

CHAPTER ONE

Leadership

It has often been said that children are the messages that we send to the future. I believe that school leaders are the guides to those children as they embark on that journey.

—*Brent Davies (2005, p. 9)*

For more than 200 years, the public school, America's primary resource for educating young people, has been led by principals. In the early 1800s, Horace Mann rode on horseback to check on schools; today, principals walk from classroom to classroom with handheld computers to log in their observations. Then, Mann's goal was that public schools would "serve all boys and girls . . . [and] would give each student an equal chance in life" (as cited in Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 29). Today's successful principals still believe in that same goal, and they have invested their lives in school leadership to give students that opportunity.

The connection between effective principals, effective schools, and leadership is strong. But what does this leadership look like? Although research has identified many different definitions for the term *leadership*, most would generally agree that a leader is seen as the one who points to or shows others the way to a destination or a goal. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) identified three categories of transformational leadership practices in schools, which include setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. This is not unlike the three categories that Hallinger and Heck (1999) noted in their review of educational leadership—purposes, people, and structures and social systems. Therefore, the leadership role of the principal is to understand how to support teachers, manage the

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curriculum to promote student learning, and transform schools into effective organizations in which powerful teaching occurs and all students learn (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). All of this is done today under the glare of an accountability spotlight that seems to be more often interested in naming scapegoats than noting solutions. Being a principal is not a leadership task that just anyone is able to fill.

At the same time, school districts are struggling to attract and retain highly qualified leaders, as nearly 60% of principals will retire, resign, or otherwise leave their positions over the next five years (Peterson, 2002). Tim Brady, an award-winning principal, reminds us that principal leadership can often be found through inner direction to “lead on a larger scale.” This is one way that Tim, in his best practice advice, provides encouragement and motivation to all principals and aspiring principals about why anyone would leave the “tranquility” of the classroom for the “turbulence” of the principalship.

When award-winning secondary school principals submitted their best practices in leadership, in general, these practices were consistent with the research on transformational leadership. For example, Sheila Anderson noted that the principal “must know where he or she is going, be well planned and organized, and build meaningful and caring relationships.” (Setting direction, redesigning the organization, and developing people—sound familiar?) Other principals used words such as *trust*, *care*, *planning*, *vision*, and *teamwork* when describing best practice leadership behaviors that have helped them become outstanding school leaders with a vision to, as Tommy Floyd said, “put kids first.”

This chapter includes a particularly unique perspective on leadership. Kristine Servais, an award-winning principal in 1994, is now an assistant professor at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. She writes about many of the leadership best practices she implemented at a middle school several years ago and looks at them in retrospect. Now, several years later, this is particularly powerful because many of these same best practices are still contributing to an effective school.

LEADERSHIP ACTIONS THAT BUILD EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS

Sheila P. Anderson
Austin, Texas

I had been an assistant principal for three years when I was appointed to my first principalship. Soon after that appointment, I was asked by an

experienced principal if I thought like a principal yet. I responded that I still thought like a teacher. He assured me that I would change, implying that it would be for the better. Yet today, after 29 years as a principal, I still think like a teacher. I simply have a group of older students, my staff. A classroom teacher must know where he or she is going, be well planned and organized, and build meaningful and caring relationships. This is just as true for the principal.

In today's high-stakes world, we know where we are going: toward all children being successful and graduating from high school and beyond. Getting to that goal can be a challenge. There are some simple things that have seemed to pay off in the schools in which I have been principal. One of them has to do with the belief that the school should be organized in a way that supports trust and removes barriers to teachers doing their jobs. In a nutshell, here are the main components:

- *Hire wisely.* Use an interview team, and don't second-guess your gut. Keep looking until you are satisfied. Usually, our team consists of the department head and a teacher from the grade level or team that has the vacancy. We have set questions we ask all interviewees and a questionnaire we ask the person to complete when he or she arrives and before the interview. The questionnaire is one we developed that allows the candidate to share some philosophical and practical background information. We review the district application, resume, written document, and interview responses as we make decisions.
- *Establish a governing body* of teachers who are elected by their peers to serve, rotating this responsibility every two years or so. Expect everyone to serve over time.
- *Build the capacity of that governing body* to emphasize leadership qualities, problem solving, decision making, and communication skills. One of the best things I have done to help me do this is to be a member of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and attend their national conference. Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman (1999) have written a book called *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. It is one of the best resources I know for helping a staff and community work together. The authors present at the NSDC conference and also offer week-long sessions for teams. Any of the major work on change can also be helpful in helping folks understand and work through change.
- *Collaboratively develop clear expectations* regarding teacher performance and school operations.

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- *Build trust* by developing the operating budget collaboratively, emphasizing that not everyone can have everything at one time, but over time, everyone can have all they need. (See that they do!)
- *Work with teachers* to have them agree that there will be an open supply room and copying materials will be monitored, but the budget decisions will be based on honesty and need.
- *Organize and train the office staff* so that they are part of the school's vision, serving the teachers and parents as major links in the communication process. We collaboratively develop a written document that outlines major and secondary responsibilities of each office person. This is given to teachers. My secretary acts as office manager and oversees the training and quality control of the office. Service with a smile is expected. We develop phone and personal communication skills and strive to meet the need of the caller on the first try. Everyone understands that we are here to serve children, and we do that by assisting teachers and parents in any way necessary. We also emphasize a team approach to tasks. Much of the office staff's work can be done better by two or three people, so it is common to see them working together to finish a big project. We are also blessed with many parent volunteers. We have written guidelines and training for them as well. I meet monthly with the office staff to see how things are going and to problem solve issues as needed. We also celebrate each person's birthday with goodies and funny cards from all the others. No gifts, just laughs.
- *Train your secretary* to manage your snail mail, e-mail, calendar, and appointments.
- *Use a wide variety of communication strategies* to keep everyone organized and informed (i.e., electronic master calendar, daily calendar sent by e-mail, bulletin board with daily schedule, broadcast e-mail to parents, Web sites for the school and individual teachers).
- *Be visible*, not just in the classrooms, but in the halls and teacher and parent work areas.
- *Know your teachers* like you expect them to know their students, and treat them as you expect them to treat their students. Much has been written about the importance of teachers having respectful relationships with their students. I think that philosophy holds true for principals and their teachers: Listen—this is more important than talking—ask questions that lead to solutions, give feedback that can be used in the learning and growth process of the teacher,

pair a teacher with another teacher who is skilled in the area being addressed, and be truthful without being judgmental.

- *Give teachers feedback* based on where they are, and emphasize the growth they are making toward the school's goals.
- *Know the school's performance data* inside and out, make them public, and set up processes for teachers to work collaboratively to improve their work. In Texas, we get a great deal of state data on our schools. The performance of students is broken down by subgroups similar to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Our district has provided us with electronic programs that sort and group results by students, teachers, grade, objectives, socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, ethnicity, and so forth. Being able to produce tables and graphs to help teachers see the patterns and areas of need has been very helpful. Anyone can do this with the use of a spreadsheet, but it is very helpful if school and district data can be dumped into a program, thereby saving the time it takes to manually enter the data. Lightspan and SchoolNet provide such assistance. Our school-wide data are sent home to parents in a report card once a year. Teachers work with bits and pieces of the data throughout the year to guide in lesson planning and student tutoring. By department and objective, teachers review each other's student performance, and high-performing teachers share strategies that seem to significantly improve student learning. I also see that teachers go to staff development that develops their skills as trainers. For example, I have two teachers who are certified trainers for the New Jersey Writing Project.
- *Know the curriculum well*, attend national conferences, and read, read, read so that you are viewed as knowledgeable about change, trends, and innovations.
- *Be a professional developer* with a deep bag of strategies to aid your teachers in learning. It is important to understand and use the processes of setting group norms, brainstorming, using effective meeting structure, resolving conflicts, and knowing change theory. The Dupont Leadership training, along with Garmston and Wellman's (1999) book *The Adaptive School*, have heavily influenced my ability to facilitate groups with these strategies, and I highly recommend them to anyone who leads a school. Probably the technique that has recently aided my teachers the most is KASAB (Knowledge, Attitude, Skill, Aspiration, Behavior). This is a process used to develop effective and measurable staff

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development created by Linda Munger and Joellen Killion. I developed a spreadsheet from their work that we use in the summer to develop our yearlong staff plan. Once we have decided on a goal, we complete the form by deciding what teachers need to know, what attitudes they need to possess, what skills are necessary for teachers to have, what aspirations must exist, and what behaviors are necessary for the successful attainment of the goal. Once those are identified, we decide what and how much staff development will be necessary to achieve the goal. Here is the table we complete:

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Staff Development Need</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Where</i>
Knowledge	Conceptual understanding of information, theories, and research				
Attitude	Beliefs about the value of particular information or strategies				
Skill	Strategies and processes to apply knowledge				
Aspiration	Desires or internal motivation to engage in a particular practice				
Behavior	Consistent application of knowledge and skills				
Notes:					

- *Put yourself and your school at the forefront of innovations;* this is a great motivator.
- *Be patient;* good things take a little time.
- *Believe* in your teachers.
- *Believe* in yourself.

Simply stated, this list confirms what research and educational writers have been saying for years. They are right! By the way, my colleague was wrong. I still think like a teacher. I am still a principal. He is no longer in education.



LEADERSHIP: TIM'S TOP 10 TIPS

Tim Brady
Gardner, Kansas

Teachers are the leaders of the classroom. Every child looks toward the teacher for guidance, direction, comfort, and opportunity. Teachers set the tone, manage personalities, discipline, motivate, and even parent.

Teachers are much like athletic coaches. They guide a team of players. There is a beginning and end to the season. The classroom is like the locker room, adorned with inspirational messages and eager players. The season, much like a school year, begins with great enthusiasm and hope. Fundamentals are taught. Improvement is desired. Teamwork is emphasized. Cheerleaders are on the sideline. Injuries occur. There are tests. There are wins and losses. The team owner, called the board of education, judges every move you make. Once the season comes to a close, the players move on. The coach sticks around for another year, promising that next season will be even better.

If you are reading this book, most likely you are a secondary school educator. You have experienced the peaks and valleys of a school year, much like a coach who endures a sports season. Your students are like athletes. These players put you in a positive light. Success feels good because you have contributed to their triumph. Your leadership impacted the life of an adolescent.

The flip side of teaching is that not all of your players achieved the gains you and others had hoped for. Despite your best efforts, some kids fall short of expectations. Exemplary educators begin to evaluate why

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everyone did not achieve the set goals: What could I have done differently? What “buttons” should have been pushed? Where were the breakdowns during the season? Was the classroom climate conducive for the children to experience success? Was there the necessary support? What went wrong? Where did I fail as a teacher?

As a classroom teacher and coach, I enjoyed every year I worked. I chose to focus on the positive aspects of school life. Each school year had its own personality. The newness in the fall was still able to sustain itself in the spring. My students kept me alert and fresh. I felt this tremendous obligation to dig deep inside myself every class period. I wanted to give my students my best. My efforts constantly led me to instruct, challenge, evaluate, and reinforce.

Every day brought a new challenge for which difficult decisions were made that impacted the psyches of teens. I welcomed this challenge. I wanted the responsibility to make a difference in each child. I didn’t make excuses regarding socioeconomic status, family history, or academic disabilities. I chose the profession. Each day offered an opportunity to lead children to become learners. Beyond the classroom and playing field, I knew I could make an impact on their future. My colleagues and I teamed together to empower kids. I had a daily choice to make about my interactions with students. Because children are easily influenced, each spoken word has power.

Psychologist Dr. Haim Ginott (1972) captured the spirit of what teachers feel:

I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized. (p. 15)

Why would I want to exit the classroom to sit in an office marked “Principal?” Why leave behind chalk dust on my pants, riveting class discussions, teenage zits and zest, grading essays, and “ah ha” moments? I would be trading tranquility for turbulence. What was I thinking?

The answer is simple. Leading people on a larger scale was my destination. I was replaceable as a classroom teacher. There are others who shared my passion for teaching eighth-grade American history. Someone

was always waiting in the wings to coach the sports teams. I believe I was intended to become a school administrator. Call it God's will—my manifest destiny. I knew it was time to become the head coach of a school instead of a classroom.

College classes on educational leadership cannot fully prepare someone for the complexity of the principalship. Practicums, internships, and other means of learning the craft do not provide the experiences one needs to lead multiple programs and people. Principals learn how to provide the necessary leadership for a school by trial and error, being mentored, reading, learning from mistakes, seeking feedback from others, and taking calculated risks. The job seems enormous at times. However, there are components of school leadership that when broken down into small parts, will provide a principal with the framework for creating a positive school environment.

Any success that I have had in school leadership is credited to what others formally or informally shared. My father was a leader as a church pastor. He modeled a relentless work ethic. An uncle empowered his staff. A college advisor instilled confidence. An assistant superintendent emphasized character. A university professor taught the art of teaching. A junior high coach demanded discipline. A human resource director modeled thoroughness in decision making. My mother and wife both exemplified the attribute of caring for others. A colleague reminded me about the importance of volunteerism and servitude. A former principal laughed and told stories. An assistant principal was resourceful and problem solved. These people and others in my life shaped my administrative career, and I am grateful.

A person I have never met has greatly influenced my leadership skills. This person is a successful college basketball coach. I am convinced that he is a better person than a coach based on the rapport that he develops with his family, staff, peers, and players. He does more than win basketball games: He leads young men to reach their potential. He molds them into a cohesive unit as they work toward a collective goal. He personally promotes and exhibits honesty, respect, passion, character, training, organization, purpose, and leadership. This is exactly what principals are trying to accomplish. In 24 years at Duke University, Mike Krzyzewski, a Hall of Fame coach and 12-time National Coach of the Year, has built a dynasty that few programs in the history of the game can match.

Krzyzewski's record as Duke's all-time winningest coach offers evidence of his leadership abilities. Even more impressive are the three national championships, including back-to-back titles in 1991 and 1992, that continue to make him the only coach since the University of California, Los Angeles's,

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John Wooden with such an accomplishment. Coach K authored *Leading With the Heart: Successful Strategies for Basketball, Business and Life* (Krzyszewski, 2001). While reading the book, I found myself making countless applications about coaching a college basketball team and leading a school staff. The two parallel one another.

What are those critical components of educational leadership? I offer 10 tips on what school leaders, not just principals, can do to sustain a school setting that students and staff alike will appreciate and in which they will prosper. Plus, I believe that if the advice given is followed, a school leader will be rewarded in a variety of ways.

Tip 1—Hire People Who Are Willing to Be Part of a Team

A former colleague enjoyed hiring new teachers. He prided himself on keeping a stack of contracts in his top desk drawer that he pulled out to ask a prospective teacher to sign once the interview had concluded. He did not conduct a second interview. References were not checked. He did not ask the right questions to know if this teacher was going to be the right fit for the staff. He was not able to gauge whether the person had the capacity to learn new information, grow professionally, or support the goals of the organization. This poor approach haunted the school for years.

Selecting staff members may be the most important task of school administrators. Who you hire may end up being your legacy at the school. Effective hiring goes beyond selecting teachers: Savvy principals will employ secretaries, custodians, food service personnel, para-educators, and teacher aides who embrace the overall mission of the school.

Once on the school team, principals must ensure that new employees understand how important they are in educating children. Yes, every staff member—regardless of his or her job title—is part of the team that teaches kids. In fact, we all know of examples of the school custodian or secretary who serves as a role model for children. These support staff members can be the brightest part of a young person's day. Reinforce this theme throughout the school year in staff meetings, in new employee orientation sessions, and in writing.

All staff members should feel part of the team. Working independently does not offer the rewards of working collectively. People experience the power of a team concept when they work hard toward a common goal. They are in the trenches together. They conquer obstacles with one another. They overcome weaknesses by tapping the strengths of another teammate. They discover that their single contribution is a key ingredient in the overall recipe for success. Remember TEAM—Together Everyone Achieves More.

Tip 2—Your Staff and Students Need Instant Belief in What You Say to Them

Addressing a staff for the very first time causes nervousness in even the strongest administrator. What should be said? What do people want to hear from their new leader? First impressions can last forever. The pressure is on to hit a home run. Another way to put it is: Whatever you do, don't strike out!

As corny as this may sound, practice aloud what you are going to say to your staff. Rehearse eye contact, pauses, and intonation. Would a basketball player forgo practicing free throws before the big game? Would a minister skip practicing a sermon before Sunday morning? Absolutely not. It is imperative that employees and children experience your credibility from the start. Kids are particularly keen in seeing through adults. People expect substance, not style. Deliver your beliefs with conviction. Staff members want to be led and to intrinsically know their leader is believable from the very beginning.

Tip 3—Leaders Instill Respect by Having a Caring Attitude

If you can accomplish Tip 3 on a regular basis, you can take your school to great heights. I really believe this. The great part of this advice is that it is pretty simple to accomplish. Once achieved, staff members will be able to forgive your poor decisions, sense your compassion for others, and understand that a principal has to make difficult decisions. Caring means showing a genuine interest in people's well-being and who they are. Examples of a principal's caring include doing the following:

- Learn the names of staff members' children.
- Invite spouses to visit the school.
- Notice something special in a classroom.
- Inquire about an event in people's lives (birthday, anniversary, death).
- Go the extra mile to assist a staff member in need of something.
- Organize a group of kids to sweep snow off staff members' vehicles so they will not have to.
- Compliment an act of kindness.
- Leave a voice mail or note for a staff member that simply says, "Thank you for being a positive influence at our school."
- Send a bouquet of flowers to a person you just hired.
- Cover a class period for a colleague so he or she can take an extended lunch with a friend or relative.
- Provide personal or professional counseling.

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- Provide snacks or meals on professional development days.
- Convey to people that hearing what they have to share with you is the most important thing that you have to do right now (even when it isn't).
- Meet deadlines and obligations.

It has been said that people don't care what you know; they just want to know that you care. When staff members know that you care about them and for them, they will respect your authority. They will support you even when it is difficult. They will implement new programs. Teach differently. Promote the positive. Accept constructive criticism. Focus on what is right. Better yet, teachers and students will initiate caring behaviors if modeled by their principal. You will notice that your school environment is thriving. The climate is conducive for acceptance, concern, and compassion for others. Staff and students flourish. Once this is established, it will transcend toward parents, community members, and other stakeholders in your school.

To keep a caring concept on the front burner of our school program, teachers are given a visual reminder. Distributed to each teacher is a business card on which the word CARE is written on the left side with the following message:

Compliment as many people as you can every day.

Act in your teammates' best interests.

Respect the differences in others.

Extend a helping hand.

Tip 4—Meet the Truth Head-On

A principal makes a myriad of daily decisions. Some decisions are not easily made. The situation requires understanding the complexity of the matter, careful deliberation, and effective resolution. There are situations a principal cannot ignore. Examples include the following:

- Teacher is using inappropriate language around children.
- Staff member is using the Internet to surf pornographic Web sites.
- Parent is harassing a teacher.
- Secretary is not friendly to visitors.
- Bus driver touches a student in anger.
- Concession stand operator is pocketing profits.

- Coach's demands on players are unwarranted.
- Assistant principal fails to support you publicly.
- School nurse errs in dispensing medication.
- Counselor did not report child abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Effective principals do not sweep problems under the carpet. They don't discount them, hoping that they go away. Does a coach fail to address a player who is detrimental to the team? Does the plant manager close his eyes on the employee who is preventing productivity? If one ignores the physical symptoms of an ailing body, the body begins to fail. Medical advice is sought. A doctor prescribes medication. People will not get better unless the problem is brought to their attention. The best medicine for an ailing staff member is a dose of the principal.

Administrators regularly work with thorny situations. Decisions are made that have a lasting impact on people. Difficult solutions to complicated matters are life changing. My experience tells me that people want to be held accountable. Internally, they are struggling with the decisions that they have made. They experience angst. Mentally and physically, they may not be sound. Guilt is prevalent.

People make choices that are not congruent with your belief system. Confront these situations head-on. Collect facts. Listen. Care. Discover the truth. Seek input regarding resolution. Document. Expect change. Monitor. Express hope.

I know what you are thinking: There are times when a problem does not go away despite your best efforts. What do you do? My advice may involve more than one of the following, depending on the situation:

- Take small steps toward the intended outcome. Reinforce the positives along the way.
- Try a new approach in solving the problem.
- Involve others to assist in the desired change.
- Be patient. Change doesn't happen suddenly.
- There is strength in numbers. Attain support from your boss.
- Realize what works for one person may not be the best for another.
- Reprimand, suspend, or dismiss an employee if necessary.

Gain credibility with students, teachers, support staff, peers, and central office administrators by your willingness to confront the truth without hesitation. Avoidance leads to destruction. Harm occurs. Children's lives are adversely affected. School climate disintegrates. Complacency sets in. There are no easy ways out. Effective administrators know this, but more

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important, confront it. It takes courage to make tough decisions; don't chicken out. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. keenly defined courage when he said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at a time of challenge and controversy" (see <http://www.Imiuru.com/quotes.html>).

Tip 5—Students, Staff, and Parents Expect You to Be Upbeat, Positive, and Confident All the Time

The first four tips have all dealt with working and communicating with people. So does this one, because this is a people business. If you are contemplating entering the school leadership circle and do not have a naturally high comfort level working with people, pursue other avenues. As an educational leader in your building, you are constantly under the microscope. People instinctively judge their boss. Privately, they will bring attention to the car you drive, the clothes you wear, the voice in which you speak, and how you carry yourself. They judge your verbal and nonverbal communication. Your demeanor in all settings is critiqued—at the grocery store, at church, at ball games, in meetings, in hallways, in the cafeteria, and in the neighborhood. You will be a discussion topic from the faculty lounge to the post office.

I felt this expectation (and even pressure) when I was teaching too. Kids want their teacher to be dynamic every day. They want to see smiles, enthusiasm, and self-assurance. These attributes are contagious. When modeled by any educator, a positive learning atmosphere is created. Leadership expert John C. Maxwell (2003) noted that a positive attitude is absolutely essential if people desire to be effective leaders. In fact, attitude not only determines one's level of contentment as a person, but it also impacts how others will interact with you.

Charisma is the word that captures what I am trying to say. World leaders, star athletes, celebrities, and corporate executives often have magnetic personalities. Charisma includes charm, warmth, excitement, and self-assurance. Charisma does not include being cocky, boastful, flamboyant, or pompous. I believe charisma is instinctual. Some folks just seem to be born with it. However, there are examples of what principals can do to enhance how they are viewed by others. Remember—image is important to your success. Consider the following:

- Dress professionally each day.
- Groom yourself to appear neat and clean.

- Smile frequently.
- Greet others with enthusiasm and genuine interest.
- Keep your head up—glow facially.
- Walk with a sense of purpose.
- Shake hands in a manner that demonstrates strength.
- Initiate verbal contact with others in social settings.
- Seek out others when you are on or off duty—in the lunchroom, at ball games, at parent/teacher conferences, in the parking lot, at community events, and standing in line.
- Counter negative statements with positive remarks.
- Exchange “we can” beliefs when responding to negative people.
- Fill yourself with a diet of healthy thinking.
- Condition your mind to never experience pessimism.
- Maximize your strengths to overshadow your weaknesses.
- Maintain your mental and physical health.

My advice to all administrators entering the profession is to always be yourself. If the items listed do not fit to who you are, don't attempt them foolishly. However, look at this list again. I cannot imagine that any of these would be risky or unadvisable. If they become a natural part of who you are, which may take some practice, you will influence others. People will want to be around you. You can articulate the mission of the school. Your vision for student success can be expressed. You will inspire. You will motivate. You will spark change. You will make a difference as the leader of your school.

Tip 6—Create a Circle So People Do Not Feel Like They Are in a Corner

Coach Krzyzewski (2001) used the analogy of an infant plant to explain the importance of allowing people to maximize their abilities. He pointed out that if you put a plant in a jar, its growth is limited by the shape of the jar. But if you allow it to grow freely, there is no limit to the size the plant may grow. Coach K then reminded us that there are four freedoms that should be assured by every leader in every organization: the freedom to grow personally, to make mistakes and learn from them, to work hard, and to be yourself. What application does Coach K's analogy have for school administrators? His advice included specific suggestions that are applicable for school leaders:

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- Hire people who bring something fresh to your team of teachers.
- Hire teachers who are not clones of yourself or others.
- Choose people who thirst for knowledge and want new experiences each day.
- Automatically go into a mode of listening and acceptance when you are approached with new ideas. Do not robotically put up barriers.
- Ask your team members to attend seminars, mentor a colleague, participate in educational research, take college courses, and present at conferences.
- Share your knowledge and expertise with others. Remember, the plant needs nourishment and sunshine, and you may be its provider.
- Understand that people are going to make mistakes. In fact, mistakes can be advantageous because we learn what doesn't work.
- Mistakes are made, but do not punish unless absolutely necessary.
- Encourage risk taking and thinking outside of the box.
- Don't have too many rules in your building. Rules stifle creativity.
- Foster an environment that encourages sharing opinions and trying new things.
- Accept different teaching styles and educational approaches.
- Do not give up on reluctant staff members. Old dogs can learn new tricks.
- Show willingness on your part to grow freely. When others notice the principal showing innovativeness, they will spark a chain reaction.
- Be alert that creativity can come from unexpected personnel.

I spoke with our head custodian in the cafeteria one morning. Several students were eating breakfast before school. The bell rang for the kids to go to their first-hour class. Some students arrived after the bell rang and wanted to eat breakfast. They explained their bus usually runs later than the other buses. They felt like they should still be able to eat breakfast. In fact, a couple of the kids qualified for free or reduced-price breakfasts, and it was important they should have a good meal. I had no way of knowing if the students told me the truth about their bus arriving later on a regular basis. I did not want them taking advantage of the situation. I preferred that they arrive at the first hour on time. I struggled with how to handle the matter.

The custodian heard my plight. In a nonchalant manner, he said, "Why don't you create a bus pass that the driver gives to the child who arrives late to school?" He continued by saying that adults should control the situation, not the kids. Students show their pass to the kitchen workers, eat their

breakfast, and then go to their first hour. The student gives the laminated bus pass to the teacher who accepts their excused tardy. The bus pass is recycled back to the bus company so that it can be used again.

Guess what? This idea worked beautifully. The custodian offered a simple solution for what I had made into a complex problem. The end result made everyone a winner; the students' problem had been addressed, the custodian felt pride and had been reaffirmed that he worked in an environment in which he could make suggestions, and the principal had a workable solution to a sticky problem.

Do not force staff and students into a corner. If you want people to think outside the box, create a circle! Bottom line—let others share their solutions, talents, and creativity for the betterment of the school.

Tip 7—Ask Stakeholders Their Opinion

Have you had your boss ask you for your opinion? Everyone feels an internal sensation of importance when their opinion really means something. We like to know when our input is valued. Endorphins are released. Typically, an enthusiastic and thoughtful response is given. Even if your boss doesn't take your advice or follow up the way you think he or she should, it still feels good to share your opinion.

Seek opinions from a wide variety of stakeholders. This includes board of education members, community leaders, parents, peers, teachers, noncertified staff, assistant principals, retired administrators, family members, local ministers, business representatives, and most of all, students. If you want to break down barriers with an adversary, seek out his or her point of view.

Leaders are tempted to make decisions without viewing the outlook of others. School administrators tend to rely on sound judgment and experience. Gathering the viewpoints of others takes time. School principals do not have excess time on their hands. Sometimes it is just easier to move forward without soliciting a lot of input. Don't sacrifice the golden opportunity to survey others just to save time.

Consider the positive consequences of asking stakeholders their opinions:

- A team concept is promoted.
- Opinions can present differing sides to an issue that had not been considered.
- Facts emerge.

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- Well-rounded judgments are formed.
- Dissenting points of view are respected.
- People experience influence when they have been involved in decision making.
- Complaints are less likely to occur.
- Enthusiasm is generated.
- People feel empowered.
- The principal receives support.

Remember that trust is a key component when discussing opinions. Stakeholders must know that their opinions are safe to be shared and negative repercussions will not ensue. Gratitude is expressed by the person seeking opinions. A wise principal will publicly credit others for contributing to the final decision that is made.

Tip 8—Faith, Family, and Friends Prioritize Decision Making

Educators can be easily stressed. The demands on time and commitment increase daily, particularly with the NCLB mandate. With outside school responsibilities, school personnel have additional pressures. It is very important that all staff members understand that school is not their highest priority. Surprisingly, at our school, it ranks pretty low.

As schools dedicate their efforts to raising test scores, data are used in driving the decisions on how to best accomplish this task. Getting accurate information is helpful when making vital decisions. As a principal, I use Tip 8 frequently when responding to the requests of staff members and parents. I collect data from the three Fs: If their need involves faith, family, or friend issues, typically the request is kindly accepted and granted. For example, a parent shares that his or her family had a church activity that evening that prevented him or her from attending Back to School Night. This helps me understand the parent's absence from this important school event. If a teacher asks to arrive at school late to see a friend before the friend goes into surgery, support will be given. A secretary is called into the principal's office to discuss an uncharacteristic negative demeanor toward others. The secretary explains that his or her child is disrupting the home environment, which has caused great stress. This helps me understand that this family issue needs greater attention. I may try to rearrange job responsibilities during this difficult time. Time off may be given to meet with a family counselor. My demonstration of caring in itself will also assist in improving the situation.

Our jobs are not the most important part of our lives. Staff members are told if they are to be solid employees, their faith, family, and friends must come first. To drive home this message, I use a stool as an example. If one leg of a stool is weak, the stool will collapse. The other two legs will not be able to support the weight. The stool will not be able to function properly.

The same is true for human beings. If our faith, family, and friends are not stable, we will falter. We must continually nurture these three areas in our life. If they are strong, like a three-legged stool, school personnel will be able to perform their jobs much better.

Emphasis is also placed on the flipside of this principle. Not only should we nurture the three Fs, we must allow our faith, family, and friends to reciprocate the deed. This is difficult for educators. Teachers, counselors, and administrators tend to be givers, not receivers. Principals must counsel staff to accept help from others when they need it. Humility and pride sometimes have to be set aside when receiving a helping hand.

Tip 9—Establish Tradition

My wife is big on tradition. During the holiday season, our family faithfully repeats the same rituals year after year. Our three children understand that when it is Christmas time, Mom will insist on fulfilling our traditions (i.e., cutting down the tree, eating breakfast casserole after presents are opened, giving Dad one silly gift in honor of a deceased grandparent). Despite our gentle criticisms of Mom's holiday customs, we all understand their importance. Repeating something together can be meaningful. It is like the cheerleading squad that constantly shouts out a chant—it becomes stronger and stronger as it is repeated over and over. Duplication brings strength. A commonality is shared that brings people together.

In school settings, most people use the word *tradition* in reference to a sports team. A team with strong tradition possesses a winning edge. Perennial powerhouse football teams masterfully promote their traditions. Successful coaches speak about tradition at every opportunity. As a principal, if you want to create something special in your building, instill tradition!

Tradition is alive and well at Wheatridge Middle School. We have established these traditions in a short amount of time. Some examples include the following:

- Before the first day of school, we have a family potluck dinner for all staff.
- At the dinner, employees introduce their family members.

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- After the dinner, we gather all the children for a photograph. An enlarged copy of the photo is framed and placed in the staff lounge. The pictures of the children are never taken down.
- Former teachers and administrators are invited to special events. This allows our school history to be kept alive.
- An old school bell is rung after a football touchdown.
- If teachers are given permission to leave before their duty day is over, I announce on the public address system that there is a tie sale at the main gate. It sounds silly, but it is a long-standing tradition.
- We give out the Golden Apple Award every six weeks to teachers who have made outstanding contributions to the school. The trophy is given from colleague to colleague.
- In January, all staff members are invited to a nice dinner for fellowship, gag gifts, and relaxation.
- In May, staff members and their families are invited to attend a professional baseball game. Prizes are given throughout the evening.
- Every year, we take a picture of our staff. The photo is placed in the front lobby in a display area with pictures from previous years.
- Community service and charitable acts are trademarks for our students and staff.

Tradition inspires people. It makes them want more. They want to come back. They want the journey to continue. Tradition feels good. It fosters strength and unity. It is difficult to destroy or criticize. Tradition can be an ally for a principal.

Tip 10—Thank Everyone for the Journey

When I was a child, just before I would walk out the door to go to a birthday party or to someone's house for lunch or dinner, my parents would always remind me to say thank you. Expressing thanks to anyone who does something for you was the expectation from Mom and Dad. Principals, too, need to heed this great advice.

As leaders of many, principals have ample opportunity to express appreciation to others. Be intentional about this. Giving thanks should be a habit. Committee members, parent/teacher association representatives, secretaries, board of education members, student council members, custodians, bus drivers, coaches, and sponsors are just a few examples of people deserving your gratitude. These groups work hard to put the school in a

positive light. Be specific about what you are thankful for. Go the extra mile and accompany your appreciation with a gift or surprise.

The journey sometimes feels like a marathon. The school year races along with obstacles along the way. We tire but always find that little extra energy to cross the finish line. The close of the school year marks the end of the educational expedition. You can take the opportunity to compliment everyone for their efforts in making the journey successful. Always say thank you!

You just finished Tim's top 10 tips for leadership. Hopefully, you will be inspired to be an exemplary leader in your school building. There are many aspects to being a leader in addition to the 10 critical components that were discussed here. Enhance your leadership capabilities by working with a mentor, stay abreast of leadership research, and sharpen your individual skills. Twenty-first-century schools are clamoring for outstanding leaders. Congratulations on empowering your students, staff, parents, and community.



TWO ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Mark Roherty
Mequon, Wisconsin

Over the last 15 years as a high school principal and the 9 years prior to that as an assistant principal, I often have been asked my view as to the most important qualities that a leader needs to exhibit. Many esteemed authors of books and articles have researched and defined leadership in understandable and meaningful ways, but in my estimation from the baseline of personal experience, the best practice of leadership is reflected through showing appreciation and visibility.

A principal, first of all, has the privilege of being in charge of a wide spectrum of adults, including classroom teachers, secretaries, custodians, hall supervisors, paraprofessionals, nurses, parent volunteers, coaches, advisors, and other significant contributors to the mission of educating children. Each person provides a talent or gift that never should be overlooked, for acknowledgments of the good things that are being done on

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behalf of children are powerful forces in creating a school culture in which people work together and students and adults achieve success. There should be no hesitation on the part of a leader to express appreciation, because in effect, he or she is shaping a school atmosphere built on trust and a sense of community.

A second quality at the core of successful leadership is visibility. This means that a principal needs to be available and present to students, staff, and parents. Sensible time management allows an open-door policy and excursions up and down the hallways and into the classrooms, the cafeteria, the gym, and the receiving room throughout the day. It also means being a member of committees; attending multiple meetings; hosting parent coffees; showing up at school club activities, athletic events, musical and drama performances; and so forth. That kind of commitment often implies five minutes for a quick sandwich at lunch, a shortened supper hour, and multiple evenings at school every week, but there is personal satisfaction in believing that you have made a positive difference at the end of each day.

Leaders need to reflect on the powerful impact that showing appreciation and being visible can have on the school community. The growing complexity and challenge of a principal's job can be handled more effectively when these qualities are internalized.



GOOD LEADERS ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Tommy Floyd
Somerset, Kentucky

Although it is one of the most demanding positions in public education, the principalship is the necessary leadership driving force behind school improvement. In fact, true school improvement cannot occur without the principal, because this is the place where the rubber hits the road every day for kids. But the wonderful thing about the principalship is that this is a place where you can make a real difference for kids! To be the best principals that we can be, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- What was my teaching experience like?
- How well do I understand the requirements for good instruction?
- How well can I recognize barriers to success?
- Why do I want to be an administrator?
- What does it take to act as a positive or negative force day to day?
- How well do I resist the urge to personalize any and every negative? There will be many.
- How well do I delegate responsibility? I cannot do it all.
- What are my long-term professional goals? How long can I stand the heat?
- How focused can I remain on instructional issues amid the never-ending barrier parade? I will be required to change channels every few minutes.
- How well do I stay focused on the big picture? Here comes the minutia!
- What leadership experiences do I bring versus management experiences?
- There is a big difference between management and leadership! Do I know the difference?
- How well can I maintain composure with a pace that never slows and requires good decision making? Every decision is important, and most can bite you.
- Can I find satisfaction by being behind the scenes?

You do not even want to think about becoming a principal if seeing all students find success is not one of your most positive goals. When you have wrapped your mind around all of these questions and know where you stand, you are ready to embrace the principalship. Remember, always keep in mind the “big five”:

1. Don't panic.
2. Don't get in a hurry.
3. Don't give out too much information.
4. Don't get mad.
5. Put kids first every time.



LEADERSHIP BEST PRACTICES: IN RETROSPECT

Kristine Servais
DeKalb, Illinois

Best practices reflect a desire to create and demonstrate excellence. I began my first principalship with only six months of leadership experience as an assistant principal and while still in the process of finishing my formal training. Yet my first instinct was to provide students with best practices in teaching and learning. Bay View Middle School was in the process of growing in size and transitioning from a junior high to a middle school. I was a rookie as a principal, but fortunately, I brought with me a great deal of successful middle school experience from my role as a teacher. So the first question was: Where do I start?

Beginning Goals

I began my principalship with three goals. My first goal was to provide a safe and vitalized learning environment for students and staff. This would require establishing best practices in the middle school while also developing an identity unique to our teachers and students. Second, great tasks require teamwork, and I would strive to place teaming as a centerpiece to accomplishing all of our work. My third goal was to provide leadership that would empower students and teachers to function as a successful learning community.

Leadership Beliefs: An Internal Compass

My goals as a beginning principal called for leadership strategies in modeling, collaboration, and student-centered decision making. It would take three to five years to systematically accomplish these goals. From the very beginning, I saw the potential in this staff and community to be a high-performing school. My beliefs were fundamental in my role and responsibility as a leader. In an exercise conducted by my superintendent during my first year as a principal, all the district administrators were required to identify their primary beliefs. These became my guide, my compass for decision making. These first beliefs were

- A safe and caring environment is the foundation of learning for children and adults.

- An educational leader's greatest responsibility is to provide every child with caring and competent teachers.
- Learning is a daily and lifelong process whereby leadership lessons can be learned from risk taking, adversity, and failure.

Today I still carry these with me as a reminder of the internal compass each of us as leaders must have in making decisions that impact students and teachers.

Cultural Change

One of my primary beliefs is that a safe and caring environment is essential for students and teachers to be successful. Bay View was rapidly growing, and although order and safety were adequate in the classroom, they were not provided in areas such as the hallways, cafeteria, and playground. Teachers agreed that greater safety was needed, but there was not a commitment or unified responsibility to provide a healthier environment for students outside of each teacher's classroom. Middle school students were not entering Bay View each day assured of emotional, physical, and social safety. My top priority was to determine ways in which we could provide a safe and successful learning community for our students. This would begin by placing students at the center of all our decisions, beginning with an emphasis on schoolwide safety and responsible student behavior. This would be the first of many cultural changes that would take place.

Students First

One of my first strategies was to model student-centered leadership. The premise of every decision I made was "How is this good for kids?" One way to convince teachers of how students must be placed at the heart of all decisions was to visit other successful middle schools. We spent time in other schools observing best middle school practices and talked with teachers who reinforced the belief that students come first. To see it was to believe it. Next, we began to explore ways we could make schoolwide changes to better meet the social, physical, and emotional developmental needs of adolescents. This would require the development of a middle school identity, and to get there would require teamwork. We developed a taskforce to create and implement a schoolwide approach to recognize responsible and safe behavior. Even though this was difficult at first, over

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time, we accepted it as the curriculum of any responsive middle school to adolescent development.

Project STRIDE

The results were remarkable. A schoolwide program called Project STRIDE was designed and implemented. It was the result of long hours of collegial conversations among teachers on creating and recognizing successful student performance. This performance was described as the A, B, Cs of the program: academics, behavior, and citizenship. STRIDE was an acronym that represented the emerging ideals of the Bay View school community: Students Taking Responsibility for Demonstrating Excellence. The identity of the school and Project STRIDE was symbolically represented by a high-top tennis shoe. We placed this symbol throughout the school, in the handbook, on T-shirts, and on banners. Students were active participants in implementing a program that honored success in academics, responsible school behavior, and service to their school and community. The identity of Bay View changed as a result of Project STRIDE. Bay View literally became one of the schools we had visited a few years earlier.

Time for Teaming

Everything I knew as an educator and leader told me that teaming would be critical to our success. Following the work of Peter Senge (1990), I knew that teams, not individuals, would be the basic learning unit in our organization. As he said, unless the team can learn, the organization cannot. The development of teams became important both as a process and a product for Bay View as a learning community. First, this would require my commitment and ability to redesign the master schedule to include common planning time for teams. I began with the goal to not only create team time for grade-level teachers, but to also include every applied arts teacher, counselor, and special-education teacher on a team. We would increase the likelihood of meeting the diverse needs of our students if we could develop highly effective teams. To do this, we would need to identify and implement best practices in teaming.

Failure Is Just Not an Option

We began with a new master schedule that created opportunities for teaming to improve student achievement and success. Daily team time allowed teachers to develop a team identity, guiding principles, goals, and

handbooks reflective of themselves and their students. For example, the Apollo Team was made up of a flight crew of teachers and parents, had a flight manual as a handbook, and had the motto “Failure is not an option.” Staff development and resources such as the National Middle School Association, Katzenbach and Smith’s (2003) *The Wisdom of Teams*, John Maxwell’s (2003) *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*, and middle school experts such as Chris Stevenson contributed to our team development. Once teams were developed, we were able to provide a school-within-a-school approach. Grade-level teams were composed of three to five teachers and 75 students in what we called houses. Students could experience a greater sense of safety, belonging, and personal commitment to successful learning in each house under the direction of an effective teaching team. Team development was pivotal and became the turning point for Bay View as a successful learning community.

CARE for Students

There is an expression that became a motto for me as a principal: People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care. One of the groups for which our school needed to provide greater educational services was our at-risk students. We began to examine ways we could provide extra assistance for students who demonstrated at-risk behaviors. The program was called CARE: Children at Risk in Education. Ten students per grade were identified and provided with a class offered by a qualified guidance counselor. This class recognized school, social, and individual conditions in students’ lives that made them at risk of not graduating from high school. The CARE program was another step for Bay View to serve students of different needs through the best instruction and learning conditions possible.

Increasing Leadership Capacity

There is no one size fits all in a successful middle school. Adolescents by their very nature come in all shapes and sizes. As a principal, I discovered that teachers, too, range dramatically in their skills, needs, and performances. This required me to develop my transformational leadership skills to build relationships as well as programs suited to the needs of adults and students. My third goal was to provide leadership that would empower students and teachers to function as a successful learning community. I realized to transform the culture to a successful middle school, we would need to increase leadership capacity among students, parents, and teachers.

Visible Presence

My commitment to be visibly present with students, parents, and teachers, and a philosophy of people over paper, demanded long hours. Consequently, it meant that paperwork went home with me each evening and every weekend. As leaders, we must leave our office and be visibly present in our organizations to build relationships. I began to use school walk-throughs as a means to visit more classrooms and better get to know my teachers. Steven Covey (1989) suggested that leaders must be effective in time management by demonstrating “first things first.” As a principal, I tried to prioritize my time for students, parents, and staff. The demands of leadership were high, but so were the results. Bay View was selected as a National Blue Ribbon School in 1994. First, we celebrated. Then we came to the realization that our success as a middle school was only the tip of the iceberg in terms of where we could go next.

Student Empowerment

While we were being considered as a National Blue Ribbon School, the evaluator shared with me some of the student comments that he had heard during his visit. Students had explained to him how students governed the school. They explained that through the middle school advisory program, a student representative was selected from each of 50 groups, and these student representatives served as a council for all school decisions. There was little or no mention of me as the principal. I realized that my efforts for student empowerment had succeeded.

It is difficult as a principal to determine a clear image of who one is to others. One of my favorite descriptions was entered in a writing contest by a seventh grader named Stephanie. She described me in the following essay:

A strong, passionate principal can change a school from a good school to an excellent school. The principal can be the key to an enthusiastic staff and willing students. A principal can encourage teachers to start great programs and projects that get the students involved. She can challenge the staff and students by having high expectations and addressing the important school rules. A strong principal isn't afraid to take risks and get the middle school involved in the community and other impressive projects. A passionate principal will make the staff want to work hard to please her, so they are more likely to be more creative and energetic toward the students. This will make the students more involved. On the other hand, if a principal stays hidden and isn't very involved in the school, the staff will not be very motivated by her

expectations. It will have a negative effect on the student body as well. A principal has the most influence over the entire school.

Leadership Fitness

Leadership is hard work. Those of us called to leadership may even claim it was not a choice. For me, everything I do is a choice. As a leader, I made choices in the best interests of students. (Teachers told me after I left Bay View that each of them knew that before they could approach me on any issue or request, they would have to respond to my question: How is this good for kids?) Leaders also make important choices to balance their lives physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Steven Covey's (1989) *7 Habits* calls for sharpening the saw. When we fail to take care of ourselves as leaders, we become less effective and less productive. It was important for me during my principalship to find time to exercise, to reflect, and to remain spiritually strong.

One way in which leaders can remain healthy and productive is through the support of a mentor. Leaders need to find mentors who will support and lift them up when the load of leadership becomes too heavy. Parker Palmer (1998), in *The Courage to Teach*, emphasized that the human soul requires time, conversation, and trust. Time, a most precious commodity to the busy school leader, is a gift we give to one another to develop and sustain a mentoring relationship. This gift benefits both partners in a mentoring relationship. The choice to mentor increases leadership capacity for ourselves and those around us. I have only had three mentors in my career as a leader. Each one was vital to provide feedback, criticism, and support when needed. I consider mentoring a lifeline for sustaining healthy leadership.

Celebrating Together

Finally, leaders must learn to celebrate the many successes as a school community. Celebrating is a form of nourishment for leaders and those they serve. Celebrations allow us to recognize the values and performances of individuals, teams, and our learning culture. Celebrations should not be limited to big events such as being selected as a national high-performing school. A favorite resource, *Encouraging the Heart* (Kouzes & Posner, 1998), helped me to realize that to sustain top performance, people need encouragement. The authors are leading authorities in leadership development and suggest that we encourage others when we set clear standards, expect the best, pay attention to people, set the example, and celebrate

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together. Public celebration at Bay View was a gradual cultural change in which recognition was not limited to students, but also grew into traditions in which teacher accomplishments were acknowledged.

Many of my celebrations as a transformational leader occurred through building relationships and empowering those who matter most in our school—the students. Faculty meetings, quarterly grading periods, and end-of-the-year events at Bay View became a time to celebrate. Project STRIDE included quarterly celebrations for success in academics, responsible behavior, and citizenship. Celebrations are not the sole responsibility of the leader. It became everyone's responsibility in the Bay View community to recognize success, and this recognition took the form of cards, awards, thank-yous, and personal recognition. Teams developed rituals within their houses in which celebrations and honoring adolescent development and success became a part of our middle school curriculum.

One of my favorite celebrations as a principal occurred each year on the final day of school. As the final dismissal bell rang, I would play the "Hallelujah Chorus" over the loud speaker for the entire school of 900 students, all the teachers, and many visiting parents. Even the superintendent and district office staff located in our building would leave their offices to join in the fun. It resulted in a chorus of schoolwide laughter and a reminder to me of the continued need to celebrate our work and ourselves as leaders.

My Leadership Journey

I left my principalship at Bay View in the spring of 1998. We had literally and educationally grown from a traditional junior high school in 1989 to a high-performing and nationally recognized middle school by 1998. Today, Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker (1998) would describe Bay View's development as a professional learning community consisting of best practices for enhancing student achievement. I realize there is no one best practice or any single leadership effort that fosters the growth and success of a learning community. Today I am a professor of educational leadership. I encourage future principals to courageously follow their passion to make a difference in the lives of children. School leaders choose a road less traveled, and it can be an amazing journey. As I continue in this journey, I hope to provide a path for the next generation of principals who also choose to travel this road.

If you are considering becoming a principal, truly understand the brave new world of education that you will be attempting to lead. We are seeing increasing student populations, rising diversity, decreases in school budgets, and an alarming teacher shortage at the same time we will be

facing an unprecedented area of accountability, highlighted by NCLB. Although the challenge for principals will be greater than ever, the need for excellent people to aspire to this position has never been more vital.



SNAPSHOTS

Sharing a Vision

Brent Curtice
Paonia, Colorado

Having a staff that shares my vision for student success has enabled our school community to strive for the excellence that is our goal. As a goal-oriented person, I have always had a direction and a vision for Paonia High School; however, through my meeting with a group of highly motivated staff members on a weekly basis, a clearly articulated plan for student achievement based on solid research has evolved.

As a leader, I not only have encouraged staff participation in developing our goals, but I have also provided departments with time to align seventh- to twelfth-grade curricula with what we want to accomplish to ensure greater student success and achievement. Knowing that staff acceptance is vital to the success of any program, I have spent the time to articulate and explain my vision to the staff, who have bought into my vision that the ACT is a proven measure of student progress; hence, our curriculum is ACT driven. We use the data from the ACT to track student progress and to identify areas that need remediation. I also encourage pedagogical innovation and the sophisticated use of technology to help us achieve our goals and to provide students with as many options as possible.



Empower Others

Kevin Fillgrove
Ephrata, Pennsylvania

Often, administrators feel they must be able to do everything, and do it well—no one can do that. So, find something you are good at that will

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overshadow your weaknesses. Then, surround yourself with others who will fill in those weaknesses. Find people's strengths and exploit them. Identify people who are strong, and surround yourself with them. I have found that if you spend most of your time with the best teachers, your school will excel.

**Balancing Life as a Leader**

Lyman Goding
Plymouth, Massachusetts

Hmm . . . balanced personal life for a principal. . . I don't think I ever got this exactly right, but here are a couple of thoughts:

1. Join the state principal association or regional groups. Our jobs are so lonely at times, but I found a real family through our state group (the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association). Whether it is the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Elementary School Principals, or another group, a place to share, consult, and create a critical friends support group has been refreshing and inspirational.
2. For my family, which I often ignore for weeks at a time—including weekends—I found that sharing the calendar in the same way I would with my secretary and other staff was helpful at home as well.
3. Block out time for family: We bought several club or timeshare weeks in the summer to force me to spend family time since it was already paid for and committed!
4. Find others to do your work for you . . . my secretary is much smarter than I am at so many things—especially when she knows what I need . . . my assistants appreciate being given responsibilities beyond discipline and do them very well. Figure out what you do well and what is most important, and accept that other things might not

get the same attention. Example: My passion is the art and science of teaching and learning strategy and being the “principal teacher.”



... And Don't Forget

Heath Morrison
Waldorf, Maryland

Ensure that all of your decisions are based on the framework and philosophy of doing what is best for students and instruction. School stakeholders may disagree with your choices, but they will not disagree with the reasons for your decisions.



Summary

Leadership Research: Set direction, develop people, redesign the organization, understand how to support teachers, manage the curriculum, promote student learning, enable powerful teaching to occur, and support student learning.

Best Practice Ideas for Leadership From Award-Winning Secondary School Principals

- Work toward shared goals
- Communicate the vision
- Be purposeful
- Be reflective
- Design and redesign the organization
- Promote student learning
- Be visible
- Empower staff and students
- Provide ongoing training for staff
- Do not accept failure
- Do what is best for kids
- Say thank you

LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

1. Where is my leadership strong?
2. What are leadership needs at my school?
3. Am I cultivating leadership at every level of the school?
4. In what ways am I doing this?
5. Does the school community have a shared vision for our school?
6. What am I doing now to promote our shared vision?
7. What am I doing to support people?
8. What am I doing to actively design and redesign our organization?
9. What ideas in this chapter will be helpful to strengthen leadership at our school?
10. How can we implement these ideas in our school?
11. How might these ideas need to be revised to be successful at our school?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ACT

<http://www.act.org/aap>

Dupont Leadership Training

<http://www.dupont.com/corp/social/people>

KASAB—Linda Munger and Joellen Killion

http://www.aea9.k12.ia.us/download/00/communicatorpdfs/09_10_2004.pdf

Mike Krzyzewski

<http://www.coachk.com>

Lightspan

<http://www.studyweb.com>

John Maxwell

<http://www.leadershipnow.com/leadershop/johnmaxwell.html>

National Staff Development Council
<http://www.nsd.org>

New Jersey Writing Project
<http://www.njwpt.com>

SchoolNet
<http://www.schoolnet.com>

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