and stress management resources, a school can help students develop resilience and coping skills. Such programs also encourage students to seek help when needed, reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues and promoting a

proactive approach to mental wellness. A culture of student well-being in a high school is crucial for fostering student mental health and overall wellness. Currently, this culture is extremely weak at CCHS (TCSB, 2023a; 2023b).

Moreover, a culture of student well-being positively impacts academic performance and personal development. When students feel mentally and emotionally healthy, they are more engaged, motivated, and capable of focusing on their studies (CMHA, 2023). This approach to education recognizes that academic success is intertwined with emotional and psychological health. Schools prioritizing well-being create an inclusive atmosphere where diverse needs are met, fostering empathy, respect, and mutual support among students. This enhances individual growth and builds a more compassionate school community (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; People for Education, 2023; Zhao, 2020). Ultimately, emphasizing student well-being equips young people with the tools to thrive inside and outside the classroom, preparing them for future challenges and successes. The teaching staff and administration at CCHS now recognize these important factors and have made them priorities in school improvement and planning (TCSB, 2023b).

### **Organizational Decision-Making**

Central Catholic High School has a hierarchy and defined roles. Each school role has clearly defined responsibilities centred on the school's Catholic mission and vision. The school is community-oriented and has an elected Catholic School Council where parents' opinions are valued.

Historically, the school's leadership is structured in a top-down, traditional manner. However, as a transformative school principal, I work collaboratively with three vice-principals and teaching and support staff to advance equity, diversity, and inclusive education. The principal's responsibilities include staff and student wellness, school operations, and the entire

instructional program. As is typical, I work closely with the superintendent, Catholic School Council, parent leaders, and community partners.

In Ontario, the school principal has the authority and agency to amend or change decisions based on many factors, including strategic commitments, coherence, instructional leadership, system objectives, and staff workload. The relationship between the administration and the four staff union organizations is stable and amicable.

### **Political Context**

The organizational values of TCSB reflect a combination of Catholic and conservative thought (Green, 2017; TCSB, 2021). Recently, there has been a shift in Catholic schools toward more liberal values, especially regarding diversity, and social justice initiatives through the lens of CST. The TCSB is committed to gathering feedback from its staff, students, and partners through school climate surveys. The last survey was administered in spring 2023 (TCSB, 2023a).

The political environment influences school culture, institutional improvement, and organizational transformation (Bolman & Deal, 2021). At CCHS, the political context impacts the PoP due to a strained school budget, daily staffing shortages, and the unstable relationship between the provincial government and Ontario teachers. The human resources framework (Bolman & Deal, 2021) is also pertinent because the school's mission is to serve students' faith needs and develop the whole student. As in other Catholic high schools in Ontario, the provincially mandated curriculum at CCHS is designed to inculcate Catholic values and Christ's teachings by encouraging students to grow intellectually, physically, and spiritually to live their faith and serve their local community.

## **Economic Context**

The TCSB receives annual funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education to construct and maintain schools, hire and retain personnel, and offer student programs. The number of full-time students enrolled at CCHS is a limiting factor for school funding. Extensive budgetary needs limit the principal's ability to budget funds for student mental health and wellness.

## **Social Context**

The TCSB's executive council establishes the district's strategic priorities, which trustees approve. Meeting district priorities through setting high expectations, innovative thinking, and championing inclusive learning can be linked to student and teacher well-being (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Khalifa et al., 2016; Kuehn, 2020). Strengthening relationships through respectful collaboration between staff and students is a crucial priority of the school principal.

## **Macro, Meso, and Micro Contexts**

Many political, social, and economic factors impact student mental health and wellness. At the macro level, CCHS is responsive to provincial priorities and policies concerning student mental health (Public Health Ontario, 2021). In particular, the school principal and school board are concerned about the effect of increasing stressors on learners in grades 7–12 that originate at the macro level (TCSB, 2023a). At the meso level, the school partners with system staff and School Mental Health Ontario to serve many students with mental health challenges. However, system staff are overwhelmed with demands across the school board.

At the micro level, the 2023 school climate survey raises concerns about deteriorating student mental health at CCHS. Most students and parents are unaware of the mental health resources available to them (TCSB, 2023a). Moreover, the importance of mental health literacy and awareness of opportunities for students to advocate for themselves cannot be emphasized

enough. Positive, personal, and cultural identity interdependence uniquely contributes to students' sense of belonging and wellness at CCHS.

### **Oppressive Systems**

Oppressive systems harm the mental health of student populations (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2020a). The experience of oppression and how it invalidates human dignity (in forms such as racism, sexism, and homophobia) are directly linked to the worsening of student mental health. Because of this, many students refuse to attend school and struggle silently at home (CMHA, 2023; TCSB, 2023a). Parents have also voiced serious concerns about the deteriorating mental health of their children, the lack of resources available, and their children's absenteeism during mental health struggles (TCSB, 2023a). As part of the principal's strategizing, CCHS staff have emphasized that student mental health is a priority through school improvement planning (TCSB, 2023b).

Raising one's level of self-awareness is the first step toward change (Lopez, 2020a). Shields (2019) states that a transformative leader works to improve the well-being of individuals and the community. With a growing understanding of reconciliation, equity, and social justice at CCHS, the school can become a community of belonging and positive student wellness (Lopez, 2020b; Shields & Hesbol, 2019). At CCHS, staff engage in anti-oppression professional learning, which creates opportunities to review existing perspectives, oppressive structures, and pedagogies while highlighting barriers to mental health support. The entire community is responsible for addressing the complex issues of intersectionality, racism, and bias implicit within school culture (Bruce et al., 2019; Capper, 2019; Lopez, 2020a; TCSB, 2023b).

## **Social Justice Context**

The predominant social justice issues related to race, ethnicity, mental health, belonging, and Indigenous worldviews are central at CCHS (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2020b; TCSB, 2023b). The existence of an unequal service system and the challenges posed by a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) global environment poses significant obstacles to positive student mental health and school improvement (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Gupta & Rous, 2016; Khalifa et al., 2016). Furthermore, a series of external and internal forces, such as the global pandemic and public mandates, impact organizational change at CCHS (Deszca et al., 2020; TCSB, 2023a; Vaillancourt et al., 2021).

## **The Importance of a Faith-Based Culture at CCHS**

A school's culture has three levels: artifacts, values, and basic assumptions (Schein, 2016). It is the leader's responsibility to learn about and navigate these levels. The growth of my understanding of CCHS's culture has influenced my leadership decisions and approach to change processes. Despite the commitment to create a safe, accepting, and inclusive environment, marginalized and racialized students remain underserved at CCHS (TCSB, 2023a; TCSB, 2023b). These students experience a lack of mental health resources and support at CCHS and across Ontario (CMHA, 2023; Public Health Ontario, 2021; School Mental Health Ontario, 2021; TCSB, 2023a).

As moral and spiritual institutions, Catholic high schools must respect and value human dignity and support struggling learners (Buchanan & Chapman, 2014; Fincham, 2021; Halstead, 2014). The school culture at CCHS is centred on the revolutionary teachings of Jesus Christ, and daily faith formation aims to instill in students a commitment to living out Christ's teachings in all aspects of their lives.



### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

Each day, I witness more students arriving at CCHS with heightened anxiety, stress, and signs of depression. Mental health emergency referrals to school administration are surging. Students regularly arrive in the main office seeking assistance from the school administration and staff. Since most teaching staff are unprepared to manage student mental health issues, their interventions are often ineffective, inadequate, and inconsistent. Students and their families require immediate assistance since mental health impacts student achievement, social-emotional learning, and family life (Cost et al., 2022; TCSB, 2023a; Vaillancourt et al., 2021).

### **Problem of Practice: Statement**

At Central Catholic High School, the PoP concerns the gap between the intensification of student mental health needs and the lack of teacher preparedness, practice and capacities to support youth wellness. I approach this problem using the combined frameworks of CST and critical social justice and this will be discussed further in the DiP.

UNICEF refers to the 1.6 billion students worldwide as a lost generation due to the impact of the global pandemic on their mental health (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). In Canada, mental health issues affect many high school students, and frustrated parents are pleading for assistance from their school communities (Mahboubi & Higazi, 2022; People for Education, 2023). In 2022, 25% of Canadian adolescents aged 12 to 18 were affected by mental health issues. Half of these students have been diagnosed with clinical depression, and 39% suffer from extreme anxiety (CMHA, 2023).

### **Equity and Reconciliation**

Critical theory envisions a world where globalization challenges the status quo and encourages radical educational reform (Rexhepi & Torres, 2011; Shields, 2019). In order to

inspire substantial and lasting change at CCHS, I acknowledge and validate the contributions of Indigenous and racialized communities in deconstructing systemic racism. Simultaneously, I underscore the responsibility of settlers to confront and contest the hegemony of European ideologies and knowledge (Althaus, 2020; Lopez, 2020a). Endeavours undertaken by non-Indigenous populations to confront and mitigate the consequences of colonization have often been met with frustration, lacking the active participation of Indigenous communities, leaders, and elders (Lopez, 2020a; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Staff at CCHS have initiated professional learning, including engaging Indigenous communities about Indigenous student wellness, to uncover and unlearn these issues.

The lack of student mental health resources at CCHS is fundamentally an equity issue, as it disproportionately affects students from marginalized, underserved and Indigenous communities. These students often face additional stressors, such as socioeconomic challenges, discrimination, and cultural barriers that can exacerbate mental health issues. Without adequate mental health support, these students are at a significant disadvantage, impacting their academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being (TCSB, 2023a). Ensuring equitable access to mental health resources means recognizing and addressing these disparities through the lens of CST and critical social justice and providing all students with the support they need to succeed. The current system at CCHS is not serving student wellness, leading to many problems (TCSB, 2023a). By investing in new approaches concerning student mental health resources, CCHS can help level the playing field, allowing every student to thrive.

Addressing student mental health is also a crucial step towards reconciliation, particularly at CCHS and its diverse student population, including Indigenous students. Reconciliation involves acknowledging past injustices and taking concrete actions to heal and build trust with

Indigenous communities (TRC, 2015). Providing adequate mental health support is one such action, as it demonstrates a commitment to the well-being of all students (Lopez, 2020b). For Indigenous students, this can include culturally sensitive counselling and programs that respect and incorporate traditional healing practices. Unfortunately, these resources are not available at CCHS. By prioritizing student mental health resources and support, CCHS can create a more equitable, inclusive and supportive environment, fostering a sense of belonging and community. This approach helps repair historical harms and lays the foundation for a more just and equitable future, where all students are valued and supported in their journey toward mental and emotional well-being (CMHA, 2023; Fullan, 2021).

As part of its mission, CCHS is currently seeking and implementing reconciliation with its Indigenous students and families by actively acknowledging past injustices and fostering an inclusive, respectful environment that honours Indigenous cultures and traditions (TRC, 2015; TCSB, 2023b). This commitment involves creating and maintaining honest dialogues with Indigenous communities to understand their unique needs and perspectives. Teachers are implementing culturally relevant curricula and celebrating Indigenous heritage through events and activities. By integrating these initiatives, the school addresses historical and ongoing disparities and upholds CST and the Catholic values of justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity. This approach helps build mutual respect, ensuring Indigenous students and their families feel valued and supported within the school community.

### **The Desirable Organizational State**

Central Catholic High School must do better to serve students and families. With the support of committed staff members, the school principal and the three vice-principals must rebuild trust with students, families, and community partners. There is also a need for the school

principal and staff to address the challenges caused by VUCA in education systems and society (Bruce et al., 2019; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). As the school principal, this priority requires me to build a collegial bridge with each teacher, emphasizing that change begins with each staff member (Donohoo et al., 2020). Improving teachers' collective efficacy has been shown to improve student wellness and outcomes (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; Fullan, 2021).

Professional learning and expertise are required at CCHS to meet students' mental health needs effectively. Without adequate professional development, teachers cannot safely and effectively address students' mental health needs (Netolicky, 2020; People for Education, 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). In addition, many teachers at CCHS struggle with their own mental health issues, which impact their professional practice and daily work (TCSB, 2023a).

### **Framing the Problem of Practice**

Hathaway and Norton (2018) claim that moving to prospective remedies without first understanding how the issue occurred is one of the most frequent mistakes while addressing a PoP. A leader must also assess the time and resources needed to bridge the gap between the present and intended outcome by looking at the scale, importance, and urgency of a problem (Deszca et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021; Hathaway & Norton, 2018). CCHS students require assistance developing the self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship-building skills necessary for advocacy and success. Teachers require further knowledge and learning with regard to best practices concerning students with mental health issues (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Netolicky, 2020; Vaillancourt et al., 2021).

### **Framing**

Reframing a problem in this way enhances a leader's ability to conceptualize a broader range of potential solutions (Deszca et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021). CCHS is organized

conventionally, with the executive officer being the principal. The principal has historically been in charge of all decisions in the school. This hierarchical structure has started to change under my leadership due to a cultural movement toward shared teacher leadership. Unfortunately, there remains ambiguity regarding the coordination of tasks and responsibilities, including early detection mechanisms, in-school and community care access, and accommodations for students' mental health needs. The school lacks a clear strategy for handling the student mental health crisis.

### **Framing the PoP through Catholic Social Teaching and Critical Social Justice**

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) provides a faith-inspired, moral and ethical framework to address the student mental health crisis by emphasizing human dignity, the common good, and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. CST insists on the inherent worth of every student, which mandates that schools create environments where every student feels valued and supported (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; King, 2021). Addressing mental health is not just about providing services but fostering a culture of care that recognizes the needs of youth. This includes mental, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions. Since CCHS is guided by CST, it must advocate for systemic changes that ensure all students have access to the mental health resources they need to thrive, reflecting the CST principle that society should be structured in a way that supports the well-being of all its members (Wright, 2017).

Critical social justice complements CST by focusing on equity and the dismantling of systemic barriers that prevent marginalized groups from accessing mental health resources. Critical social justice highlights how factors such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual orientation intersect to impact students' mental health differently. In this view, addressing the mental health crisis at CCHS requires an understanding of these intersecting oppressions and

actively working to eliminate them (King, 2021; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). CCHS must provide resources and ensure that these resources are culturally sensitive and accessible to all students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities. This means training staff to recognize and address biases, and ensuring that support services are inclusive and equitable.

### **Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Support at CCHS**

Schools should implement comprehensive mental health programs that include preventive measures, education, and immediate support services. These programs should be designed to reduce stigma around mental health issues, encouraging students to seek help without fear of judgment. By fostering an environment where students feel safe and supported, schools can better address the root causes of mental health issues and promote overall well-being (Fullan, 2021). Combining CST and critical social justice emphasizes creating an inclusive and supportive school culture where student wellness is prioritized (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Freire, 2000; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). This involves actively listening to students' voices, particularly those who have been marginalized, and incorporating their feedback into mental health initiatives at CCHS.

### **Addressing Systemic Inequities**

Through the combined lens of CST and CSJ, addressing the student mental health crisis at CCHS also involves tackling the broader systemic inequities that contribute to mental health disparities. This includes advocating for school policies that address poverty, improve access to mental healthcare, and ensure safe, supportive learning environments for all students (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). CCHS must partner with families, community organizations, and policymakers to create a network of support that extends beyond the school

walls. This approach recognizes that students' mental health is influenced by a wide range of factors and requires comprehensive, community-wide efforts to address effectively.

### **Building a Compassionate Community**

Finally, integrating CST and critical social justice in addressing the student mental health crisis encourages building a compassionate community at CCHS. This community should be rooted in the principles of justice, equity, and the inherent dignity of every person (King, 2021). CCHS must educate students about these values, promoting empathy, understanding, and solidarity among all school community members. By doing so, students will develop into compassionate, socially conscious individuals who cannot only seek help for their own mental health needs but are also equipped to support others. This compassionate approach aligns with the mission of both CST and critical social justice, ultimately aiming to create a more just and caring school community (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Freire, 2000; Ryan & Rotman, 2007).

Any transformative plan must include the teachers since those responsible for making the changes and narrowing the gap must be involved in the design, change, and implementation process (Kotter & von Ameln, 2019). However, undeveloped skill sets, gaps in training, and an increasing number of students who are not appropriately served all point to a crisis at CCHS. Through the school improvement planning process, CCHS teachers have repeatedly informed the administration that they need assistance with student mental health challenges (TCSB, 2023b).

### **An Outdated Student Mental Health Model**

Only 4% of Ontario high school students sought mental health assistance during the global pandemic in 2021 (Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Many of these students are now struggling in school (CMHA, 2023). At CCHS, students and parents have cited mental health as a barrier to student success, student achievement and wellness (TCSB, 2023a).

## **External Data**

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), more than 50% of young Canadians seeking mental health services at school had difficulty obtaining school support and resources (People for Education, 2023). This surge in student mental distress, combined with its disproportionate effect on marginalized students and the low rate of students seeking and obtaining help, constitutes a complex national school crisis (TCSB, 2023a, 2023b; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Student mental health issues have also increased teacher workloads and stress among school principals (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Cost et al., 2022; People for Education, 2023; Zhao, 2020). Teacher wellness, student learning, and student well-being are strongly interconnected (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Shields, 2019). Mentally distressed youth are poorly served at Canadian schools, and teachers across the country tend to use a reactive, outmoded, and fragmented mental health model (CMHA, 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021; Wang, 2022). Approximately 88% of Canadian teachers require additional training to understand the complexities of youth mental health (CMHA, 2023; Sokal et al., 2020; Wang, 2022).

## **Internal Data**

90% of Ontario schools require more mental health resources (Mahboubi & Higazi, 2022; Mojtehdzadeh, 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). According to Ontario school principals, student mental health issues are severely straining the school system and Ontario teachers feel the education system is nearing collapse (CMHA, 2023; People for Education, 2023).

At CCHS, a 2023 school climate survey, which was required by the district, revealed that students and parents had significant concerns about mental health. Students cited their mental health as a barrier to academic and school success, whereas parents cited mental health issues as pronounced and impacting student attendance and development. Teachers also cited their mental



health as a significant factor in their work lives. At CCHS, many students with mental health issues struggle with self-advocacy (TCSB, 2023a).

### **Teacher Practice**

Teacher unpreparedness significantly impacts student mental health by creating an environment where students' emotional and psychological needs are not adequately addressed. When teachers lack training in mental health awareness, literacy and support strategies, they may be unable to recognize signs of distress or provide appropriate interventions. This can lead to unaddressed issues escalating, causing students to feel misunderstood, unsupported, and isolated (CMHA, 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021; Wang, 2022). Additionally, unprepared teachers might inadvertently contribute to a stressful classroom atmosphere through ineffective classroom management, inconsistent discipline, or lack of empathy and sensitivity. Such an environment can exacerbate anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues among students, making it difficult for them to focus on their studies and participate fully in school life at CCHS (TCSB, 2023a).

Furthermore, teacher unpreparedness can perpetuate stigma and misinformation about mental health within the school community. Without proper training, teachers might unknowingly reinforce negative stereotypes or fail to create a safe space for students to discuss their mental health concerns. This lack of support can discourage students from seeking help, leading to feelings of hopelessness and further deteriorating their mental health (CMHA, 2023; Zhao, 2020). Additionally, when teachers are not equipped with the tools to address their stress and burnout, it can negatively impact their ability to effectively support their students, creating a cycle of distress and disengagement (CMHA, 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021; TCSB, 2023a; Wang, 2022). Therefore, investing in comprehensive mental health training for teachers is

crucial for fostering a supportive, understanding, and proactive school environment that prioritizes student well-being at CCHS.

### **Equity, Social Justice, and Mental Health**

Black, Indigenous, and racialized students, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, newcomers, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, students with pre-existing health conditions, and students with special needs have been disproportionately affected by pandemic-related stress (Cost et al., 2022; CMHA, 2023; Kuehn, 2020; Public Health Ontario, 2021). It is challenging for marginalized, racialized, and underserved students to manage their mental health problems and the stigma that comes with them (Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Teachers have emphasized that marginalized students and their families are excluded from the conversation about mental health. On the other hand, teachers often fail to understand the backgrounds of marginalized students, and consequently, student anxiety is increased (CMHA, 2023; Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021; Sokal et al., 2020). Due to the cultural stigma associated with mental health, struggling students fear being judged and therefore do not seek assistance (CMHA, 2023; Vaillancourt, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). To create a socially just environment at CCHS, teachers must expand their professional learning with a focus on equity and student well-being (Fullan, 2021; Lopez, 2020a, 2020b).

### **Questions Arising From the Problem of Practice**

All three of the PoP's main questions are related to the DiP. The first examines the school's culture. Because of the authority the Ministry of Education provides Ontario school principals, the effort to bring about change is entirely within my sphere of influence, control, and power. I am the one who has begun the process of transformation at CCHS.

### **Question 1**

Question 1 asks: What cultural strategies can CCHS initiate to alter the staff's views about student mental health and promote teachers' professional growth? The attitudes and behaviours of teachers towards mental health must be altered and a student-centred school culture must be promoted (CMHA, 2023; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). Research suggests that professional collaboration will assist teachers through this challenging endeavour and expand the school's culture of care (Fullan, 2021). The result will be the improvement of collective teacher efficacy (CTE). This change will also challenge educators to believe in their shared potential to serve students and inspire all learners with hope for the future (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Shields, 2019; Zhao, 2020).

### **Question 2**

Question 2 asks: How can the perspectives of underserved and marginalized students be elevated at CCHS through the combined lens of CST and critical social justice? In school communities, the opinions of underrepresented students and their families are frequently ignored in favour of a focus on the perspectives of privileged students. This promotes disparities (Khalifa et al., 2016; King, 2021; Kuehn, 2020). An inclusive school culture cannot be developed without providing a forum for the opinions of oppressed students (Bruce et al., 2019; Mitra, 2018).

### **Question 3**

Question 3 asks: What practices can the school principal establish so that teachers can identify systemic injustices and personal biases, undo harmful barriers, and learn new methods to serve students? Transformative leadership theory and faith-based leadership can be utilized to increase awareness, assist leaders in identifying social injustices, undo practices that support inequities, and foster best practices that benefit all students, notably the marginalized. These

approaches offer a combined lens of faith, equity and social justice by raising important issues such as systemic barriers, unheard voices, and marginalized populations (Fincham, 2021; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Halstead, 2014; Wright, 2017).

### **Challenges Emerging From the Problem of Practice**

Ensuring adequate support for vulnerable students in Canadian schools is challenging (Wang et al., 2021). Additionally, there is a link between students' learning challenges and mental health (Boak et al., 2020; CMHA, 2023), which creates school attendance issues and learning gaps for struggling students. These difficulties underline schools' lack of resources to assist their students adequately. This does not, however, imply that external program referrals should constitute the solution (Boak et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). The demand for youth mental health services has far exceeded available Ministry funding, and the capacity for a family to access external support is correlated to their financial resources and community networks (CMHA, 2023). Supporting and fostering the resilience of students dealing with mental health issues is at the heart of this PoP (TCSB, 2023a). In order to encourage equity and care, CCHS needs to provide timely resources and interventions within the school environment.

The concept of well-being also concerns staff. Teachers are now at greater risk of distress, making it difficult to manage their professional duties and form supportive teacher-student relationships (Lever et al., 2017; Sokal et al., 2020; Zhao, 2020). The daily demands of teaching, assessment and evaluation, inadequate classroom management techniques, and lower academic functioning have all been linked to increased teacher workload (Lever et al., 2017). Teacher mental health is crucial in improving the learning culture at CCHS (Sokal et al., 2020; TCSB, 2023a). Additionally, teacher wellness and student achievement are linked (CMHA, 2023; Fazel & Newby, 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

### **Leadership-Focused Vision for Change**

My inspiration for a leadership-focused vision for change comes from the current experiences of students with mental health challenges and my many discussions with them. These students demonstrate frequent absences, lower grades, and disengagement from school (TCSB, 2023a). Increasing mental health literacy is essential to foster practices that support inclusion, promote wellness, encourage a sense of student connection to caring adults, and enhance academic performance. The manner that teachers view students with mental health issues impacts teacher practice and interventions (Wang et al., 2021; Willis et al., 2019). Teachers can also encourage students to seek support by actively decreasing the stigma associated with mental health conditions and normalizing access to support and resources (CMHA, 2023; Harding et al., 2019; Vaillancourt et al., 2021).

My vision, grounded in CST and critical social justice, enables me to conceive of change, examine how CCHS currently functions, set transformational goals, and consider how individual decisions affect the change process. System- and school-wide transformational approaches are required, and the Catholic faith is the foundation for my leadership and change agenda. Critical epistemology and social justice are integral to this approach. Furthermore, teacher leadership and staff empowerment ensure that leaders know the organization and how it connects to activities for change (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Senge et al., 2019). This new thinking has the potential to inspire a transformational process shaped by the involvement of teachers and all partners at CCHS.

### **The Gap in Current Professional Practice at CCHS**

Teachers' approaches to their students' mental health needs are inconsistent at CCHS. Many educators feel uneasy engaging in exploratory talks with students about mental health,

while others feel it is not their responsibility to do so (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; TCSB, 2023b).

Some teachers argue that a classroom teacher's role in presenting the curriculum does not encompass socio-emotional considerations. Others' motivation is hindered by their contradictory perspectives on mental health, which are influenced by societal stigma, cultural beliefs, and perhaps personal experience (Boak et al., 2020; Sokal et al., 2020). In addition, some teachers feel overburdened by their personal and professional obligations to work outside of instructional leadership.

Some teachers willing to address mental health issues among their students understand that their training and skills do not adequately qualify them to do so. The discrepancy between student needs and teacher capacity at CCHS is glaring (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Donohoo et al., 2020; TCSB, 2023a, 2023b). Ideally, teachers should be knowledgeable about student mental health, capable of recognizing symptoms, and equipped with tools to support students. This capability could mitigate the immediate effects on student wellness and achievement (CMHA, 2023; Cost et al., 2022; Donohoo et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

The chasm between student mental health needs and teacher capacity is not unique to CCHS, it is a national crisis (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; CMHA, 2023; Cost et al., 2022; People for Education, 2023; Zhao, 2020). The approach to student mental health care, how it can be administered, and how it should be administered are major topics in educational studies (TCSB, 2023b; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). The inability of teachers to recognize significant mental health concerns that may signal the onset of anxiety and despair constitutes another layer of the crisis. Internalizing behaviours such as student withdrawal, isolation, and school absenteeism are critical signs of deterioration (CMHA, 2023; TCSB, 2023a). Teachers are in a crucial position to offer early care, yet they lack the knowledge and skills to interact successfully, safely, and

efficiently.

Critics of the current school-based mental health treatment models have suggested that the absence of genuine partnership may inhibit growth potential. School professionals such as guidance counsellors, social workers, and classroom teachers often provide student assistance in isolation, without collaboration or sharing student profiles (CMHA, 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Moreover, the current climate at CCHS perpetuates the false belief that educators are not responsible for students' well-being and need not take action to address students' mental health concerns.

Often, the mental health problems of students go unreported at CCHS. New information from teachers about student behaviour tends to be random and unreliable, dependent upon intuition rather than formal training in identifying risk factors or symptoms of anxiety and depression. A student's reluctance to self-report and a teacher's inability to notice symptoms significantly reduce the likelihood of early and effective intervention at CCHS.

### **The Ideal Organizational State at CCHS**

When CCHS teachers are better equipped to address their students' mental health issues, a substantial barrier to learning and academic accomplishment will be removed. The mental health crisis requires a teacher skillset that includes recognizing mood and behaviour changes and referring students to care consistently and appropriately (CMHA, 2023; Cost et al., 2022; Sokal et al., 2020). An entrenched feeling of commitment and responsibility to produce a circle of care founded on CST and critical social justice is essential for altering the school's mental health culture.

At CCHS, an enhanced and collaborative leadership approach that places less emphasis on the principal as a single leadership figure will improve student mental health. The aim should

be to create a network of leaders instead of relying on a single leader to foster change.

Combining teachers' knowledge and expertise can contribute to the professional growth of all and improve school capacity. Shared leadership creates a community where leadership and organizational learning coexist (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Donohoo et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021). A school-based mental health model must be based on collaboration and the sharing of student profiles.

### **A New Vision for CCHS**

A new vision of in-school care must include a school-wide approach (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Donohoo et al., 2020). Teachers are best positioned to offer students mental health resources and ongoing assistance (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Donohoo et al., 2020). CST and critical social justice, which are key concepts in this change framework, involves a deep commitment to understanding and addressing the multifaceted needs of students, engaging different voices, recognizing systemic injustices, and actively working to dismantle barriers to their well-being and mental health (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Freire, 2000; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). When schools create collaboration and teacher leadership, they can close the gap between how well teachers are trained and how well students' mental health needs are met. Students will then experience academic, social, and emotional success in school and relationships with their teachers will improve, leading to enhanced social-emotional learning (Cost et al., 2022). Teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support will be better able to support and meet the mental health needs of their students (CMHA, 2023; Donohoo et al., 2020; Mahboubi & Higazi, 2022; Vaillancourt et al., 2021; Zhao, 2020).

The parents of students in mental distress are additional partners who must be considered. Parents and guardians may perceive a lack of appropriate resources and support for their children



and experience frustration regarding the next steps. This frustration may harm parent-teacher relationships (CMHA, 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). By enhancing the school's response to the mental health needs of students, parents may feel less pressure to seek care from external sources, thereby enhancing the relationship between the school and its parent community (CMHA, 2023; Cost et al., 2022).

### **Changing Priorities at CCHS**

Enhancing teacher preparedness and CTE will be a top goal at CCHS. One cannot expect educators to fulfill the needs of students if they lack the requisite knowledge to do so. Teachers must know best practices to manage student wellness and access opportunities for capacity building and engaging student voices (Kuehn, 2020; Zhao, 2020). Including the voices of teachers in the change process will ensure their professional needs are considered and addressed.

In order to achieve the goal of assisting students, the perspectives and needs of teachers must be balanced with those of the school and school board. Although teacher preparedness and collective efficacy will be key priorities of the transition process, changes must be integrated into the workday and professional practice. Change cannot be implemented at the expense of educators (Mahboubi & Higazi, 2022). Priorities of the change process include ensuring teachers have access to capacity-building opportunities and knowledge of wellness supports available to students. The behaviour, practices, and values of educators inside the organization must be the central focus of change (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Kotter & von Ameln, 2019; Sokal et al., 2020).

### **Change Drivers at CCHS**

According to Fullan (2021), there are five fundamental and interconnected drivers of transformational development in school systems: well-being, learning, social intelligence, equity investments, and systemness (or wholeness). These drivers are essential for implementing

effective change that prioritizes the well-being of students. They do not seek to compel students to adapt to a pre-existing and rigid structure; they aim to modify the system to match the students' requirements. A lack of timely access to suitable community resources for students and their families is another factor driving change.

### **School Leadership: Macro**

The school principal plays a crucial role in establishing, fostering, and maintaining relationships of trust by identifying the school's needs and addressing them appropriately. Hargreaves and Shirley (2022) highlight the importance of school administrators in creating safe, accepting, and inclusive school communities. The principal, grounded in CST and critical social justice, is the most influential actor and can encourage teachers to view themselves as agents of change.

### **Catholic School Board: Meso**

The local public health authority has not yet conducted a pandemic-timed survey of community stakeholders to accurately assess students' mental health struggles, needs, and challenges. Scholars have labelled Canada's response to student mental health a systemic failure (CMHA, 2023; Vaillancourt. et al., 2021). According to a recent provincial study of Ontario school principals, student mental health issues have caused significant strains in the Ontario school system (People in Education, 2023). In addition, the survey revealed that student mental health issues significantly widened the gap between the Ministry of Education, school boards, and school realities (People in Education, 2023). This is the case at CCHS, and resources are minimal.

### **The Ministry of Education and School Mental Health Ontario: Micro**

The Ministry of Education of Ontario and School Mental Health Ontario are influential actors regarding the PoP. The Ministry has established a province-wide policy to promote the mental health and wellness of K–12 students, and school principals are demanding more resources (People for Education, 2023; School Mental Health Ontario, 2021; Sick Kids Toronto, 2021). In response, School Mental Health Ontario has shared intervention frameworks to aid school leaders in serving students and families. However, these partners are far-removed from CCHS.

### **Chapter 1 Conclusion**

CCHS is currently unable to serve its students with mental health issues due to a lack of teacher preparedness, shared understanding, coherence, and alignment concerning student mental health and wellness. Information about student mental health is not collected or analyzed systematically, and most teachers lack the preparedness and capacities to deal with student mental health issues. The school administration is struggling to address shortcomings. However, responding to this problem requires sound data, collective effort, and skill development among teaching staff. A comprehensive plan, grounded in CST and critical social justice, addressing the pedagogical, cultural, and structural issues will be further explored in Chapters 2 and 3 as part of a strategy for planning and monitoring the change process.

## **Chapter 2: Planning and Development**

Advancing student well-being requires Catholic school leaders to apply the lens of faith to pursue a new reality and improve student outcomes. Educational leaders must prioritize student welfare, equity of care, and social-emotional development (Fazel & Newby, 2021; Harding et al., 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020).

### **Leadership Approach to Change**

The leadership-focused vision for change in this DiP is grounded in CST and critical social justice and involves promoting positive student mental health for all students by enhancing teacher leadership, preparedness, and capacities at CCHS. To propel change forward and meet the mental health needs of students, I envision a combination of faith-based and transformative leadership models as the appropriate leadership framework.

### **Faith and Spirituality: A Personal Experience**

Leaders of faith-based schools must undergo ongoing renewal, growth, and development to support the learning and well-being of students (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Buchanan & Chapman, 2014; Fincham, 2021; Halstead, 2014). My leadership philosophy is rooted in CST, social justice and the ethic of compassion. This approach, which is person-centred and faith-based, has allowed me to serve as a leader for student care. Transformative and faith-based leadership will be used to care for vulnerable students at CCHS.

Catholic teachings challenge the leader to examine everything through the lens of faith. This approach is the defining characteristic of a faith-based school leader. As a Catholic leader, it is crucial to identify the staff's abilities, needs, and experiences when helping vulnerable youth (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Wright, 2017). Transforming the learning culture is a priority and the DiP is one major step in achieving transformation.

## **Catholic Social Teaching**

CST is a rich tradition of thought that emphasizes the Church's commitment to social justice and the dignity of every human person. Rooted in Jesus Christ's teachings and Catholic principles, CST outlines a framework for addressing social, economic, and political issues through Christian ethics (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Wright, 2017). Key principles of CST include the inherent dignity of the human person, the importance of family and community, the preferential option for the marginalized, the dignity of work and workers' rights, and the call to solidarity and care for creation (Galioto & Marini, 2021; King, 2021). These principles guide CCHS in promoting a just society where the needs of the most vulnerable are prioritized and the common good is upheld.

CST also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the moral responsibility to build a society that respects and protects human rights and fosters social cohesion. It calls for active participation in school life, advocating for policies and practices that ensure equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. CST encourages school leaders and teachers to act compassionately, engage in dialogue, and work collaboratively toward systemic change (King, 2021). By advocating for justice, peace, and respect for all creation, CST provides a comprehensive framework that informs both personal conduct and policy, aiming to transform society in accordance with the Christian Gospel values of love, justice, and mercy.

The history of CST is extensive. It is both ancient and modern, expressing eternal ideals within the Church's history while continuously reflecting upon the contemporary world. The Catholic Church's moral perspective is based on the three pillars of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity (King, 2021). Human dignity is the most important of these three principles and drives my thinking concerning student mental health and wellness. The Church urges Catholic

schools to construct a future congruent with the inherent dignity of every person (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Galioto & Marini, 2021; Wright, 2017).

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

CST and critical social justice share significant common ground in their commitment to promoting human dignity, equity, and the common good (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). CST emphasizes the inherent worth of every person, rooted in the belief that all humans are made in the image of God (King, 2021). This perspective mandates a preferential option for marginalized students, advocating for school structures that uphold justice and reduce inequality. Similarly, critical social justice focuses on identifying and dismantling systems of oppression and privilege that perpetuate social inequities (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). Both frameworks seek to create a more just school community by addressing the root causes of injustice and advocating for systemic change that respects and uplifts marginalized students.

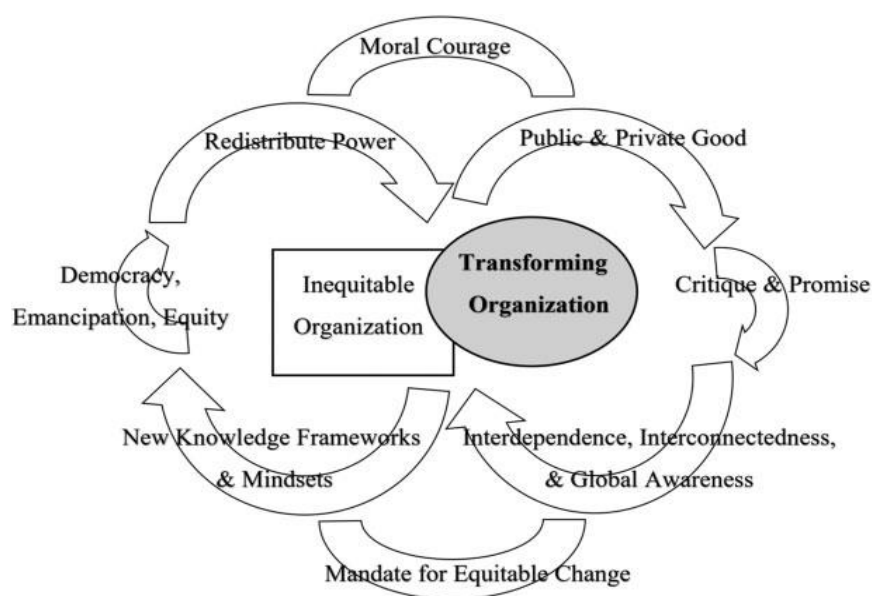
The overlap between CST and critical social justice is evident in their shared values of solidarity, compassion, and the pursuit of social justice (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). CST's principles of solidarity call for a deep commitment to the well-being of students, mirroring critical social justice's emphasis on collective action and allyship in fighting oppression. Additionally, CST's emphasis on the common good aligns with critical social justice's goal of creating inclusive communities where everyone has equal opportunities to thrive (Fincham, 2021; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). By integrating these perspectives, I can draw on the moral and ethical foundations of CST and the analytical tools of critical social justice to foster environments that promote social equity, respect for human dignity, and transformative change at CCHS.

## Transformative Leadership

Transformative leadership emphasizes that every educational stakeholder is entitled to dignity and respect. Shields (2019) proposes eight tenets of transformative leadership in her research. Figure 1 illustrates the interconnectedness of each tenet and the process of transformation.

**Figure 1**

Model of Transformative Leadership Theory



*Note.* Adapted from “Transformative Leadership Approaches to Inclusion, Equity and Social Justice,” by C. M. Shields and K. A. Hesbol, 2020, *Journal of School Leadership*, 30(1), p. 2 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619873343>). Copyright 2020 by SAGE.

These tenets include the mandate to effect profound and equitable change; the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice; the need to address the inequitable distribution of power; an emphasis on both private and public

(individual and collective) good; a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice; an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness; the necessity of balancing critique with promise; and a call to exhibit moral courage. Transformative leadership acknowledges societal inequities and encourages continual reflection and staff learning (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Shields, 2019).

Transformative leadership theory emphasizes equity of care and mandates that all pupils are served. Shields (2019) and Bruce et al. (2019) urge transformative leaders to pursue improved student outcomes by acknowledging and challenging established assumptions and inequitable and oppressive systems. Through critical thinking and action toward social justice, transformative leadership engages staff in the pursuit of self-awareness and a thorough understanding of their students and school community.

Transformative leadership involves a dedication to comprehending and experiencing change in oneself and one's environment to create significant change for students. The critical nature of TLT necessitates a decolonizing lens through which oppressive structures can be deconstructed and replaced with systems that support organizational change and equity of care (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Hopkins, 2018; Lopez, 2020b).

Transformative leadership theory urges educators to reinvent the educational system and build new models prioritizing social justice, well-being, and reconciliation (Bruce et al., 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016). Transformation at CCHS will only be achievable if educators see the injustices in the current system (Lopez, 2020a) and are willing to modify their mindset along with their actions. By promoting critical reflection on the assumptions held by the administration, staff, and students, positive mental health for all students can be established.



## **Catholic and Faith-Based Leadership**

Faith-based leadership styles stress one's relationship with Jesus Christ and are founded on CST. The Catholic faith guides every organizational decision at CCHS because a Catholic high school is a moral and spiritual institution honouring human dignity while serving the community (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Galioto & Marini, 2021). To lead, build, and maintain effective schools and to promote student learning and well-being in religious contexts, leaders of faith-based schools must continually renew themselves, grow, and develop (Wright, 2017). The school principal aims to promote the development of the whole person through CST at CCHS.

Leaders in faith-based schools need daily formation experiences in which spiritual growth and religious understanding are in harmony. This formation style goes beyond secular professional development programs and university-level educational leadership courses (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Fincham, 2021). A crucial element of faith-based leadership is the leader's commitment to growth and a life-long vocation in Christ (King, 2021; Wright, 2017). Consequently, the leader of a faith-based school is distinguished by their worldview and willingness to view decision-making through the lens of faith. If leaders lack a clear value system or vision of who they are, they cannot offer leadership in a faith-based context (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Buchanan & Chapman, 2014).

A faith-based leadership approach provides the conditions necessary for wellness and capacity building because it is based on personalization and the belief that people are interdependent (Halstead, 2014). Catholicism views individuals as possessing compassion, expressing themselves through interpersonal interactions, and finding purpose through faith in Christ (Fincham, 2021). In the past, a faith-inspired leadership approach has provided me with

the space for creativity by emphasizing human connections and facilitating opportunities to lead with empathy (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Galioto & Marini, 2021; Wright, 2017).

### **Two Combined Approaches: Transformative Leadership and Faith-Based Leadership**

Underpinning the DiP with both CST and critical social justice brings several benefits. Firstly, it provides a comprehensive framework that addresses the ethical dimensions of leadership, rooted in principles of human dignity, solidarity, and the common good, as emphasized in CST. Additionally, integrating critical social justice perspectives offers a deeper understanding of the systemic injustices and power dynamics that underlie the problem, allowing for more effective analysis and intervention by the school principal and teaching staff. This combined approach encourages empathy and fosters dialogue. It promotes transformative action towards structural change at CCHS, ensuring that solutions are grounded in moral integrity and a commitment to social justice. By combining insights from both traditions, CCHS can develop more holistic and equitable responses to student mental health, fostering greater inclusion, solidarity, and flourishing for all students at CCHS.

The emancipatory aims of critical social justice theory combined with the humanist and egalitarian values of Catholicism support the dismantling of systemic barriers to mental health care and resources. First and foremost, through the Catholic lens, a I must embrace community building and commit to forming the whole learner (Buchanan & Chapman, 2014; King, 2021). Through the lens of critical social justice theory, hope is emphasized constantly. Systems and structures can be dismantled to allow all students to participate fully in learning and school leadership. A positive aspect of critical social justice is its insistence that oppression is immoral and that caring for justice is important. Shared leadership are at the heart of both these approaches, challenging the leader to include teaching staff and the most vulnerable and

marginalized in the school community. Outreach, inclusion and service are at the heart of my longstanding educational philosophy.

Transformative leadership theory and faith-based leadership have been selected as a combined leadership strategy because both focus on dignity, equity, and community building. Typically, when a student faces mental health concerns in a Canadian school, ineffective strategies are still employed (CMHA, 2023; Cost et al., 2022; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Transformative leadership theory and faith-based leadership elements offer a new way of thinking about student mental health at CCHS.

Faith-based and transformative leadership models are highly effective for Catholic school leadership because they align deeply with the core values of Catholic education, emphasizing dignity, compassion, ethical integrity, and faith development. Faith-based leadership draws on the teachings of Jesus Christ to foster a nurturing and inclusive environment where every student is valued and supported (King, 2021). This model prioritizes spirituality, wellness, and academic growth, encouraging students to live out their faith through service and social justice.

Transformative leadership inspires and empowers the entire school community to achieve a shared vision of social justice and equity (Shields, 2019). By integrating these models, I can create a school culture that promotes academic success and student wellness and engages the student voice, positively impacting the community.

Faith-based leadership informed by TLT can assume responsibility for addressing the PoP and critically exploring what educators can do to improve the school experience, especially for marginalized students (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; King, 2021). As with faith-based leadership, transformative leadership promotes the collective good while paying particular attention to marginalized learners. Engaging and valuing student voices

is a significant component of TLT and faith-based leadership. All learners are supported and affirmed equally in the interest of the collective good. As a critical leadership philosophy, TLT focuses on inclusiveness and equity. Shields (2019) explains that the tenets of TLT motivate the school principal to undertake a reform process to serve struggling students. Due to Christ's teachings on leadership and outreach (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; King, 2021), TLT aligns effectively with CST. Bruce et al. (2019) explain that transformative leadership enables leaders to reimagine the world, inspire change, and enhance the lives of learners. Appendix A outlines the theoretical underpinning of these two leadership models.

### **Framework for Leading the Change Process**

Catholic educational leadership must be centred on equity and social justice (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). At CCHS, transformative change necessitates the inclusion of critical leadership perspectives and CST. Apple (2016) conceives of critical theory as a transformative discourse and practice that unleashes new possibilities through the persistent disruption of the status quo. Transformative and faith-based leadership offers inspiration for organizational change, wellness, and belonging.

### **Understanding the Need for Kotter**

The Kotter Change Model offers a structured approach to organizational change that can benefit a Catholic high school in crisis. First, the Kotter model's emphasis on creating a sense of urgency and establishing a guiding coalition resonates with CST's call for solidarity and collective action in addressing social challenges within the school community. This approach encourages teachers to unite around the school's mission of compassion, justice, and equity, mobilizing efforts to address the crisis with a shared purpose (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Kotter, 2014; Kotter & von Ameln, 2019). Secondly, the model's focus on clear communication

and empowering broad-based action aligns with critical social justice and its emphasis on inclusivity and dismantling systemic barriers. By involving diverse voices in the change process and promoting transparency, the school can ensure that decisions reflect the needs and perspectives of all community members, fostering a culture of inclusiveness and respect (Kotter & von Ameln, 2019; Shields, 2019). By integrating the Kotter Change Model with CST and critical social justice principles, CCHS can navigate its crisis effectively, promoting positive transformation grounded in faith, social justice, and community solidarity.

### **The Kotter Change Model**

The Kotter Change Model is a structured approach to organizational change developed by Harvard Business School professor John Kotter. It consists of eight sequential steps to manage and implement transformative initiatives within CCHS (Kotter, 2014). These steps include creating urgency, forming a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the organization's culture.

From the perspective of CST, the Kotter model aligns with principles such as solidarity and stewardship by promoting collective action, inclusive decision-making processes, and a commitment to the common good (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Kotter et al., 2021). Similarly, in the context of critical social justice, the Kotter model can be linked to principles of equity and empowerment by emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, transparency, and addressing power imbalances within organizational change processes (Kotter et al., 2021; Ryan & Rotman, 2007). By integrating these perspectives, the Kotter Change Model can guide CCHS in fostering positive organizational transformation to improve student mental health.

By guiding teachers through clear steps such as establishing a guiding coalition of influential stakeholders, communicating a compelling vision for unity and healing, and empowering action through small wins and visible successes, the Kotter model helps rebuild trust and collaboration among staff. It encourages transparency, open communication, and accountability, essential elements for fostering a supportive and cohesive school community where mutual respect, shared goals, and a renewed sense of purpose can flourish in alignment with the principles of CST and critical social justice. As the primary change agent at CCHS, I will lead the change process with staff, as outlined in Appendix B.

### **Establish Urgency About the Change**

The deficit in teacher preparedness is one of many interconnected factors contributing to a significant school service gap in meeting the mental health needs of students at CCHS. Other factors include school culture, negative stigma, the lack of student mental health literacy, and inadequate teacher resources (CMHA, 2023; TCSB, 2023a; Wang et al., 2021).

Statistics on mental health continue to indicate rising rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental distress among Canadian students (CMHA, 2023; Cost et al., 2022; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). According to a recent provincial study of Ontario school principals, student mental health issues require rapid intervention (People in Education, 2023).

Poor mental health is the leading cause of negative behaviours, eating disorders, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies, school absences, learning gaps, and falling grades among Canadian adolescents and students (CMHA, 2023; Fazel & Newby, 2021; People for Education, 2023; TCSB, 2023a), which is true of students at CCHS as well. Step 1 of Kotter's model involves establishing urgency about the proposed change. As principal, I can establish urgency

around this issue by correlating poor mental health with student behaviour and achievement. I have combined Kotter's model with CST and critical social justice.

### **Create a Coalition**

In step 2 of the change model, Kotter et al. (2021) suggest forming a coalition of key school personnel to lead change, professional learning, communication, monitoring, and evaluation. At CCHS, this coalition will include the school principal, the three vice-principals, and the academic department heads. As principal, I will create this coalition to enhance and increase staff collaboration and shared leadership (Calegari et al., 2015; Deszca, 2020; Donohoo, 2017a). By adopting a new way of thinking about their school, the principal and teachers can foster a more positive school climate in which teachers actively bring about and drive change (Donohoo et al., 2020; King & Stevenson, 2017). Teamwork is fostered by highlighting the interconnectedness of the organization and the ongoing, reciprocal nature of the coalition members' support for one another (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Kotter, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019).

### **Develop a Vision and Strategy**

Hargreaves and Shirley (2022) suggest that a responsive teaching mindset is transformative when driven by a vision and supported by collaborative teacher networks. In step 3 of the change model, a new vision increases staff leadership, improves CTE, and nurtures a broader sense of teacher responsibility for meeting student needs (Gunter et al., 2013). Sharing mental health expertise, knowledge, best practices, and confidence to realign daily practices and improve student outcomes must be embedded in the school's culture.

A vision for student mental health in a Catholic high school should reflect Christ's love for humanity and prioritize CST, dignity and the mental health needs of students. To serve

students quickly, safely, and effectively, the school administration and staff must create an enhanced culture of care to support student wellness (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Donohoo et al., 2020; Galioto & Marini, 2021; Rivera-McCutchen, 2021).

### **Communicate the Change Vision to Stakeholders**

The school principal is the key communicator and must use data, research, stakeholder feedback, and school climate surveys to support the new school vision, according to King and Stevenson (2017) and Kotter (2014). In implementing step 4, the vice-principals and I will use school data to inform stakeholders of the devastating effects of poor mental health and the urgent need for change (Dempster & Robinson, 2017; Kotter, 2014; Lewis, 2019). Through Kotter's model, transformative leaders must also include the voices of different interest groups, including students, in the school's change process (Lewis, 2019; Shields, 2019).

### **Empower Broad-Based Action**

When led by transformative, faith-based leaders, organizational change increases collegiality, professional learning, and trust (King & Stevenson, 2017; Kotter, 2014; Shields, 2019). Furthermore, in step 5 of the change model, engaging the student voice is utilized as a strategy to further support the process of decolonization by increasing student belonging and engagement (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2020b; Mitra, 2018). The school principal and the three vice-principals must lead the change and empower all partners, including students.

### **Generate Short-Term Wins**

In step 6 of the change model, students' examples of resilience and success regarding mental health challenges will be shared with the school's parent leadership, staff, and partners to



celebrate milestones. Student success stories of resilience will inspire the community to move forward with transformative change (Deszca et al., 2020; Lever et al., 2017).

### **Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change**

In step 7 of the change model, continuous professional learning and feedback must be incorporated into the change process to create a new school culture of positive mental health, CTE, and new structures to serve students (Andreoli et al., 2020; Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015).

### **Anchor New Approaches in the School Culture**

According to research, Kotter's change model is highly effective in transforming organizations. Step 8 of the change model will institutionalize an innovative and supportive learning culture at CCHS (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; King & Stevenson, 2017; Senge et al., 2019). Principal leadership and teacher empowerment are critical to this process (Kotter, 2014; Kotter & von Ameln, 2019; TCSB, 2023b). Appendix C outlines the integration of leadership and frameworks.

Scholars agree that a faith-based school is an optimal environment for supporting student wellness (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Fincham, 2021; Wright, 2017). Faith-based leadership in a Catholic high school can inspire a comprehensive school-wide service model to advance positive mental health (Galioto & Marini, 2021; Halstead, 2014; Wright, 2017).

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

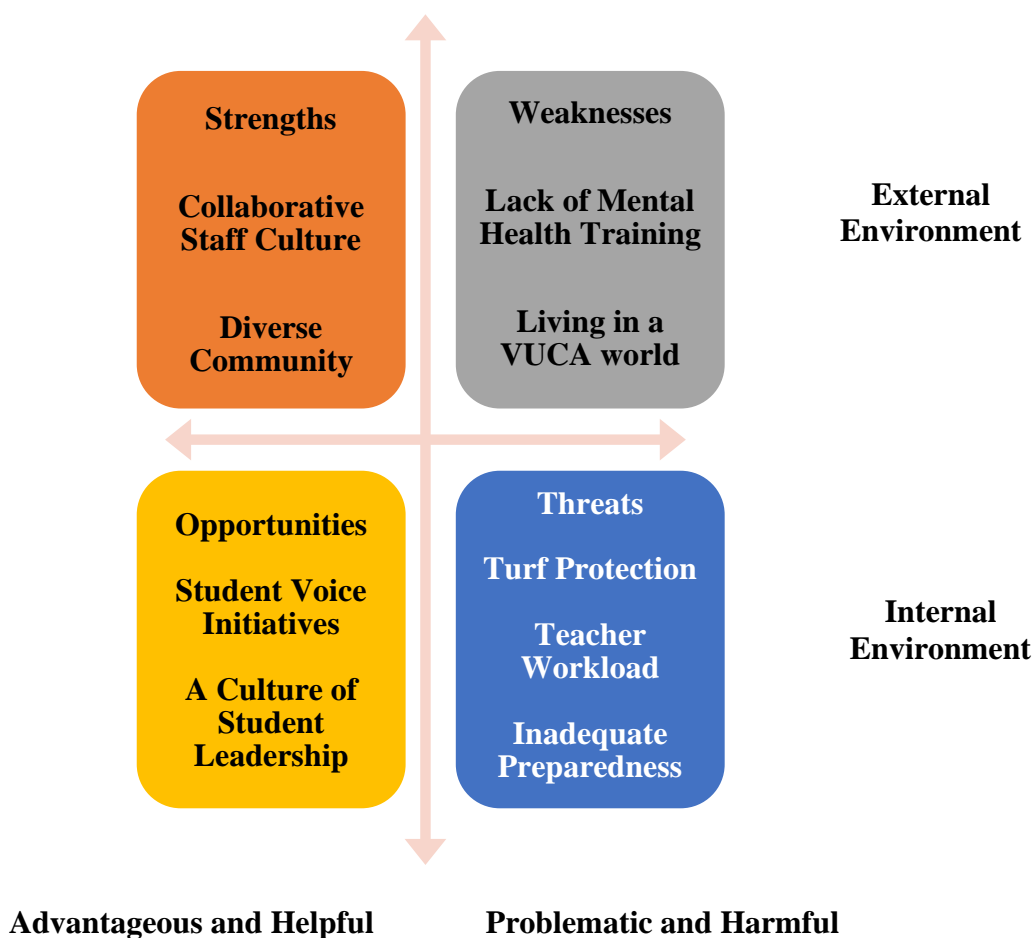
Vision alone will not facilitate the transition from present conditions to the desired state. The purpose of a readiness assessment is to assess the areas of an organization where change readiness is strong and where resistance or lack of motivation will occur (Deszca et al., 2020). To mitigate resistance barriers, it is critical to cultivate preparedness and secure the support of organizational partners (Kotter, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019).

## SWOT Analysis

To evaluate the school's preparedness to implement a change plan, I conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis in September 2023. The SWOT analysis is a tool to assess organizational readiness as illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*SWOT Analysis of Central Catholic High School*



*Note.* The framework is adapted from “SWOT analysis: A theoretical review,” by E. Gurel, and M, Tat, 2017, *Journal of International Social Research*, 10(51), 994-1006.

As revealed by the analysis, the environment at CCHS is conducive to change, with an established culture of staff collaboration and diversity. As the change implementation plan (CIP)

moves forward, the SWOT analysis will assist the guiding coalition in identifying further opportunities and challenges at CCHS. External factors and the impact of a VUCA environment on student mental health are particularly concerning to me. A motivating internal factor is a school culture of student leadership, which has improved diversity, equity, and inclusion at CCHS.

### **Organizational Readiness Questionnaire**

Deszca et al. (2020) state that organizational readiness must be deliberately fostered and nurtured. Utilizing the *Rate the Organization's Readiness* questionnaire devised by Deszca et al. (2020) to assess the elements that facilitate or impede change readiness at CCHS has provided me as a change agent with essential information to assist with developing the change plan. It has been extremely helpful as a tool for self-reflection during the planning process. The following categories comprise the questionnaire: (a) previous change experiences within the organization; (b) support and leadership from executives; (c) credible leadership and change champions; (d) transparency regarding change; (e) rewards for embracing change; (f) metrics to evaluate progress; and, (g) accountability.

This readiness questionnaire (see Appendix D) was utilized to evaluate the school's preparedness for innovation and change. The questionnaire can assess the multiple facets of preparedness and identify possible obstacles and school areas that can be improved (Deszca et al., 2020). The categories into which the 36 questions are divided are extensive, and potential scores range from -25 to +50. In September 2023, I completed the questionnaire and scored in the 40s, as summarized in Appendix D. As revealed, turf protection and status quo thinking among staff are weaknesses at CCHS. Strengths include openness to change and supportive,

robust, and credible school leadership. As evidenced by a high score, my assessment is that CCHS is ready for change.

### **Current Approach to Decision-Making**

The current approach to decision-making at CCHS is traditional and hierarchical. Through this change process, the model must become more efficient, engaging, and reflective of staff innovation (Deszca et al., 2020; Kotter et al., 2021; Rincon-Gallardo, 2020). In the hierarchical model, information flows down from the school principal, who holds all the information and administers the change process. The inverse flow of information is reduced because of the authoritative design of this model. As a result, initiatives originating from staff need to be made available. The traditional model is often criticized by school staff (TCSB, 2023b).

New horizontal structures, resources, and roles are needed at CCHS. Andreoli et al. (2020) emphasize that staff must navigate the change process collaboratively. The image of a spider's web can help visualize this innovative approach where leadership is shared (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Deszca et al., 2020). Moreover, advancing change by addressing inequity and redistributing power requires moral courage from the school principal, vice-principals, and staff (Day et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2020; Senge et al., 2019; Shields, 2019). The redistribution of power and overcoming inequity in care constitute some of the transformative teachings of Jesus Christ (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Fincham, 2021; King, 2021; Wright, 2017).

### **Previous Change Experiences**

Working with CCHS has been an enriching experience for me, particularly with regards to the implementation of COVID-19 rules and procedures. My administration devised school-based remote learning procedures and forms of evaluation, assessment, digital learning, and

student support mechanisms for 1,200 students and their families in conjunction with staff. Throughout this transition process, obstacles were resolved via candid dialogue and collaboration with staff. Subsequently, the school administration has been committed to undertaking the required measures and new approaches to promote positive mental health at CCHS (TCSB, 2023b). I will work closely with the three vice-principals as the school's leadership team. However, I have ultimate authority and responsibility for change planning.

### **Executive Support**

I will describe the planned future state to partners and involve staff, students, and families in the change process. The current school leadership supports the transformation of this PoP and has exhibited the faith-inspired moral imperative and readiness to support student mental health. The principal and three vice-principals will commit internal and external resources to address the PoP (TCSB, 2023b).

### **Credible Leadership and Change Champions**

Determining organizational preparedness also entails charting a new course and ensuring that the change agents at CCHS have legitimate credentials. According to Deszca et al. (2020), when the need for change is communicated, change initiatives are not successful unless followers believe in the efficacy of the change leaders. The school principal, three vice-principals, and academic department heads are among the respected change agents. As a result, trustworthy change leaders will implement the change vision's actions and values (Deszca et al., 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020).

### **Openness to Change**

Staff, students, and parents are the internal partners in the change process while the Ontario Ministry of Education, the school board, and unions are external stakeholders. Teachers,

students, and parents have all reported dissatisfaction with mental health services at CCHS (TCSB, 2023a). Stakeholder viewpoints are essential in identifying CCHS's readiness for change (Deszca et al., 2020). Examining the primary internal and external elements that will influence the change process is critical. The SWOT analysis and the readiness questionnaire indicated that CCHS is ready for change. However, many teachers will find it challenging to share their "turf." The four members of the school leadership team view this as a critical challenge.

### **Rewards for Change**

Change rewards can be intrinsic or extrinsic (Deszca et al., 2020). Teachers who successfully broaden their mental health knowledge will undoubtedly feel a sense of vocation, professional accomplishment, and self-efficacy. Increased knowledge, professional growth support for teachers, and opportunities to recognize student needs at CCHS are possible rewards for positive change at CCHS. Some teachers have not experienced these types of rewards for previous changes.

### **Measures for Change and Accountability**

In Chapter Three, these factors will be further discussed. Nonetheless, these factors can be ascertained beyond reductions in student mental health distress and school climate data. Attendance records, student behaviour tracking, classroom teacher feedback, and credit accumulation summaries will be utilized as evidence of change and growth.

After providing an overview of the readiness situation at CCHS and analyzing several internal and external elements that may influence the change process, I anticipate that greater diligence will need to be devoted to identifying the factors that render educators ill-equipped to handle the mental health concerns of students. Moreover, as the Kotter (2014) change model outlines, presenting an original and compelling vision is crucial. The change agents must exhibit

credibility, competence, and influence. Considering the conducive atmosphere fostered by the school principal, three vice-principals, and community partners, it is plausible that the intended enhancements can be effectively executed. Following an evaluation of organizational readiness elements and a SWOT analysis, CCHS is prepared to address the gap identified in the PoP. A faith-inspired, transformative leadership approach will help alleviate anxiety associated with change by forming a foundation and prioritizing the enhancement of equitable care for students facing challenges.

### **Challenges and Constraints: Organizational Readiness**

At the macro level, senior leaders at TCSB must allocate the time, budget, and school-based resources required to implement student well-being and support initiatives at CCHS. With accountability measures, staffing shortages, budget constraints, and limited community-based supports, senior leaders should acknowledge that improving student wellness is a key priority to achieving the district's strategic commitments. At the meso level, the leadership team should prioritize establishing stronger voices for staff and students that stimulate and cultivate constructive, mutually beneficial, and trustworthy human connections. Establishing settings that encourage timely, honest, and direct feedback without fearing retaliation is a gradual process necessary for intimate and genuine relationships to develop. Ultimately, on a micro level, teachers must recognize the necessity for transformation and possess the degree of ease needed to be candid and vulnerable to confront their students' challenges. Teachers must adopt new approaches, resources, and assistance, and collaborate to improve student results.

Every component of the readiness assessment presents its own set of challenges. Every domain that warrants improvement presents opportunities for surmounting obstacles through acquiring teacher knowledge, reorienting viewpoints, and accepting inventive, progressive

teaching methodologies at CCHS.

### **Leadership Ethics in Organizational Change**

A discussion of ethics aligns closely with the tenets of transformative and faith-based leadership by emphasizing the importance of moral integrity, justice, and the common good. Transformative leadership calls for leaders to inspire and empower others toward a collective vision of positive change rooted in ethical principles that prioritize fairness, inclusivity, and accountability. Ethics provide the foundational framework for decision-making and actions that consider the well-being of all students, ensuring that leadership practices promote equity and address systemic injustices (King, 2021; Shields, 2019).

Faith-based leadership, grounded in spiritual values and teachings, similarly emphasizes ethical conduct guided by principles of love, compassion, and service to others. The leader must uphold every student's dignity and foster a learning environment where integrity, honesty, and respect prevail (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021; Shields, 2019). Both transformative and faith-based leadership models recognize that ethical leadership is essential not only for organizational success but also for creating school communities where students can flourish in accordance with their inherent dignity and worth.

When addressing the PoP at CCHS, leadership ethics is a vital consideration. Care, compassion, respect for persons, justice, and honesty are among the Catholic values that govern Ontario Catholic schools (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018). Faith, social justice, diversity, power, and critical theory are the frameworks for action within the CIP (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Mitra, 2018; Rexhepi & Torres, 2011). Below are the ethical pillars that support my vocation and professional practice. These pillars will inform the discourse surrounding organizational change at CCHS.



## **Ethics of Compassion**

An ethic of compassion acknowledges the inherent worth of every learner, regardless of their circumstances (Gupta & Rous, 2016; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021). Faith-based educators are firmly rooted in caring for students and fostering cultures of care (Fincham, 2021). School change and improvement at CCHS will be propelled by student well-being and social-emotional growth in a safe and faith-filled school environment (Khalifa et al., 2016; Wright, 2017).

## **Ethics of Care**

Individual dignity and humanity are the central tenets of an ethic of care and CST (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021; Shields, 2019). This ethic is based on genuineness and transparency, focusing on interpersonal relationships. The ethical tenets of leadership are reflected in the DiP's transformative leadership framework, which emphasizes building trust through openness and a steadfast commitment to equity. This ethic is further reflected in the principles of critical social justice and the prioritization of student well-being (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022).

As outlined in the province's professional standards of practice, Catholic educators in Ontario have a responsibility to care deeply about the well-being of their students (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; Ontario College of Teachers, 2020). The Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and the TRC are additional frameworks that exemplify the ethics of care, emphasizing the eradication of systemic barriers. The OHRC forbids discriminatory actions against people based on protected characteristics. Access to equal educational opportunities, protection of the right to Indigenous languages in public education, and availability of culturally appropriate curricula are among the education-specific calls to action included in the TRC report

(TRC, 2015). The CIP will emphasize the ethics of care when addressing the inequities marginalized students face at CCHS.

### **Ethics of Justice**

According to the ethics of justice, laws, rules, and policies should guide decisions. An ethic of justice concerns equitable and fair treatment of individuals (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021; Shields & Hesbol, 2019). As part of leadership ethics, a leader must maintain democratic values and procedures of fairness during collaborative decision-making (Apple, 2016).

Moreover, to pursue a transformative vision of student mental health and wellness, the school principal and vice-principals must value every team member's contribution when supporting students (Mitra, 2018; Rexhepi & Torres, 2011; Ryan & Rottman, 2007). Faith-based and transformative leadership is aligned with an ethic of justice. This ethic fosters community engagement and reconciliation (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021), following the tenets of equity-based leadership (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Bruce et al., 2019). CCHS must actively forge partnerships with Indigenous communities, families, and students, placing their voices, needs, and experiences at the centre of its efforts to dismantle systemic barriers and decolonize educational learning spaces.

### **Ethics of Critique**

School staff must constantly examine theories, methods, and practices for inherent biases and presumptions, especially regarding how their conduct may inadvertently perpetuate oppression in a learning environment. Lopez (2020a) posits that educators must self-reflect on colonialism and scrutinize their practices as a prerequisite for decolonizing education. CCHS's school leadership and classroom teachers must interrogate and challenge the dominant worldview and its impact on student belonging, wellness, culture, and power (Bradley-Levine &

Carr, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016).

An ethic of critique will be used to examine policies and laws to challenge the status quo (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021; Shields, 2019). Power relations within society and institutions are the focus of an ethic of critique. Transformative leaders must identify and rectify existing forms of injustice and exploitation. They must also increase their responsiveness to the entire community (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021). In addition, CCHS staff must continuously reflect critically on the state of student mental health (Harris & Jones, 2020; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021).

Lopez (2020b) described ethical spaces as spaces where colonizing practices are disrupted and new ideas about leadership and schooling are imagined and enacted. This process entails examining whose knowledge is included, whose language is regarded as a legitimate vehicle for knowledge, whose decision-making authority is legitimated, and how decisions are made (Khalifa et al., 2016). It also requires explicit reflection on the role of Catholic and equity-focused education in challenging power hierarchies ingrained in society and education (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Shields, 2019).

### **Ethics of Profession**

While leaders may recognize their responsibility and believe in their abilities, more courage is required to act (Leithwood et al., 2020; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021; Shields, 2019). Given the importance of ethics and morals to any profession, a Catholic leader must uphold Catholic teachings (Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2018; Wright, 2017). In the face of ethical dilemmas, my leadership approach will be guided by Catholic values and social teachings. Students are positioned at the centre of my decision-making process to ensure that choices are made in their best interests (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021). From an ethic of

profession perspective, student needs and wellness are at the heart of organizational renewal and faith-inspired change at CCHS.

An ethic of profession emphasizes the specific moral considerations of one's occupation. Professional ethical codes for Ontario teachers and personal values that govern actions and decisions shape the distinctive professional obligations of educators (Lopez & Jean Marie, 2021; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021; Shields & Hesbol, 2019). Nevertheless, according to Tuana (2014), educators must first recognize their influence as agents of change before pursuing a moral purpose.

### **Ethics of Community**

An ethic of community emphasizes the importance of the community in education. Community is conceived as a dynamic process rather than a static entity based on a particular social structure (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). Educators who share similar morals and beliefs are essential to the development of any community, especially one based on faith, which emphasizes the importance of relationships, collaboration, communication, and interdependence. According to Khalifa et al. (2016), community is not an end product but a moral responsibility to engage in communal processes and relationship building. I know this well as a faith-based leader who operates from an ethic of community standpoint. Catholic social teachings, resilient relationships, and constant outreach are consistent with the ethics of a faith-inspired community.

### **Ethical Challenges**

Several ethical challenges can emerge during the journey of change at CCHS, including balancing inclusivity with CST, managing power dynamics to ensure genuine equity and participation of teachers, and handling conflicts of interest between personal beliefs and school

goals. CCHS may also face difficulties maintaining accountability and integrity, particularly when facing pressure to compromise on ethical standards for convenience or cost (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021). Additionally, the ethical allocation of limited school resources can be complex, requiring transparent decision-making by the principal and fair distribution to uphold the common good. Navigating these challenges necessitates a steadfast commitment to CST, ethical reflection, collaboration and dialogue with teaching staff.

### **Strategies and Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice**

When considering which strategies and solutions will be most effective to address this PoP, it will be essential to identify approaches that will inspire staff at CCHS to question established norms and demonstrate dedication to the school's faith-based educational mission. Staff will be motivated to embrace change in a manner that prioritizes human dignity in all decision-making. Shields (2019) states that such an approach will ensure that the resources necessary for organizational transformation and a corresponding cultural shift will be available and distributed.

According to Fullan (2021), the appropriate principles for the success of the entire system are well-being and learning, social intelligence, equality investment, and systems thinking. These four principles mesh effectively with CST and critical social justice. They are connected to the PoP, framing the process of professional learning for staff at CCHS and emphasizing the critical importance of creating a supportive and faith-inspired educational environment. By focusing on well-being and learning, CCHS ensures that both staff and students thrive spiritually, emotionally and academically. Social intelligence fosters a culture of empathy and collaboration, enhancing relationships within the school community (Fullan, 2021). Equality investment guarantees that all students have equitable access to quality education, promoting social justice.

Systems thinking enables staff to understand and navigate the complex interdependencies within the school, leading to more effective and sustainable improvements. These principles align with TLT, faith-based leadership and will empower teachers to cultivate a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere, driving student success and improving student wellness.

### **Well-Being and Learning**

Student needs are more complex than they were in the pre-pandemic era. Balancing the wellness and mental health requirements of students can induce anxiety among educators given that the global pandemic has exacerbated well-being issues and systemic inequities (CMHA, 2023; Harris & Jones, 2020; People for Education, 2023). However, teachers profoundly impact outcomes and can work effectively to address these challenges (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021).

Fullan (2021) stated that post-pandemic systemic change must prioritize student well-being. An openness to new ideas is generated when discontent with the status quo is combined with the aspiration and motivation to enhance overall student success. This attitude can act as a catalyst for change (Bruce et al., 2019; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). According to a recent CCHS climate survey, high school students place a high value on mental health and well-being (TCSB, 2023a). In this regard, School Mental Health Ontario (2021) urges school leaders to identify strategies for promoting student well-being and positive mental health.

### **Social Intelligence**

Social intelligence is a vital resource that generates and emerges from interpersonal connections. It can be harnessed to build resilient relationships and foster staff collaboration (Fullan, 2021; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). The dynamism of human connections and relationships is irreplaceable by technology (Fullan, 2021). A climate conducive to success is more probable

when principals cultivate social intelligence by establishing trusting and collaborative relationships with all staff (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Harris & Jones, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). As the school principal, I am privileged to occupy a position where trusting relationships can act as a catalyst for change, thereby increasing the probability of achieving favourable outcomes (Duignan, 2020; G  linas-Proulx & Shields, 2022).

### **Systemness**

Systemness means that everyone in the system feels that they are a part of the whole (Fullan, 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020). Learners, too, are to be considered influential agents of change (Fullan, 2021). Students must be empowered to participate in meetings and group dialogues as part of school policy formulation. An inclusive and collaborative orientation among all partners will facilitate transformative change. This coordinated and holistic approach increases the probability that change will be sustainable at CCHS.

### **Equality Investments**

The detrimental effects of residential schools and the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples and communities have had a profound and intergenerational effect on Canadian youth (G  linas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). CCHS acknowledges the professional and moral obligation to advance truth and reconciliation (TCSB, 2023b) and supports initiatives that do so. Fullan (2021) asserts that to overcome oppression, there must be an explicit commitment to work toward decolonization and anti-racism. The persistence of discrimination ensures the perpetuation of inequality. As educators learn to understand their prejudices and identify instances of injustice, the accumulating momentum will act as a catalyst for transformative change at CCHS (G  linas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Kuehn, 2020).

### **Viable Solutions**

School staff have been inspired by recent school improvement planning, an annual process mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the TCSB to help advance positive student outcomes. Three viable solutions have been identified for this PoP: a cultural shift at CCHS, addressing systemic injustice, and student engagement. The issue of moving forward and, consequently, narrowing the gap in practice has given rise to three distinct lines of inquiry:

1. What strategies and opportunities can the school principal and three vice-principals initiate to alter staff views about student mental health and promote teachers' professional growth?
2. What practices can the school administration establish so that teachers can identify systemic injustices and personal biases, undo harmful barriers, and learn new methods to serve students?
3. How can the perspectives of underserved and marginalized students be elevated at CCHS?

Fostering a resilient student body is possible through enhancing school structures and procedures and developing resilience and capacity among all teaching and support staff (Kruse & Johnson, 2017; Shields & Hesbol, 2019). Appendix A provides an overview of the faith-based leadership, CST, and critical social justice that frame the PoP. By situating each proposed solution within this conceptual framework, its alignment with the objectives of dignity, inclusivity, resilience, and interdependence can be discerned. The resources required for each solution, as well as its benefits and challenges will be explored.



### **Proposed Solution 1: Mobilizing a School Culture for Focused Professional Learning**

Students with mental health needs at CCHS are not presently receiving extensive support from classroom teachers or school counsellors. Support for students with severe needs frequently involves the participation of external agencies and hospitals. Students who are having difficulties cite issues with their mental health as an obstacle to their academic achievement (CMHA, 2023; TCSB, 2023a; TCSB, 2023b). The school's mental health resources and staff expertise need enhancement and improvement.

#### ***Shifting the Culture at CCHS***

It is imperative to foster an awareness of the nature of change and how the prevailing culture either facilitates or hinders a school's capacity for advancement. Meaningful change requires a collective staff vision that all must embrace (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Kotter, 2014; Senge et al., 2019). Organizational change is successful when the group comprehends the rationale behind the vision, its contribution to its formation, and the obstacles that may impede its realization. Donohoo et al. (2020) and Fullan and Quinn (2016) highlight the benefits of a school culture that encourages continuous interaction, shared meanings, and collective learning throughout change initiatives. Examining the school culture is necessary for the school administration, as it establishes connections between the organizational and environmental factors that impact the school's capacity to improve student wellness (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Additionally, questioning the rationale behind why specific structures, systems, and practices are in place while challenging their utility is an essential step to using inquiry and understanding to create a cultural shift at CCHS. In this process, teachers would be involved in collective storytelling, which connects people and creates a context for professional learning,

engagement, and advocacy (Khalifa et al., 2016). Asserting a willingness to connect with others is the initial step toward development and change. Turf protection, identified as a weakness in the readiness questionnaire, would diminish with collaborative listening and open dialogue (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Bruce et al., 2019; Sokal et al., 2020).

According to Schein (2016), a school's leadership team must collectively envision alternative approaches to teachers' professional practice. As school principal, I would establish a methodical approach that facilitates robust discourse, given that culture and the perception of collective efficacy are founded upon shared assumptions. Fostering a culture of continuous professional growth related to student wellness would establish an atmosphere conducive to formulating resolutions to narrow the gap outlined in the PoP.

### ***Collaborative Teacher Inquiry***

In this proposed solution, teachers would work together to solve problems in their profession by engaging in collaborative teacher inquiry (CTI) (Donohoo, 2017a, 2017b; Donohoo et al., 2020). Collaborative teacher inquiry is a powerful model (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) because it integrates theory and practice and uses inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning to produce meaningful analysis. Moreover, CTI can be scaffolded through action research, partnerships, school networks, and professional learning communities (PLC). As a system for facilitating CTI, this proposed solution emphasizes a new PLC structure.

### ***Creating Focused Professional Learning Communities at CCHS***

A PLC comprises a group of leaders and educators who engage in a consistent, reflective, and collaborative process of sharing and interrogating their practice (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Dufour, 2004; Taylor, 2023). A PLC fosters professional development and dialogue, primarily focused on acquiring new knowledge and practice (Donohoo, 2017c; Dufour, 2004; Kruse &

Johnson, 2017). Educators must share and scrutinize their practices with an all-encompassing yet discerning perspective to enhance student achievement and well-being (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Donohoo et al., 2020; MacPhail et al., 2021; Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021). Professional learning community topics could include mental health literacy, tiered approaches, student tracking practices, and provincial and district resources. The school principal and three vice-principals would each chair and lead a school-based PLC.

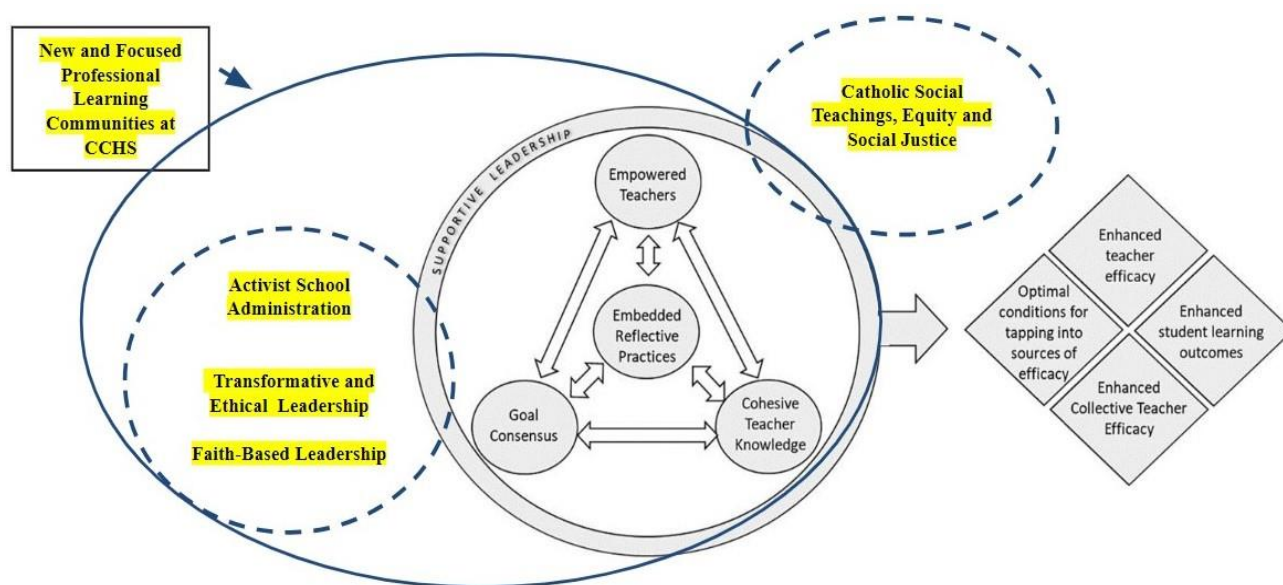
The proposed solution employs the collaborative inquiry four-stage model (CTI) developed by Donohoo (2017a). This CTI model would begin with framing the PoP using school data and developing inquiry questions to help formulate a theory of teacher action at CCHS. Using CTI, teachers would collectively develop shared knowledge and understanding as they collect and analyze evidence and implement changes. Subsequently, a comprehensive analysis of student data would be conducted to ascertain whether implementation changes have resulted in any discernible progress. An activist and involved school principal would also be an integral part of this PLC work, playing a crucial role in driving the change process forward with passion and dedication. As a leader deeply committed to social justice and equity, the principal would actively participate in the professional learning communities, bringing valuable insights and fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility. By modelling the principles of faith-based and transformative leadership, the principal would inspire teachers and students alike to engage fully in the change initiatives, ensuring that the school's mission and values are reflected in every aspect of the process.

Through active advocacy, I will address systemic barriers, allocate resources effectively, and create opportunities for professional development that empower teachers to implement innovative and effective teaching strategies. By leading with empathy and a commitment to

justice, the principal would help to create a school culture where every student and teacher feels valued, supported, and motivated to contribute to a collective vision of positive change and continuous improvement. (Donohoo, 2017a, 2017c; van Veelen et al., 2017). As Figure 3 outlines, teachers would debrief, strategize, celebrate achievements, document learning, and draw conclusions based on their inquiry.

**Figure 3**

*Structure and Cycle of New Focused Professional Learning Communities at CCHS*



*Note.* Adapted from *Quality Implementation: Leveraging Collective Efficacy to Make “What Works” Actually Work*,” by J. Donohoo and S. Katz, 2020, p. 39. Copyright 2020 by Corwin.

Increasing the capacity of teachers, particularly in mental health knowledge, resilience, and proactive and responsive skills, constitutes a protective and therapeutic strategy to serve students (CMHA, 2023; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). Given the high prevalence of mental health issues among youth, significant efforts would be made to

enhance the capacity of teachers and implement comprehensive school-level strategies (Cost et al., 2022; Donohoo et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

### ***Challenges***

In order to successfully adopt evidence-based practices, some staff members would require substantial support, which may be challenging to organize in the context of competing instructional practices, funding, classroom demands, and varying degrees of expertise (Donohoo et al., 2020; Willis et al., 2019). Furthermore, teachers may need help collaborating with other experts and staff members regarding strategies to promote student success, making time a valuable resource (Sokal et al., 2020). This difficulty can be lessened by encouraging a system of professional development integrated into the school's daily work schedule. I could use my school budget to provide teachers with one monthly preparation block to devote to mental health professional learning. Professional development days and monthly staff meetings could expand teacher knowledge and expertise.

### **Proposed Solution 2: An Equity Audit to Advance a Culture of Care at CCHS**

The second solution concerns systemic barriers at CCHS and goes beyond adopting new curricula and pedagogical approaches. It encompasses cultivating a shared critical consciousness, exposing inequitable practices, introspecting for personal biases, and acknowledging the numerous educational norms and routines that harm marginalized students (Gottlieb et al., 2019; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Khalifa et al., 2016). Further equity work is needed at CCHS to improve student outcomes (Bruce et al., 2019; Hatch, 2021; TCSB, 2023a). Given the school's commitment to CST, a new equity team, composed of a sub-team of the guiding coalition (Kotter, 2014; Kotter & von Ameln, 2019), would examine classroom and school data and draw attention to inequities at CCHS.

Equity audits are a leadership tool used to collect data that informs the removal of barriers that impede all students' full participation in, access to, and opportunity to receive equitable mental health support. If using this process, the school administration would assess the extent to which equity is present in pedagogical practice, the overall school, and student achievement (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Sisask et al., 2009; Taylor, 2023). Equity audits support proactive leaders and planning for school improvement (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Shields, 2019).

A new school equity team would begin by conducting focused observations of classrooms and facilitating staff engagement through an inquiry to collect data related to environment, practices, and procedures. A series of questions to this end are listed in Appendix E. Following this, the equity team would begin analyzing the data gathered through observations, drawing comparisons between it and the students. In this phase, the equity team would examine the underlying causes of inequitable mental health care outcomes at CCHS (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Skrla et al., 2009). Once the information has been shared and understood, school-wide professional learning could be planned and implemented to aid in attaining equity objectives. The final step of the equity auditing process would be reflecting on how unequal practices are maintained in school-based mental health care. This would be the most essential action in the equity auditing process.

Building collective capacity to confront and collaborate regarding decolonization would be crucial to this solution (Althaus, 2020; Louie & Gereluk, 2021). An equity audit is characterized by reciprocity, respect, and connection and is facilitated through relationships, accountability, and staff leadership (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). Furthermore, establishing a collective understanding of systemic barriers and their impact on student achievement and

wellness would be critical (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2020b). An equity audit led by the school coalition could examine a structural change narrative that includes decolonization and student empowerment.

### ***Challenges***

Conducting an equity audit would support a school principal who embodies the qualities of a transformative leader (Murray & West-Burns, 2011; Shields, 2019; Skrla et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the principal is one of many who must share the change vision for the school community (Leithwood et al., 2010; Shields, 2019). However, this involvement would require funding, time, extensive professional learning, and resources. The school principal and three vice-principals have intimate knowledge of their current school culture and would move toward changes according to their understanding. Therefore, equitable changes would require the involvement of all partners, including parents. Promoting educational equity is complex (Murray & West-Burns, 2011; Zhao, 2020). An audit process would identify inequitable practices and generate uncomfortable conversations.

### **Proposed Solution 3: Engaging the Student Voice**

The third proposed solution involves engaging the student voice at CCHS. Incorporating student perspectives has been shown to benefit students' well-being (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Mitra, 2018). Scholars contend that greater emphasis should be placed on initiating and evaluating student-voice initiatives (Khalifa et al., 2016; Kuehn, 2020; Wang et al., 2021).

In this proposed solution, students would have time to share and collaborate with peers, discussing topics connected to mental health strategies, belonging, learning, and leadership. At present, this engagement is not happening at CCHS. Further examples include sharing effective wellness strategies for students, where they would reflect upon and discuss the approaches that

marginalize and disenfranchise them. These sharing strategies would allow students to note where they see gaps at CCHS while illuminating and exploring their hopes for the future. As a school-based club led by a vice-principal, the students would determine whether staff are present during these discussions (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Pearce & Wood, 2019). Regardless, the administration would be present for these discussions. For some students, this experience could be the first opportunity for their voices to be intentionally sought. However, some teachers might not feel obligated to act on student needs, which is problematic for school improvement (Pierce & Wood, 2019).

### ***Engagement with Student Voices***

According to Pearce and Wood (2019), engagement with the student voice occurs along a four-theme continuum that extends from participation to empowerment. Voice initiatives must exhibit dialogic, intergenerational, collectively inclusive, and transgressive qualities (Mitra, 2018; Pearce & Wood, 2019; Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021). These themes are often inseparable and integrally linked. They illuminate how student-voice initiatives should be structured to foster an environment where students can advocate for themselves.

Topics such as student mental health can be discussed with CST via a procedure overseen by the school administration. By utilizing critical perspectives on voice, the guiding coalition can discern transformative concepts emerging from the students to inspire change (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Bruce et al., 2019; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Mitra, 2018).

### ***Challenges***

Considerable potential exists for the student voice at CCHS when approached with sincere intentions and guided by an ethic of care. Nevertheless, it is critical to recognize that the ability of educators and schools to implement transformative voice initiatives is severely



constrained by competing school obligations and escalating workloads (Pearce & Wood, 2019; Zhao, 2020). Consequently, a school environment emerges where student-voice initiatives need more consensus-based support. To complicate matters, facilitating student participation in leadership-voice initiatives will be challenging since struggling students are prone to disregard these approaches because of their detachment from the school community (Bourke & MacDonald, 2018; Mitra, 2018). Indeed, according to the 2023 school climate survey, staff must increase the sense of student belonging at CCHS (TCSB, 2023a; TCSB, 2023b).

### **Proposed Solutions**

The three proposed solutions aim to prepare teachers to address student mental health issues and eliminate obstacles that impede the integration of student interests and perspectives. The first proposed solution seeks to increase teacher voice and competence through authentic, job-embedded learning. The second generates an equity audit through a newly established guiding coalition, and the third focuses entirely on engaging the student voice.

After conducting an analysis using several criteria and weighing the benefits and drawbacks of each potential solution, I have determined that the first solution, creating focused PLCs, is the best option (see Appendix F). To close the gap outlined in the PoP, the first solution involves establishing a school framework led by the school administration to foster collaborative professional development among teachers. A motivational factor for school administration involves chairing each PLC and monitoring and assessing progress while implementing necessary adjustments. This school-based professional learning process will begin to close the knowledge gap (Dufour, 2004; MacPhail et al., 2021; Taylor, 2023; Voelkel, 2022).

Furthermore, educators can enhance their collective confidence in improving student mental

health through co-planning, co-sharing, and co-analyzing (Donohoo, 2017c; Dufour, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

### **Benefits of the Solution One**

Subject-specific professional learning communities (PLCs) will be grounded in CST and critical social justice and driven by collaborative teacher inquiry. This learning venue will offer significant benefits in addressing the guiding questions outlined earlier. Many teachers may lack sufficient professional learning opportunities focused on mental health literacy, leaving them ill-equipped to recognize and support students experiencing mental health challenges. By establishing PLCs centred on student mental health, a culture shift develops at CCHS, and teachers begin collaborating, engaging diverse voices and implementing changes to their daily practice (Donohoo et al., 2020; MacPhail et al., 2021). Teachers can engage in CTI to deepen their understanding of mental health issues, identify effective strategies for supporting student well-being, and share best practices tailored to the unique needs of their students.

Furthermore, integrating CST and critical social justice principles into these PLCs enriches the professional learning experience. CST emphasizes every student's inherent dignity and worth, advocating for compassionate care and support for those in need, including students facing mental health challenges. PLCs can explore how CST principles guide CCHS in fostering inclusive, supportive classroom environments that promote mental health and well-being. Additionally, critical social justice provides a critical lens through which teachers can analyze and address systemic inequalities and the lack of mental health resources. (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; MacPhail et al., 2021). By incorporating critical social justice perspectives, PLCs can challenge stigma, promote social justice, and advocate for policies and classroom practices that create equitable access to mental health resources for all students.

Moreover, I have the agency to implement this solution that creates a school-based structured forum for teachers to collaborate, reflect, and develop evidence-based strategies that integrate mental health literacy with subject-area content. This approach not only enhances teachers' pedagogical skills but also strengthens their capacity to address the holistic needs of students. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth focused on mental health, these PLCs will empower teachers to create more supportive learning environments where students feel understood, valued, and supported in alignment with the principles of CST and critical social justice. Thus, subject-specific PLCs driven by CTI not only address the immediate challenges posed by a student mental health crisis but also contribute to long-term systemic improvements in mental health literacy and support at CCHS.

## **Chapter 2 Conclusion**

Improving students' mental health demands an improvement in teacher readiness, efficacy, and professional learning grounded in CST and critical social justice at CCHS. In this chapter, I analyzed a combined leadership framework and leadership ethics. Additionally, three potential solutions were identified through critical analysis. In the chosen solution, the effectiveness of CTE and CTI were discussed in promoting professional development by drawing upon faith-based leadership, transformative leadership, and Donohoo's (2017) collective inquiry framework. Using a CTI approach and PLCs, school administration and teachers can acquire and cultivate skills and experiences to improve student outcomes at CCHS. The implementation plan and how the change process will be communicated, monitored, and evaluated will be detailed in Chapter 3. In addition to articulating the plan, subsequent actions and future considerations will also be discussed.

### **Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication**

To improve teacher readiness and address the gap identified in the PoP, Chapter 3 presents a structured approach for executing, overseeing, and disseminating the organizational change process to enhance CTE. This plan, led by faith-based and transformative leadership, outlines the process, strategies, techniques, and tools to transition CCHS to its desired future state.

#### **Change Implementation Plan**

In August 2024, the change team outlined in this DiP will comprise the five academic department heads, the three vice-principals, and the school principal. The objective is to transform the current state of low CTE into a future state characterized by elevated levels of CTE. Collective efficacy is the shared belief in the ability of the team to make a difference (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo, 2017a; Donohoo et al., 2020). It is crucial to highlight that, in the school's 2024–2025 Student Achievement Plan, a plan required by TCSB and the province (TCSB, 2023b), two primary objectives will be given priority:

1. Raise teacher awareness regarding student mental health issues and challenges;
2. Develop, enhance, assess, and expand CTE and improve teacher readiness to serve students effectively.

To pursue these goals, the PLC cycle (Harris & Jones, 2011), the Kotter change model, and the CTI model (Donohoo, 2017b) will operate together. Collective teacher inquiry (CTI) incorporates a PAOA (plan, act, observe, assess) cycle and will incorporate Catholic Social Teaching and teacher reflection. The CIP, grounded in CST and critical social justice, will be implemented in various phases, as explained in Table 1. A guiding coalition of staff will lead all aspects of the CIP.

**Table 1***Change Implementation Plan*

<b>Stages</b>	<b>CTI &amp; PAOA Cycle</b>	<b>PLC Stages (Harris &amp; Jones)</b>	<b>Kotter Change Model</b>	<b>Priorities for School Administration &amp; the Guiding Coalition</b>
Stage 1: Short-term <b>Year 1</b>	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a focus</li> <li>• Establish the team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create urgency</li> <li>• Build a coalition</li> <li>• Create a faith-inspired vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grounded in CST</li> <li>• Survey all teachers at CCHS (see Appendix G)</li> <li>• Survey students</li> <li>• Create a guiding coalition</li> <li>• Gather school data</li> </ul>
Stage 2: Medium-term <b>Year 1</b>	Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovate and change</li> <li>• Conduct trials and offer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the vision</li> <li>• Empower staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish PLC topics</li> <li>• Determine timelines</li> <li>• Determine PLC focus</li> <li>• Use digital exit cards to harvest feedback</li> </ul>
Stage 3: Medium-/long-term <b>Year 2</b>	Observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create quick wins</li> <li>• Build on the change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review PLC learning, exit-card data, discussions, and best practices</li> <li>• Embed further learning and new teacher practices</li> <li>• Survey students</li> <li>• Survey teachers again (see Appendix G)</li> <li>• Review and share data</li> </ul>
Stage 4: Long-term <b>Year 3</b>	Assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share outcomes</li> <li>• Celebrate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed changes</li> <li>• Institutionalize changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan for continuous improvement</li> <li>• Embed changes (administration)</li> <li>• Share findings with the district leadership</li> <li>• Survey students</li> <li>• Survey teachers again (see Appendix G)</li> <li>• Review and share data</li> </ul>

*Note.* This table demonstrates the stages of the Change Implementation Plan at CCHS.

**Faith, Leadership and Teacher Mental Health Self-Efficacy**

As a faith-based and transformative leader, I will inform and advance the CIP by integrating the ethical and compassionate principles of the Catholic faith with innovation and inclusive leadership practices. Grounded in the teachings of Jesus Christ, I will prioritize the dignity and well-being of every individual, fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and service. My hope is to inspire and empower the community to embrace a shared vision of positive change, promoting equity and social justice in alignment with critical social justice principles. During the CIP, I will create an environment conducive to holistic growth and sustainable improvements, ensuring that change is both meaningful and impactful for staff and students

Researchers have clarified that teachers' sense of self-efficacy is vital to establishing a culture of positive student mental health within schools. Self-efficacy in the context of mental health refers to a teacher's belief in their capacity to successfully support students' mental health needs (Brann et al., 2020). Specifically, mental health self-efficacy reflects three teacher outcomes: (1) a level of confidence in dealing with students with mental health concerns; (2) perceived competencies in noticing mental health symptoms in students; and (3) the ability to engage and escalate student issues to another tier (Brann et al., 2020). Teachers at CCHS will be surveyed several times throughout the change implementation process to determine change progress and levels of efficacy. Brann et al.'s (2020) survey (Appendix G) will measure school mental health self-efficacy, track teacher self-efficacy over time, and inform professional learning and organizational planning. Data from the survey will be used and shared extensively with the guiding coalition and teaching staff through the change implementation process.

### **Stage 1: Shifting Teacher Mindsets**

All stages are grounded in CST and social justice. Stage 1 is crucial and activates the process by establishing a sense of urgency around student mental health priorities at CCHS. The first step will be to gather the school administration and academic department heads to analyze the gap outlined in the PoP. Once this team understands the challenges, the school principal will form a long-term guiding coalition. Kotter (2014) and Harris and Jones (2011) refer to this coalition as essential since it champions change, communication, monitoring, and evaluation.

The school principal will choose the guiding coalition to reflect a faith-inspired and diverse group comprising academic department heads, the guidance department, and the student success teacher, all of whom understand student mental health issues. All teaching staff will be assigned to a PLC chaired by a member of the school leadership team. Each PLC will highlight a specific topic or theme concerning student mental health at CCHS. As the school's principal, I will be responsible for facilitating the development of the change implementation plan, listening to others' perspectives, and creating self-sustaining PLCs (Dufour et al., 2020). During this first stage, it will be critical to engage the hearts and minds of teachers to commit to the process (Donohoo, 2013, 2017a; DuFour & DuFour, 2013; Freire, 2000/1970; Kotter, 2014). Hearing student perspectives in the first stage of school improvement planning is also a priority (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Kuehn, 2020).

The guiding coalition will include the school principal and three vice-principals and will formulate a long-term school vision and strategy for change based on a review of student surveys, student data, and teacher survey feedback (Appendix G). Data will be shared and form the basis of topic-oriented PLCs. The guiding coalition and teaching staff will receive

professional learning and resources related to PLC coaching, protocols, and mentorship from a school board consultant (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; DuFour, 2004).

Meaningful engagement among the teachers creates unity and trust (Donohoo, 2013; Kuenkel et al., 2021). Stage 1 of the CIP begins with achieving the short-term goals, which may take most of the first year. Identifying a focus, establishing working relationships, and engaging in active inquiry are the first steps of the PLC model, which involves trust, risk, and meaningful collaboration (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Harris & Jones, 2011).

Group norms will be established during the first month of PLC meetings (September 2024). The guiding coalition will organize results from each PLC meeting after members complete a digital exit card. In the first stage of the PLC model, the PLC chairpersons, chosen by the school principal, will assess their group's strengths and needs and determine whether support or knowledge is needed to improve teacher practice. This stage requires working with the board's mental health lead and School Mental Health Ontario. Collaborative teacher inquiry encourages action planning (Donohoo, 2017c; Donohoo & Velasco, 2016). The guiding coalition's involvement in aligning the PLC work with a faith-based, transformative leadership model will increase teacher growth, efficacy, and capacity. The PLC chairs and guiding coalition will consider CTI to formulate inquiry questions during PLC work (see Table 2).

The Catholic faith plays a crucial role during a change implementation plan by providing a moral and ethical foundation that guides decision-making and actions. Rooted in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles, the faith emphasizes the dignity of every person, the importance of community and the common good, and a preferential option for the marginalized. These values ensure that any changes are implemented with compassion, respect, and a commitment to justice and equity (King, 2021). The Catholic faith also fosters a sense of purpose



and mission for teachers, inspiring all members of the school community to work towards a shared vision that aligns with their spiritual beliefs. By embedding these faith principles into the change process, I can create a supportive and inclusive environment that not only addresses practical needs but also nurtures the spiritual and emotional well-being of staff and students involved, leading to more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

**Table 2**

*Collaborative Teacher Inquiry: New Professional Learning Communities at CCHS*

<b>CTI and the PAOA Cycle</b>	<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Sample Questions</b>
Plan: <i>Appreciating the Group</i>	Describe current practices at CCHS. What should we celebrate? What should we change, improve, or enhance?	Are teacher and classroom practices benefiting student mental health? Discuss.
Act: <i>Envisioning Results</i>	Develop better and positive outcomes for high school students.	How might we improve our Catholic practices to advance positive student mental health?
Observe: <i>Co-constructing</i>	What should the teaching community work towards?  What new strategies are needed?	How can we ensure each staff member is skilled in creating inclusive environments? What does the administration need to learn to support teacher growth? What resources are needed?
Assess: <i>Sustaining the Change</i>	How should CCHS teachers empower students, learn, and improvise to sustain change? How can we embed CST into daily practice?	What needs to be implemented to ensure systems and structures are in place to support continuous learning and engage the student voice?

*Note.* Adapted from *Quality Implementation: Leveraging Collective Efficacy to Make “What Works” Actually Work,*” by J. Donohoo and S. Katz, 2020, p. 77. Copyright 2020 by Corwin.

DuFour et al. (2020) describe the fundamental characteristics of an effective, research-based PLC. The guiding coalition will lead the members through the short-, mid-, and long-term

actions as part of the PLC process. The school principal and three vice-principals will create a safe environment for teachers to investigate and implement new practices to advance positive student mental health. As the guiding coalition advances the PLC process, the experiences of the teachers and students will be shared with the entire staff through meetings and professional development days (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; DuFour & DuFour, 2013; Harris & Jones, 2011).

DuFour et al. (2020) examine trust in second-order emergent change. The Kotter change model also supports PLC norms and protocols which foster trust and productive dialogue, moving teams away from polite compliance (Dempster & Robinson, 2017; Kotter, 2014). Professional learning community protocols can structure, deepen, and optimize time spent in conversations (Donohoo, 2013, 2017a). Stage 1 will likely be the most challenging and uncomfortable for teachers, as they will be asked to situate themselves within the PoP to determine how best to move forward (Hallinger, 2011; Le Fevre, 2014).

Harris and Jones (2011) outline actionable steps during and between PLC meetings. Group meetings are essential to the PLC structure, but the transformative work occurs during the school day and will be tracked by PLC members. This will be explained in the monitoring and evaluation section. Change requires collective efficacy and agency, which stage 1 will develop.

## **Stage 2: Risk-Taking and Empowering Others**

This stage is scheduled to occur at the first year's end. Stage 2 supports empowering others through group reporting, continuous learning, and developing strategies to change teacher and classroom practices. For knowledge to become embedded in practice and lead to teacher and leader transformation, the understanding must be deep, explicit, and ongoing (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Halbert & Kaser, 2022).

Practicing culturally proficient learning communities is an intentional practice that builds community and capacity to move the change plan forward (Donohoo et al., 2020; Duda et al., 2017). Professional learning communities are purposeful practices during this stage, and the guiding coalition will monitor and supervise the entire process. Also, PLCs will develop informal change leaders and inspire shared leadership (Leithwood et al., 2010; Northouse, 2016). By reinforcing the vision of improved student mental health, teachers can learn from each other through communication, observation, and new classroom practices (Fullan, 2021; Lazenby et al., 2020). The PLC forum will offer a genuine, inclusive learning environment where teachers can pose thoughtful questions and draw inspiration from one another's ideas.

Harris and Jones (2011) encourage staff innovation and change. Each PLC will attempt new methods to gather evidence and assess student wellness and mental health. Trial and feedback will address strategy-related data during stage 2. Gathering student and community feedback to identify needs is helpful at this stage. Building on feedback will help change agents co-create and model a new reality for CCHS, reinforcing reconciliation, student voices, and culturally responsive pedagogy while encouraging an asset-based approach to teaching, learning, and positive mental health. While PLCs can be unpredictable, the guiding coalition will monitor the entire process to ensure efficiency. In this way, timelines will be met and the groups will remain focused (DuFour & DuFour, 2013; Kotter, 2021).

Sustaining deep learning is considered a valuable component of sustainable organizational change (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Tuana, 2014). Once consensus has been reached on the inquiry questions, the guiding coalition will provide each PLC chairperson with assistance in the form of resources and school data. Innovative teaching practices that support positive mental health, student wellness, and culturally responsive teaching must be developed

(TCSB, 2023b). A balance between student data, facts, figures, observations, feelings, beliefs, and trust must be intentionally maintained and valued during this stage of the change implementation process (Kuenkel et al., 2021). As teaching and learning is an endeavour based on resilient relationships, it will be essential to emphasize each PLC's assets and strengths.

Staff meetings will be organized to review the data communicated in the PLCs. During staff meetings and PD days, the guiding coalition will continue facilitating collaborative conversations with teachers and extend the support into classrooms throughout each cycle. Moreover, as a transformative, faith-based leader, my understanding of the minds and hearts of teachers throughout the transformative process will be imperative to its success.

### **Stage 3: Embedding Professional Learning into the School Day**

Stage 3 of the change implementation process involves working within established PLCs and practicing the essential components of effective collaboration during the school day. This phase will be instrumental in developing momentum for the change plan. Teachers will co-manage the PLC teams by practicing shared leadership to increase collective efficacy (Donohoo, 2017b; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Understanding the tasks and team goals, celebrating small victories together, and having confidence in team members will promote collegiality and bolster confidence. These aspects of PLCs are outlined as critical components of shared leadership and are essential to any productive and successful PLC (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Duda et al., 2017; DuFour, 2004; Harris & Jones, 2011). Stage 3 of the CTI cycle also focuses on propelling change actions forward by observing, co-constructing, and assessing new teacher practices and their impact on student mental health. Stage 3 of the CIP will take place in the second year. This will give the guiding coalition time to meet, inquire, and develop learning opportunities around mental health literacy and a whole-school approach to positive mental

health. It will focus on generating short-term wins and building change through PLC work (Donohoo, 2017a; Kotter et al., 2021).

In the second year of implementation teachers will participate in monthly staff meetings and PD days where they will learn new ways to support students, such as how to implement mental health strategies through content-based instruction, how to differentiate their teaching, and how to develop classroom strategies (Boak et al., 2020; Bourke & MacDonald, 2018; Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021). During PLC work, teachers will co-plan classroom strategies to address student mental health (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). Monitoring student outcomes at this point is a cornerstone of stage 3. The guiding coalition will harvest this data for review with the school administration and the teaching staff.

#### **Stage 4: Sharing Outcomes, Embedding Change, and Celebrating**

Stage 4 of the CIP will begin in year 3, focusing on institutionalizing professional learning and new strategies. Steps include assessing progress and celebration. Sharing new knowledge through digital exit cards and surveys, gathering student feedback, and celebrating organizational progress is appropriate at this point. Feedback will help set goals and determine how to move forward. This stage should start at the beginning of the third year and be completed within a few months to allow for the institutionalization of change during the remainder of the year. The PLCs will continue supporting new teacher practices, student mental health interventions, and ongoing professional learning.

In Harris and Jones's (2011) model, there are two components of the final stage: refining and sharing outcomes. Critical reflection and responding to feedback form the basis of this stage (Kotter, 2021; Le Fevre, 2014). According to Harris and Jones (2011), the phase of sharing outcomes is of utmost importance, as it facilitates candid and transparent discussions with

teachers. Developing best practices requires feedback as a fundamental component. A teacher's self-efficacy will be bolstered by positive feedback (Donohoo, 2013, 2017a; Galioto & Marini, 2021; Kotter, 2014; Kruse & Johnson, 2017).

### **Managing the New Reality**

Successful change implementation requires clarity, appropriate timing, and coordination. Empowering the guiding coalition to lead the vision for change will facilitate transforming school culture (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Fullan, 2021; Kotter, 2014). The CTI model will help the guiding coalition and PLCs set goals for the PAOA steps of the implementation plan. Priority goals and activities developed by the guiding coalition will orient the PLCs at each stage. The CTI model will help transition CCHS through CTI. The process will allow the guiding coalition to increase their efficacy and better understand the principles of CTI (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016). This plan of using CTI as an inquiry model is well-suited and will improve the learning culture at CCHS (Beghetto & Zhao, 2022; Donohoo, 2017c; Kruse & Johnson, 2017).

### **Resources**

The guiding coalition must review school resources used in PLC work to ensure they are culturally appropriate and support student wellness (Lopez, 2020a; Lopez & Jean Marie, 2021). Some of the professional learning work in stage 4 will occur through a partnership with the board's mental health lead, School Mental Health Ontario, the local university, and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Community leaders will provide professional expertise, resources, and advice for PLCs. Teachers will continually review their practices and curriculum as they learn to ensure they are culturally appropriate and aligned with supporting students.

## **Creating a Learning Organization**

Creating a faith-based learning organization and a safe space for mutual understanding allows for essential energy flow between partners and is vital for effective change (Senge et al., 2019). Sustainability is more likely to occur when stakeholders can observe the larger picture and shift towards new understandings. This insight and sense of wholeness invokes the teacher's capacity to stay emotionally connected to common goals (Kuenkel et al., 2021; MacPhail et al., 2021; Senge et al., 2019).

As highlighted throughout this section, profound, sustainable transformation at CCHS requires examining and deconstructing current beliefs and values to acquire new knowledge and develop capacity, agency, and efficacy. This process is complicated, considering the constraints on available resources and the school day's structure. More professional learning time will be required for in-depth, substantive dialogue that can inspire critical reflection and effect change (Andreoli et al., 2020; Donohoo, 2017b).

### **Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process**

The previous section of this chapter outlined an implementation plan that presented strategies, approaches, and frameworks to implement the desired change. The change outlined in this DiP involves transformation and disruption, both of which can be unsettling and uncertain for staff and students. This section centres on communication strategies to ensure that teachers at CCHS clearly understand the necessity for change and actively endorse and facilitate it. Additionally, it outlines the approach to raising awareness about the change, the communication channels used, and a summary of the knowledge mobilization plan (KMbP) (Gunter et al., 2013; Lavis et al., 2003). The three fundamental goals of this communication plan are:

1. To convey the necessity for change to enhance teacher efficacy, promote awareness of student mental health, and increase teacher preparedness at CCHS;
2. To effectively convey the process and actions of change clearly at every stage;
3. To provide updates and celebrate significant achievements during the transformation.

### **Communication Planning**

Preparing teachers for the implementation stage will be essential when planning for communication. During the August 2024 staff meeting, sharing data and priorities will help explain the purpose of the change plan. The guiding coalition will consider the SWOT results and data from the change readiness questionnaire, discussed in Chapter 2, to prepare for the first meetings with teachers (Dempster & Robinson, 2017; Donohoo, 2017b). As the change leader and key messenger, I must establish the importance of interdependence and collaboration. The school principal is the key messenger and will utilize effective communication strategies to actively involve all teachers and partners (Kotter, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019).

The principal and vice-principals will convene in early August 2024 to communicate and promote positive mental health, equity, and inclusion (TCSB, 2023a, 2023b). The communication plan will be explained and articulated in late August 2024 and implemented through the three stages, strategically timed to coincide with the commencement of the new academic year. It is essential to acknowledge that as change advances, this communication plan will be altered or adjusted as necessary.

### **Formal and Informal Communication**

A faith-based, transformative leader must address people's beliefs, emotions, vulnerabilities, and concerns (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; King, 2021). Recognizing change resistance and how to overcome it is critical (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Lewis, 2019).



Miscommunication and lack of clarity are familiar sources of frustration during organizational change efforts (Deszca et al., 2020; Klein, 1996). Creating fairness, trust, and confidence with stakeholders, as well as interest and enthusiasm for the initiative, is essential for the school principal. When communication strategies are not carefully planned, there is a risk of implementation difficulties and community destabilization (Deszca et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019; Shields, 2019).

Lewis (2019) discusses formal and informal communication and their roles in communication plans. Formal communication includes new school policy mandates and guidance on the details of the new change. It may include feedback, but it is usually a one-way process. Informal communication emphasizing teacher and student voices, stories, support, and feelings is essential to transformative leadership (Deszca et al., 2020; Shields & Hesbol, 2019).

Lewis (2019) suggests that communication processes can mediate issues, and planned change involves information dissemination, soliciting input, and socialization. Increasing stakeholder knowledge through information dissemination is essential, but knowledge is emergent and in flux and can change through interaction and socialization (Deszca et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019). As the critical messenger, the school principal must clarify communication and information gaps (Klein, 1996; Lewis, 2019; Voelkel, 2022).

Currently, as the school principal, I provide formal information primarily through staff meetings, parent meetings, professional learning sessions, digital platforms, and PD days. Through information and socialization, organizations shape members' understanding of their culture, values, and expectations (Deszca et al., 2020; Klein, 1996). Changing teacher roles and teaching practices can require resocialization, and CCHS must communicate clearly and consistently how it intends to do this.

Deszca et al. (2020) emphasizes that effective communication infuses change throughout an organization, helps individuals understand the change's impact on them, and keeps people informed of the progress made. According to Lewis (2019), change resistance ranges in intensity from subtle to more demanding. While resistance is often viewed strictly as the opposite of acceptance, it can be considered an energy toward change because it provides an opportunity to improve the change effort (Dudar et al., 2017; Klein, 1996; Lewis, 2019).

### **Coherence and Communication**

Early in the communication process, the shared vision must be clear and compelling (Deszca et al., 2020; Duignan, 2014; Klein, 1996; Kotter, 2014; Lewis, 2019). The guiding coalition will develop strategic communication at CCHS to ensure coherence and clarity by cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). By working collaboratively and developing a culture of internal accountability (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Lewis, 2019), teachers will understand new strategies within the newly established PLCs, provide and hold each other accountable.

### **School Administration, the Guiding Coalition, and Communication**

The school principal and three vice-principals must emphasize the interconnectedness between student wellness and the school's mission and vision of CST, emphasizing that this work is a collective responsibility (Harding et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020; Wright, 2017). The guiding coalition must also explain why there is an emphasis on mental health in the student achievement plan (TCSB, 2023b) and link this issue to the theme of student success. The results of the school climate survey (TCSB, 2023a) and other student data will be organized by the coalition. The coalition must also explain why the PLC structure was selected and show the benefits of applying CTI and improving CTE.

## The Communication Plan

Kotter (2014) stresses the importance of communication. Table 3 outlines the plan.

**Table 3**

### *The Communication Plan*

<b>Phases</b>	<b>CTI and the PAOA Cycle The 4 Rs</b>	<b>Kotter Change Model: Focus and Goals</b>	<b>Channels of Communication</b>
Phase 1: Focus and set direction  <b>Years 1 &amp; 2</b>	Plan & Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create urgency</li> <li>• Build a coalition</li> <li>• Create a vision</li> <li>• Digital platforms, social media and e-newsletters will be utilized throughout the communication plan</li> </ul>	Beginning in August 2024, monthly and regular communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff meetings, internal digital platforms, PLCs</li> <li>• Monthly meetings with students and parents; admin and guiding coalition meetings</li> </ul>
Phase 2: Cultivate collaborative cultures  <b>Years 1 &amp; 2</b>	Action & Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the vision, plan, and goals</li> <li>• Utilize CTI within PLCs</li> <li>• Empower others</li> <li>• Create quick wins</li> </ul>	Monthly gatherings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff meetings/PD days</li> <li>• Focused PLC meetings</li> <li>• Administration and guiding coalition meetings</li> </ul>
Phase 3: Deepen learning  <b>Year 3</b>	Observe & Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on the change</li> <li>• Communicate about and provide feedback from learning</li> <li>• Innovate and generate best practices to serve students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly PLC and staff meetings. PLC feedback</li> <li>• Meetings with students and the Catholic School Council</li> <li>• Administration and coalition meetings</li> </ul>
Phase 4: Secure accountability  <b>Year 3</b>	Assess & Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on new learning and leadership</li> <li>• Embed the change</li> <li>• Celebrate the change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital platforms will be extensively utilized</li> <li>• PLC and staff meetings</li> <li>• Meetings with students</li> </ul>

*Note.* Grounded in CST and critical social justice, the table demonstrates the communication plan. Adapted from Donohoo (2017a), Fullan and Quinn (2016), and Shields (2019).

The early stages of the Kotter change framework speak to the relationships between people, and how this informs the change process by maintaining a faith-based, transformative leadership perspective. Values and innovation must be supported and shared openly (Calegari et al., 2015; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Kotter, 2014; Shields, 2019).

To implement successful change, the change leader and guiding coalition must develop a clear communication plan that provides guidance and reassurance (Dempster & Robinson, 2017; Deszca et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019). Clarifying teacher roles and responsibilities concerning student mental health and wellness is also critical (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022; Klein, 1996; Kotter, 2021; Lewis, 2019).

### **The Four-Step Cycle: Organizational Learning and the Communication Plan**

The communication plan will move through the four phases of Fullan and Quinn's (2016) coherence framework while ensuring that a comprehensive and practical approach to communication is embedded within each phase. Appendix H describes the guiding coalition for all internal and external communication. Digital platforms will be used extensively and the guiding coalition will elicit feedback throughout the phases and CTI cycles. The 4 Rs—rights, responsibility, respect, and relationships—will also be applied to internal and external communication (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021).

### **Phase 1: Focusing and Setting Direction**

Klein (1996) suggests that early communication involves identifying a rationale, reassuring partners, and securing the awareness of perspective holders. Data sharing motivates change leaders and participants and emphasizes a sense of urgency (Deszca et al., 2020; Kotter, 2014; Lewis, 2019). As the school principal, I will set the direction and inspire collaboration by

connecting the urgency of change to school data and student mental health issues (Deszca et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019).

The envisioning process hinges on communicating what areas require improvement or development, while indicating discrepancies between belief and action (Deszca et al., 2020; Kotter, 2014; Lewis, 2019). Moreover, a Catholic-based, transformative leader must employ CST to build trust in the communication plan (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; King, 2021). Recognizing change resistance and how to overcome it will also be integral with regards to fostering constructive communication channels.

## **Phase 2: Cultivating Collaborative Cultures**

Broadening visionary messaging is the central communication component of phase 2. A shared faith-inspired language regarding change must be developed through collaborative efforts. This common language can enhance the likelihood of individuals reaching a consensus on the necessity of the change (Dempster & Robinson, 2017; Fincham, 2021; Lewis, 2019). Utilizing a shared faith-based, CST-inspired language facilitates collaboration. Catholic education is committed to building the whole learner (King, 2021; Wright, 2017). The school principal must communicate clearly and efficiently and build enthusiasm for change. Meeting with teachers privately will also build trust and accountability.

Donohoo et al.'s (2020) research on CTE is ideal for the communication plan. Informed by the critical inquiry questions created by the guiding coalition, I will communicate the importance of CTI in organizing, carrying out, observing, and evaluating professional learning. This approach seeks to strengthen teacher leadership and foster collective efficacy. Within the PLCs and among the entire staff, CTI will be used to set the tone for continuous professional

development, involvement, and ongoing communication (Deszca et al., 2020; Donohoo et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hattie, 2012).

### **Phase 3: Deepening Learning**

Communication in phase 3 primarily involves strengthening shifts in the collective mindset of teachers. This phase situates extensive informal communication in PLCs as teachers engage in individual sharing and reflexivity, which is reinforced through collaborative dialogue. The principal, three vice-principals, and guiding coalition will deepen learning with teaching staff and seek feedback from teachers about the change process and its effect on their changing in order to foster innovative practices and continuous organizational learning (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Donohoo et al., 2020; Fullan, 2021; Senge et al., 2019). Regular communication through an internal digital platform for teaching staff is ideal at this stage. The guiding coalition will post items daily.

### **Phase 4: Securing Accountability**

Communication in phase 4 should be thorough, adaptive, and dialogic to ensure the institutionalization of new knowledge and structures at CCHS (Deszca et al., 2020; Kotter et al., 2021; Lewis, 2019). All communication will be invitational, encouraging two-way dialogue and welcoming concerns and inquiries via a digital platform monitored and led by the guiding coalition.

### **Professional Learning Communities and Internal Communication**

Under the direction of the PLC chairs, teachers will form co-teaching and peer-coaching teams within the PLCs. Developing communication norms to ensure productive dialogue will be valuable for these teams. Community agreements, or norms of collaboration, are ideally co-constructed and can encourage cooperation (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Lewis, 2019;

Tschannen-Moran, 2004). The participants will support teacher feedback within each PLC and share outcomes in a safe and non-judgemental space (DuFour & DuFour, 2013; Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Harris & Jones, 2011).

### **Celebrations**

Celebrations will honour teachers and students, the process, and all partners involved in the transformative change (Calegari et al., 2015; Harris & Jones, 2011; Kotter, 2014, 2021). The successes will demonstrate the benefits of innovation, collaboration, student feedback, monitoring, and classroom best practices. Other sharing methods will include presentations to the parent leadership, Catholic School Council, and school board.

### **Knowledge Mobilization**

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) transfers data and research through practical applications that can be shared at the end of a change process (Lavis et al., 2003). As the key messenger, I must ensure that KMb is a catalyst for individual and organizational learning (Lavis et al., 2003; Leithwood et al., 2020; Senge et al., 2019). Knowledge mobilization requires participation, especially by those most impacted, through the dissemination, socialization, and institutionalization of change (Andreoli et al., 2020; Lavis et al., 2003; Lopez, 2020b). As noted in Appendix I, sharing student voices, student achievement, attendance data, teacher observations, and the effectiveness of the PLCs will ensure that the new knowledge is developed with colleagues and changes are institutionalized at CCHS (Gunter et al., 2013; Kotter et al., 2021; Kotter & von Ameln, 2019).

According to Lavis et al. (2003), five points must be addressed when communicating knowledge: the elements of the critical message, the target audience, the messenger, how the

knowledge will be transferred, and the details that need to be transferred. Digital platforms will play an essential role in mobilizing knowledge.

Sharing and communicating knowledge through different channels and formats will enhance professional learning and CTE at CCHS. As previously indicated, the guiding coalition will communicate with school staff through PLC sessions, meetings, and resource sharing. Parents and community members will be engaged through social media, parent nights, and school council meetings. Sharing knowledge will encourage continuous improvement, intentional change, and the pursuit of vision (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2020). Knowledge mobilization will guarantee that new knowledge about teacher practices and student mental health is shared and applied meaningfully and efficiently to create better student outcomes.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Within this change plan, monitoring entails closely observing and keeping track of the change process's implementation, progress, and results. On the other hand, evaluation involves making informed assessments and judgments regarding change performance. Monitoring and evaluation have a symbiotic relationship. Monitoring generates data that can be utilized to assess change progress, enabling participants to analyze and gain insights from the data (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). A comprehensive conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of change will assist with organizational improvement at CCHS.

Monitoring change involves consistently scrutinizing the process to ensure it remains aligned with the implementation plan (Liu et al., 2021; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The tools for monitoring need to suit the process, and appreciative inquiry will be invaluable for gauging the success of the PLCs while allowing the guiding coalition to respond to any questions or



resistance (Kotter, 2014; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This AI cycle will also help to determine the change in participants' levels of learning and leadership since there should be ongoing discussions about best classroom practices and overall school culture. For evaluation, the feedback from teachers, staff, and students and the data collected from PLC work will be analyzed by the guiding coalition.

A structured monitoring and evaluation procedure will ensure that the implementation plan is achieved. Each subject-specific PLC meeting will pause and administer digital surveys to teachers at several evaluation points to determine CTE and whether the new teacher practices and strategies introduced in the classroom have improved student mental health (Donohoo, 2017c; Fazel & Newby, 2021; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The PLC model relies on the participation of all teachers to design, guide, and lead the change process (Donohoo et al., 2020; DuFour, 2004; DuFour & DuFour, 2013). The guiding coalition will focus on obtaining and analyzing information. Ideally, this means that teachers are activating prior knowledge and incorporating student perspectives in their PLC work by supporting a new, whole-school approach to positive mental health.

### **Appreciative Inquiry**

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) propose in their appreciative inquiry (AI) framework that leaders should recognize and value the existing elements within the organization. Appreciative inquiry is a robust monitoring and evaluative tool for a change initiative, providing a positive and participatory approach to assessing progress and outcomes. An AI model can foster a new learning culture and bolster CTE, innovation, and continuous system improvement in a school (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016). Appendix J illustrates how this model will provide the guiding coalition with a framework for monitoring and evaluating the change process

at CCHS. This process will build capacity by facilitating trust, CTE, extensive professional learning, and sharing practices (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Donohoo et al., 2020).

The AI model fits well with a faith-inspired, forward-thinking school culture (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; King, 2021; King & Stevenson, 2017; Senge et al., 2019). AI focuses on identifying and building upon the strengths and positive aspects of the community, aligning seamlessly with the optimistic and compassionate values of the Catholic faith. AI encourages a collaborative approach to envisioning and creating a better future, which resonates with the faith's emphasis on collective growth, hope, and the inherent goodness of individuals. This method fosters an inclusive and supportive environment where all voices are heard and valued, promoting unity and shared purpose. By leveraging AI, CCHS can harness its spiritual and communal strengths to drive innovative and transformative changes, ensuring that progress is uplifting and aligned with CST.

AI is a valuable tool for this DiP because it facilitates the sharing, tracking, measuring, and evaluating changes during PLC and classroom work. AI is meant to bring out the best in people by emphasizing human interaction, empathy, organizational thinking, and growth (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016).

AI often uses storytelling to communicate during the monitoring phase. Success stories and narratives provide a qualitative dimension to ongoing assessments during the work of PLCs. Storytelling continues into the evaluation process, offering a rich source of qualitative data. Moreover, the emphasis on storytelling borrows from Indigenous epistemologies and works nicely within the theme of critical theory and decolonization. Teacher and student narratives become part of the evaluative evidence, providing insights into the cultural and emotional aspects of the changes and increasing positive mental health.

AI principles and CTI will be adhered to throughout the monitoring and evaluation phase to maintain alignment and leverage current school strengths (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Donohoo et al., 2020; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016). Using AI with evaluation will align this part of the DiP with critical social justice, CST, shared leadership approaches, and an ongoing, iterative, and inquiry-based process. The leader and guiding coalition will prioritize securing feedback from teachers and students to check on progress regularly and redesigning plans to reach goals (Hattie, 2012; Kotter, 2014; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016, Taylor, 2023).

### **Student Surveys**

The importance of students surveying teacher practices lies in the empowerment and inclusion of student voice, a critical aspect of fostering an equitable learning environment and transformative leadership (Shields, 2019). When students can provide feedback on classroom practices, it ensures that their perspectives and experiences are valued and considered in shaping the learning environment. This practice enhances student engagement and ownership of their educational journey and helps identify areas where teachers can improve to meet diverse student needs better (Mitra, 2018). By actively listening to and incorporating student feedback, CCHS can create a more responsive and inclusive atmosphere that promotes equity, ensuring all students have access to high-quality learning tailored to their unique experiences and challenges.

Additionally, surveying teacher practices through the lens of student feedback can uncover systemic issues and biases that may otherwise go unnoticed. Students from different backgrounds may experience teaching methods differently, and their insights can highlight disparities in teacher practices and the impact of various student groups. This process promotes a culture of continuous improvement and accountability among educators, encouraging them to reflect on their methods and strive for more equitable teaching strategies. Ultimately, involving

students in the evaluation process helps bridge gaps between teachers and students, fostering a collaborative school environment. Table 4 outlines the process of PLC work, which is grounded in CST and critical social justice. The guiding coalition will lead monitoring and evaluation.

**Table 4**

*The Appreciative Inquiry Process and CTI*

Process of AI and CTI: Phases	Kotter Change Model	PLC and Community Work – Grounded in CST	
		Key Questions	Tasks
Phase 1: Discovery, Planning, Appreciating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create urgency</li> <li>• Build a guiding coalition</li> <li>• Create a vision</li> </ul>	What are the benefits and gaps in current mental health interventions at CCHS? List and give examples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a digital survey for PLC teacher members to evaluate</li> <li>• Harvest and share the data</li> </ul>
Phase 2: Dreaming, Actioning, Envisioning Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate process</li> <li>• Empower others</li> </ul>	<p>How can we enhance mental health literacy and strategies?</p> <p>What kinds of resources are needed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with staff</li> <li>• Survey students concerning classroom practices</li> <li>• Survey staff for best practices</li> </ul>
Phase 3: Observing, Designing, Co-constructing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate wins</li> <li>• Build on the change</li> </ul>	How can teachers develop and implement new daily practices to improve student wellness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an open-ended staff survey</li> <li>• Harvest and share data</li> </ul>
Phase 4: Destiny, Assessing, Sustaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed the change</li> <li>• Share goals and ongoing learning</li> <li>• Celebrate with the entire community</li> </ul>	What do classroom teachers need to improve their confidence levels in managing mental health issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share new best practices</li> <li>• Develop a digital survey for PLCs and staff to reflect on the journey</li> <li>• Harvest and share data</li> <li>• Assess changes</li> <li>• Develop a digital survey for students and parents to evaluate changes</li> </ul>

*Note.* The table is adapted from *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*, by G.

Deszca, C. Ingols, and T. Cawsey, 2020, p. 290. Copyright 2020 by Sage.

### **Plan: Discovery Phase**

During the discovery phase, AI will be used to focus on what works well at CCHS. In the context of monitoring, and during the discovery phase, knowledge will be generated for the purpose of understanding the strengths and assets contributing to the change initiative's success. Based on the positive elements identified, evaluative criteria will be established. Tracking improvements, successes, and areas of concern will be continuous through digital exit cards and teacher feedback (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Donohoo, 2017a; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016). The guiding coalition will lead all aspects of monitoring and evaluation.

### **Action: Dreaming Phase**

This second phase has two stages. The PLC participants will explore and determine new classroom and school practices and then enact these solutions. In this phase of the change process, the PLCs will follow Kotter's steps to communicate the change vision and empower broad-based action (Kotter et al., 2021). The guiding coalition will schedule both PLC work and meetings with the entire staff to monitor and evaluate progress toward change. The guiding coalition will also calculate any release time needed. They will also determine the PLC inquiry questions by focusing on goals, assessments, and other logistics.

AI involves teachers in creating a vision of success. Monitoring efforts must align with this shared vision and track progress toward collectively defined goals and outcomes concerning student mental health. Success criteria will be established collaboratively and can become the benchmark for evaluation. Regular teacher surveys and observations by the guiding coalition will measure how the initiative achieves its intended outcomes, while allowing for adjustments when needed (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Skrla et al., 2009; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016).

Creating positive feedback loops is a key element of AI. Monitoring the PLCs involves identifying and reinforcing positive patterns and behaviours resulting from the change initiative. Continuous feedback between the guiding coalition and the school administration can be a valuable source of information for the evaluative process. Positive feedback loops can contribute to the monitoring process by highlighting success stories and positive outcomes. These stories then become evidence of the initiative's impact and effectiveness (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2015; Harris & Jones, 2020). Monitoring involves continuous communication with school administration, staff, students, and families through digital platforms.

### **Observe: Design Phase**

Once the data from new practices has been reported, the guiding coalition must study all results. This phase aligns with Kotter's steps for generating short-term wins and consolidating gains to produce more change through acceleration (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015; Kotter, 2014). The guiding coalition, teachers, and staff will analyze their findings and triangulate this new data by comparing initial results and their current information about students (Kotter et al., 2021; Taylor, 2023). Qualitative and quantitative data, such as parent feedback, student attendance, report cards, classroom observations, and student-voice initiatives, will also be reviewed (Dempster & Robbins, 2017). After introducing changes in their classes, teachers will survey their students for feedback about new, innovative practices. These student surveys will provide valuable information on the change process and future focus areas. Designing and co-constructing learning and leadership around positive mental health will positively impact the daily work of teachers at CCHS (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015; Skrla et al., 2009; TCSB, 2023b; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016).

During this stage, CCHS's administration and guiding coalition will investigate gaps, determine the next steps, and celebrate and share their findings with the school community. AI emphasizes CTI and fits the Kotter change process (Calegari et al., 2015). In this context, monitoring involves sharing professional learning, and a participatory approach extends to evaluation, where teachers contribute to the assessment. Teacher perspectives and experiences are welcome and will shape the evaluative criteria, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive evaluation (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015; Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; Skrla et al., 2009). Appreciative inquiry recognizes the importance of adapting to changing circumstances. Regular monitoring by the guiding coalition will make it possible to assess whether the best practices of teachers require adjustments to align with evolving student needs at CCHS. Adaptability can be extended to the evaluative process, allowing for a dynamic assessment.

### **Assess: Destiny and Celebration Phase**

This phase will concentrate on celebration and continuous improvement. The guiding coalition will work to anchor innovative approaches, new teacher practices, and student tracking into the school culture by instituting changes (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015; Kotter, 2014; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016). This phase will ensure that PLC work has met specific goals and created improved conditions for students and CCHS. In this phase, the PLC members and change team will consider how CCHS can sustain the implemented changes and support continuous improvement.

Meanwhile, advancing positive mental health among students will remain a priority in professional learning. It will be critical to allocate sufficient time for teachers to accomplish this work. As the school principal, I will secure funding for job-embedded assistance, such as mentoring by PLC leaders, which is an effective approach to implementing a culture learning

(Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015; Senge et al., 2019; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016). The priority will be to monitor and measure the teachers' ability to employ new practices.

Data from diverse sources will be collected and compiled each semester to celebrate the changes implemented, and the leadership team and guiding coalition will review the results. Teachers will be encouraged to find ways to support students with mental health issues and record their progress through digital platforms facilitated by the guiding coalition.

### **Leader Roles and Responsibilities**

As the change process leader, I will rely on my faith-based, transformative leadership approach to oversee, monitor, and evaluate the change with a steadfast commitment to ethical principles and the values rooted in my faith. Grounded in the teachings of Jesus Christ, I will prioritize compassion, integrity, and justice throughout the change process, ensuring that decisions and actions reflect the dignity and well-being of all staff and students. I believe a transformative leadership style will inspire and empower others to embrace the vision of change, fostering a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives are valued and respected. By integrating faith-inspired values such as solidarity, stewardship, and the preferential option for the marginalized, I will guide the implementation of change initiatives that promote inclusivity and equity and engage the student voice. Through reflection, prayer, and dialogue with staff and students, I will continuously assess progress, address challenges with humility and openness, and celebrate successes as milestones of collective growth and student wellness.

As the change process leader, I will share key responsibilities with the three vice-principals and the guiding coalition. My role will be facilitating the change plan, supporting the change team through the various stages, and leading the evaluation process. The guiding



coalition and school administration will hold regular monthly meetings to assess the change process and review the monitoring and evaluation data (see Appendix J).

### **Tools: Surveys and Digital Exit Cards**

Monitoring and control processes will provide the change leader with valuable tools. The data obtained from measurement systems will allow the change leader to articulate the necessity for change accurately, align the vision with the desired results, assess the surrounding conditions, facilitate change through effective communication, and guide the change plan at CCHS (Deszca et al., 2020; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Digital platforms will be a cornerstone of the DiP.

## **Chapter 3 Conclusion**

The CIP detailed in Chapter 3 addresses practical issues at CCHS and focuses on enhancing teacher preparedness and CTE by closing the existing gap at CCHS. The plan is based on CST, emphasizing critical social justice and faith-based leadership practices prioritizing dignity and transformation. The implementation plan outlines each phase's priorities, objectives, and results. This chapter also outlined the essential components of the communication plan and incorporated a monitoring and evaluation plan. An intentional, cohesive strategy for transformation will enable ongoing progress and advancement in establishing new teaching practices and instructional opportunities that question prevailing norms, engage in critical thinking, and address student mental health concerns at CCHS.

### **Next Steps and Future Considerations**

After implementing the solution proposed in this DiP, three considerations are put forward as the next steps. The first step will be to create an online resource hub that contains all available resources from School Mental Health Ontario and other partners. This resource hub will provide the guiding coalition and PLCs with timely and necessary resources in one digital

location. There must be a central place for teachers to secure mental health resources. The second step will be to initiate a new cycle upon completing this improvement plan. Newly acquired knowledge gained through CTI, practices, beliefs, structures, and processes needs to become customary to ensure the sustainability of the gains made at CCHS (Deszca et al., 2020; Donohoo, 2017a; Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016). In light of deteriorating student mental health throughout Ontario (CMHA, 2023; Mahoubi & Higazi, 2022), sharing the outcome of this DiP with other Catholic high schools will be essential. Engaging in professional dialogue will provide insights for closing other gaps at CCHS.

The third step will be to continue implementing the CTI model. Over time, the PLC structure risks becoming routinized to the point of mechanical participation, which diminishes enthusiasm for new learning (DuFour & DuFour, 2013; DuFour et al., 2020). By tasking staff with the responsibility of setting their own professional goals and working on innovative ways to meet their targets, the positive changes of this DiP will be sustained. Teachers will continue to build confidence in their ability to transform their daily work into promising practices that continuously build on the staff's and students' creativity, skills, and experiences. This continuity will engage teachers in professional growth and strengthen teacher collaboration at CCHS.

By capitalizing on CTE, prevailing notions regarding the collective influence of educators will be altered, disparities will be narrowed, and mental health will be enhanced. Donohoo (2017a) noted that promoting CTE not only facilitates meaningful collaboration but also aids in interpreting outcomes, generating feedback, and it enables educators to set objectives particular to leadership and learning. As a result, for the subsequent CTI cycle, the CCHS administration should identify more concerns of practice in partnership with teachers. This approach will help enhance teaching and learning at CCHS.

It is recommended that future CTI cycles be influenced by the work done through the AI process. A collaborative and bottom-up approach, consistent with transformative leadership, will enable educators to direct their learning and establish objectives for best practices (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; Lever et al., 2017; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2016). The AI methodology assesses the viability of the proposed change endeavour. By considering the actions of established and emerging leaders, this methodology can serve as a systematic framework for evaluating the extent to which community members adopt the DiP implementation strategy. Additionally, the methodology outlines the protocols for monitoring and assessing progress. Furthermore, this DiP has examined the ethical terrain necessary to establish effective practices founded on CST.

Grounded in CST and critical social justice, the objective of this DiP has been to emphasize the significance of promoting positive mental health among students using CTE. Collective efficacy is the conviction that educators influence student outcomes and enhance learning through concerted efforts (Donohoo, 2017b; Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; Voelkel, 2022; Willis et al., 2019). Research indicates that CTE is critical for fostering transformation and facilitating student accomplishment (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo et al., 2020; Hattie, 2012; Taylor, 2023). Cultivating and promoting CTE must be a priority at CCHS.

The closure of the gap will be realized when school administration and teachers improve CTE at CCHS. Utilizing action steps derived from the Kotter change model, several frameworks, and CTI, this DiP illustrated an implementation strategy at a Catholic high school to improve students' mental health. This DiP will provide valuable insights into CTE's development, enhancement, measuring, and sustainment by incorporating transformative and faith-based leadership principles.

As the author and lead change agent tasked with executing the change plan outlined in this DiP, I am inspired to foster a faith-based, collaborative atmosphere by transforming the perspectives of staff and students. At CCHS, demonstrating concern for students' intellectual, physical, and spiritual advancement is an obligation. Teacher efforts and daily practices can enhance student outcomes. By undertaking this endeavour, CCHS will advance towards its educational goal of maximizing every student's capabilities in a faith-inspired and inclusive learning environment.

Central Catholic High School is a sacred space where faith and education converge, and staff are called to embrace this change process as a collective journey towards greater unity and purpose. Staff will draw on faith-inspired strength and a commitment to serving others, guided by Christ's teachings and our faith tradition's wisdom. As CCHS embarks on this path of transformation, may we inspire one another with courage and compassion, recognizing the inherent dignity and potential of every school community member. Together, let us take courageous steps forward, celebrating each milestone and learning from every challenge as we strive to create a school environment where all staff and students can thrive and contribute meaningfully to our shared mission of unconditional love for humanity, learning, and leadership.

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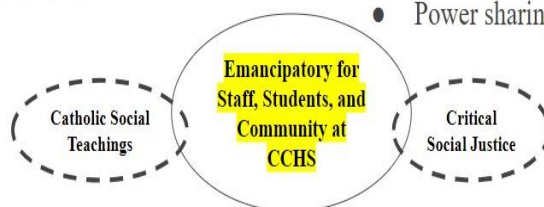
## Appendix A: A Combination of Catholic Social Teaching and Critical Social Justice

### Catholic Social Teachings - Dignity of the Person

- Faith-based leadership
- Pastoral care for student's mental health
- Building relationships with parents and families
- Outreach to marginalized students
- Equity and inclusion
- Daily faith formation
- Advancing wellness
- Educating the whole person
- Ethical leadership

### Critical Social Justice Framework - Action Oriented

- Transformative leadership
- Social institutions are human creations
- Some communities are consistently disadvantaged
- Social justice must be embedded in education
- Dismantling oppressive structures is a priority
- Social justice calls for hope
- Equity and inclusion engages teacher and student voices
- Community building
- Power sharing



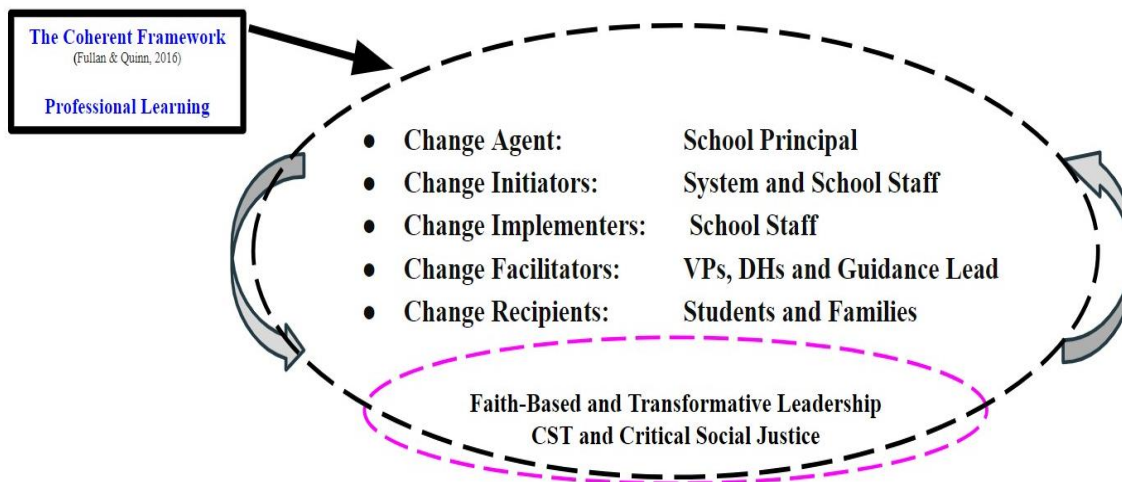
*Note.* This chart and image demonstrate the theoretical underpinnings in the DiP. Sources:

Halstead, (2014); Lewis, (2019); Ryan & Rottman, (2007); Shapiro & Stefkovich, (2021);

Shields, (2019)

## Appendix B: Organizational Change Roles: Central Catholic High School

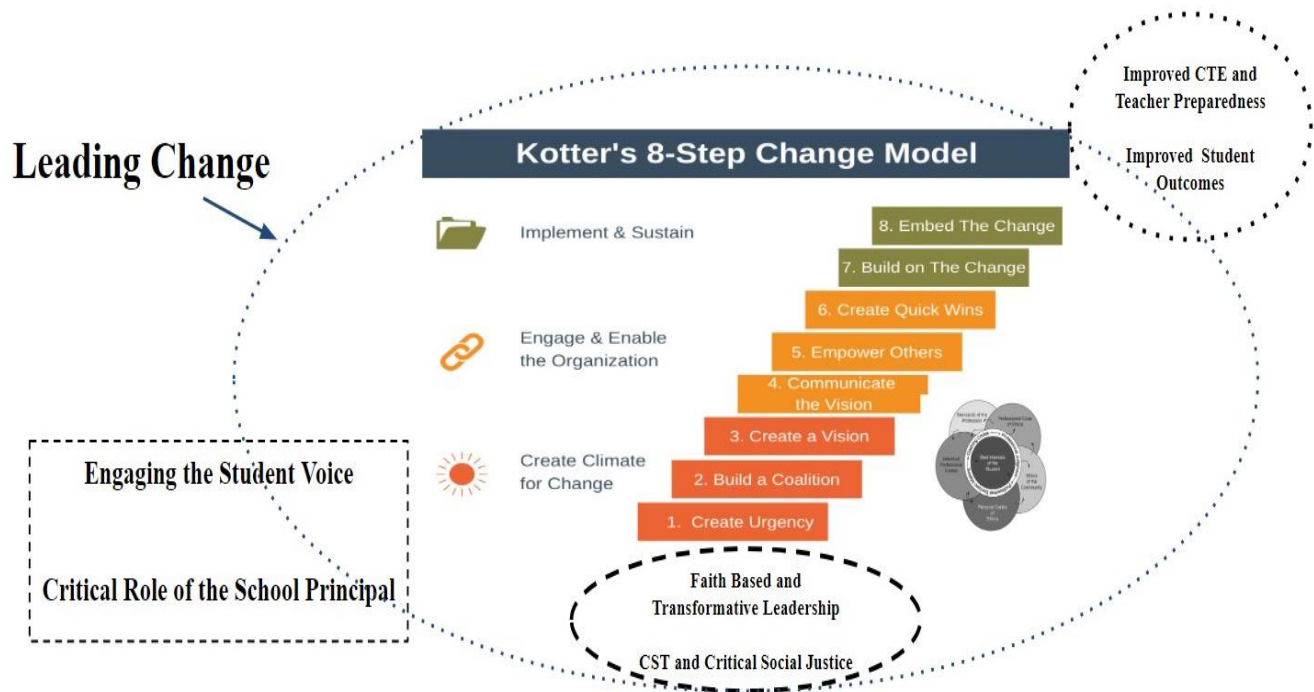
### Organizational Change Roles: School Principal and Staff



*Note.* This image reveals the important organizational change roles at CCHS.

Sources: Bolman & Deal, (2015); Buchanan & Chapman (2014); Kotter, (2014); Rexhepi & Torres, (2011); Rognlien, (2016); Ryan & Rottman, (2007); Senge, et al., (2019); Shields, (2019); Shapiro & Stefkovich, (2021)

## Appendix C: Change Planning: Integration of Frameworks and Leadership



*Note.* This visual is derived from Bolman & Deal, (2021); Buchanan & Chapman (2014); Bradley-Levine & Carr, (2015); Donohoo et al., (2020); Kotter, (2014); Lewis, (2019); Rexhepi & Torres, (2011); Ryan & Rottman, (2007); Senge, et al., (2019); Shapiro & Stefkovich, (2021); Shields, (2019).



## Appendix D: Assess the Organization's Readiness for Change

### Readiness Dimensions

### Potential Score

#### Previous Change Experiences

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 1. Has the organization had generally positive experiences with change? | 0 to +2 |
| 2. Has the organization had recent failures with change?                | 0 to -2 |
| 3. What is the mood of the organization: upbeat?                        | 0 to +2 |
| 4. What is the mood of the organization: pessimistic and cynical?       | 0 to -3 |
| 5. Does the organization appear to be resting on its laurels?           | 0 to -3 |

#### Executive Leadership and Support

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 6. Are administrators directly involved in sponsoring the change?   | 0 to +2 |
| 7. Is there a clear picture of the future?                          | 0 to +3 |
| 8. Is executive success dependent on the change occurring?          | 0 to +2 |
| 9. Are some administrators likely to demonstrate a lack of support? | 0 to -3 |

#### Credible Leadership and Change Champions

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 10. Are administrators in the organization trusted?  | 0 to +3 |
| 11. Can administrators credibly show others how to achieve their collective goals?             | 0 to +1 |
| 12. Can the organization attract and retain capable and respected change champions?            | 0 to +2 |
| 13. Can middle managers effectively link senior managers with the rest of the organization?    | 0 to +1 |
| 14. Are senior leaders likely to view the proposed change as appropriate for the organization? | 0 to +2 |
| 15. Will the senior leaders view the proposed change as needed?                                | 0 to +2 |

#### Openness to Change

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 16. Can the organization scan and monitor the internal and external environment?  | 0 to +2 |
| 17. Is there a culture of scanning and paying attention to those scans?   | 0 to +2 |
| 18. Does the organization have the ability to focus on root causes and recognize interdependencies both inside and outside the organization's boundaries? | 0 to +2 |
| 19. Does "turf" protection exist in the organization that could affect the change?  | 0 to -3 |
| 20. Are administrators or staff locked into using past strategies, approaches, and solutions?   | 0 to -4 |
| 21. Are staff able to constructively voice their concerns or support?   | 0 to +2 |
| 22. Is conflict dealt with openly, with a focus on resolution?  | 0 to +2 |
| 23. Is conflict suppressed and smoothed over?   | 0 to +2 |
| 24. Does the organization have an innovative culture that encourages innovation?  | 0 to +2 |
| 25. Does the organization have communications channels that work effectively?   | 0 to +2 |
| 26. Will the proposed change be considered appropriate by the general staff?  | 0 to +2 |
| 27. Will those not in senior leadership roles view the proposed change as needed?   | 0 to +2 |
| 28. Do those affected believe they have the energy to undertake the change?   | 0 to +2 |
| 29. Do those impacted believe there will be access to sufficient resources to support change?   | 0 to +2 |

**Rewards for Change**

30. Does the reward system value innovation and change? 0 to +2
31. Does the reward system focus exclusively on short-term results? 0 to -2
32. Are people censured for attempting change and failing? 0 to -3

**Measures for Change and Accountability**

33. Are suitable measures available to assess the need for change and track progress? 0 to +1
34. Does the organization attend to the data it collects? 0 to +1
35. Does the organization measure and evaluate stakeholder satisfaction? 0 to +1
36. Can the organization carefully steward resources and successfully meet deadlines? 0 to +1

- **The scores can range from -25 to +50.**
- **The higher the score, the more ready the organization is for change.**
- **If the score is below 10, the organization is not likely ready for change.**

**Actual Score****School Principal, CCHS**

<b>Principal</b>
<b>42</b>

*Note.* Note. The six dimensions of readiness by Deszca et al. (2020) indicate that CCHS's readiness for change is +42 change.

From *Organizational change: An action-oriented toolkit* (4th ed.) by G. Deszca, C. Ingols., & T. F. Cawsey, 2020, Sage.

## Appendix E: Equity Audit Guiding Questions

**Figure 1**

Sample Guiding Questions:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What can you discern from “walking the walls”?</li> <li>2. How is the learning environment inclusive and reflective of individual learning profiles?</li> <li>3. What evidence do you see in the environment that demonstrates culturally relevant and responsive teaching and learning? Do class and schoolwide goals, policies and procedures incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural diversity, cultural competence and linguistic competence? Are these expectations posted?</li> </ol>		
Developing	Implementing	Evidence of Equitable Practices
		All adults use a variety of strategies to communicate high expectations for college and career readiness for all students.
		Schoolwide communications keep students and parents informed about high expectations.
		Families have regular opportunities to contribute to school planning and decision-making and feel their contributions are appreciated.
		Teachers work together to choose exemplars of student work that demonstrate grade-level proficiency.
		All students can explain what they must know and be able to do to meet the performance level required of the standard(s).
		Exemplars of previous student work with teacher commentary are posted in the classroom so students know the expectations for quality work.
		Campus leaders and teachers can explain independently the school’s numerous coordinated strategies to help each student achieve grade-level proficiency and academic literacy.
		There is evidence of teachers scaffolding the lessons with tools such as visuals, thinking maps, graphic organizers, academic vocabulary, and other preparatory organizers.
		Intervention opportunities are strategic, monitored for impact, and are accessible to every student during and beyond the school day.
		Students are engaged and feel valued by the school community.
		Each student is provided with the resources necessary to complete high-quality work.
		Students’ skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized.
		Grade level teams are systematically analyzing student discipline, attendance, academic and survey data to ensure individual students and critical sub-populations are being supported to ensure the performance gaps index is addressed.
Sample Questions for Observation Debrief:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What professional development do our teachers need regarding providing feedback to students?</li> <li>2. What professional development is needed to help teachers use students’ funds of knowledge and cultural frames of reference to engage them in the classroom?</li> <li>3. How can we engage parents to help with nurturing relationships with students?</li> <li>4. Are there specific teachers that students of color or other diverse teachers feel more comfortable with?</li> <li>5. How do diverse groups of students interact with each other?</li> </ol>		

*Note.* These guiding questions were adapted from Murray and West-Burns (2012) and Shields (2019).

### Appendix F: Chart to Compare the Proposed Solutions

Criteria/ Areas	Considerations – Grounded in CST and Critical Social Justice		
	Solution #1	Solution #2	Solution #3
<b>Diversity, Inclusion and Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff members are represented</li> <li>• A safe space is created for all staff to discuss and generate best practices to advance a culture of care</li> <li>• Create structured PLCs led by a school administrator</li> <li>• Access to system staff and experts during learning</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> <li>• School-wide approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A team will be established to review school culture and school practices vis-a-vis the lens of equity</li> <li>• Training is needed for the equity team</li> <li>• Extensive learning</li> <li>• Fierce discussions are needed across the curriculum</li> <li>• Staff resistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A safe space is generated for students to share and voice their thoughts about equity, mental health, inclusion, diversity, and decolonization</li> <li>• However, there is no change in teacher practice</li> <li>• Staff might influence this agenda</li> <li>• Student representation</li> </ul>
<b>Ethics and leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic work building community with staff to increase and improve collective efficacy</li> <li>• Transformative</li> <li>• Ethics of community</li> <li>• Ethics of care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning opportunities are created</li> <li>• Professional development led by a school-based equity team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of structure</li> <li>• Students may need prompting by staff</li> <li>• Struggling students may opt out of the process</li> <li>• Student anxiety</li> </ul>
<b>Resources and support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment by school leadership and teachers</li> <li>• Job-embedded</li> <li>• System staff involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment by school leadership and teaching staff</li> <li>• External experts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment by school leadership and teaching staff</li> </ul>
<b>Implications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are contributing to a new culture of care for student mental health</li> <li>• This learning and structure will narrow the gap outlined in the PoP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school-based equity team creates the building blocks for improved practice at CCHS</li> <li>• Time is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The follow-through is uncertain</li> <li>• Processes may be skewed to reflect a limited dynamic</li> <li>• Time is needed</li> </ul>

<b>Increasing teacher preparedness and collective efficacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shared leadership</li> <li>● Enhanced staff efficacy</li> <li>● Faith-inspired process</li> <li>● Vocation-driven</li> <li>● Ethics of the profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Criteria determined by school leadership</li> <li>● Student participation is limited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is unclear how this solution will determine an increase in teacher preparedness</li> </ul>
<i>Strong – Most Transformative</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Weak</i>	
<p><i>Note.</i> Solution one has been chosen. This chart compares the three proposed solutions.</p>			

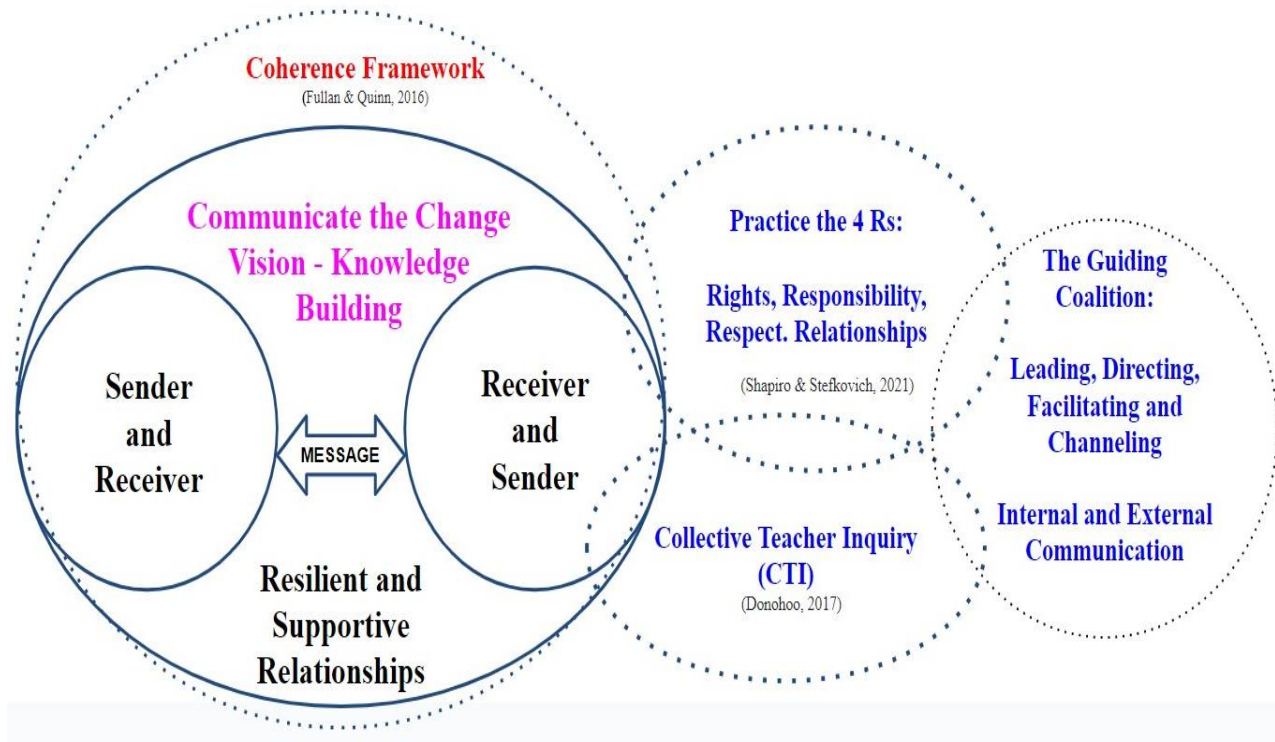
## Appendix G: Teacher Survey – Mental Health Self-Efficacy

I feel confident in my ability to:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize when there is a student with an internalizing concern (e.g., depression and/or anxiety symptoms)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize when there is a student with an externalizing concern (e.g., defiant, hyperactive, and/or aggressive behavior)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize when a student is displaying indicators of exposure to trauma (e.g., intense event that threatens harm to emotional and/or physical well-being such as natural disaster, violence, serious injury, or sexual abuse)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide academic instruction to students with an internalizing concern (e.g., depression and/or anxiety symptoms)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide academic instruction to students with an externalizing concern (e.g., defiant, hyperactive, and/or aggressive behavior)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide academic instruction to students from diverse backgrounds who have mental health concerns					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consider cultural needs in promoting students' mental health					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respond when a student is in crisis (e.g., pose a potential threat of harm to themselves or others)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respond when a student is displaying aggressive behavior					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respond to a student who is expressing suicidal thoughts					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refer a student to the appropriate school-based mental health providers					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offer assistance in the classroom when a student is struggling with a mental health concern					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss student mental health concerns with parents/guardians					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote the social skills of students in my classroom (e.g., review how to solve peer conflicts, provide opportunities for peer interactions on academic projects)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote the emotional skills of students in my classroom (e.g., label emotions, model coping strategies, praise for managing emotions)					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Note.* This survey is adapted from Brann et al. (2020).

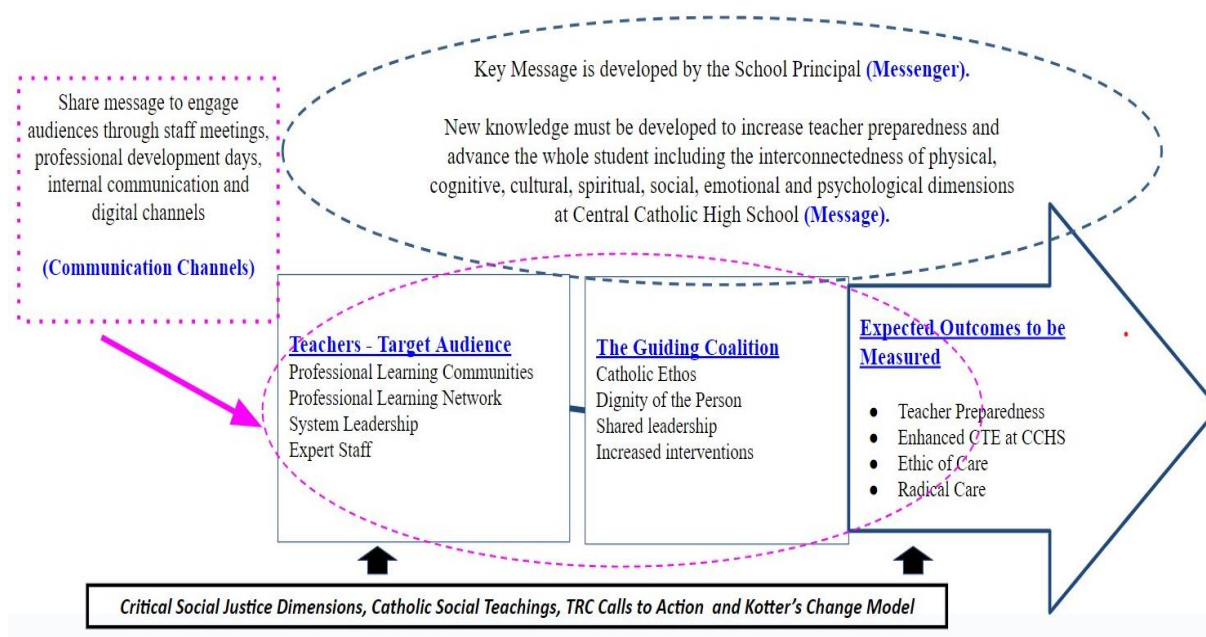
## Appendix H: The Communication Model



*Note.* This visual representation highlights the communication model during the work of PLCs and communicating with the wider school community. The model is grounded in Catholic Social Teaching and critical social justice. Sources: Cooperrider & Whitney, (2005); Dempster & Robbins, (2017); Deszca et al., (2020); Donohoo et al., (2020); Fullan & Quinn, (2016); King (2021); Kotter, (2014); Ryan & Rotman (20017); Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, (2016).



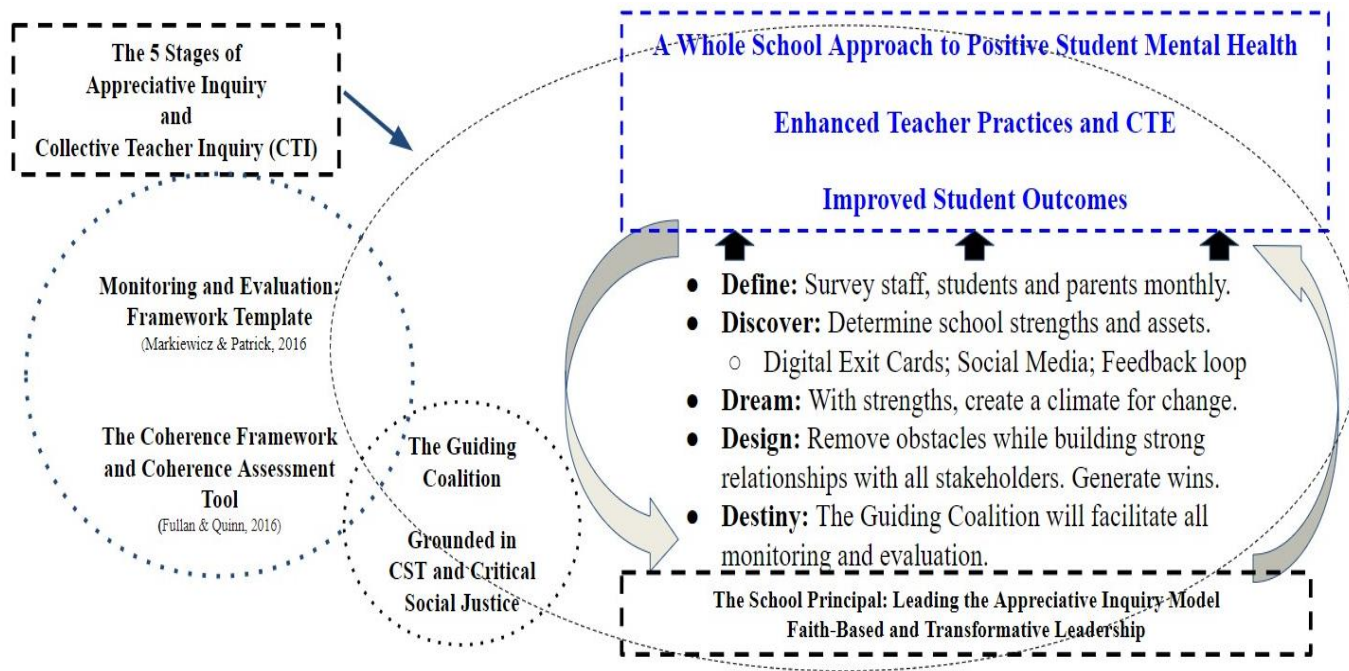
## Appendix I: Knowledge Mobilization Plan



*Note.* This visual illustrates KMB as a process to adapt and utilize the appropriate knowledge to address students in crisis, make decisions, and take action through subject-specific PLCs at CCHS. This figure highlights connections to CTI, the Kotter change framework, CST, and critical social justice dimensions. The communication plan is embedded in the KMBP (Apple, 2016; Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Buchanan & Chapman, 2014; Donohoo, 2017a; Donohoo et al., 2020; Kotter, 2014; Lavis et al., 2003; Lewis, 2019; Rexhepi & Torres, 2011; Ryan & Rottman, 2007; Senge et al., 2019; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021).



## Appendix J: Monitoring and Evaluation



*Note.* This visual representation highlights the monitoring and evaluation framework during the work of PLCs and wider staff dialogue. The framework is grounded in Catholic Social Teaching and critical social justice. Sources: Deszca et al., (2020); Donohoo et al., (2021); Fullan and Quinn, (2016); King (2021); Markiewicz & Patrick, (2016); Shapiro & Stefkovich, (2021); Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, (2010).