

# **Achieving Success as a Principal: Concrete Strategies and Essential Advice**

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# Your Presenter

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# The Principal: An Unreasonable Job

“Wisdom of a sage, vision of a CEO, intellect of a scholar, leadership of a point guard, compassion of a counselor, moral strength of a nun, craft knowledge of a surgeon, political savvy of a senator, toughness of a soldier, listening skills of a blind man, humility of a saint, collaborative skills of an entrepreneur, certitude of a civil rights activist, charisma of a stage performer, patience of Job. Salary lower than you might expect. Credential required.”  
(Copland, 2001)

# Key Words

- wisdom
- vision
- intellect
- leadership
- compassion
- moral strength
- craft knowledge
- political savvy
- toughness
- listening skills
- humility
- collaborative skills
- certitude
- charisma
- patience

# The Principal's Structural Challenge

“Principals are given little authority to select staff, allocate resources, or make programmatic decisions. Unlike leaders in private-sector or military organizations (from which leadership theories are often drawn), principals typically have only indirect control over subordinates. As a result, effective school leadership is often less about giving orders than about leading through social persuasion, personal connections, and shared leadership.” (Goodwin 2013)

# So why take on this challenge?

“If I have learned anything in my time traveling the world, it is the power of hope. The power of one person – Washington, Lincoln, King, Mandela and even a young girl from Pakistan, Malala – one person can change the world by giving people hope.”

Admiral William H. McRaven (2016)

# The Principal is Essential

“Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.” (Leithwood et al 2004)

“...demonstrated effects of successful leadership are considerably greater in schools that are in more difficult circumstances.” (Leithwood et al 2004)

“There is clearly a multiplier effect if the principal helps, directly and indirectly, 30 or more teachers become dramatically more effective in their teaching.” (Fullan 2010)

# Six Areas of Focus Today

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1. Preparation for the principalship
  2. First steps once selected
  3. Determining initial priorities
  4. Time management and personal management
  5. Strategy development
  6. Empowering and motivating staff
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# 1. Preparation

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What are some essential steps in preparing to lead a school?

Discuss

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# Preparation – Keys

- Be an excellent teacher
- Don't be in such a hurry; learn where you are
- Accept opportunities to learn and do more
- Mentors matter; choose wisely
- Make friends in a variety of places
- Accept that you may have to move
- Unstick yourself if necessary
- Invest in your selection skills
- Keep your head up

# Leader vs. Manager

| <b>A Manager... (A.P.)</b> | <b>A Leader... (Principal)</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tells                      | Sells                          |
| Plans the details          | Sets the direction             |
| Instructs employees        | Encourages people              |
| Has objectives             | Has vision                     |
| Eyes the bottom line       | Eyes the horizon               |
| Thinks short term          | Thinks long term               |
| Approves                   | Motivates                      |
| Assigns duties             | Fosters ideas                  |
| Relies on control          | Inspires trust                 |
| Does things right          | Does the right thing           |

## 2. First Steps

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What should a newly-placed principal do during the first six months?

Discuss

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# First Steps

- Realize that being the principal is a different job; resist the fix-it temptation
- Design, publicize, and implement an entry plan
- Relationships, relationships, relationships
- Open school smoothly
- Report your entry plan findings mid-year
- You'll never work harder than those first six months
- Have clear plans for managing your energy

### 3. Determining Initial Priorities

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How should a new principal go about determining the initial priorities in a school?

Discuss

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# Determining Initial Priorities

- Know your facility – the meat and potatoes
- Climate matters – and is supported by research
- Ensure student safety and functioning discipline systems
- Understand the systems for maintaining order
- Know and be able to use the information systems (SIS, IEP, Assessment and Grade Reporting)
- One story: tardy management

## 4. Time and Self-Management

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What strategies should a principal employ in order to manage his/her time and to insure reasonable personal health and balance?

Discuss

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# Time and Self-Management

- Manage yourself and others by objectives
- Make A.P.'s leaders
- Get rid of the paper; keep a clean and empty office
- Use technology to your benefit
- Schedule and keep regular meetings
- Communicate your work style and preferences explicitly
- When in doubt, go home.

# Time and Self-Management: Building an Ethos

- Understand and nurture your ethos. If you don't define it, you can be sure that others will.
- Everything the principal says and writes, and how she says and writes it, contributes to her ethos. Be intentional.
- Rhetoric is about the impact of communication on an audience. The principal must always think about her audiences and anticipate how they are likely to respond to her message.
- The wise principal strives to be a servant leader and a lead learner.

# Time and Self-Management: Building an Ethos

- Remember Aristotle: be a principal who projects an ethos of good sense, good moral character, and goodwill.
- The principal must mind her optics; they contribute to ethos. The principal is always watched.
- The principal should strive to be seen everywhere, but especially in classrooms.
- The principal must always keep in mind that the students and their teachers are the stars. The principal's job is to support them by being the light that makes others shine brightly.

# 5. Strategy Development

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What should a new principal keep in mind in developing a strategy for improving outcomes in a school?

Discuss

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# Strategy Development

- Understand what the experts recommend
- Understand your district's initiatives
- Whatever is implemented, it will involve people growing
- Don't row alone
- Use the processes already in place
- Establish metrics and report progress regularly
- Always change a losing game; never change a winning game.

## 6. Empowering and Motivating Staff

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How should a principal go about unleashing the best work of a staff?

Discuss

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# Empowering and Motivating Staff

“Work isn’t to make you money; you work to justify life.” ~ Marc Chagall

“What man needs is not a tensionless state, but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal.” ~ Viktor Frankl

Autonomy - Mastery - Purpose

# Empowering and Motivating Staff

“The best teachers experience continuous growth over the arc of a career. No amount of carrots or sticks is needed to motivate them to continue their quests for improved performance; they’ll do it themselves.” (Cunard 114)

## Two Key Questions

1. What ignites these star performers?
2. How can we ignite others?



# Empowering and Motivating Staff

Viktor Frankl taught that motivation comes from three things:

1. Creating a work, or doing deeds (work)
2. Experiencing something or encountering someone (love)
3. In the face of a fate one cannot change, rising above or changing oneself (enduring)

# Empowering and Motivating Staff

In *Drive*, Daniel Pink reported that three factors motivate human beings:

1. Sufficient autonomy to act with choice
2. Striving for mastery
3. A clear sense of purpose

Pink also reminds us that for the best performers, mastery is an ongoing quest, that it is never achieved.

# Empowering and Motivating Staff

How can a principal use these principles to motivate staff?

1. Be the chief communicator about the meaning, purpose, and progress in your school
2. Work with site leaders to establish meaningful goals to which all can contribute
3. Let teachers devise strategies and methods for pursuing these goals
4. Recognize and support the innovators

# Rowing in the Same Direction

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. ~ *Margaret Mead*



# Success vs. Effectiveness

“Success includes, but is more than, effectiveness...effectiveness is associated with instrumental outcomes of students...whereas success is associated with these in addition to positive personal and social outcomes, well-being, and equity. In other words, success is more all-encompassing.” (Day 2007)

# The Successful Principal - Resources

- Book available on Amazon
- Website located at:  
[www.thesuccessfulprincipal.org](http://www.thesuccessfulprincipal.org)
- Website includes:
  - Entry Plan
  - Complete Friday Letters
  - Blog
  - Contact form
- I am always available at:  
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