A personal vision of the principalship and the ideal school: A reflective essay

Corwin R. Dunlap
University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract
In reflecting on the more memorable events of my youth, a significant element began to emerge. Many of the most important of these events were centered around the activities associated with my elementary and high school education: past friendships, school organizations and activities, and those favorite teachers, who left a lasting impression on the person I was to become. These teachers influenced the direction my life was to take; becoming an educator. Regardless of the subject taught, the teachers I remembered most were the ones who made learning fun and exciting, and made me feel that I was someone special. People in the community also admired and appreciated these teachers, holding them in high regard.
A PERSONAL VISION OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP AND THE IDEAL SCHOOL:
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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Corwin R. Dunlap
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Patricia R. Krysinski
Adviser/Director of Research Paper

11-21-95
Date Approved

Dave Else
Second Reader of Research Paper

11-30-95
Date Approved

Michael D. Waggoner
Head, Department of Educational Administration and Counseling
In reflecting on the more memorable events of my youth, a significant element began to emerge. Many of the most important of these events were centered around the activities associated with my elementary and high school education: past friendships, school organizations and activities, and those favorite teachers, who left a lasting impression on the person I was to become. These teachers influenced the direction my life was to take; becoming an educator. Regardless of the subject taught, the teachers I remembered most were the ones who made learning fun and exciting, and made me feel that I was someone special. People in the community also admired and appreciated these teachers, holding them in high regard.

Now, having taught for many years, I find that I have aspirations of becoming a school administrator. In the same manner that other teachers inspired me to become a teacher, a few good administrators have influenced me to want to become a principal. What I most admired about those men and women was that they all seemed to have a genuine concern for people. Most were good-natured, had good managerial skills, were able to relate well to the community and staff, and, above all, were honest. They held a position of esteem and trust that I respected and admired. They seemed to have a "grand plan" in mind and knew what direction they wanted to take the school system, hopefully leaving it a better place.

The purpose of this paper is to share some of my personal beliefs, values, and philosophies as they apply to the practice of educational administration. Part One identifies the relatively new paradigm that teaching and educational administration is a reflective practice and, from a reflective point of view, shares some of my beliefs about
the principalship. Part Two highlights some of the more important skills, attitudes, and orientations that principals must possess as reflected in my course work in school administration. The final section of the paper will deal with the vision I bring to the practice of educational administration.

PART ONE

Becoming a principal is not easy, and many educators believe it to be a profession that requires much inner reflection. While the nature of this reflective practice as applied to administrative education is a relatively new concept, it is an important aspect of education. This reflective perspective creates a "mindscape" in which mental images provide a framework for the mind's eye to view one's profession (Sergiovanni, 1987, p. xi). Professional practice, according to research, is based not so much on the prescribed standards of science, but, rather, on the growth process developed through trial and error methods. When applying the knowledge base gained from this trial and error method, professionals rely heavily on intuition to guide their application. When teachers and principals use informed intuition, they are engaging in reflective practice.

Accordingly, this concept opens a whole new way of thinking and reflecting about one's profession. In the past, educators relied on data and research gained from the social and managerial sciences to guide their practice. They applied anecdotal remedies gained from experienced practitioners to solve educational issues. Both of these methods, however, usually emphasized a one-best-way approach to their practice. Uniform answers to problems did not work well in a profession where uncertainty and complexity were normal aspects of everyday management. Now, researchers are saying
that a reflective approach, one that relies on informed intuition, is necessary to fill in the gaps between the known, scientific approach and the unknown, or unexpected, occurrences associated with educational practice (Sergiovanni, 1987).

In applying the idea of reflective practice to the managerial aspects of the principalship, it is my belief that teaching styles and individual differences should be addressed, keeping in mind that no one-best-way exists in teaching. Principals should rely on their intuition to guide them as they apply supervisory strategies to teachers. These strategies are reflective of differences in personality, individual needs, professional expertise and teaching styles. I believe this approach to differential styles allows teachers to grow both personally and professionally. Sergiovanni stated that supervision should be viewed not as something done to teachers, but as a process in which teachers participated as partners. In successful schools, the emphasis of supervision should be on improving learning and teaching skills, not just sorting or grading teachers (Sergiovanni, 1987). The general concern for employee supervision should be with coordinating, directing, organizing, and developing employee performance, so that the goals and objectives of the organization can be met (Guthrie & Reed, 1991).

In my opinion, effective evaluation requires that principals be well versed about educational issues relating to curriculum, teaching methods, principles of learning, and classroom objectives. Evaluation methods should reflect an understanding of teaching styles and individual course objectives. Just as teachers should provide a safe and nurturing environment for students, I believe principals should foster a collegial and
caring theme when providing evaluation data to teachers. An effective program of supervision and evaluation provides for individual differences.

As teachers are all individuals and possess unique qualities, I, too, bring different skills and orientations to the practice of school administration. I believe one of the first duties of a new principal is to get to know the faculty and staff. Each individual staff member brings different experiences and approaches to his/her job. They have different perceptions of their role as teachers and support staff and possess an unlimited supply of creative ideas. I believe a new principal should schedule an informal interview(s) with all school employees. In this way the new principal, hopefully, will become familiar with the interests, strengths and weaknesses of each individual. By exchanging information, the principal will also be able to share his/her vision for the school with each individual. Using this knowledge, the principal may more effectively match the skills and interests of the individuals with their particular assignment. I believe new principals must be effective facilitators, expert advisers, resource coordinators, and, above all, communicators. The new principal's primary role is to help the faculty and staff determine needs, identify problems, and find and implement solutions (Trantor, 1992).

Having taught in the classroom for over 20 years, I have become a firm believer in collegial and collaborative professional relationships. I believe that the top-down power structure of big business has no place in an educational setting. Part of the blame for the failure of educational reform is due to these types of power structures. A power structure that is facilitative and collaborative, where power is manifested through
people, not over people, is much more effective. Sharing power with the school staff, where members learn how to make the most of their collective capacities, builds ownership, improves communication, and develops collaborative decision-making with a shared vision (Leithwood, 1992).

I believe that in any endeavor, where an individual leaves their comfort zone and attempts to grow intellectually and professionally, there will always be an element of risk present. As an administrator, I intend to create a nurturing, supporting environment where the teaching staff will be unafraid to take risks as they assume leadership roles (Blankstein & Swain, 1994).

Honesty and integrity are both very important to the perception I have of the principalship. Both of these attributes are important to the democratic way of life. Schools provide one of the major contexts for shaping the future. If we wish the future to be democratic, then school should become the crucible for testing that democracy. As a microcosm of society, our schools often experience changes before they are felt fully in the larger society. Principals of these schools establish patterns of living and learning together as norms. If faculty and students are responsible for achieving the goals set by the institution, they need the freedom to achieve these goals. I believe respect for the rules start at the top (Achilles, 1994).

PART TWO

Education is ever-changing and as the 90's give way to the educational demands of the 21st Century, I believe today's principals must change to meet these new challenges. As I near the culmination of my quest to become a school administrator, I am convinced
that the role of the principal is dramatically changing. Teachers are increasingly taking on the roles formerly held by principals. Principals, on the other hand, are creating new leadership roles for themselves, replacing hierarchical relationships with more group-centered, collaborative roles. This new leadership role reflects a change in the status coming from official position, to that of status earned because of individual actions (Parks & Barrett, 1994).

Leadership literature from the 1970's and 80's showed that effective schools were led by effective principals. These principals emphasized "learning", produced high achievement scores, set high expectations for teachers and students, valued a quality curriculum, protected learning time, spent time in classrooms, monitored student performance and assisted teachers in their educational endeavors, while encouraging them to grow professionally.

Into the late 1980's and 90's, however, new leadership perspectives are emerging. Much of the same effective school language remains, but new words must be added to the leadership vocabulary. Principals find themselves in new school cultures where teachers and parents are emerging in powerful leadership roles. Terms, such as collaboration, team work, consensus building, community involvement, ownership, site-based management and strategic planning, are becoming more and more common. What seems to be happening is that school administrators are becoming facilitators and leaders of leaders. These new perspectives demand that administrators be able to create conditions under which to transfer authority and develop leadership in others. The new school culture that is emerging is based on shared decision-making and a continuous
effort to nurture and improve leadership skills in others. Whether or not I exercise my option of becoming an administrator, I view this new trend in a very favorable light.

As administrators contemplate the role of leader of leaders, they need to focus on three areas of training for potential leaders: interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and technical skills. The interpersonal skills that educational literature identifies suggests that not all potential leaders possess the team and group skills necessary for a collaborative climate. Some individuals need to develop conflict resolution skills, along with oral and written communication skills. Skills of persuasion are also very helpful in group dynamics and individuals must learn to be diplomatic in times of stress and conflict (Parks & Barrett, 1994).

Some of the conceptual skills needed for group dynamics and leadership deal with the multi-cultural and global nature of the economy of the 21st Century. Potential leaders must develop a broad perspective by reading a wide range of literature dealing with change in today's society. Leaders should also be politically responsible and develop and enjoy an appreciation for the arts.

The technical skills necessary for leadership consideration center around an understanding of school budgeting and resource allocation. Leaders must also be able to evaluate school programs, understand class scheduling and site management. One of the most important skills that a leader must possess, however, is to be able to use the electronic tools of the future: FAX, modem, and computer.
In the final analysis, tomorrow's leaders must be able to develop leadership qualities in others. As teachers and community members cry for a greater voice in the operation of their school, administrators must be able to see leadership qualities in others, relinquish leadership responsibilities, and provide the proper support for developing leadership (Parks & Barrett, 1994).

Theories of effective leadership talk about rules, procedure, and other factors on the one hand, and the leaders' personality and style on the other. Today, three popular theories of leadership take into account both rules-based and personality-based aspects of leadership: the pyramid theory, the railroad theory, and the high performance theory (Sergiovanni, 1994).

The "pyramid theory" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 7), is based on one person in charge at the top. This person provides direction, supervision and inspection. This same person delegates management burdens to others. This theory works well for organizations that produce standardized products in uniform ways. In an educational setting, however, this theory provides a bureaucratic nightmare. The work of principals and teachers are simplified, because as management burdens are delegated to others, a hierarchical system emerges. Rules and regulations are developed to ensure all players think and act the same way. What becomes important are the rules, not the educational product, and outcomes reflect this.

The "railroad theory" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 7), attempts to control working people who have different jobs by standardizing the work process. This theory relies less on supervision and hierarchical authority and more on anticipated outcomes. A
great deal of time is spent trouble shooting potential questions and problems, and applying answers and solutions. Once the tracks are laid, all that needs to happen to reach the desired goals, is to train and monitor people to follow them.

In an educational setting, principals and teachers use fewer skills and student work becomes increasingly standardized. Teachers are supervised and evaluated and students tested to ensure the approved curriculum and teaching skills are being followed. Specific objectives are to fit an explicit curriculum and specific method of teaching. The bottom line is that a one-best-way of doing things is the main determination.

In adopting the "high performance theory" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 7), people follow a path that de-emphasizes both top-down hierarchies and detailed scripts. Decentralization empowers workers to make their own decisions about how to do things. Borrowing from big business, this theory connects workers tightly to specific outcomes, but only loosely to the means. In an educational setting, schools are free to decide how they best can achieve desired, specific learning outcomes. Principals can organize and teachers can teach in ways that they think will best enable them to meet the standards. Collecting data will determine how well teachers teach, and help them to find ways to continuously improve their performance.

In all three theories, schools are perceived as formal organizations, however, I believe this metaphor does not fit the real nature of schools. Schools must address human relationships that deal with serving parents and students, and the teacher's responsibilities of effectiveness and learning environments. What these three popular theories seem to overlook is that the planning of "what to do" must be connected to the
planning of "how to do." What seems to be missing here is professional discretion and a lack of concern with democratic principles. Those that should be empowered (parents, teachers and principals) are limited to decision-making about how, not what, and means but not ends.

A better model might view school as a moral community. A moral community is one that connects teachers, principals, parents, and students and helps them to develop self-managing strategies. The over-riding theme should be to connect people to each other and to their work. The previous three theories might have placed emphasis on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and penalties for non-compliance. Moral connections, on the other hand, are stronger because they are part of the cultural norms not based on psychological needs. Moral connections come from shared values and beliefs in firm commitments and a strong sense of ownership. By sharing the power with moral connections, the roots of school leadership lie in the values, ideas and moral authority on which it is based (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Educational literature relating to effective principals, state that they must possess and demonstrate compassion and understanding of the characteristics of the students they are responsible for. The difference between successful and short-lived school programs is directly related to the dedication and understanding and meeting of student needs. Effective principals constantly strive to raise the awareness of the teaching staff about student needs and re-examine their perceptions of ineffective teaching practices (George & Grebing, 1992).
One of the most important and guiding principles a school can adopt is that "learning" is the most important reason for being in school. Principals can reinforce this idea by being very protective about learning time, and keeping unnecessary interruptions to a minimum (Hughes & Ubben, 1989). This idea might be most effectively articulated by being part of the school's preferred vision statement. Good principals possess a clear vision of where they intend to guide their school and this vision must be widely shared with staff, parents, board members and the central office. Good principals must be able to articulate the purpose of the organization and the methods to achieve that purpose (George & Grebing, 1992).

In further reflection upon the task of administration, I believe the primary goal of all principals should be that of the educational leader within their educational setting. Too often principals take the easy way out and become good managers. They enforce and make rules, create schedules and evaluate performance. I believe real leadership, however, involves more. School leaders should find the means of connecting people to their work in moral and ethical ways. Real school leadership involves developing shared purposes, values, and beliefs. Leaders must also clarify educational concepts and be involved in community building, collegiality, and character development (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Researchers have singled out principals as the most significant individual in the creation of an effective school. A leading educator once said, "There may be some bad schools here and there with good principals, but I have never seen a good school that had a bad principal" (Hughes & Ubben, 1989, p. 3). Principals must enjoy being around
students and becoming involved in their educational setting. Each school is different and should reflect the wants and needs of the community it serves. The principal's responsibility as educational leader is to ascertain those needs and structure a curriculum that reflects those needs. Part of the responsibility of being a principal is to set up educational teams to help identify and monitor both long-term and short-term goals (George & Grebing, 1992). These teams should have representation from the professional staff, support staff personnel, students, administrators, and the general public. The key to bringing significant change in schools is to encourage all levels of community involvement. Successful principals are those that are willing to share leadership and involve those doing the work in decision-making (Bradshaw & Buckner, 1994).

I believe another important aspect of the principalship is to encourage professional growth in the staff and support personnel. Principals can encourage and enable teachers to visit the classrooms of master teachers in both exploratory and academic areas. Teachers can be granted professional days to take workshops or visit other schools. Administrators can develop, in cooperation with teachers, professional growth plans that can be implemented in a non-threatening way. Educators can also be encouraged to take graduate level classes, attend conferences and make inservice presentations (George & Grebing, 1992).
PART THREE

Vision of the Principalship

Dreaming about things that might happen, and even things that are impossible, is a form of reflection that can be playful, creative, and entertaining in nature. However, when dreams become more structured and purposeful, with an intended utility, they become less of a dream and more of a vision. A vision might start as a dream, but as it takes purpose and structure and is given credence in our mind, it becomes a vision.

Visions are important to leadership positions because they provide direction, especially in critical times. Leaders are pioneers of unexplored territory. A good leader with a strong vision shared by people in and outside of the organization, will most likely find success even in unchartered waters. "Quite simply, a vision is a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization" (Nanus, 1992, p. 8).

In the school setting, it is important to have a vision that points the direction in which the school should move. Teachers may not necessarily have a personal vision, but I believe it is essential that administrators do. As principals deal with daily issues and problems, it would be easy to get caught up in the short-term fix. Principals must, however, see the big picture and keep the school moving towards the ultimate objective. "A school can fulfill no higher purpose than to teach all its members that they can make what they believe in happen" (Barth, 1990, p. 515). As a prospective leader of leaders, I believe that one of the first responsibilities a new principal should tackle is to help develop a vision for the school s/he leads. This vision should be a collaborative effort of teachers, support staff, parents, students, administrators, and people of the community. "There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward
excellence and long range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared" (Nanus, 1992, p. 3).

In order to guide and help form a collaborative vision for an organization or school, I believe a principal must first have developed a personal vision for the ideal school. The principal's personal vision will act as a framework to build upon as the educational community builds a more powerful, collaborative, and shared vision for the school.

My personal vision of the ideal school has taken form after much thought and inner reflection. The vision has taken substance from the course work in educational administration, personal experiences from years of teaching, and issues and projections relating to the future of American education.

I am convinced that education must, and is changing. Visionaries have stated that our schools are not producing the kinds of workers needed to compete in the high tech work place of the 21st Century. Traditionally, our schools reflect the kind of training our parents and grandparents received in the 1930's. It has also been projected that by the year 2000 only 15% of the work force will require unskilled labor. Our schools need to revise their curriculums to catch up with the other industrialized nations of the world. U.S. schools must begin to teach skills needed in the work place: statistics, logic, probability, and measurement. Our students must learn to read technical manuals, be versed in the latest technology, and be exposed to more hands-on experiences (Daggett, 1994).

Another important trend affecting today's educational efforts is the shift in demographics. Approximately 33% of all U.S. students are considered to be at risk. Our kids are confronted by a host of social and economic problems which adversely affect
their capacity to learn. Alarmingly, too, is the fact that only about 25% of the adults in our country have youngsters enrolled in the public schools. This reduces the chances that citizens will have a vested interest in the success of our schools. A new politics of education is evolving. In recent years, state and local government and more and more business and civic leaders are getting involved in local educational issues. As the cost of education continues to escalate, we must begin to accept these business and political leaders as important allies of public education. These new allies understand that to produce a work force that must be increasingly competitive in a world-wide economy requires quality schools (Usdan, 1994). A vision of the future must include partners in education and the use of those resources that each community may provide.

Part of the structure of an ideal vision that a new principal brings to the job deals with the perceptions of "self" and the ability to motivate others. People respond better to those individuals who are up-beat, enthusiastic, growth-oriented, and cheerful. Other people gravitate to these type of individuals, like to be in their company, and, generally, attempt to emulate them. I believe successful leaders exhibit a number of characteristics that allow them to be effective motivators; they know and like themselves; they can take control; they are flexible, accept reality and live fully.

Knowing yourself means being in touch with your values. Who am I, where am I going, and what matters most in life? Principals who have answers to these questions recognize not only their weaknesses but their strengths as well. These individuals feel comfortable in delegating responsibility in areas of their weakness while accepting accountability in their areas of strength. Knowing yourself also means having the self-confidence to express your opinions (Krupp, 1994).
I believe that people who like themselves are up-beat, focus on their strengths and generally think positively. They set high standards for themselves while constructing achievable goals. They take control and responsibility for their decisions while establishing a positive climate in their schools. They value diversity, empower others and focus on the individual strengths of others, while fostering a "can do" attitude. They also reward improvement and encourage others to live their values.

Being able to take control means principals must be able to make decisions and take responsibility for the consequences. No one has control over the unexpected, but people can control how they respond to these situations. Principals who establish clear and concise rules and who set expectations with appropriate consequences, empower others. Basically, they communicate that they believe and trust others.

Effective leaders are flexible and realize that every problem has several solutions with no single approach fitting all situations. They recognize the need to modify and change their perceptions as circumstances demand. They perceive changes in themselves as evidence of growth, not as signs of weakness. Flexible leaders model growth for their staff, while creating expectations for change in others. They also encourage others to explore and create (Krupp, 1994).

Successful principals must accept reality and respond to the demands, constraints, and choices of their assignment. Demands are those aspects of the principal’s job that must be done. Constraints are those internal and external factors limiting what a principal is able to do. All administrators face the demands and constraints of their job as individuals. They all assess these demands and constraints as choices relating to a unique situation, with each responding in his/her own way. As administrators reflect
upon the decisions they have made; they bring to their school all those forces of educational, technical, human, and cultural leadership associated with successful schools (Barth, 1990a). Accepting reality also means taking pride in their accomplishments and strengths, while working to overcome weaknesses and mistakes (Krupp, 1994).

Reality also means accepting change. The world changes every day, and taken over a long period of time, significant changes become readily apparent. If teachers and administrators fail to keep abreast of new teaching strategies, advances in technology and changes in society, they will eventually find themselves living in a world they don't understand. George Kennan (1989), a notable American diplomat, commented in his autobiography that, in reflection, a person's life is too long a span for today's pace of change. He stated, "A person living over 50 years finds the familiar world of his youth failing him, like a dying horse" (p. 183), where the new world of today is one which is not really his.

In reality, today's children have changed. They are part of a very mobile society where the family structure has dramatically changed. They are greatly influenced by television, M.T.V., and computers. Teachers and administrators can't expect children to act as they did ten years ago. Realistic principals must communicate honestly with their faculties and provide support for confronting difficult issues that may arise (Krupp, 1994).

Vision of the School Climate

Another important aspect of a principal's vision is the school climate s/he hopes to build. I believe that good schools have a climate where everyone models learning, where
there is an atmosphere of collegiality, where risk-taking is supported, where there is respect for diversity, where there is a place for humor, where leadership is encouraged at all levels, where standards are high and everyone is encouraged to share in a collaborative vision for that school (Barth, 1990b).

A principal with a clear picture in mind of an ideal school climate can more easily map a course for the school in which s/he actually works. I firmly believe that learning is the most important task a school has to facilitate. Keeping this in mind, I think that modeling learning at all levels of the school community is important. The principal, as head learner, should model learning to the staff. One such way a principal may accomplish this is to share journal articles about relevant educational issues with the staff. By placing these articles in school mailboxes, the principal models that learning is important and that dialogue among staff members is healthy. Principals can also become expert outside resources as teachers invite them into their classrooms to share knowledge and experiences. Classroom teachers can model learning for each other by sharing new ideas from workshops with each other. Teachers can also model learning to students by sharing their own personal experiences with their classes and by finding alternative resources to enrich the classroom setting. Students can also model for each other by studying at school and by getting involved in a peer-helper program. Thus, everyone should take an active, visible responsibility to participate in new learning from the top down.

Secondly, I would much rather teach and learn in a collegial environment than one where relationships tend to be adversarial: teachers against students, teachers against
teachers, principals against teachers, parents against school people, etc. Adversarial relationships fragment the business of learning, where nobody wins. In a collegial school, adults and students are helpful and share their skills. Learning is facilitated because everyone is a developer for everyone else. Learning is a cooperative venture where everyone wins (Barth, 1990b).

One way to promote a collegial climate within the school is to use a consensus-building model that allows everyone involved an equal opportunity to have input in all major educational decisions affecting their school. In this model everyone will be seated in a circular design where all faces can be seen and all comments heard. A go-round should be used where everyone has a chance to comment without interruptions or negative feedback. Using such a model would, in my opinion, communicate to all school personnel that they are important and their ideas are valued.

Often teachers tend to teach in their own little world in isolation from each other, where one barely knows what the other is doing. There are few opportunities to get together with colleagues and share information and concerns. If and when educators do get together to problem-solve, students and community people are often not included in the process. I believe another excellent way to promote a collegial school climate is to host an open house at the beginning of school. In this way, educators, students, parents, and community people will have the opportunity to come together and bring questions, answers, and concerns to the attention of the public. An open house will promote sharing, a collegial environment, and keep lines of communication open for everyone.
I believe another important aspect of the learning environment is an administrative approach that encourages risk-taking to promote learning. Barth states, "Considerable research suggests that risk-taking is strongly associated with learning" (p. 513). In a school climate where the administration encourages the staff to take risks, innovative learning is more likely to emerge. New ideas can be widely shared and everyone benefits. New and unusual ideas will be viewed less as embarrassments, but more as signs of life. Teachers should weigh the learning potentials against the risks and the administration should provide a safety net by sharing the responsibility for any problems. Administrators must keep in mind that education is an ever-changing process and favorable changes sometimes come only from those innovative programs/ideas that involve risk.

Principals that create school climates that respect differences are better places to learn. Differences should be seen as opportunities to learn, not something to criticize. Schools that offer a diversity of programs and ideas are much more interesting. One new idea or direction to move could spark a whole new way of doing or seeing things. Principals should encourage and support those programs that explore cultural diversity, promote non-traditional roles for males and females, and encourage development of the creative thought processes in the fine arts. What should be celebrated is not what is the same about each school, but, rather, what is different (Barth, 1990b).

I believe that principals, as leaders of the educational community, should have a good sense of humor. Humor is an important element missing from most school climates and may be seen as a risk-taking exercise to many people. I know, upon reflection, that many funny things take place in schools every day. It has been shown that humor can
enhance learning. Barth states, "...humor can be the glue that binds an assorted group of individuals into a community" (p. 515). Humor is good for schools and the people who learn there.

I believe an effective school climate is one where the principal promotes leadership qualities in everyone. Barth states that leadership is "...making happen what you believe in" (p. 515). Principals that have the ability to cultivate leadership qualities in others strengthen their own position. Principals should delegate authority and share decision-making with others. Sharing promotes higher self-esteem and those who perceive themselves as leaders appreciate leadership efforts in others (Barth, 1990b).

High standards are also an important part of the school climate. Principals that model high standards for themselves can more easily demand high expectations from others. Sometimes, however, high standards go hand-in-hand with high anxiety. A big challenge to any school principal is how to demand high standards, yet relieve anxiety. Where anxiety is high, attention, learning and performance all diminish. The key to high performance is to plan well, share strategies with the staff to reduce anxiety, and believe that success is possible (Barth, 1990b).

Perhaps the most important aspect of the school climate, however, is the vision of the "principalship" the administrator brings to the organization. Over time, as the principal shares this vision with the staff, the vision may change. The vision should become a shared vision which all educators must believe in. It should be part of them, wherever they go. The vision provides a framework within which many individuals can
accommodate their differences of approach and application. Without this vision, widely shared behavior becomes inconsistent and short-sighted. Individuals may become increasingly concerned with the short-term fix and eventually become lost. When the school climate reflects what is valued for our children, it will have value to others as well (Barth, 1990b).

Finally, I believe it is important to reflect upon the idea that principals are real people, too. According to Krupp, "The best educators live fully. They don't live and die for education" (p. 29). They paint and write, go biking, dabble in cooking, garden, and read, etc. Principals should never have to look back and have regrets about their life.

Because principals are required to make decisions and evaluations that affect many people on a daily basis, they need to be in touch with their personal values. These values will ultimately affect the way they lead their lives and the types of decisions they will be able to make. Being in touch with these values will also give principals the confidence to make those tough decisions that are sometimes very painful. However, principals need to let people know that these decisions are not taken lightly nor easily made. As Dr. Else stated in seminar class, "...they need to see you bleed" (personal communication, July 19, 1995).

Because principals are real people, they will sometimes make mistakes. Principals who are self-confident will focus on the positive, take responsibility for the consequences, and make every effort to find a suitable solution to the problem. Principals that truly like people will never find it impossible to apologize if needed. They will have empathy for others and, hopefully, people will view them as sensitive and caring.
Principals that are up-beat and enthusiastic about their job, set a positive example for those around them. Other people tend to gravitate towards those who are cheerful and caring and will generally try to emulate them. Principals who are real people know how to enrich other people's lives and make the work place a positive environment. When this happens, principals feel good about themselves as well (Krupp, 1994).

Like most people, principals need to know their strengths and weaknesses. Principals should delegate responsibilities to others in the areas they are weaker and accept accountability in areas they feel most competent. As Krupp states, "Leaders cannot model qualities that they do not possess" (p. 29). However, principals that admit their short-comings, but stay positive and growth-oriented, model that behavior for others and create a more positive and productive work place. Principals should concentrate on being human and demand the "best" from life, for those who live life, will enrich the school environment they help to maintain (Krupp, 1994).
References


