The Elements of Education for
SCHOOL LEADERS

50 Research-Based Principles Every Administrator Should Know

Cm CHANGE MANAGEMENT	**Lt** LEADERSHIP TEAM	**Di** DISCIPLINE	**Pr** PRIORITIZATION	**Up** UNION PARTNERSHIPS	**Me** MENTORSHIP
Ir INSTRUCTIONAL ROUNDS	**Te** TERMINATION	**Pp** PRINCIPAL PRACTICES	**Go** GOAL SETTING	**Ss** SAFETY AND SECURITY	**Em** ETHICAL MISCONDUCT
Po PROGRESS OVER PERFECTION	**Sc** SCHOOL CLIMATE	**Il** INNOVATION LEADERSHIP	**Sd** SITUATIONAL DECISION-MAKING	**Cx** COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE	**Sr** STRATEGIC RETENTION
Dd DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING	**Tl** TURNAROUND LEADERSHIP	**Cl** CRISIS LEADERSHIP	**Mv** MISSION AND VISION	**Hi** HIRING	**Pc** PILOTING CRAZY IDEAS
Fe FACULTY EVALUATION	**Id** INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY	**Cu** CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP	**Ox** OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE	**Dl** DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING	**Sp** SUCCESSION PLANNING

JULIA CHUN
TYLER TINGLEY
WILLIAM LIDWELL

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Julia Chun, Tyler Tingley, and William Lidwell

Dedicated to
Stephen and Insook Chun
Avery and Arabella Rhodes
Chad Vignola
Marcia M. Tingley

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Meet the Authors

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Introduction

Being a school leader is arguably both the most fulfilling and most rewarding job in education. However, it can also be the most thankless and lonely one. The dichotomous nature of the role makes the position challenging, as school leadership requires a unique set of skills and traits that are often diametrically opposed—one must be an instructional technician who can analyze the precise details of a classroom as well as a broad generalist who can communicate big-picture goals to the various constituencies in the school.

Given the challenges inherent in the role, this book is intended to be a quick reference tool for leaders who need immediate assistance but don't have ample time to sift through complex texts or lengthy articles. It can be considered a troubleshooting guide for leaders who need to get pertinent information and practical advice on a topic without having to do the research themselves. It is also intended to inspire school leaders when they need to make tough decisions and untangle seemingly intractable problems, as we understand what you are facing, having been there ourselves.

The format of the book is simple. We have chosen fifty leadership principles that are the most essential for any school leader to understand. The list is not meant to be comprehensive; it represents the most common—but often the most misunderstood—principles in school leadership. Each chapter is double-sided; the left side defines the principle, providing the most current research and offering expert advice. The right side presents a case study, with a familiar cast of characters in a school that may be similar to your own. The case study is meant to contextualize the issue, provide a narrative that brings the principle to light, and embed it in a real-world scenario. All characters in the case studies are fictional.

We anticipate some educators may find this book useful in leading a professional-development workshop or continuing education for those who are running schools or hope someday to do so. If this is your need, we suggest you follow this plan:

Pick case studies that illustrate the principles of leadership on which you are focused.

Ask the participants to summarize what has taken place.

Ask the participants to suggest alternative scenarios to the actions of the administrators of North High.

Evaluate those scenarios to see which ones best exemplify the principle explained on the page to the left of the case study.

The book will be at its most useful if leaders can lean on it much as they would an experienced consultant. The idea is not to read the book from cover to cover but to refer to the chapters as topics become relevant. We have poured much of our collective school leadership years into these principles and case studies, and we hope you can benefit from our experience.

Julia Chun
Tyler Tingley
William Lidwell

1 Admissions

The student selection and enrollment process

The most important thing a school leader can do is to partner with the school's admissions director to ensure the school enrolls students who are a "good fit" for the institution. What constitutes a "good fit" will depend on the school's philosophy and the organization's ability to connect to students and families who fit the school's profile. A school leader can support the school's admissions effort in three main ways:

1. Ensuring engagement
2. Supporting understanding
3. Advocating for diversity

A leader should encourage the entire school community to facilitate the admissions process, making admissions and enrollment a priority for the school. The leader should emphasize the importance of administration, faculty, and students attending open houses, volunteering to guide tours, and helping at school information and recruitment sessions. When prospective families visit the school, faculty should welcome visitors into their classrooms, while students should be able to articulate the school's strengths and unique features as well as their personal experiences attending the school.

Admissions officers often have a cursory understanding of curricular details and lack the pedagogical experience to be able to advocate particular courses or activities to an outside audience. Teachers may be reluctant to volunteer to offer additional time to the admissions effort, and it is sometimes challenging to ask them to take on more responsibilities. Leaders should utilize their professional-duty system to enroll teachers to support the admissions and enrollment team. They can then ask the faculty volunteers to help the admissions team understand how to best describe classes and other school offerings.

Leaders should partner with admissions directors to make diversity and equity in the admissions and enrollment process a key priority. Research shows that racially and socioeconomically diverse schools cultivate students with higher test scores, increased college attendance, and improved critical-thinking skills. A diverse group of faculty should attend recruitment fairs and school information sessions as ambassadors. In addition, schools can also intentionally reduce barriers to enrollment in multiple ways: by creating promotional materials in multiple languages, having school representatives who speak languages other than English available to answer questions, and providing child care at information sessions and school lotteries.

See also   Community Engagement, Inclusivity and Diversity, School Culture

RESOURCES

Anderson, Melinda D. "The Promise of Integrated Schools." *The Atlantic*, February 16, 2016.

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CASE STUDY

North High School, a school of 1,200 students in grades nine through twelve, didn't have any trouble filling the seats in its classrooms, but Jim Short, the principal, was still interested in admissions. To Short, the admissions process represented one of the key ways North could communicate with the parents and potential students in its neighborhood. "All the newspapers want to report is bad news," Short complained to his administrative team. "Some kid gets caught shoplifting and they put it on the front page. A student wins the state science fair and it's buried in the middle of the paper. If we want parents to know what we do well, we've got to take responsibility for getting that story out."

Short met with the district's admissions officer, Linda Walker, who oversaw admissions at North and two other schools. "I want North to have an admissions fair," Short said. "I want the kids to make exhibits of all the things they like and the school does well. I want our glee club and pep band to perform. I want to introduce the captains of the debate team and the sports teams. I want our current parents to come and get to know the potential new parents and tell them about their own experience at North. I want those parents to bring their own students to welcome the new students. And most of all, I want our potential families of color to feel welcomed and safe."

"That sounds like a great idea, Jim," said Linda Walker. "But there's no way I can organize that. I'll support the idea and take care of mailing lists, but you've got to plan the fair on your own."

"We'll organize it," Short replied.

At the next faculty meeting, Short asked for volunteers to help plan and execute the admissions fair. He made it clear it was a high priority for faculty to attend. He appointed several volunteers to organize the student groups that would be featured and the students who would speak. He met with the leaders of the student council and got their support for getting the student body to be ambassadors for North. And he met with the parent council and got their enthusiastic support for the project.

"Everyone wants the community to recognize the quality of North," Short said. "And everybody has a personal stake in making sure families come ready to support the values that make North a good school."

2 Assessment

Understanding student performance and progress

While all tests are assessments, not all assessments are tests. Assessment can refer to everything from standardized state and national tests to in-class projects, exams, quizzes, and portfolios, as well as more informal assessments of knowledge like daily "exit tickets" assessing students' understanding of the day's lesson. Leaders should ensure the school is utilizing various types of assessment, both to provide individual students with feedback on their progress and to allow faculty to analyze patterns of student performance in order to improve instruction.

Summative assessments such as state tests can be reliable and broad indicators of how a student, grade, class, or school is faring academically and to identify trends in student learning. Most schools utilize summative assessment data to create intervention systems for students and to plan professional development for teachers. However, researchers have found a curriculum-embedded formative assessment system has the greatest impact on student learning (just below having an excellent classroom teacher). Accordingly, leaders should also support a schoolwide system of formative assessment. The system should incorporate the intended curriculum standards the school has chosen to adopt (i.e., the International Baccalaureate, Common Core, etc.). School leaders should also provide ample opportunities for faculty and leadership to review and understand the data from these assessments and plan the implementation of corrective measures in their classrooms.

The goal of summative assessments is to evaluate students' performance at a given time against a benchmark. Summative assessments lag student achievement and are ways to determine whether students have learned the content and skills expected of them. Usually, this occurs at the end of an instructional unit or break point in the school year. The goal of formative assessment, on the other hand, is to understand where a student is in their learning process to inform ongoing instruction. Formative assessments can be in the moment. A typical formative assessment could be an end-of-teaching-period exit ticket in which the student demonstrates whether they mastered a single lesson. Formative assessments, when used appropriately, allow for early intervention and can provide students with useful feedback to take action in their own learning. The public often focuses on summative results—but far more important is the school's system of assessment *for* learning, which is formative assessment.

See also Curriculum Leadership, Grading

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CASE STUDY

The school year at North High generally ended with students taking a number of state-designed comprehensive exams in foundational subjects such as English and math. Jim Short and his academic team of department heads studied the results of the state exams closely. The cumulative results were often published in the local paper and could, if the scores were significantly lower than in previous years, be a source of parental concern. Short and his team were more interested in the breakdown of the scores by grade and subject, since these scores could give clues to weaknesses in North's curriculum and instruction. But Short was careful how this analysis was used. He knew the limits that "teaching to the test" could bring, and he wanted to make sure his faculty didn't think scores on the state exams were the only performance indices that mattered.

"Let's talk about formative testing," Short said to his department heads in one of their pre-school meetings. "How much do you talk about that in your department meetings?"

"Not much," replied Dick Brown, the chair of the math department. "We're generally bogged down with student issues—performance issues with kids who aren't getting the material. It's a continuous battle."

"Exactly," said Genevieve Weber, the chair of modern languages. "We spend all our time talking about kids who are doing poorly."

There were nods of agreement around the room.

"Well, that's exactly the reason I raised the subject of formative testing," Short said. "A good formative test is both diagnostic and educational. Kids learn by figuring things out, and a formative test asks the kids to figure out material they haven't yet fully learned. It's not a test to find the holes in the students' learning. That's what the state exams do. It's to help them build their skills while seeing where they're having trouble learning.

"For example," Short continued, "suppose the kids are having trouble factoring polynomials. The teacher can see that in class, so on the weekly quiz, she puts a couple of problems that include some of the first steps in performing the operation. The kids can use those problems to help them figure out the harder problems and learn in the process.

"I don't know enough Spanish to give you a good example, Genevieve," Short went on. "But the principle of formative testing is the same in every discipline. Have your faculty experiment with thinking about the majority of their tests as a learning experience. It will help if you have some department meetings where faculty write test questions collectively and help each other out. And in the end, we should see the results of formative testing in our state scores."