

INTRODUCTION

Today's principals are finding the task of providing school leadership a highly political and complex task that challenges even the most experienced principal. The lives of students, staff, and parents lie in the balance. We have entered the era of high-stakes accountability and the principal, as the school's leader, is the one being held most accountable. No matter how hard you work, how much you do, or how well you do it, you are open to criticism and judgment. If principals are to survive in this challenging and complex environment, they will need to master the new three R's of school leadership—resiliency, renewal, and reflection.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

As an experienced principal struggling to meet the increasing demands and stresses of the job, I was always on the lookout for any materials or resources I could use that would make my job a little easier. It seemed that too much of my time was spent composing letters, creating forms, or developing checklists that had already been written by principals at other schools. I felt like I was always reinventing the wheel as I sat composing a letter on school attendance when I knew that one of my colleagues had probably written a similar letter. If I could just borrow that letter, I could use it as a sample and then save time by modifying it to fit the situation at my school. So, whenever I could borrow a sample from a colleague, I felt that I had saved myself valuable time that could free me up to get out into the classrooms and do the important work of the principalship.

Because my day was incredibly busy with all the urgent tasks, problems, and interactions that I had to deal with, I never could find a few moments of quiet time to sit down at my desk and write the numerous memos, letters, and evaluations that required my undivided attention. So, they became the tasks that I took home to do at night and on weekends when I could create the uninterrupted quiet time I needed to get the job done. And I began to resent the valuable time this homework took away from my family and personal life. If I could just find a book of sample memos or borrow examples from my fellow principals, I could spend less time writing and more time with my family.

If principals are to survive as leaders in schools of the 21st century, they need to find ways to lighten their load by finding resources, materials, and support systems that will enable them to work more efficiently. Therefore, I wanted

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to write a practical book, jam-packed with easy-to-implement strategies, ready-to-use forms, and dozens of sample letters that could serve as a valuable resource.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

It is the goal of this book to provide principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals with a treasure chest filled with over 500 powerful tips, shortcuts, time-savers, ideas, strategies, and sample letters and forms shared by award-winning principals from across the nation. This treasure chest will allow you to pick and choose those that would best fit your school. These concrete examples are designed to save you time and can be implemented immediately at your school. The book is organized into four chapters: Blueprint for Leadership in 21st-Century Schools, Mastering the Skills of Resiliency, Mastering the Skills of Renewal, and Mastering the Skills of Reflection. Each chapter is packed with school-tested samples and real-life examples designed to give you the survival skills that will save you time and allow you to work more efficiently.

Despite hundreds of interactions with people throughout a single day, when the dust settles the principalship is an isolated job. Your busy day allows little, if any, time for interaction and sharing with your fellow principals. It is hoped that the materials in this book can reduce some of that isolation by sharing what has worked for award-winning principals across the nation. These resources are based on the day-to-day reality of the job and the experiences of highly successful principals of what works and what doesn't work.