

The Principled Principal-J. Zoul & A. McConnell

Reflection

When we lead on principles our decisions are clearer and easier. Leaders must know what they stand for and what they are about. When I began this book the first principle made me second guess if I wanted to read the whole thing. I pushed through and was very happy that I did continue. Leaders are about people, hiring them, developing them, collaborating with them, and managing them. Ten principles may seem like a lot but they are practical, logical, and sometimes overlap with ideas from other principles which makes them flow easily and become easily remembered. If you already consider yourself a leader, whether formally or informally, you probably already abide by many of the principles discussed.

Notes

Introduction

- how will our actions/inactions impact the students we serve?
- a principal's most important job is hiring quality teachers who can implement both the art and science of teaching
- school leader's impact on students contributes to 25% of school's influence on a child's academic performance
- when leadership is determined by principles decisions are easier to make

1: The Priority Principle

- everything we do is important
 - Stating one thing is more important than another is espousing opinion not supported by facts
- false dilemma: when only two options are presented when there are actually more than that*
- principals cannot give into the idea that some aspects of school are more important than others
- if we really look at standardized test questions, do they inherently lend to paper-pencil instruction or can they actually be taught using PBL?
- we cannot assume students naturally have SEL skills & dispositions
- studies show: not reading proficiently by 3rd grade delays high school graduation, every non-high school graduate costs the economy \$260,000 in lost wages/taxes/productivity
- one of the most important jobs of the P is to ensure students are learning & growing**
 - learning needs to happen. Results do matter
- innovating means doing something new and better; does not have to necessarily relate to technology; many of the in-demand jobs today did not even exist ten years ago
- if something we do is not a priority then we should not be doing it

BIG 3: SEL, Academic achievement, Innovative teaching and learning...none are more important than the other

2: The People Principle

- the P should be the model for how to treat people inside and outside the school building
- Be Empathetic*

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- parents want to know we (Ts & Ps) *care for their child*
- we cannot promise a perfect day but we CAN promise to care and show others how much we care
- a key component of empathy is treating everybody as unique individuals each with their own dreams, aspirations, passions, and goals

Listen Intentionally

- stop interrupting with your “solutions” and listen
- sometimes people just need you to listen...ask yourself when listening “is there a question mark”?

Show you care

- be intentional with your spoken and written words
- write positive notes to parents about students (or **staff**), even (or especially) if the student is often difficult
- Successful school cultures and professional relationships are never achieved in the strict language of a contract; they are found among the spaces in between.

Be Vulnerable

- share when things don't work out or when plans don't materialize
 - Models reflection and acceptance for professional growth
 - Establishes mistakes and learning as part of the culture
 - Helps us as leaders take the weight off our shoulders of needing to be perfect
- look for opportunities to laugh with the people at your school
- **if serving is beneath you, leading is beyond you” Jessica Cabeen
- Arrival and dismissal are prime times to develop relationships with students and parents (learn their names as you would the children's names)

3: The Self-Leadership Principle

- cannot lead others if you cannot lead yourself effectively
- get clear on why you do what you do; what is your purpose; what are you about both personally and professionally?
 - What is your mission? (what is my purpose?)
 - What is your vision? (what do I hope to become?)
 - What are your values? (behaviors of everyday life)--what are your top 5 that define you?
- *set personal and professional goals
- *set yourself up for success--create a plan to achieve your goals
 - how does your school look, feel, and sound? (culture)
- *reward yourself
- *prioritize
- *take care of yourself
- *be the lead learner; learn from staff members too
- *be what you want others to be

4: The Outcomes Principle

- lofty goals must be met with intentional actions

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- Focus on the outcome of the action and not the goal
- Focusing on outcomes takes a narrow form (not 'we will improve 3rd grade math scores) by focusing on skills
 - Needs to be associated with some measurement tool

-we must accept that our schools exist for the purpose of student learning

-Great principals focus their schools on intentional and innovative teaching and learning practices so students succeed regardless of the assessment.

- *it's not about the assessment, it's about the learning*

-data is used to clearly mark where students are and what subsequent actions should be taken

-what outcomes do we expect from the goals we set? (goals are broad stroke statements: "we will increase 3rd grade math scores)

-if you can't measure it, you cannot manage it...or improve it

-use and view data as a means to improve, not a personal attack

****getting better on purpose instead of by accident...use data strategically**

5: The Talent Principle

-hire character. Train for skill.

-experience, education, and training tell you nothing about character

-experience doesn't equal quality; diverse experiences/backgrounds on staff can be invaluable

- Where you went to college, tests, & GPAs have little to do with outstanding teaching
- Trainings & certifications can give an idea of their skills but not performance

-hire *talent*: referring to a disposition, mindset, or overall character

-do you hire (fill holes) people? Or do you select (rigorous process & consistent practices)?

-talented people will more than likely succeed in any field

-teachers and staff can give input on the hiring decision but it is ultimately the principal's decision

6: The Change Principal

-change should be for the better, not just for change sake

-we are in an age of continuous change; after WWII knowledge doubled every 25 years, today it is every 2 years...IBM predicts it will come to a point human knowledge doubles every 12 hours

-the "quieter and simpler" days are not coming back; we must be honest with our people why change is necessary

-Manage the process: start with the WHY, be honest (don't sugarcoat what is needed to change), everybody should know the scope of the process and their role within it, communicate change in tailored ways to various stakeholders

7: The Communication Principal

-a school can be a reflection of the greater community or it can be a leader by supporting values and priorities

-a school is a place parents and communities send their hopes and dreams for the future

-communication spreads; from one parents to another and from one teacher to another, so be prepared and don't be shocked

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- as Ps we take into account all sides of the story while keeping the big picture in mind
- if you aren't telling your school's story, somebody else is or will
- Effective communication is:
 - Honest
 - Relevant and Timely: over-communication is more about quality than quantity
 - Varied: Facebook research shows pages with 7-10 posts each week get most hits; Hootsuite for FB & Twitter posts; **teacher communication**: steer Ts to communicate solutions vs. problems
 - Recent studies show that 88% of people in America have access to the internet and 77% have smartphones

8: The Management Principle

- to actually make progress, school leaders need to be focused on details and hard work
- management of schools may not be flashy but it is a necessary and important part of the job
- people want their leaders to be well-organized managers and run well-organized schools
- there is a difference in decisions that should be talked about collaboratively and those which are straight administrative decisions
- "managing up": communicating and working with central office
- "managing down": be crystal clear about expectations, provide clear and timely feedback
- create a culture of "YES"

9: The Harmony Principle

- the leader's voice should never be the voice raising the level of stress & anxiety
 - keep "problems" in perspective, not everything is an emergency
 - stay calm and carry on
 - asking for help when you actually need it is not a sign of weak leadership
 - if your stress level and response is elevated it is nearly impossible to solve or even acknowledge problems
- **5 ways to keep calm: **reframe**, **context** (what's the worst thing that can result from this?), **nonverbals** (be aware of your own), **humor** (don't take yourself too seriously), **positive messaging****

10: The Collaboration Principle

- realize you are not alone
- Serving as a principal means you stand for something, have beliefs about student learning, and have values based on what is best for students, which you will not allow to be compromised.**
- your commitment should be to CHILDREN, not to tradition or convenience
 - in healthy school cultures teachers are not in competition with one another but with themselves
 - great principals embrace the success of others
 - in collaboration we all can win; in competition there must be a winner and loser
 - if your school is not in a better place after one year of you leading it you should consider whether or not that school is a good fit for you*

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-sometimes even good Ps can wear out their welcome and need to move to a new school as they have taken the school as far as they can

-Culture crushers: competition supersedes collaboration, Ts who bully Ts, Ts who cannot celebrate other T successes, jealousy and cliques among teachers

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