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Leadership

A
*Relevant
and
Realistic
Role
for
Principals*

Gary M. Crow • L. Joseph Matthews
Lloyd E. McCleary

An **Eye On Education** Book

LEADERSHIP: A RELEVANT AND REALISTIC ROLE FOR PRINCIPALS

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FOREWORD

The School Leadership Library was designed to show practicing and aspiring principals what they should know and be able to do to be effective leaders of their schools. The books in this series were written to answer the question, "How can we improve our schools by improving the effectiveness of our principals?"

Success in the principalship, like in other professions, requires mastery of a knowledge and skills base. One of the goals of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (sponsored by NAESP, NASSP, AASA, ASCD, NCPEA, UCEA, and other professional organizations) was to define and organize that knowledge and skill base. The result of our efforts was the development of a set of 21 "domains," building blocks representing the core understandings and capabilities required of successful principals.

The 21 domains of knowledge and skills are organized under four broad areas: Functional, Programmatic, Interpersonal, and Contextual. They are as follows:

FUNCTIONAL DOMAINS

- Leadership
- Information Collection
- Problem Analysis
- Judgment
- Organizational Oversight
- Implementation
- Delegation

INTERPERSONAL DOMAINS

- Motivating Others
- Interpersonal Sensitivity
- Oral and Nonverbal Expression
- Written Expression

PROGRAMMATIC DOMAINS

- Instruction and the Learning Environment
- Curriculum Design
- Student Guidance and Development
- Staff Development
- Measurement and Evaluation
- Resource Allocation

CONTEXTUAL DOMAINS

- Philosophical and Cultural Values
- Legal and Regulatory Applications
- Policy and Political Influences
- Public Relations

These domains are not discrete, separate entities. Rather, they evolved only for the purpose of providing manageable descriptions of essential content and practice so as to better understand the entire complex role of the principalship. Because human behavior comes in “bunches” rather than neat packages, they are also overlapping pieces of a complex puzzle. Consider the domains as converging streams of behavior that spill over one another’s banks but that all contribute to the total reservoir of knowledge and skills required of today’s principals.

The School Leadership Library was established by General Editors David Erlandson and Al Wilson to provide a broad examination of the content and skills in all of the domains. The authors of each volume in this series offer concrete and realistic illustrations and examples, along with reflective exercises. You will find their work to be of exceptional merit, illustrating with insight the depth and interconnectedness of the domains. This series provides the fullest, most contemporary, and most useful information available for the preparation and professional development of principals.

Scott D. Thomson
Executive Secretary
National Policy Board for
Educational Administration

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gary M. Crow, associate professor, educational administration, University of Utah, received his Master of Education degree from Bank Street College and the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Chicago. He served as an early childhood teacher and an administrator in an early childhood program and a secondary alternative school. His publications, including articles, book chapters and monographs, and his conference presentations focus on leadership, the principalship, socialization, and school reform. He has conducted research projects in three U.S. cities, on the subjects of principal internships and socialization.

L. Joseph Matthews, clinical professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Utah, has also served as a high school teacher and a principal of three high schools in Nebraska, Wyoming and Utah. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wyoming, and the Master of Education degree and the Doctor of Education degree from Brigham Young University. He has extensive experience in staff development for principals and was the director of the Utah Principals Academy before his present assignment at the University of Utah. He has written and presented on various topics related to school leadership, namely school choice, site based management, professional practices, reflective decision making and mentoring.

Lloyd E. McCleary, professor emeritus, educational administration, University of Utah, has conducted numerous research projects relating to the principalship, including major U.S. and international studies. He has authored or coauthored 10 books and many articles, monographs and research reports. His educational preparation includes Kansas University, LSU, the Sorbonne, and the University of Illinois where he earned the Doctor of Education degree. He has taught and served as a principal and assistant superintendent in the public schools.

PREFACE

In 1993, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration published a description of the 21 domains of the principalship. These domains identify the body of knowledge and skills that define the field of educational administration. There remains the task of drawing together, in scholarly fashion, the best thinking regarding each of these domains, and this book represents a portion of that task.

The first domain focused on the topic of leadership, which is the subject of this book. The Policy Board and the consultants who developed the domains understood the importance of leadership for the principal's role. The major issue in school improvement today is leadership, whatever image that may conjure. Many reform movements have questioned the relevance of the role of the principal as a leader. The teacher professionalism movement has emphasized the teacher's leadership role in instruction. Some school improvement literature has argued that principals have a useful but not a necessary role to play in innovation projects. These movements leave open the question of whether principal leadership is critical. Fortunately this debate has not stopped effective principals from exercising leadership. Nevertheless, for current and prospective principals the nature of a leadership role that is realistic and relevant is worth consideration.

The topic of leadership for schools is not an easy task to treat. This topic has many facets about which there is genuine disagreement; there are problems that are difficult to research, and some that are not researchable; and the demographic and constantly changing social context requires new interpretation and study. However, much is known that can be of use to those in the principalship and those preparing for it.

In today's schools the principal functions in a context quite different from that of a few years ago. Gary Crow, Joseph

Matthews, and Lloyd McCleary have attempted in this book to define leadership for principals that is both realistic and relevant. This definition recognizes the multiple sources of leadership in the school and fact that principals follow as well a lead, Yet it also acknowledges that a relevant leadership role for principals is still not only possible but critical. The tremendous chance occurring in contemporary schools and the uncertainty of what principals, teachers, students, and parents will face in future schools strongly suggest the need for a critical leadership role for principals.

The authors have aimed this book at both current and prospective principals. Current principals will find it helpful in their role, especially in a changing environment. The self reflection and peer reflection called for in this book are crucial to enable current principals to question whether their assumptions about leadership are relevant for contemporary and future schools and to consider alternative perspectives. Prospective principals will also find the book useful in introducing them to a definition of the principal's leadership role that may be different from what they experienced as teachers. As they prepare to be school administrators, they should consider how leadership is both a realistic and relevant part of their jobs. This book encourages them to do so.

David A. Erlandson
Alfred P. Wilson

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	v
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	viii
PREFACE	ix
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xi
1 PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING	1
Why Is Leadership Important for Principals?	2
Leadership from External Sources	3
Leadership from Internal Sources	4
Principal Leadership	4
How Do We Know about Leadership?	6
Leadership in Practice	6
Society	6
Other Principals	7
Organization	7
Individual Principals	8
Leadership Literature	9
Leadership as a Personal Quality	10
Leadership as a Type of Behavior or Activity ...	11
Leadership as Dependent on the Situation	12
Leadership as a Relationship	13
Leadership as an Organizational Feature	14
Leadership as a Moral Quality	15
Controversies in the Literature	17
Format of Book	19
Reflective Vignette	19
Self-reflection Activities	23
Peer-reflection Activities	24
Course Activities	24
2 A FRAMEWORK FOR PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP	26
The Nature of Leadership	26
Leadership Is Not Management	26
Leadership Is Not Leaders	27
Leadership Is an Influence Relationship	28
The Participants in a Leadership Relationship	30

The Principal as Leader of Leaders	32
Leadership Roles of Teachers	33
Leadership Roles of Principals	34
The Location of Leadership	35
Internal Sphere of Leadership	37
External Sphere of Leadership	38
The Purpose of Leadership	39
Leadership for Change	39
The Methods of Leadership	41
Three Areas of Leadership	41
The Technical Methods of Leadership	42
The Symbolic Methods of Leadership	42
Summary	43
Reflective Vignette	44
Self-reflection Activities	46
Peer-reflection Activities	47
Course Activities	47
3 LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL CULTURE: CREATING,	
MAINTAINING, AND CHANGING	48
Defining Culture	48
The Nature of Leadership for Culture	50
Creating Culture	50
Maintaining Culture	52
Changing Culture	53
The Participants of Leadership and Culture	55
Principal as Leader of Leaders	57
The Location of Leadership for	
Culture Development	58
The Purpose of Leadership for Culture	59
The Dark Side of Culture	61
The Methods of Leadership for Culture	61
Leadership for Creating Culture	61
Leadership for Maintaining Culture	63
Internal Veterans	63
Internal Newcomers	64
External Constituents	66
Leadership and Changing Culture	67
When is Cultural Change Needed?	67

What can Leaders Do to Effect Cultural Change?	69
Reflective Vignette	73
Self-reflection Activities	75
Peer-reflection Activities	76
Course Activities	76
4 INFLUENCING A COLLECTIVE VISION	77
The Nature of Leadership for Vision	77
What Is Vision?	77
Personal Vision	78
Collective Vision	78
Influencing the Collective Vision	80
The Process of Vision	80
The Content of Vision	80
The Participants of Leadership for Vision	81
Leader's Role in Vision	82
Followers' Role in Vision	83
Principals as Leaders of Leaders for Vision	85
The Location of Leadership for Vision	86
The External Sphere of Leadership for Vision	86
The Internal Sphere of Leadership for Vision	87
The Purpose of Leadership for Vision	88
Visions that Blind	89
Methods of Leadership for Vision	90
Understand the School and Its Environment	91
Involve Critical Individuals in the Process	93
Explore Possible Visions of the Future	94
Develop and Communicate the Vision	95
Reflective Vignette	96
Self-reflection activities	97
Peer-reflective Activities	98
Course Activities	98
5 LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:	
INFLUENCING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR CHANGE	99
The Nature of Leadership for School Improvement	99
Influencing a School Improvement Environment ..	101
Bureaucratic Actions	102
Cultural Actions	102
Educational Actions	103

The Participants of Leadership for	
School Improvement	104
Leaders' and Followers' Roles	104
Principal as Leader of Leaders for School	
Improvement	105
The Location of Leadership for School Improvement .	107
Leadership in the Internal Sphere	107
Leadership in the External Sphere	108
The Purpose of Leadership for School Improvement .	110
The Methods of Leadership for School Improvement .	111
Bureaucratic Methods of Leadership	111
Cultural Methods of Leadership	114
Inspiring a Shared Vision and Focus	114
Enabling and Encouraging Others	115
Modeling Change	116
Educational Methods of Leadership	116
Begin with Self	117
Surface and Test Mental Models	118
Promote Systems Thinking	120
Reflective Vignette	122
Self-reflection Activities	123
Peer-reflection activities	124
Course Activities	124
6 A LEADERSHIP ROLE FOR PRINCIPALS:	
REALISTIC AND RELEVANT	125
Summary	125
The Nature of Leadership	125
The Participants of Leadership	127
The Location for Leadership	128
The Purpose of Leadership	129
The Methods of Leadership	129
Principal Leadership for the Future	130
Beyond Effective Management	130
Systemic Leadership	131
Focusing on Leadership rather than Leaders	132
Leadership for Responsibility	133
Conclusion	133
REFERENCES	135

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

Writings and discussions about principals as leaders tend to identify two extremes. On one extreme, principals are encouraged to be charismatic leaders and sole agents for improving the school's instructional program. This instructional leadership role often assumes a larger than life "lone ranger" or "pied piper" quality. Principals as leaders are expected to construct a vision for the school and inspire others to accept and implement it; they envision and create, singlehandedly, a more effective school.

At the other extreme, principals are admonished to take a less creative approach to leadership, one in which they become facilitators of others' leadership. In this role, principals are expected to be conveners or parliamentarians, bringing teachers, parents, and the community together to decide the vision of the school; they are to be fundraisers, providing resources that enable teachers and other groups to create a more effective school. Although these responsibilities are surely valuable to the school, many principals question whether they involve a significant leadership role.

Neither of these extremes alone—everything or nothing—constitutes a realistic or relevant leadership role for principals. Realistically, leadership in schools cannot be limited to the action of a single individual. For schools to change in substantive ways, leadership must include more than one person and frequently be exercised by those without formal administrative titles. Relevantly, principals can and should inspire others to follow