

Introduction

The principal's job has become more complicated and demanding over the past decade. The standards and accountability movement, school security and violence, and an increase in litigation are but a few examples of the issues that make the role of school principal an incredibly demanding one. In short, principals are asked to do more. This book is designed to maximize principals' effectiveness by helping them be well organized, learn what they should and should not delegate, and learn how to take care of their staff and themselves. This book contains practical tips on how to create and find the time to lead—as well as manage—schools.

Effective leadership requires a principal to work toward a coherent vision and direction for the school—and make sure their teachers work toward the same goals. This is time-consuming. The strategies and tips in this book enable principals to carve out the time to function as true leaders and at the same time accomplish the managerial demands of the role.

Getting and staying organized is essential if principals expect to find time to lead. The first chapter gives principals a menu of strategies from which they can create an organization system that helps them in addressing the day-to-day demands. By streamlining the work that principals face, time is freed up to build and nurture a school culture that focuses on instructional leadership. Whether it's using to-do lists to track and monitor the demands of the job or whether it's creating personalized filing systems, all principals—even the most experienced—will find useful, time-saving ideas in this chapter.

Controlling one's calendar is an almost impossible task for a leader. Every group, event coordinator, and committee wants the principal as a member or participant. Chapter 2 explores ways to structure one's daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly calendar to accomplish everything yet produce time for intellectually engaging leadership activities.

Chapter 3 provides advice and suggestions to enhance communication without adding time to an already overcrowded principal's calendar. From creating regular newsletters to sustaining a very visible presence during the school day, the tips in this chapter will keep all-important stakeholders in the loop and enable a principal to focus on the big-picture issues.

xiv Making Time to Lead

Delegation is the key to saving and creating time. Chapter 4 looks at the resources a principal can draw on that often go untapped. Empowering staff not only makes them a stronger part of the school culture, but it also provides a quick and easy way to get many routine tasks done.

Chapter 5 describes ways to use time in the summer to prepare for the school year. Principals can organize many activities, projects, and schedules during the summer—and in turn free up time during the school year to engage in genuine leadership activities.

Taking care of people is often the most demanding task for a principal. Staff, students, and parents want to be known, heard, and validated. Investing time in getting to know one's constituents and doing the little things to acknowledge how important they are lay the groundwork for collectively working on the real challenges facing a school. Chapter 6 provides principals with a number of valuable techniques and practices to build relationships with all parties.

The demands on a principal seem to grow every year. Leading in a time of political and social pressure on schools to achieve more with less in the way of resources and freedom generates incredible stress on a principal. Too many principals put their own professional and personal needs last on their list of demands. Taking care of self is the theme of Chapter 7. This chapter looks at ways a principal can stay energized, refreshed, and engaged. A leader's attitude and mood are powerful forces that set the tone for the leader's work and the school environment.

The conclusion to this book argues that in spite of all the pressure and demands on a principal, there is hope for all who take on this challenge. To be an effective leader, to make the job of a school principal manageable and satisfying, requires thoughtful and creative organizational strategies. These strategies unlock time for true leadership work. Principals, to be effective, must take the time to reflect, to experiment, and to engage all constituents in the process of school growth. Time is the key, and using the strategies in this book will help you create it. Good luck.