

2000

The principal : a reflective essay

Mel F. Mysak
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©2000 Mel F. Mysak

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mysak, Mel F., "The principal : a reflective essay" (2000). *Graduate Research Papers*. 1258.
<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1258>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

The principal : a reflective essay

Abstract

As I think of the principal my mind takes me back to my early school days. As a young student one of my earliest encounters with a principal was on a disciplinary matter. Even though the incident must have been in first or second grade I still clearly remember it to this day. Hence, one of my first encounters with a principal was a negative one. Due to the nature of the job, disciplinarian is one of the roles of the principal that I now understand. This incident causes me to consider that as a principal I will never know how my actions and reactions will impact or affect someone, perhaps for years to come.

A Reflective Research Paper on

The Principalship

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

and Postsecondary Education

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

by

Mel F. Mysak

May 2000

This Research Paper by: Mel F. Mysak

Entitled: The Principal: A Reflective Essay

Has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Education.

Dave Else

1-26-2001
Date Approved

Advisor/Director of Research Paper

Dale R. Jackson

1/26/2001
Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper

Michael D. Waggoner

1.26.2001
Date Received

Head, Department of Educational
Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary
Education

As I think of the principal my mind takes me back to my early school days. As a young student one of my earliest encounters with a principal was on a disciplinary matter. Even though the incident must have been in first or second grade I still clearly remember it to this day. Hence, one of my first encounters with a principal was a negative one. Due to the nature of the job, disciplinarian is one of the roles of the principal that I now understand. This incident causes me to consider that as a principal I will never know how my actions and reactions will impact or affect someone, perhaps for years to come.

Another formative incident was to occur years later when I was in junior high. My principal was the coach of the football team. I saw a different man on the football field than I had seen in the office. He taught me how to play football. He seemed to really be interested in me. He wasn't the principal to just be the disciplinarian or just run the school. He was involved in other things outside of the school. I began to realize there were positive aspects to the man in the office as well as those of a negative nature that I had from earlier experiences. These revisited memories illustrated to me the importance of allowing students to see me, as their principal, in as many different roles as possible. During all the years that I was a student I believed the principal's job was to make sure everything ran as it was supposed to. As a student, I

felt the principal was both the disciplinarian and the "boss" of the school. I had no idea of the complexity of the office of principal until years later.

As I reflect upon just these two incidents in my early school life, it causes me to realize that how I react toward people, as a principal, will have either positive or negative consequences in their lives. And the effect of that interaction may indeed last a lifetime! I can be helpful or I can be a hindrance to those I come into contact with. I can have a positive or I can have a negative influence upon them. It is obvious to me that I must carefully consider how I act and react to those around me. I must analyze what actions I take to see if I need to make changes in them for the next time.

As time passed I became a teacher and have since worked with several principals, in three different states and four different school systems. As a teacher I have come to see the principal in a much different light than I did as a student. I have worked with some principals that were very competent and some that were not. The competent principals have helped me to grow both as a professional and as a person. Through competent evaluations and discussions, they helped me to better see the strong as well as the weak points in my teaching style. They would honestly evaluate what I was attempting to do in the classroom. We would then discuss together what was actually accomplished. We

would discuss what was done correctly and discuss constructively what needed improvement. Then the principal would offer concrete suggestions that would help me to improve. I could really discern that principals of this type were really interested in helping me grow professionally as an educator. I distinctly remember one very helpful suggestion. During my second year of teaching the principal came into my class for a formal observation session. During our conversation afterward, he simply suggested, among some other things, that I audio tape my next class. This was in the days before video cameras. I followed his advice and learned a lesson about voice projection and animation. I was so boring with my monotone presentation I nearly put myself to sleep! This clearly taught me that suggestions don't have to be complicated and difficult but be very helpful.

On the other hand, those principals who were not competent have really hindered my professional growth. They either would not or could not do those things that more competent principals did for me. I have come to greatly appreciate the positive impact that competent principals have had on my professional and personal growth. I have come to resent the impact that those incompetent principals have had. Due to their incompetence, my professional growth has most certainly been hindered. My experiences with principals has demonstrated to me that as a principal

I must be prepared to be a positive influence on those who depend upon my leadership abilities and knowledge of the educational profession, in all its aspects.

During my early teaching years I would periodically look longingly at the principals office and wonder what it would be like to be a principal. What kind of a principal could I be? But then reality would set in and I would realize I had a wife and two young daughters to support. I could not afford to go back to school and get the necessary course work to become a principal. Over twenty years have since passed and now my girls are grown, married and have children of their own. I've now decided to seriously explore the possibilities of becoming a principal. That exploration ultimately led me to enroll in the educational leadership program at the University of Northern Iowa. This experience has caused me to begin to develop a vision of what a principal really does and who a principal really is.

Before my experiences in the educational leadership program my vision of an effective principal was concerned mainly with the ability to manage the system and be a disciplinarian. I realize that the principal must be effective in those areas or there will be chaos. I have since discovered that there is much more to being an effective principal than I had originally thought. Because so much is at stake, those who are in and

hope to be in the principal's position must indeed be remarkable people. These leaders must be professional leaders and not just workers. "A worker is interested in time and money whereas a professional leader is interested in enhancement and cooperation" (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 272). I believe a principal must be a consummate professional. Undoubtedly, an effective principal is a complex person. I have come to agree, in part with Specks basic "anatomy of a principal", (Speck, 1999, p. 16-21). I would however like to modify that model slightly.

In the remainder of this paper I would like to outline four areas of the principalship that I believe are essential for an effective principal to possess. These areas are the principal as: (a) the educational leader with a vision, (b) the possessor of educational knowledge, (c) the manager of the system, and (d) the person having certain characteristics of integrity and morality.

The Principal as Visionary Leader

The role of principal must change to meet the challenges of the 21st century. "Administrators must develop a new conception of their roles as instructional leaders or public education in the new century could well be endangered" (Colon, 1994, p. 85). "Leaders must be ones with a vision" (Lewis, 1993, p. 3). The role of principal is becoming more and more complex. Principals will need to function in many different arenas to be

effective leaders. In this section I will briefly touch on several of these areas that I believe fall under the heading of the principal as a visionary leader.

Lindelov, Mazarella, Scott, Ellis, and Smith, found that, " each school has its own distinct feel or personality that can be recognized soon after entering its doors" (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1991 p. 168). I believe the principal plays a major role in helping to develop the school's "personality" which is a direct result of what is perceived as the school's vision. To play the leadership role in developing the vision of the school the principal must be competent in many behaviors. "One of the behaviors of a strong principal is being a forceful and dynamic leader" (Persell & Cookson, 1982, p. 22). "Effective school leaders establish a vision for the school and lead the school community toward that vision" (Shoemaker & Fraser, 1981, p.178). If the vision is to be successfully brought to reality, many stakeholders need to buy into that vision. It is therefore important to involve a host of people and make the process of developing that vision a collaborative one.

The establishment of a planning committee made up of several stakeholders would be the logical beginning toward developing the vision. There are many ways to establish such a planning committee. I believe the placement of effective individuals on this committee is very critical. In

order to get those on the planning committee that would be most effective, it would behoove the principal to know as many stakeholders as well as possible. From this knowledge the principal can place selected individuals from within the system and outside the system on the planning committee. Advice from people familiar with the community could be sought to get names of the stakeholders that could be personally invited to be on the planning committee. All in all, the formation of this planning committee should be a high priority item.

As a new principal, I feel it necessary to get to know the community as well and as quickly as possible. This knowledge would enable me to determine what direction the community wants the school to be headed. I can gain valuable information through simple informal conversations over coffee at the local cafe. Information could be gathered by formal poles or surveys taken as mailings from the principal's office. Joining local civic organizations could prove to be a valuable area for obtaining data as well. All these things need to be considered as data gathering devices, as I would move into a new system as principal.

The principal's impact can be clearly seen in developing the vision toward which the school needs to be moving. It is my opinion that the principal needs to be a team member and not be a dictator. "In the virtuous school, the leader would be seen as a servant" (Sergiovanni,

1992, p. 115). Sergiovanni, in discussing school improvement, tells us that, "servant leadership can be much more powerful than other forms" (p. 117). People really want to know how much you care. I believe people will respond faster if they realize you really are a caring and compassionate person who has the future of their children and the educational system at heart.

The principal demonstrates being a servant as he or she helps the staff grow personally and professionally. Servant leadership is further demonstrated as the principal enables students to become higher achievers.

The principal further illustrates servant leadership as responsibility is given to others that will empower them to make decisions. Hence, as principal, I need to be able to properly delegate responsibilities to others in order to facilitate the process toward reaching mutually agreed upon goals. I can best serve the educational community as I help others achieve their personal goals and help them strive toward achieving the vision we've set for the entire district.

My personal vision for a school system is one that has a climate that is conducive to learning and achievement at the highest level by all involved. From the superintendent to the youngest student, I see a place that

encourages everyone to engage in learning. No matter what level that learning might be. Everyone in the system needs to continue to learn and improve. I see a school that is very positive in its message that everyone is given the opportunity to learn. This vision has several parts that work together to develop the whole.

Part of this vision is reflected in the physical environment. Brightly painted walls in the halls and rooms would help to promote a positive atmosphere. Suitable banners, posters and pictures should abound as statements of those things that play a positive role in the overall process of education. Cheery professionals who are truly interested in the students and what they become should roam the halls and inhabit the rooms. A staff that is unified in mission and vision is a significant part of this effective school.

To bring this vision to reality it will be imperative that the principal be the catalyst in this process. This can be a slow and sometimes painful process. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) note that collaborative cultures are highly sophisticated and cannot be created overnight. "Principals earn staff respect by clearly articulating a vision of their schools mission and working collegially to accomplish agreed upon goals and objectives" (Vann, 1994, p. 25).

I believe another part of this vision is the ability of the principal to facilitate the professional development of the teaching staff. "As the vision of an effective school learning community is developed it is important that the principal and staff determine what matters so far as their own particular needs are concerned" (Smith & Piele, 1991, p. 169). A healthy vision is a product of an educated staff and community. As knowledge increases, we must use the best of what's available in conjunction with what we already possess to aid in good staff development. The principal must be able to help others see what improvement is needed to reach the vision.

"The principal can model for all within the workplace what lifelong learning means" (Robbins & Harvey, 1995, p. 3). The principal must continually reflect upon what is learned and its potential usefulness to promoting the vision. "Reflective practice requires that the principal have a healthy respect for, be well informed about, and use the best available theory and research and accumulated practiced wisdom" (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 36).

I believe the principals leadership is also important in the overall development of the school climate, another part of the vision. "Research has told us that a healthy school climate is important because it is associated with higher student achievement, better behavior and better attitudes" (Lindelov & others cited by Smith & Piele, 1991 p. 188). I

would want to see a climate that encourages both staff and students to pursue learning on a continual basis in order to improve as an individual. The principal must be the catalyst in maintaining a school climate where the vision can take shape.

In developing a vision it is important that the principal understand that the job cannot be done in isolation. Teachers and staff must be given time and opportunity to work together in the development of the vision. It is in the collective knowledge of the staff that information must be "mined" to push the vision forward. "There is simply not enough opportunity and not enough encouragement for teachers to work together, learn from each other, and improve their expertise as a community" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 1).

Schools may develop missions and visions of where they want to go, but these are preferred futures built on ideals and dreams. What administrators, teachers and communities also need to do is sketch out and consider other scenarios, positive and negative, with which they may need to engage in the near future, so they will not be caught off guard by new developments. (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 114)

One of the jobs of the principal is then to provide that encouragement and opportunity for the staff and the community to come together and help to develop the vision for the school. Providing cooperative times to do this

could be done through more effective planning in the use of in-service days, staff workdays or creative scheduling.

Once the cooperative efforts of the staff and community have developed a clear vision, it becomes part of the principal's job to promote that vision often. The principal must be in contact with students, staff and community members on a daily basis and must constantly be talking with them about how what they are doing is aligned with where the school is going. The principal as the visionary leader, must have a clear understanding of the agreed upon vision in order to be able to continually communicate it to those involved in bringing the vision to reality.

An effective principal must be able to nurture a caring, trusting and collegial environment and then project it as the image of the school. "A compelling vision is the key quality in heads of highly successful organizations" (Speck, 1999, p. 36).

Throughout all this process of leading and facilitating the principal must be constantly monitoring his personal progress by way of interaction with those involved. Communication with the students and staff is an important part of making certain everyone is on track. I believe it is therefore important that the principal have a lot of patience and possess those leadership and effective communication skills that will allow him/her to

effectively bring people together so all can play a role in the development of a school vision. Facilitation, team building, consensus building, and intervention skills are essential. It is then up to the principal to encourage and promote this vision development to completion. It is the principal who keeps the vision alive!

As has been demonstrated, the principal has many roles as the visionary leader including: (a) taking the lead in developing the schools climate, (b) developing strong interpersonal relationships, (c) becoming a servant leader rather than a dictator, (d) being an effective communicator and team player, (e) being a positive role model for all to follow, (f) effectively communicating the schools vision to keep it alive and (g) helping others to become the best they can be. Each of these parts working together helps establish a healthy working environment that makes for an effective learning community.

The Principal as Possessor of Knowledge

In order for the principal to best help the staff develop he/she must personally be in possession of as much educational knowledge as possible. The principal needs to work with the staff to help them become the best they can be. To accomplish this, the principal can provide such information as the latest data available on research, the latest

methodologies of instruction, and specific information on best practice that would benefit each classroom teacher. One method of getting this information into the teachers hand is to give each teacher ample time to attend seminars and training sessions that would further aid in the professional development of the teacher. In addition, more professional time off or time away from the classroom could be given to promote professional growth. I believe practical things such as these would be a real benefit to all staff, to the entire organization, and most importantly, to students.

The school is really an "organism" with many parts. Each part functioning to make the whole work properly. If the principal can help each part be as strong as it can be the whole organism is made stronger. This help can also come in the form of incentives to achieve professional goals, encouragement toward a higher plateau or public recognition. Each person is motivated by different means and the principal must seek to find what motivates each staff person. This encouragement should be a result of the established culture that encourages staff to continue personal and professional development.

Principals must attain an extensive knowledge of instruction.

"Principals can best discharge their leadership role if they develop a deep

and broad knowledge base with respect to curriculum" (Glatthorn, 1997, p. 3). To be a leader in the areas of curriculum and instruction and to most effectively serve teachers, the principal must possess and continue to attain knowledge in the areas of curriculum and instruction. The principal is then able to provide the teaching staff with information that will give them alternatives to enable them do a more effective job. Methods for the principal to employ in gaining knowledge would be to attend workshops, meet with other administrators and education consultants in areas under study, and with experts from area education agencies. There will be many and varied opportunities for the principal to attend training and informational meetings outside the district to obtain usable knowledge and skills. Reitzug and Burrello(1995) note that principals can help teachers develop other perspectives by way of creative use of staff development opportunities. The principal could work with a planning committee to come up with the best alternatives for the most effective uses of staff development times. Beck and Murphy(1996) note that as people are supported and encouraged to learn more, the principal receives more energy to continue working toward the success of all students. It appears that continued learning and application of knowledge will provide the impetus to gain and apply more knowledge.

Sergiovanni (1995) notes that reflective professionals become students of their practices. To continually expand skills and the knowledge base, the principal must constantly reflect on what is being done and how effective it is. As principal, I must constantly be asking questions concerning what is going on within the system and how our actions are moving us toward our goals. As the curriculum and instructional leader, the principal must keep current with a myriad of concepts in the field of education. Concepts including but not limited to whole language, cooperative learning, peer counseling and coaching, nongraded classrooms, tracking, vocational education, assessment strategies, and brain-based research are necessary in creating the optimal learning environment for students. The principal must be consistently and constantly building a mass of knowledge in these areas and any others that might prove to be beneficial. As the team leader, the principal must constantly be evaluating the effectiveness of concepts, moving the system toward the goal of building the best learning environment for all concerned.

"The principal serves as a role model, establishing an atmosphere in which all members of the schools organization work to improve the processes and outcomes" (Goldring & Rallis, 1993, p.140). As a principal,

I will need to widely read the literature in curricular and instructional areas. Because the job of keeping abreast of all information in just these two areas is far too time consuming for any one person, I believe it will be very beneficial to have a research committee established for this purpose as well. This committee could be made up of teachers, parents and administrators. The committee could be a subcommittee of the same group used to plan in-services and other staff development tools. The research committee could seek out and process information in instructional and curricular areas. Information from this committee could then be passed on to the teaching staff during in-services or other teacher training and staff development sessions.

One must realize however, that the knowledge principals must gain is not restricted to curriculum and instructional areas. Skills in management and solid interpersonal skills are a necessity. "Tomorrows principals will need to possess an array of interpersonal skills as they work with the professional staff of their schools, with parents, and increasingly with outside forces and agencies" (NAESP, 1990, p. 1). Hence, to most effectively convey needed information to the staff the principal must build interpersonal relationships and possess effective skills of communication. Another benefit of these relationships is that trust is established. Staff

trust in the principal will also stem from the principal's personal character and integrity. I believe principals of influence are those that appear to the staff as possessing not only expertise, but are someone that all staff are able to place trust in.

Principal as the Manager of the System

I believe that effective management is the key that allows the principal the time to lead and educate personnel involved in educating students. Effective skills of management must be quickly developed in order to have the luxury of time to do the other things that need to be done to attain the vision. Pullan and Hargreaves (1996) note that teachers need to be encouraged to work together. Because it is necessary for teachers to work together, the principal needs to be a good manager of staff schedules. The principal must manage the time schedule in such a way as to create times for the staff to work together. As the staff works effectively together, the expected result is increased student achievement. It is my job, as principal, to provide those times through proper scheduling, hiring of substitute teachers, covering classes personally and planning effective in-services and staff development.

Speck (1999) notes that the tremendous number of tasks makes the managerial role of the principal highly open-ended. There are many

demands competing for the time of the principal and the staff. It is up to the principal to discover ways to keep things running smoothly in the school so the staff can have ample time to collaborate on issues that need their attention.

"Principals must seek to involve teachers more in the life and work of the school outside the classroom, to have them take more responsibility for the policies and practices that are created there" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 2). As principal, I believe it will be necessary to involve as many teachers and other staff as possible on committees that can make the recommendations for best use of time, proper scheduling, and any other things related to organizational management practices. Effective management can also be a collaborative effort. All suggestions for the best ways to manage a situation do not need to come entirely from the principal. Perhaps this group could also be a subcommittee of the original planning committee established at the beginning of the school year.

An effective method of becoming a better manager is for the principal to be visible within the environment of the school. "Management by wandering around is helpful to principals to stay informed" (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995, p. 48).

Nearly everything the principal does during the day needs some form of management. Routines that free the principal up to do the other more pressing and necessary leadership activities, need to be established. "In the manager role the principal must prepare, plan, organize, and manage through recurring systems, direct and carry out processes and evaluate and improve" (Speck, 1999, p. 36). Each minute created by better management is another minute that can be spent in areas of educational leadership.

Management requires advanced planning. Improved management skills will take times of reflection, just sifting down and giving some thought to what needs to be done and the most effective way of doing it. I believe up front investment of time devoted to managing the buses, bells and buildings will pay off with great dividends in the end. This investment will have to be outside of the regular school day.

Anything the principal can do to provide an environment conducive to learning should be a goal worthy of achieving. "Good management is the foundation on which a school learning community can be built" (Speck, 1999, p. 75). An area where effective management will pay off is in something as routine as weekly faculty meetings. "Principals can collaborate with teachers to help create faculty meetings in which

conversations about teaching become institutionalized through various activities" (Robbins & Harvey, 1995, p. 3). Weekly faculty meetings can be made more effective and efficient by (a) giving the staff agendas ahead of time, (b) selecting only those staff members impacted, (c) setting time limits on the agenda items, and (d) ensuring follow up.

I fully realize that there will be times when management of daily routine activities will have to be given priority over leadership activities. I will need to develop a physical plant that will run as smoothly as possible to free up time to do educational leadership activities.

As principal it will be very important to surround myself with competent people to accomplish this high degree of efficiency of daily routines. This competency can best be accomplished by good training of those already in place and by sound hiring practices. I know this training and coordination will take time and effort. I believe once the people, who are hired to do certain jobs, are properly trained, they must be allowed to do the job. Hence, the importance of proper delegation of responsibilities. If future "fine tuning" is necessary, that can then be accomplished with a minimum of effort. As a last resort, if some cannot do the job hired to do, they must be replaced with someone who can.

If as principal I ever hope to lead a school toward a vision for better education, I must be an effective manager of the school. Speck (1999) cites a comment made by Smith and Peale (1996) on the importance of the management aspect of the principalship: "School leaders must first of all be skillful managers... Whatever else a district may want from its leaders, managerial skill is essential; without it, no school leader will last long" (p. 15). "The choice is not whether a principal is leader or manager but whether the two emphases are in balance and, indeed, whether they complement each other" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 16).

The Moral and Ethical Character of the Principal

Through informal conversations with several active administrators, the personal characteristics of high morality and ethics seem to be a common trait that they believe effective principals must possess. I am further convinced of the foundational importance of personal character and integrity for two other reasons. First, having been a classroom teacher for over twenty years, I've worked with several different principals. I can personally attest to the fact that it is much more rewarding to work with those who possess high moral and ethical characteristics than for those who do not! The second reason is my own personal faith system dictates that I must be a person of high moral and ethical character.

People with questionable morals and ethics do not command, the respect and admiration of those they are trying to lead. "In the long run, in the great battle of life, no brilliancy of intellect, no perfection of bodily development, will count when weighed in the balance against that assemblage of virtues, active and passive, of moral qualities, which we group together under the name of character" (Roosevelt, 1905, p. 113-114).

I believe that how a principal personally conducts both informal and formal business, speaks volumes about his/her character and subsequently commitment toward a highly significant and important profession. It is during those unguarded times of informal conversation where speech and conduct must be protected and carefully monitored to be of the highest quality. Personal experience has shown me that most teachers and other staff members, will say little or nothing at the time the principal is present but afterward, during times when the principal is not present the conversation about the principal's character really flows! I truly believe that no principal can be as effective when he/she does not have the respect of the staff due to poor character traits. "The principal serves as a role model, establishing an atmosphere in which all members of the schools' organization work to improve the processes and outcomes. In this way, the principal encourages a self-correcting school" (Goldring & Rallis,

1993, p. 140). One of the first and foremost things I must realize, as principal, is I am a role model. I can either be one of high moral and ethical character or one of low moral and ethical character. I prefer to be known by the former rather than the latter type!

I also realize that being a role model extends outside the school as well. How I am perceived in the community will have a tremendous affect on how effective I can be inside the school. The principal should possess qualities of a person who is above reproach and is held in high esteem by the school, staff and community. There should be no need to be ashamed to walk down the streets of the community. The principals model of the highest standards of behavior, ethics, conduct and integrity should be standards that parents of the community would want reflected in their children. Standards the community would want reflected in its citizens.

High moral and ethical values are illustrated in numerous ways. "...the fundamental basis of any covenantal relationship should be moral" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 105). I believe the principal's basic concern for the school and the people involved finds its roots in the integrity of the principal's character. The principal's influence extends far beyond the hallways of the school building! "In a virtuous school, parents, teachers, community, and school are partners, with reciprocal and interdependent

rights to participate and benefit and with obligations to support and assist" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 113). Because education is truly a community effort, the character of the principal, as its leader influences the entire community.

As a Christian, I am guided in my daily life by the commands of God's Word, the Bible. I know my Lord would desire for me to be a principal with personal characteristics that are a reflection of His. For He has said, "...God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes" (Ephesians 1:4). It will be Biblical precepts such as this that will be foundational to me. Because I am a Christian, there will be many conflicts along the way. As I deal with these conflicts, I must strive to make decisions that do not go against my personal belief system. I believe there are many that desire to behave in high moral and ethical ways, who are not Christians. I am fully aware of the fact that most people do not share all my personal values and beliefs. However, my faith system has served me extremely well for my entire classroom career. I have no reason to believe it will fail me in the principal's office. For over twenty years, faith in God and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ has guided me through many trials and tribulations both in and out of the educational system. I have yet to discover any insurmountable conflicts!

I believe the standards and character of the principal are eventually reflected in not only the students but much of the staff as well. Just as the conduct of an athletic team is a reflection of the coaching staff, so the conduct of a staff is a reflection of the principal's character. The principal must also recognize the tremendous impact he/she has on young and highly impressionistic minds of students who are looking to the principal for guidance and as a role model. I believe the administrator who will not stand for high moral and ethical standards is primed to fall for anything and will probably end up being a disgrace to the school and the community. "Be on guard. Stand true to what you believe. Be courageous. Be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

For me it is impossible to divorce my personal faith, beliefs and values from my position as principal. I believe if one's faith does not govern the way one acts and reacts, of what value is it? An educational leader must be authentic. To deny my personal beliefs and faith would be deceitful and dishonest. As an educational leader I can ill-afford to be one who is deceptive, deceitful or hypocritical in personal or professional conduct. The principal needs to be forthright and above board in all dealings with the public as well as the students and staff.

staff as well. They deal much more closely with the students than the principal usually will. Since the teacher has firsthand contact and influence with the students, and the principal has firsthand contact and influence with the teachers, the way the principal behaves effects the teachers, which will effect the students and the whole system is given the aura of the principal. Therefore, how the principal performs in dealing with the teachers is of utmost importance to the development of the moral and ethical character of the system and of the schools climate in general. "I have seen unsuccessful schools turned into successful ones and outstanding ones decline. In each case, the rise or fall could readily be traced to the quality of the principal" (Smith & Piele, 1991, p. 178). Smith and Andrews (1989) note that educators have a great moral, ethical and legal obligation to create good schools as places where children can achieve their full potential and a place where they receive equal opportunity to succeed in society.

"Proficient principals are the moral and ethical agents responsible for the welfare and development of students" (NAESP, 1986, p. 5) and "effective principals possess values, beliefs and personal attributes that inspire others to achieve the schools academic, social, and cultural goals" (p. 5). "Besides concern for the empowerment of individual teachers,

supervisors have a responsibility to nurture the moral environment of the school" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993, p. 61). "To be a virtuous school leader when much of society lacks virtue is a challenge of huge proportions. School leaders must have a passion for a communitarian sharing of power and a commitment to honesty and integrity" (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998, p. 176). I feel the above researchers clearly illustrate the importance of being a principal with high moral and ethical standards.

"Rules for leadership in American education are changing. The United States is on the brink of a fundamentally different framework for describing and understanding leadership in all our major institutions" (Patterson, 1993, p. 53). At the risk of sounding rather utopian and utterly idealistic, I believe that unless we have leaders of quality and commitment to high personal and professional standards of morality and integrity, our society and obviously our educational systems, are headed for certain disaster! Given the shortage of educational leaders, I sense an urgency for the placement of high caliber individuals into the field. To place leaders of lesser moral character would severely jeopardize the integrity of our educational system.

I realize that many difficulties undoubtedly lie ahead. The task in the future will be difficult but I am confident that over time the standards of excellence will be achieved. I know with the Lords help, I can make a difference. The values and beliefs I personally hold, have an immovable standard and are time-tested and proven effective. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). "He is my rock and my fortress" (Psalm 31:3). I look forward to the task with great anticipation of what He can accomplish through me.

With perseverance and persistence I am confident that a high level of trust and integrity can be established between me and a staff that I would be working with. It will be necessary for me to take stands on issues that relate to morality and integrity within the educational system that may be unpopular. I believe character is established and revealed during these times. These will be moments when the character and integrity I desire to be part of the culture and climate will show forth.

Summary

"Providing appropriate leadership is an idea as old as civilization itself. Socrates, Aristotle, Lao Tzu all puzzled with notions about leadership --- its functions, meaning, methods and value" (Smith & Andrews, 1989, p. 1). I believe it is obvious that the job of principal is indeed an extremely

complex one! The principal must be a multi-talented individual that is self-starting and able to withstand a lot of pressure from many sources. The principal must be a visionary leader, a knowledgeable educator, possess the skills of an effective manager, and have a personal and professional character of high moral and ethical standards in order to accomplish the job assigned. The principal must also possess the ability to lead a large and diverse group of individuals toward a common goal.

As I conclude this paper, I find myself to the point of being overwhelmed with the whole concept of what it means to be an effective principal! I am certain that it will be a career-long effort to build the necessary skills to carry out the position of principal in an effective manner. Many times I have wished I had started much earlier in my career. However, I believe the twenty plus years of experience in the classroom will be invaluable to me as principal. To become the consummate professional will indeed take many years and I may never fully achieve the task. However, during the process I will have the awesome privilege to impact the lives of many individuals along the way. I truly believe, by the grace of God, I can make a difference in the system in which He places me. Being privileged to impact the lives of so many, I believe is one of the driving forces that will inspire and motivate me to

become the very best principal I can be. In the final analysis, I am concerned with the many lives I will touch along the way. If I can impact those lives in a positive way and somehow make them better, I will have achieved a major part of my goal for becoming an administrator! Few people will ever get the opportunities afforded to the "principal" to affect the lives of so many. I can think of nothing more rewarding than to look back over a fruitful career as a principal and see the impact I had on the lives of individuals and have them tell me that because of my influence, their life has been enhanced.

As the Lord Jesus has instructed, "So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and steady, always enthusiastic about the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless" (1 Corinthians 15:58). In this command I believe lies the foundation to embark upon a most eventful journey. A journey of true servant leadershipthe principalship.

References

- Beck, L. G., & Murphy, J. (1996). The four imperatives of a successful school. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Colon, R. J. (1994). Rethinking and retooling for the 21st Century: A must for administrators. NASSP Bulletin, 78 (564), p. 85-88.
- Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1996). What's worth fighting for in your school? New York: Teacher College Press / Teachers College.
- Glatthorn, A. A. (1997). The principal as curriculum leader: Shaping what is taught and tested. Newbury Park, CA.: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Goldring, E. B., & Rallis, S. F. (1993). Principals of dynamic schools: Taking charge of change. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Holy Bible: New Living Translation. (1996). Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
- Hoyle, J. R., English, F. W., & Steffy, B. E. (1998). Skills for successful 21st Century school leaders. American Association of School Administrators, 3rd ed.
- Lewis, A. L. (1993). Leadership styles. Arlington, Va: The American Association of School Administrators.
- National Association for Elementary School Principals. (NAESP). 1990. Principals for the 21st century schools. Alexandria, Va. p. 1.
- National Association for Elementary School Principals. (NAESP). 1986. Proficiencies for principals. Alexandria, Va. p. 5.
- Patterson, J. L. (1993). Leadership for tomorrow's schools. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, p. 53.
- Persell, C., & Cookson, P. (1982). The effective principal: A research summary. Reston, Virginia: NASSP Bulletin, p. 22.
- Reitzug, U. C., & Burrello, B. C. (April 1995). How can principals build self-renewing schools?. Educational Leadership, p. 48-50.

Robbins, P., & Harvey, A. B. (1995). The principal's companion: Strategies to make the job easier. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Roosevelt, T. (1905). The strenuous life. New York: The Century Co.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass publisher.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1995). The principalship: A reflective practice perspective. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Sergiovanni, T. J., & Starratt, R. J. (1993). Supervision: A redefinition. New York: McGraw-Hill. 5th ed.

Shoemaker, J., & Fraser, H. (1981). What principals can do: Some implications from studies of effective schooling. Phi Delta Kappan 63, p. 178-182.

Smith, W. F., & Andrews, R. L. (1989). Instructional leadership: How principals make a difference. Alexandria Va.: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Smith, S. C., & Piele, P. K. (1991). School leadership handbook for excellence, 2nd ed.

Speck, M. (1999). The principalship: Building a learning community. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Vann, A. S. (1994). That vision thing. School Leadership Principal 79, p. 25.

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (1998). The first days of school. California: Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.