

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:
AN INTERN'S PERSPECTIVE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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The Roles and Responsibilities of a School Principal: An Intern's Perspective

By

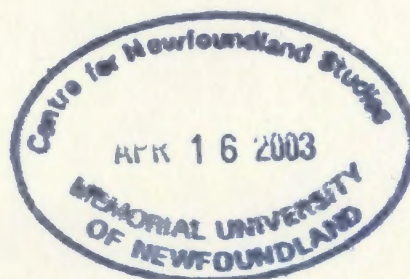
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An internship report submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

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Abstract

Drawing on current literature from the last two decades, this report provides a comparative analysis of the duties of a school principal as defined by various researchers and my observations as an intern in a typical school setting. More specifically, this report focuses on what Ubben and Hughes (1987) deem to be the major responsibilities of a school principal: (i) staffing and personnel development; (ii) pupil services; (iii) curriculum development; (iv) finance and facilities management; and (v) community relations. I learned that the roles and responsibilities of a school principal are diverse, complex, and ever changing. While theorists and researchers may attempt to categorize the roles and responsibilities of a school principal, in reality, these categorizations only scratch the surface of the true nature of the job. It is only through actual participation and observation that one can truly appreciate the multi-dimensional role that a principal must play in the overall operation of a school.

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE INTERNSHIP

Introduction

The Newfoundland educational system is currently undergoing tremendous change. These changes have been brought about as a result of a variety of factors. Firstly, the educational reform movement of the 1990's in Newfoundland and Labrador necessitated the change from the former denominational system to the current public education system. Secondly, public demands for greater accountability in public programs have driven educators to make changes to ensure that the dollars directed from the public purse have been used in the best possible ways. Thirdly, the global economy has thrust huge demands on the educational system to supply future workers who are prepared to help our province compete in the global marketplace. Such changes have had direct impact on how schools operate, and the key person to whom these responsibilities generally have fallen is the school principal.

Most principals in Newfoundland and Labrador's education system have been teachers who have been promoted to the job of being the school leader or principal. However, there is typically no on-the-job training provided such prospective leaders.

The degree of Master of Education in Leadership Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland requires the graduate student to pursue studies that examine the most current theoretical paradigms and research in the educational field. Students are afforded a variety of routes through which these pursuits may be achieved. Research may take the form of either a thesis, internship report, paper folio, or project. This candidate chose the internship option as the completion requirement for the degree of Master of Education.

The internship is a process used by many professions to provide practical training for students. The Faculty of Education at Memorial University recognizes the value of internship

training for prospective principals by providing such opportunities to graduate students in the field of Educational Leadership. Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz (1984) say of internship training that "direct participation in administrative duties, closely supervised by an experienced professional, is a natural complement to the graduate seminars conducted on campus" (p. 234). The internship allows for the practical application of the theories and practices advocated throughout leadership studies.

The roles and responsibilities of a school principal are complex, varied, and vaguely defined. Moreover, many new principals are often thrust into administrative positions with little or no practical preparation for the job. Lack of experience, coupled with the multifaceted demands placed on the principal, often create challenges for the beginning administrator. For this reason, a growing number of universities now offer an internship program as an alternative to the more traditional master's thesis requirement for graduate degrees in school administration (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993).

This writer participated in such internship training, being paired with an experienced principal in a large urban school for approximately thirteen weeks in the fall of 2000. The principal served as a role model and mentor. Observations, discussions, practice, and evaluation of the roles and responsibilities of the principal within the school setting formed the basis of this report.

This report is the culmination of that internship placement and is meant to reflect the experiences obtained. In particular, it compares what was observed in such a practical setting with the trends highlighted in current research literature pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of a school principal.

Internship Setting

The site selected for my internship training was X Intermediate School located in an urban area of Newfoundland. This school has an administrative team consisting of a principal, assistant principal, administrative assistant, various department heads, and lead teachers. The administrative team has worked together for only two years because, prior to 1999, the school had a different configuration of grade levels and, consequently, a different administrative team. However, many of the team members have worked together for longer than two years.

The school is newly reconfigured to house grades four through nine with four streams at each of the elementary grade levels, and six, seven, and eight streams at the junior high levels. It has a student population of 916 students. It has a total of 46 full-time and five part-time educational staff that includes 39 classroom teachers and seven and one-half special services personnel who have the support of four student assistants. In addition to staff based at the school, X Intermediate School has access to the following services at the district level: itinerant teachers for enrichment, the hearing impaired, the visually impaired, the learning disabled, speech-language pathologists, educational psychologists, and program implementation specialists.

This school is located in a residential area with a population of approximately twenty-six thousand (26 000). The socioeconomic status of the families in this school would be considered middle income. The school building plays an integral role in the community because it is used by numerous service and youth organizations. X Intermediate has an active school council, parent and community volunteer network and a dedicated team of educational professionals and support staff.

This school was chosen for the internship setting for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the school's grade configuration encompasses the grades at which I have had experience as a teacher and would be the levels at which I would seek employment in the future as administrator. Secondly, because of current educational reforms within the district, X Intermediate School, formerly a junior high school, was recently reconfigured to include elementary level students. This change was made one year before my internship placement, and I felt that witnessing such great change in personnel, programming, and even physical structure would provide valuable insight into how educational leadership can affect the process.

This school was also chosen because of the principal. The principal is a veteran of educational administration. He has worked with five different school boards and six different schools. He has been an educator for the past 24 years, 19 of which he has served as principal. With sound academic accreditation, and extensive educational involvement, he offers both the knowledge and experience I believe is necessary for one to act in such a mentoring capacity.

Finally, this site seemed to have the characteristics of an excellent setting in which to facilitate internship training. A large student population, broad spectrum of grade levels, highly experienced administrator, and a school undergoing great change appeared to be circumstances that would provide me with more diverse challenges and greater opportunity to observe broad levels of decision-making.

Internship Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of this internship was the opportunity for me to observe and participate in the administration of a school. My main intent was to examine the roles and

responsibilities of a school principal in a typical educational setting in order to draw a comparative analysis between what is suggested by current literature related to the topic and what seems possible in a realistic institution. The intended goals and objectives for this internship included the following:

1. to gain insight into the various roles of the principal as educational leader in a school setting;
2. to develop a mentoring relationship with the principal so as to foster meaningful skill development and learning for my internship experience;
3. to document the roles and responsibilities of the administrative team to compare with current research literature on the subject;
4. to reflect on my current philosophies of education and educational leadership in order to refine my beliefs and practices;
5. to gain insight into the administrator's role in fostering positive school-family-community relationships.

My list of goals and objectives was in no way exhaustive and I suspected my internship would provide additional experiences pertinent to the subjects of my study. I was prepared to redefine my goals and objectives where necessary to make the most of my time spent at X Intermediate School. I further found that this opportunity could permit me to learn another skill that would be useful in the future should I seek employment as a school administrator. Therefore, I added another goal to my list. It was as follows:

1. to become familiar with the computer program used in the school district to facilitate communication among school personnel regarding student information and district office administrative procedures.

Means For Realization of Goals and Objectives

Various means through which I planned to achieve my goals and objectives were employed throughout my internship placement. All of these strategies proved useful in gaining insight into the roles and responsibilities of a school principal and helped me understand the complexities of the leadership position. The strategies used were as follows:

1. I documented my daily experiences and observations through journal writing.
These journal writings allowed me to chronicle the process of my internship in order to examine the growth of my learning.
2. I observed and, where possible, engaged in the various roles and responsibilities of the principal as he carried out his daily duties around the school.
3. I attended and participated in staff meetings and other administrative meetings in order to gain awareness of how a principal deals with personnel, scheduling, managerial, and curriculum issues.
4. I attended meetings of the school council, curriculum orientation sessions, and parent-teacher meetings to gain insight into how home-school-community partnerships are developed.
5. I gained a rudimentary knowledge of how to use the WinSchool computer program that is used by schools in the district for administrative purposes.
6. I made audio recordings of discussions held with the principal to provide a source of qualitative data for my research.
7. I attended principals' meetings sponsored by the school board to observe the duties and responsibilities of principals in an overall district team.

8. I researched current literature related to the roles and responsibilities of a school principal.
9. I reflected on my observations and experiences through discussions with the participating principal.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Defined

Leadership is a very complex concept. Functions performed by educational leaders have in recent times expanded in scope and have become extremely multifaceted. "Findings from research conducted in business, industrial, and school settings have consistently found that effective organizations have strong leaders with well-defined visions of what they are trying to accomplish" (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993, p. 185). Ramsey (1999) states, "Leadership is more than a series of knee-jerk reactions" (p. 26).

Defining what leadership is or the traits that constitute an effective leader can be rather difficult. Owens (1998) states that "leadership is not something that one does to people, or is it a manner of behaving toward people, or is it working through other people to achieve organizational goals" (p. 206). Guthrie and Reed (1991) refer to leadership as "that quality which enables an individual within a given setting to establish an organizational vision, to motivate and inspire others to embrace that vision and achieve and maintain organizational and individual goals" (p. 232). Similarly, Drake and Roe (1999) describe leadership as "a planned process of interaction in a social setting in which goals that are mutually satisfying to the school organization and the individuals in the school are established, and means are developed to achieve them" (p. 132).

Many researchers distinguish between leadership and management functions of a school administrator. However, Kowalski and Reitzug (1993) view school administration as a process that encompasses both areas of responsibility. They define leadership as "a process that: (1) results in the determination of organizational objectives and strategies, (2) entails building consensus for meeting those objectives, and (3) involves influencing others to work

toward those objectives” (p. 5). They further define management as “the process of implementing strategies and controlling resources in an effort to achieve organizational objectives” (p. 5). Hart and Bredeson (1996) define leadership as “reciprocal influence, interaction, and connection among talented, educated, and dedicated professionals – a process of validation by teachers (primarily) of their principals” (p. 5).

Three types of factors are common to the wealth of literature examining the study of leadership. They include the personal traits of the leaders, the behaviors exhibited by the leaders, and the situational factors that combine to influence leadership practices (Hart, 1993).

Functions of a Principal

Lipham (as cited in Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990) contends that “there are two major functions that a principal must perform, management and leadership” (p. 30). Hart and Bredeson (1996) suggest principals have four major responsibilities. These include promoting goals attainment, participating in the maintenance of cultural patterns, working to maintain the practices and resources that support coordination of organizational structures and processes meant to achieve desired goals, and helping teachers be responsive to the needs of children. Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) contend the principal is responsible for instruction and curriculum, pupil services, community-school relations, staffing, organization and structure of the school, and school plant facilities. Ubben and Hughes (1987) identify five major task areas of the principal’s role as school leader. These are staffing and personnel development, pupil services, curriculum development, finance and facilities management, and community relations. These topics appeared to summarize the varied roles suggested by

other researchers. The following sections address these functions as set out by Ubben and Hughes.

Staffing and Personnel Development

Because providing leadership that can motivate staff, facilitate professional development, and adapt to staffing changes is the role of the principal, "The most important resource in an organization is its staff. When the staff is congruent with organizational needs, well trained, adaptive, and motivated, great things can happen" (Ubben & Hughes, 1997, p. 242). Recognizing the valuable contributions to the overall organization and development of an educational institution is important to school principals.

The ultimate goal of education is to ensure the delivery of the best quality educational experiences for all students (Valentine, 1992). Determining whether or not that goal is being met suggests the need for a systemic means of measuring performance against a set of predetermined criteria. In the realm of education, the standard means of accomplishing such a task is through the process of educational evaluation and supervision. The principal is most often the person charged with performing this task.

Definitions of supervision and evaluation are varied and often conflicting. Many researchers include evaluation as an element contained within the supervisory process. Others maintain that the two should be functionally separated. Whether these are viewed as separate but complementary processes or as one and the same, most would agree that they are crucial components in the development of improved instructional practices.

Developmental supervision, according to Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998), is the process of assisting educators in the improvement of instruction. Ubben and Hughes (1987) define clinical supervision as "supervision devoted to diagnosis and

prescription and formative, rather than summative, evaluation” (p. 227). Similarly, Valentine (1992) defines performance-based developmental evaluation as “an ongoing process designed to improve a teacher’s professional skills” (p. 6). Arrendondo, Brody, Zimmerma, and Moffett (1995) suggest that supervision should be thought of as a process that facilitates collaborative and reflective practices in promoting continuous learning and growth.

McCarty, Kaufman, and Stafford (1986) offer distinct differences in their definitions of supervision and evaluation. They posit that supervision is a developmental process aimed at improving teacher performance in order to improve instructional practices, while evaluation is a harsher process designed to rank teacher performance in a more formal way.

Glanz and Neville (1997) assert that it is virtually impossible to separate the concept of evaluation from supervision. They argue that any attempt to improve instruction must also invite evaluation as a process of assessing where improvements need to be made. Drake and Roe (1999) concur, insisting it is impossible to separate supervision from evaluation if the supervisor’s role is to achieve school goals through teaching, providing support and resources, and fostering cooperative problem solving. However, they caution that supervision of instruction should be considered separately from summative evaluation in order to achieve maximum growth for teachers.

Current thinking about the principal’s role in schools suggests that principals should be instructional leaders. Reitzug (1997) argues that supervision is a key element in developing effective classroom instruction. Textbooks on the topic of supervision assert that the primary purpose of the principal’s involvement is to assist teachers in improving instruction.

While many researchers use words such as collaborative, collegial, or developmental to describe the nature of the relationship between principal and teacher in the supervision practice, the reality is that there still exists an hierarchical relationship between the supervisor and the teacher. This imbalanced relationship is grounded by the notion that a principal's position is one of power and status in the school's hierarchy. Such authority prevents the process of supervision from being truly collaborative or collegial in nature. Rather, it further exacerbates the hierarchical structure of power base. Reitzug (1997) cautions that empowering principals with the dual role of instructional leader and evaluator of classroom instruction is dangerous. He states, "when diagnosis and vision-building are grounded in notions of individual expertise and conducted in isolation by the supervisor, past hierarchical conceptions of supervisory practice are likely to be perpetuated" (p. 329).

Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) suggest that such a control-oriented supervisory approach may become necessary if teachers are functioning at low levels of personal and professional development or where students' best interests are in jeopardy. Reitzug (1997), however, contends that the assessment of whether or not a teacher's performance is satisfactory is purely subjective and sometimes contrary to how others may perceive the performance appraisal. Gleave (1997) states that "objectivity is a necessity and value when decisions regarding promotion, tenure, and accountability are under consideration" (p. 273).

Reitzug (1997) maintains that "no distinction reasonable may be drawn between traditional supervision and evaluation when performed by the principal" (p. 330). Putting the principal in the position of superiority does little to validate the knowledge and experience

teachers have to offer in instructional development and the establishment of collaborative inquiry into educational practices.

To adopt the definition of supervision as one which seeks improvement in instruction is to imply that problems exist and must be corrected. Reitzug (1997) states, "The focus of supervision on helping teachers change and 'improve their instructional behaviors' communicates a message that their instruction is deficient and needs to be fixed" (p. 331). Moreover, he contends that textbooks about supervision and evaluation "imply that the principal is the agent of improved instruction, not the teacher" (p. 333).

Although many researchers posit that supervision should be a continuous process, it is often a broken cycle encompassing a pre-conference, classroom observation, and post-conference that occurs several times a year. However, because of the depth of work involved and the number of teachers on most staffs, it is often not repeated until some years later. This breaks the intended continuity and flow of the process.

Drake and Roe (1999) suggest that "the principal's supervisory function is to develop instructional teamwork" (p. 350). Glickman (as cited in Sheppard, 1996) contends that "the principal must be the educational leader who acts as a facilitator of empowered teachers" (p. 328). How teachers become empowered is dependent on the style of supervision adopted by the principal.

If we are to have successful schools, we must have strong leadership. Blasé and Blasé (1998) view supervision as a subset of instructional leadership. They further suggest that there are direct connections between the types of action a principal takes and both the professional growth of teachers and increases in student learning. Sheppard (1996) confirms a positive and strong relationship between effective instructional leadership behaviors

exhibited by the principal and teacher commitment, professional involvement, and innovativeness. As Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) point out, "when improved instruction and school success do not materialize, supervision should shoulder the responsibility for not permitting teachers to be successful" (p. 7).

Pupil Services

Student services typically encompass a rather expansive array of duties and responsibilities. Principals are responsible for providing students with a broad range of services meant to enhance student development (Sybouts & Wendel, 1994). While the principal may not directly involve him/herself in the delivery of these services, he or she is the one charged with the responsibility of ensuring that programs and practices are put into place to meet the needs of the student body.

Effective schools are frequently characterized as ones in which there exists a positive learning environment. "Fundamental to an orderly learning climate is a collection of well-understood, appropriate, and consistently applied rules and procedures" (Hughes & Ubben, 1989, p. 122). Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) believe that "the development of a desirable school climate (or culture) combined with efficient methods to cope with disciplinary problems will result in student conduct consistent with the attainment of educational excellence" (p. 274).

Student services have expanded considerably in recent years in both their scope and depth. Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) suggest that student services include grading, reporting, grouping, record keeping, attendance, guidance, discipline, security, and exceptional education.

Feedback on student progress is crucial in helping motivate students to achieve their best. Students who expend great energy to complete school work need continuous evaluation and feedback to determine how much progress is being made in order to make changes if necessary. Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) suggest "the system of evaluation should include a balance of norm-referenced tests, teacher-made tests, criterion-referenced tests, recorded observation of student behavior, and samples of student work" (p. 280).

Reporting on student progress is a necessary element of communicating whether or not students are meeting the expected level of academic achievement. Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) state that "administrators and teachers at all levels of schooling have heavy responsibility to report pupil development to parents as succinctly as possible" (p. 281).

School districts commonly develop the various policies and procedures needed to govern student attendance and the maintenance of student records. The principal is generally the person who is accountable for the adherence to such policies and procedures. Principals must ensure that records of student attendance are properly kept, particularly where there are compulsory attendance laws (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). Furthermore, they maintain that the principal is responsible for keeping and maintaining permanent student records and ensuring both confidentiality and accuracy of these records. Beyond the record-keeping aspects of student attendance, principals need to develop practices that encourage students to attend school. As Hughes (1999) states,

Structuring participation opportunities school-wide (through clubs, athletics, class offices, and community service opportunities) and working with teachers to structure classroom participation (through peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and small interactive classes) are ways that principals can exercise leadership in the quest for improved pupil outcomes through sustained attendance. (p. 219)

The need to group students for instructional purposes is obvious. However, most researchers maintain that grouping has always been and will continue to be an area of great debate among educators. Most elementary schools follow the self-contained classroom model whereby one teacher guides the learning of all pupils in all subjects. Junior high schools and senior high schools, on the other hand, frequently adopt the departmental approach where students are grouped according to the subjects being taught. Unfortunately, many schools match their grouping policies to suit administrative convenience rather than student needs (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990; Drake & Roe, 1999). The best interests of students should take priority over scheduling conveniences, and policies that encourage flexibility of grouping procedures should promote optimum learning. Kimbrough and Burkett state, "The primary consideration must be a grouping policy that best facilitates the intellectual development of students" (p. 289). Moreover, the principal is the one who is responsible and accountable for whatever instructional grouping plan or model that is established with the school.

The term exceptional, according to Kimbrough and Burkett (1990), means that students' "physical, social, emotional, or intellectual strengths and limitations lie outside what society believes is in the normal range" (p. 289). Traditional programming most often dealt with the exceptionally gifted children or the exceptionally mentally challenged children. Increasing political and societal pressure in recent years has led to more inclusive programming for a much wider variety of educational exceptionalities including the emotionally disturbed, physically disabled, and others.

Recent incidents of violence and crime in public schools have led to greater need for the establishment of policies and procedures to address the security of students. Many schools have had to evaluate their means of dealing with crisis situations. Principals have had

to assess the security of their schools to determine where deficiencies may be apparent and create plans for such things as emergency evacuations, screening for weapons, and procedures to deal with violence on school property.

For many years discipline has ranked as one of the most serious problems affecting education (Drake & Roe, 1999; Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). Maintaining order and discipline is an important function of the principal in an attempt to provide an atmosphere where effective learning can take place. The establishment of rules of conduct is essential and should involve both the staff and student body. When students are involved in making the rules, they are more likely to comply with them and be supportive of their enforcement (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). Drake & Roe (1999) concur and suggest that "good discipline is first attained through a teaching-learning process that encourages active participation and involvement of students as well as the entire school staff and, in most instances, the community" (p. 387). The primary goal of any discipline policy should be to correct misbehaviors rather than to punish those who do not conform to established codes of conduct.

Guidance services are necessary in educational settings to provide four basic roles:

1. to deal with crisis situations to ensure the safety and welfare of all students;
2. to provide programming to assist with the remediation of social or academic deficiencies of students;
3. to provide prevention programs that alert students to the dangers and consequences of undesirable actions;

4. to provide developmental counseling to help students develop skills and attitudes consistent with appropriate social, emotional, and academic behaviors.

While these functions are primarily carried out by the school guidance counseling team, the other staff members play an important role in assisting their efforts. As Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) posit, "Professional guidance counselors are needed for the coordination of guidance functions; however, members of the administrative staff and teachers serve a very important role in the guidance program" (p. 279).

Providing the multitude of pupil services needed in a learning environment is a major responsibility for the principal of a school. The wide range of services necessary, the complexities involved in their delivery and the vast number of personnel required in meeting the demands present challenges to the administrator.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development, while being a prime responsibility of the principal, cannot be segregated from staff development and treated as a separate process. Sybouts and Wendel (1994) argue that curriculum development and staff development are irrevocably linked in that program development can evolve from strategically planned staff development. It is the principal's responsibility to provide leadership in the planning process in order for the staff to move toward productive curriculum development.

One of the most important tasks of any educational facility is to deliver the curriculum. Curriculum delivery, it may be argued, should be the area of prime consideration for the school. However, most schools have little say in determining what curriculum will be offered. That task is most often mandated by legislatures or by provincial departments of

education. Few, if any, decisions pertaining to course offerings or percentage of time for instruction per course are undertaken by local schools (Ubben & Hughes, 1997). McCall (1994) would suggest that principals should be given the power to design or redesign the curriculum to match the needs of the staff and students of his or her jurisdiction.

Effective schools research often equates well-designed curriculum structure with the characteristics of effective schools. Development of well-designed curriculum involves planning for specific learner outcomes, specific content and skills, appropriate instructional strategies, related resource materials, and evaluation schemes matched to the outcomes.

The principal's role in curriculum development may be viewed as somewhat limited. On the one hand, the principal does not often dictate the curriculum to be taught, nor does he or she often teach the prescribed curriculum. What influence, if any, can he or she be reasonably expected to have over curriculum development? The principal cannot be expected to be knowledgeable about every content area of the curriculum offered in the school. However, a basic knowledge of the skills and content of the curriculum presented at all levels within the school and an active involvement in the instructional program are very important to providing leadership in the area of curriculum development (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990).

Research would suggest that the principal should be an instructional leader whose primary goal is to improve the teaching and learning that goes on at the school level (Bookbinder, 1992; McCall, 1994). While the principal is the one generally charged with providing the instructional leadership for a school, it is possible and even prudent for others to become involved in the process of instructional improvement. Teachers themselves, department heads, or assistant principals can also play a role in improving classroom instruction.

McCall (1994) suggests there are four ways that principals can fulfill the role of instructional leader. They should be knowledgeable about teaching and learning, help teachers plan instructional programs, empower teachers in implementing their plans, and provide instructional supervision and evaluation. Moreover, McCall posits that there are four areas of formative knowledge a principal needs to best function as an instructional leader. Principals must be familiar with curricular trends, new organizational trends in schooling, instructional media and methodology advances, and current research on improving student outcomes.

While effective schools research would suggest that effective schools can be characterized by a multitude of factors, Rossow (1990) contends that the three areas most controllable by the principal are setting a climate with academic emphasis, maintaining a safe and orderly environment, and setting high expectations for success. McCall (1994) states that “holding both the teachers and the students to high expectations is probably the most important thing the principal does for instructional quality” (p. 176).

Senge (1990) claims that five disciplines are practiced in true learning organizations. These disciplines include systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. People who possess a high level of personal mastery are dedicated to life-long learning by continually building on a personal vision. Mental models reflect a person's beliefs and assumptions regarding both the world and from within. Shared vision is the composite of all the personal visions within the organization focused toward a common set of goals and norms. Team learning occurs through active dialogue where differences of opinion are valued as learning opportunities in the shared decision-making and planning

process. Systems thinking is the ability to see the interconnectedness of the parts of the organization in relation to the holistic view.

Creating a learning community is a challenge for today's principals. Principals of learning communities must lead through shared vision and values, involve faculty members in the decision-making process, empower members to be proactive rather than reactive, provide developmental supervision, and guide members to become results-oriented.

Finance and Facilities Management

Most schools are public institutions and as such are primarily financed through public funds. School districts receive government funding and disburse huge amounts of money to cover a variety of services and materials at the school level. Sometimes funds are obtained from private or corporate foundations. The degree to which the principal may administer those funds can vary from district to district. However, Hughes and Ubben (1989) suggest principals are being given more and more fiscal responsibility and decision-making power as a result of the movement toward decentralization in large school systems.

Finances rely heavily on a plan to manage the costs to providing the intended products and services, as well as knowledge of where to seek the necessary monies. Such a plan is often referred to as budgeting. Drake and Roe (1999) define the educational budget as

the translation of educational needs into a financial plan that is interpreted to the public in such a way that when formally adopted, it expresses the kind of educational program the community is willing to support, financially and morally, for a given period. (p. 430)

Quite often school programming is determined by the financial sources available. However, budgetary considerations should flow from the planned academic program and should enable those plans to be fulfilled, not the other way around (Drake & Roe, 1999; Hughes & Ubben, 1989; Rossow, 1990). Educational programs should be planned with the

needs of students in mind without allowing available funds to influence the nature of those programs. Principals must demonstrate leadership in the budgetary process and invite the involvement of the staff to ensure that monies spent directly correspond to educational plans.

Sybouts and Wendel (1994) posit

Leadership skills are essential in the development of budgets that link goals to expenditures in pursuit of improved performance; the ability of principals to guide their staffs to work cooperatively in budget preparation should result in increased effectiveness and efficiency. (p.269)

The main objective of the management practices of the school is to get the best out of its physical layout, supplies and equipment. It is the principal's responsibility "to ensure the maximum efficient use of the school plant for the educational program" (Hughes & Ubben, 1989, p. 317).

Schools often become community centers and are frequently used by community groups and agencies. The principal should make sure there is a defined set of policies and procedures to govern community and interagency use of the building (Drake & Roe, 1999).

The physical appearance of the school can influence how visitors, staff, and students feel about the effectiveness of the programming offered. The condition of the school building and surrounding grounds has an impact on the morale and attitudes of both teachers and students (Drake & Roe, 1999; Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). Consequently, the physical plant must be an area of responsibility for the administrator.

Maintaining a clean and well-kept building is the responsibility of the principal. The best way to ensure that the physical environment gets the attention it deserves is to establish positive relationships with the custodial staff. The extent to which an administrator may be involved in the supervision of custodial staff may vary from district to district or school to school. The principal should ensure that custodians and other nonacademic personnel are

provided with specific job descriptions and the necessary equipment and supplies to carry out their duties (Drake & Roe, 1999). Moreover, Hughes and Ubben (1989) state that the “counsel and advice of these persons should be sought and their expertise and insights utilized” (p. 322).

The enormous financial cost of equipment and supplies needed to operate schools would suggest the need for careful purchase, storage, inventorying, and maintenance. Sybouts and Wendel (1994) state, “establishing and maintaining an accurate inventory of equipment and supplies on hand, consumed, and requisitioned can be accomplished through careful planning and operation of a comprehensive management system” (p. 274). While managing equipment and supplies may be the direct responsibility of the principal, he or she may often delegate these tasks to other appropriate staff members such as department heads, secretaries, or teachers. It is important for the administrator to provide a management system whereby he or she will not have to spend a great deal of time attending to this function (Hughes & Ubben, 1989).

The school site must be regularly examined in an effort to find potentially dangerous conditions. Broken or damaged equipment can pose a threat to the safety of students and faculty and must be repaired promptly. Many schools must requisition repairs from a central office. Nonetheless, the principal is still the key person responsible for the maintenance and operation of the site. Therefore, where timing may be a factor, the principal would be well advised to regularly inspect the site to determine where preventive action may be necessary (Hughes & Ubben, 1989).

The principal is responsible for managing the financial and physical resources of the school. This managerial role can be a daunting one, especially when finances are limited or

even inadequate. Attending to the fiscal and physical environment often forces the principal to find creative solutions to complex problems.

Community Relations

Communities can have profound impact on schools as institutions and also on the individuals under their jurisdiction (Lipham, Rankin, & Hoeh, 1985). Including the community in the life of the school can be an effective tool in building effective learning. According to Drake and Roe (1999), "collaboration among all agencies of community life is essential to the realization of desirable educational outcomes" (p. 41). The role of the principal is to ensure that effective and collaborative relationships are struck between the school community and the larger community in which the school finds itself. Lipham, Rankin, and Hoeh add that "involvement can be enhanced through home visits, parent conferences, community-based learning, citizen volunteers, and advisory committees" (p. 274).

Parents and the community at large look to school leaders in seeking to improve the quality of education (Lipham, Rankin, & Hoeh, 1985). Studies have shown the value of establishing positive interactions between school, home, and the community. It has been reported that strong home and school relations lead to increased educational productivity and achievement. Moreover, when partnerships between the school and community are strengthened, the entire community benefits. Ubben and Hughes (1997) argue that "if school principals do not use available means to interact with members of the community, the school will become static and unresponsive to changing community and societal needs" (p. 73).

Since schools are essentially belonging to the public, it is imperative to seek public input into the policies, programs, and goal-setting initiatives of the school. This task is

frequently accomplished through the establishment of school councils. Ubben and Hughes (1997) refer to similar entities as community advisory councils. In Newfoundland and Labrador school councils are typically made up of representatives of administration, teaching personnel, the parent population, the community at large, and in some instances the student population. The importance of these school councils is evidenced by the fact that schools are often mandated to ensure their existence. However, Rossow (1990) cautions that there is always the danger that the group may not accurately reflect the opinions of the wider community.

Co-curricular activities, especially those that provide service to the community, can go a long way in creating positive links between the school and community. Encouraging the school community to become involved in activities that support initiatives of the broader societal community can help demonstrate the connection between school curriculum and public service. For example, students who are members of the school's debating club may be encouraged to participate in community forums on matters of public interest. From such experiences students can be shown the value and practicality of their learning, while the community can be assured that the school is active in supporting their agenda.

Parent conferences serve an important function in developing positive home and school relations (Hughes & Ubben, 1989). Not only can parents be informed of the programs and their child's progress in their pursuits, but they can also have a voice in planning directions to meet their child's educational needs. The principal must be mindful, however, that such conferences require careful planning. Consideration must be given to scheduling conferences at various times, both during the day and in the evening, to accommodate the fact that many, if not most, parents work outside the home. Additionally, it may even be

necessary to schedule two separate conferences to discuss the progress of some children.

Where divorce may mean that one child has two sets of parents, and there can be no agreement for both parties to attend a joint conference, it may require the school personnel to arrange two conferences for that one child.

School-community relations go beyond the scope of public relations. Public relations are typically concerned with image building, whereas good community relations should foster a cooperative, working relationship such that the relationship is mutually beneficial (Sybouts & Wendell, 1994). Through such positive relationships, members of the community gain a greater awareness of the purposes and accomplishments of the school. Moreover, the school can benefit from the various levels of support that the community at large can provide.

CHAPTER 3: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

Throughout the term of my internship I focused on the five major responsibilities of a school principal as posited by Ubben and Hughes (1987). These were: (i) staffing and personnel development; (ii) pupil services; (iii) curriculum development; (iv) finance and facilities management; and (v) community relations. Observations, conversations, participation, and reflection formed the basis of this chapter in an attempt to draw comparisons between the literature and the actual practice in one school.

Staffing and Personnel Development

Staffing and personnel development are two major responsibilities of a school principal. Recruiting and hiring personnel to fulfill the functions of curriculum delivery,

identifying weaknesses through supervision and evaluation, and providing professional development are key components in the effective teaching-learning process.

Staffing a school is a major responsibility of a school principal. It becomes imperative that an administrator choose people who are in line with the school's mission and vision. However, that may not always be possible. While principals may hire new staff with that goal in mind, they sometimes have little or no say in deciding who will be working in the school. Quite often the principal is hired and must accept the staff personnel that already exists within the institution. Recent trends toward site-based management have permitted the principal to have greater say in the hiring of staff. The principal of X Intermediate said that

staffing is perhaps the most critical aspect of the whole process in terms of organizing the school for delivery of program. Staff recruitment has become almost a full-time occupation in itself even for the principal at the school level. At one time those things were the prerogative of people at district office, but more and more in recent years with the shift towards school-based management the principal and vice-principal at the school level, and quite often in association with department heads are extensively involved in staff recruitment, interviewing, and actual hiring.

Performing leadership tasks that will bring all parties in line with intended visions can be a challenging prospect.

The principal at X Intermediate was careful and methodical in choosing staff when the opportunity presented itself. He always had the best interests of the students, department, and staff in general in mind when he had occasion to choose a teacher for the school. As the principal stated to me,

First and foremost before there's any questions about knowledge of content and subject area and so on, we need to determine whether or not the persons like kids, like working in schools, and like delivering programs to students and that of course also involves meeting with and interacting with parents and other professionals and so on.

The principal felt that the person chosen to fill a role within the school had to match the school's mission statement and blend with the other dynamics of the school in order to provide the best instruction for students.

The principal was very much tuned into the various personalities, strengths and weaknesses of the staff. For example, he would know whom to talk to on staff that would ensure some new policy or procedure would be adopted. He also knew whom he could rely on to get important tasks accomplished. Not only did he try to persuade others of his plans, he frequently sought advice on how certain situations should be handled. He valued the opinions and decisions of his staff and often deferred to their expertise, especially where programming was concerned.

It became evident to me that the principal was very concerned about his staff. When a staff member approached him to support his or her attending a professional development seminar, he whole-heartedly encouraged participation and used whatever power necessary to ensure he or she was able to attend. The principal also showed compassion for staff members who were being challenged in their personal lives and made a point of explaining to me his concern for their welfare.

While the principal did not directly oversee the evaluation and supervision process for the teaching staff, he did play an active part in the decisions taken regarding that process. The assistant principal was responsible for the actual conferencing with teachers, classroom observations, and post-conferencing. However, the principal always made a point of discussing the procedures with the assistant principal and insisted on being briefed on the sessions. When certain teachers appeared to need some assistance in their teaching practices, the principal arranged for more experienced teachers to mentor and even coach them.

Moreover, the principal asked the assistant principal to provide direct intervention where necessary so that the teacher could model appropriate classroom strategies. While the principal was patient with a particular teacher who was struggling with his duties, he was also firm in his decision to terminate his contract if conditions did not improve. This proved to me that the principal truly did expect the best for his students and was willing to take action, however extreme, to ensure that they received quality instruction.

A characteristic of an effective leader is the ability to delegate responsibilities. The goal of developmental supervision is to empower those teachers who feel capable of making decisions for themselves. I witnessed that the principal, on many occasions, left decisions to teachers where their areas of expertise permitted them to make sound judgments. For example, a teacher who was not actually hired as part of the administrative team was given time from his teaching duties daily to deal with student behavior issues and he was granted the authority to act on behalf of the administration. He was given an office and even the unofficial title of Administrative Assistant.

Responsibilities were also delegated to the various Department Heads. The principal often looked to these leaders to fulfill duties that would otherwise have been his responsibility. For example, he encouraged them to provide curriculum leadership and development, yet all the while assessing their progress. The teachers readily accepted their roles and felt the principal entrusted a great deal of responsibility to them. Feeling empowered to make a difference to their departments, the department heads worked tirelessly to ensure they met the expectations entrusted to them. The principal recognized and valued the work of department heads in the overall running of the school. Such commitment was evidenced in the fact that the principal ensured time was built into the school day for

department heads to meet collectively, rather than outside teaching hours. Department heads, the administrative team, and the guidance counselors comprised a working group that the principal referred to as the priorities and planning (P&P) team. The P&P team met regularly to discuss issues of concern and to plan instructional initiatives.

Providing professional development can greatly enhance instruction within a school. In recent years, schools have been providing their own professional development in an attempt to customize the personnel development to individual schools. The principal of X Intermediate noted

more and more schools are forced to do their own personnel development and staff development at the school level. Again another aspect, I guess, of school-based management in the late 90's and moving into the next few years. All schools, basically, now would be operating with school development teams and meeting several times annually to reevaluate their directions and determine whether or not there are any new needs at the school level in terms of professional development and directions that the school may need to take and then of course organizing themselves and taking a day or two out of the school year for the purpose of providing that staff development at the school level.

It is perhaps felt that more specific professional development would maximize the direct benefits to each and every school.

Pupil Services

One of the most important responsibilities of a school administrator is to ensure that the school is a true learning organization. Schools should be all about learning and the best way to facilitate optimum learning is by providing the vast array of pupil services suggested by effective school research. Not only does that mean the school should provide all the academic supports and services necessary, but so too it should foster an environment that is conducive to the development of the whole child. Some of the many steps the principal took in attempting to create a learning organization included getting to know the students; creating

a code of conduct for the school; monitoring student attendance; maintaining school records; encouraging fair assessments of student achievement; providing guidance programs; grouping students systematically; arranging effective programming, and providing student conveniences.

The principal at X Intermediate demonstrated a commitment to the development of a positive learning environment for the students in his care. He regularly made efforts to meet and greet by name the students as they entered the building in the morning. As the principal pointed out to me, letting the students know that he knows who they are is important in warding off undesirable behaviors. As well, he felt being able to call them by name was important in establishing a caring environment.

Establishing the expected code of conduct for students is an important task for an administrator. Students need to know what is expected of them and the consequences of breaking that code of conduct. X Intermediate had a written code of conduct and an explanation of the consequences of various misbehaviors. Such information was printed in the student agenda that each student used to keep track of homework and assignments. The principal insisted that teachers explain this policy to students at the start of the school year and have both parents and students sign the information to indicate that it was read and understood.

Monitoring student attendance is an important function of the principal. Students cannot learn the curriculum if they are not at school when they should be. Generally, student attendance is more a concern for junior and senior high school principals than for primary and elementary principals because older children may feel they can skip school without getting caught. The principal at X Intermediate insists that teachers use a computer program

to record student attendance for each period of the day. Because pupils move from class to class during the day, it is important for teachers and the administration to promptly know whether a student who has not shown up for class is legitimately absent or not. The safety of students is of prime concern and when students are not where they should be, the school cannot adequately fulfill its obligation to parents to properly care their children. The administration of X

Intermediate ensures that parents of students who skip classes are immediately informed.

Maintaining school records, especially those of a confidential nature, is the responsibility of the principal. The principal of X Intermediate insisted that guidance files be kept securely locked and in an inaccessible area of the guidance room. Teachers would have to seek permission in order to obtain such files. Other records such as those pertaining to academic achievement were kept in the general office and safely secured as well. The principal and guidance counselors had a system of coding files in such a way that teachers would know whether or not a confidential file on a student was in existence.

Principals are required to ensure grading of student work is done fairly, in a timely manner, and that assessments of student progress are based on a variety of evaluation techniques. The principal of X Intermediate was particularly concerned that students in his school, especially those in the junior high classes, not be unduly pressured by having too many tests, assignments, or projects due all at once. With the students having a variety of different teachers for the various subjects, he worried that teachers would not know the workload of their students assigned by other teachers. He placed a large monthly calendar on the staff bulletin board and insisted that teachers post when their assignments or tests were being given. In that way a teacher would determine if a particular class had too heavy a

workload for that particular week. No more than two tests were permitted on any given day and no more than three in any given week.

Guidance services are very important to the overall running of X Intermediate. The school has two guidance counselors who provide comprehensive services to students, staff, parents and the community. The principal worked very closely with the guidance counselors on issues pertaining to the social, emotional, academic and family needs of the students of the school. For example, when a sibling of a student needed a serious and potentially life-threatening surgery, the principal suggested the guidance counselor work closely with the family and help organize a fund-raising effort within the school community to assist the family financially.

Perhaps one of the most critical pupil services is the function of grouping students for instructional purposes. At X Intermediate the elementary pupils were grouped in the same way as they had been in the previous year. The principal explained that normally the groupings change from year to year so that students get to experience a variety of people over the course of their elementary years. However, this year the groups were not varied because the principal felt that the reorganization of the school meant that elementary students were new to the system and he wanted to make their transition as smooth as possible. By keeping the groups together as a whole, he believed it would be less traumatic for the students.

Pupil services can mean a variety of different things to different people. The principal at X Intermediate felt that pupil services meant

supports in determining curriculum delivery ... things like special services, things like itinerants, things like educational psychologists, and guidance services and so on. In addition to that, of course, there're the basic day-to-day pupil service supports that you need like intramurals after school, co-curricular activities, cafeteria services, bus services, and so on, and all those again become aspects of the organization of the school for the total delivery.

The school provided all those services and many more. Most importantly, the principal was always cognizant of the role the school should play in providing the best supports necessary for the effective delivery of the curriculum.

The school has a cafeteria with adequate seating for the students who stay at school for lunch. Many students go out during the lunch period to either their homes or to nearby fast-food establishments. Food services within the school are provided by a commercial company. For those who bring their own lunches from home, the school has provided three microwaves to allow students to enjoy a hot lunch. The principal felt that students who do not avail of the lunches prepared by the food services company could still enjoy hot lunches that would be more economical.

There are two lunch periods within the school day at X Intermediate. One is for the elementary students, and the other is for junior high. The behaviors of the two levels of students were so significantly different that the administration felt two separate lunch periods were necessary. Moreover, it was felt that the cafeteria was not large enough to accommodate both groups at one time so to ensure adequate services were provided the administrators scheduled staggered lunch periods.

The administration of the school recognized that students often need to use a phone for a variety of reasons such as to arrange rides, seek permission to go places after school, or other valid purposes. While there are pay phones provided in the school by the local phone company for public use, the principal appreciated that this service requires money, and quite often students do not have the necessary funds. To help with this problem, the principal installed a phone line strictly dedicated for student or public use. The phone was located

directly across from the office so that staff could monitor whether or not the phone was being used for the intended purpose. Students were discouraged from using the phone for social conversations and reminded to keep calls to a minimum frequency and duration.

Curriculum Development

The principal should be the curriculum leader. It is his or her responsibility to ensure that the students are given the opportunity to learn a curriculum that has been designed to meet the outcomes expected of the program and suited to the level of ability of the students. The principal of X Intermediate was very active in curriculum issues. As he stated

One of the first things you have to do is analyze the facility in terms of the curriculum that you're supposed to be offering. Obviously that requires that you be familiar with the curriculum and various aspects of curriculum delivery and the physical facilities that are needed to deliver that program adequately.

His dedication to the curriculum was evident in the various actions he initiated to ensure that his school provided appropriate, effective and efficient programming for the students of his school. These actions included scheduling special programming for students with special needs, providing funding for curriculum needs, procuring professional resources to facilitate the teaching-learning process, setting instructional long-term plans, and encouraging community support programs.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Education for the province assumes the responsibility for the development of the curriculum and prescribes the curriculum that is to be taught at all levels of schooling. This includes providing some resources that are intended for use in delivering the prescribed curriculum. However, with recent trends toward resource-based teaching, many schools are finding it necessary to research their own resources and build site-based resources in order to effectively meet the intended learner outcomes. The principal at X Intermediate commented that "In

Newfoundland and Labrador, of course, the curriculum is already developed and prescribed by the Department of Education so the role at the school level in terms of curriculum development is very limited indeed.” The principal must be knowledgeable about the curriculum and the myriad of curriculum delivery models that need to be implemented in order to ensure that instruction and programming of good quality takes place within the school for the betterment of the students.

The principal at X Intermediate arranged a Curriculum Night information session for parents early in the school year. He instructed the staff to prepare information booklets for parents that would include outlines of the various subjects taught at each grade level, the outcomes expected for those courses, and the evaluation methods that would be used to assess students’ achievement of those outcomes. The principal required teachers to submit their information packages to the office a week in advance of Curriculum Night to determine whether or not all the necessary information was included, but also so that he could arrange for the photocopying and collating of the packages. This would give teachers greater time to prepare for the evening instead of spending time on clerical duties.

Students do not all learn at the same rate, and some even require adjustments to their programming to allow them to complete prescribed courses successfully. It is the principal’s responsibility to ensure that students’ needs are accommodated in the most effective and efficient means possible. The principal at X Intermediate frequently met with the school’s two guidance counselors to discuss students who required accommodations to their existing program of studies, or even alternate programming. If a teacher expressed concern with a student’s lack of achievement, the principal consulted with the guidance counselor to determine the best means of ensuring that particular student could be more successful. The

school even offered a Programming with Appropriate Supports and Strategies (PASS) grouping for instruction at the grade seven, eight, and nine levels. The principal felt that students who needed greater time to cover core subjects with additional supports would be more successful in completing the learner outcomes. The PASS groups had a maximum of 18 students and these students opted out of religious education and French to permit more periods of instruction in the core areas.

Efforts were made by the principal to coordinate the curriculum of the various classes within the same grade at the elementary level. He required the teachers at a particular grade level to meet one day per week to plan units of work, share ideas or teaching strategies, and coordinate tests or assignments. This same process was carried out at the junior high level as well. However, rather than meet at grade level, teachers were assigned to particular departments according to the subject areas they predominately taught. The principal's goal was to ensure consistency in the topics covered, the methods used to achieve the outcomes, and the evaluation methods used to assess student achievement. He relied on department heads to oversee the process of adhering to provincial guidelines and intended learner outcomes.

The principal of X Intermediate was very supportive of extra-curricular and co-curricular programs intended to enhance the core curriculum, as well as the personal development courses offered at the school. He demonstrated his support by providing funding to supplement field trips, encouraging staff and students to participate in community events such as the annual Terry Fox run in support of cancer research, arranging assemblies to permit students involved in music, drama, or band programs to perform for their peers, and involving outside groups such as the local newspaper staff and the Royal Canadian Legion to

participate in activities in the classroom. He also encouraged the guidance counselors to provide occasional parenting support programs to be offered in evening sessions at the school. Such support did more than lend support to the teachers who initiated the projects, but it also demonstrated the principal's willingness to extend the curriculum beyond the confines of the one prescribed by the Department of Education.

The principal of X Intermediate had worked with the staff in the previous year to develop a long-range plan for school improvement. He sought the advice of the entire staff in determining areas where it was felt the school could improve. Through this consultative process he pinpointed several common areas in need of improvement, and he asked for staff input into an action plan that could remedy the identified areas of weakness. Many times during my internship the principal referred to this plan and explained that certain decisions he made were arrived at because of the goals previously set. He was determined to see the plan through and was always cognizant of ensuring decisions were in keeping with those goals.

One area that the staff identified as needing improvement was accumulating professional resource materials. The principal himself expressed a keen interest in keeping up with recent trends in curriculum and instruction. If the principal learned of a new program being used by some other school, he would ask a teacher involved in that subject area to obtain a copy of the program so he and the pertinent teachers could determine if it would be in the best interest of the school to purchase that program. As well, he encouraged teachers to recommend professional journals and resources so that he could order them for the school.

Keeping abreast of changes is a challenging and time-consuming endeavor for any school principal. The principal of X Intermediate recognized and welcomed changes, especially where curriculum was concerned. Recent trends toward technology in education

such as computer programs often strike fear in the hearts of veteran teachers who feel ill-equipped to learn the skills necessary to include computer technology in the various curricula. The principal at X Intermediate encouraged computer use in the curriculum and supported this trend by purchasing the hardware and software needed to enhance programming. He even went so far as to send staff memos via e-mail instead of the more traditional paper route. However, he soon discovered that not all teachers shared his enthusiasm for embracing technological advances. Teachers who were not at ease with this mode of imparting information complained that they still needed a hard copy of memos. The principal compromised and posted one hard copy of his memos on the staff bulletin board, but also continued to post e-mail memos.

Finance and Facilities Management

Managing the school facility and overseeing the budget necessary for successful operation of the organization is a major responsibility for the principal. The principal must take responsibility for working within the confines of a set budget over which he has limited control; ensuring adequate supplies and equipment are provided, arranging schedules that are conducive to effective programming, overseeing the esthetic attributes of the building; scheduling community use of the site; and managing the general maintenance of the plant and inventory. Managing and organizing these components are vital to the success or failure of the whole organization.

Management of the overall operation of the school and the establishment of sound organizational practices are of prime importance to a principal. The principal of X Intermediate stated that "management and organization are key, key components of the leadership aspect of any school." Without the proper structures of organization in place, the

other systems cannot operate as effectively and efficiently as they should. The principal further stated

We can talk about all of the other aspects of leadership and interacting with teachers and visiting classrooms and the professional edge, if you will, but at the very base of all of that before any of those things can become issues is the basic organization of the school for effective, efficient delivery of programs and effective, efficient use of staff.

Budgeting becomes particularly challenging when the principal does not have direct control of finances and must bargain with the district office for supplies, inventory, and maintenance schedules. Such was the case for the principal of X Intermediate. While he did have access to budgetary resources allotted to his school, his access was limited monthly. Consequently, if an expenditure was required in one month that exceeded that month's limit, he had to wait until the next month to make the expenditure or barter with the suppliers to give him a thirty-day grace period before payment was expected.

The principal divided the budget into various departments of the school that required funds for effective operation of their programs. Each academic subject domain was allotted funds, as were specialty areas such as physical education, guidance, arts, special education, technology and administration. The secretary was instructed to keep track of the budgeting and to debit the appropriate accounts when purchases were made. The principal asked for frequent updates on the funds remaining in each account and since he required that all purchases be approved through him, he checked the remaining funds before granting any approval. The principal always made it a priority to approve those expenditures that would directly benefit the students.

The reconfiguration process of the previous year saw the school change from a junior high school housing grades seven to nine to an intermediate school including classes from

grades four to nine. This reconfiguration presented various challenges for the principal. The added grade levels made it necessary to purchase supplies and equipment that the school did not previously need but could now not have done without. For example, the gym equipment needed to run a successful physical education program for elementary students is not the same as that which is necessary for a junior high program. Moreover, desks and chairs for elementary classrooms are different sizes than those of junior high schools. While district office accommodated some of these changes to the facility, the principal often found himself pleading for greater understanding for his budgetary concerns.

The change in grade configurations at the school also meant that the facility operations had to be handled differently than they had been in previous years. For example, with a greater school population, the principal had to ensure that every available space within the building was utilized in the most efficient and effective manner possible. In the first week of school this often meant rearranging classes to other more suitable rooms, changing furniture to accommodate the program being offered in certain areas of the school, or making maintenance requests to district office for such things as computer networking. In the end, the principal's persistence paid off and the organization of the school plant was brought up to the principal's operational expectations. The principal had a long-established rapport with district office and was able to be assertive when necessary, but at the same time supporting the initiative of district office as a team player. I felt that district office held his opinions in high regard, and that meant that when he made a request of them, the board was assured his requests were quite legitimate.

The principal of X Intermediate was very proud of his school, programs, and staff. This pride was frequently demonstrated to me when the principal discussed his procedures

with me or any other visitors to the school. I found the school to appear very esthetically pleasing and I later discovered that this was no accident. The principal and staff invested a great deal of time, energy and money in ensuring that the school presented a clean, organized, learner-centered atmosphere. The walls of the main hall were decorated with framed art created by students, trophy cases exhibiting the various awards presented annually to students for various types of achievements and photo displays depicting candid moments of school events. There was an elaborately carved large wooden plaque in the main entrance to announce the honor roll of previous years, large art murals painted by students brightened the hallways, and there was a "Wall of Success" where special work or announcements of student achievement were displayed. The thing I found encouraging was that not all of the achievements were strictly tied to grades. Students who had demonstrated significant improvements, or had accomplished a special task were rewarded with recognition as well.

Part of the overall responsibility for operating the physical plant is ensuring that the site complies with safety standards and proper maintenance of the structure. The principal of X Intermediate did frequent walks through the building to inspect the condition of the facility. If a staff member reported an area of concern to public safety, the principal immediately acted to have the problem corrected. He was also proactive in his approach to proper maintenance of the building. He asked the custodian to check washrooms at specific times of day to replenish supplies where needed, and to check for general maintenance problems that needed attention. The principal even supplied the custodian with a pager so that he could be reached quickly to respond to problem areas such as spills or broken glass. In that way, the classes would not have to be interrupted by public address announcements to track the custodian in the building.

Community Relations

Building strong links between the home and the school, as well as to the larger community, is a necessary task for any school administrator. The principal of X Intermediate was well aware of the importance of such relationships. Communication is a vital component of any organization and it becomes more critically important when one considers that a school's staff must transfer information affecting children. Quite often children in a school setting become the conveyors of information that parents or guardians may need to ensure safe, effective schooling for their children. The principal of X Intermediate stated that "good PR [public relations] is as much the domain of schools now as it is of any business organization in our society."

X Intermediate School has established very effective means of relaying important information and services to parents or guardians of the families they serve. It accomplishes this task in a variety of ways. It has an elaborate telephone message manager system, it publishes a monthly newsletter, it posts a frequently updated website, it communicates through memos, it makes public announcements through mass media, it permits community use of the school, and it encourages volunteers to assist with school routines. The principal of the school made deliberate efforts to put these procedures in place to ensure that positive school-family-community links were enhanced.

Knowing that a large population with only limited phone lines could block one of the most critical communication techniques, the principal of X Intermediate procured a sophisticated telephone answering system. When an outside caller phones the school, the first voice heard is that of the principal. On a daily basis, the principal updates the greeting that explains current or upcoming events of the school. The caller may then try to reach the

person he or she was calling by choosing from a list of options. If the desired party is not available, the caller is encouraged to leave a message.

The secretary of the school reviews the messages left in the general delivery mailbox of the phone system and directs the messages appropriately. If, for example, a parent or guardian wishes to get a message to a child within the school, a message can be left and the secretary will ensure that such messages are delivered to the appropriate person at one of three times daily: before recess, at the end of the lunch period, or before the end of the school day. Messages left for teachers in their individual mailboxes are answered at the discretion of the teacher. However, the principal instructs teachers to respond to messages within a two-day period.

X Intermediate School also communicates to parents or the community via newsletters. A monthly newsletter is distributed to all families of the school to inform them of recent noteworthy achievements, current events, or upcoming programs of the school. The focus is on the students, but the newsletter also informs readers of important information about school programs or services.

The school website is another means of disseminating information to the parent population or community at large. The website is updated regularly with current information about school activities, events, achievements and the like. The principal frequently enlists the help of staff members to contribute to the website and the school is fortunate enough to have a highly competent technology teacher on staff. Parents are encouraged to visit the website to gather information regarding staffing, programs, special events, and schedules.

Traditional communications methods such as memos and media announcements are also used to ensure that families are informed of the events or happenings currently ongoing

at the school. The principal ensures that memos are given to students on time by having a class representative pick up the memos from the office. The memos are stacked according to individual classes, and if a class does not collect the memos, that particular class is reminded to do so. In that way the principal ensures that every class receives the memos on time.

Community groups frequently use the school gym for organized activities. The principal gives priority to groups or associations that work with children. Adult groups are given permission to use the gym if time is available outside of that which is booked for children's groups. The use of the school is free for youth organizations. However, if the group does not wish to clean after an event, the principal charges a fee of \$50.00 to pay the school custodian. This fee is not determined by the principal, but rather it is the amount charged by the custodian since such work is outside his contract obligations.

Quite frequently, community organizations or individuals that regularly use the school gym offer to pay an honorarium to the school as a token of appreciation. The principal, however, requests that such groups provide money for scholarships to be awarded by the school. Those groups or individuals are then recognized for their sponsorship of the scholarship at the school's annual awards presentation. As well, they are invited to a volunteer breakfast sponsored by the school in appreciation of their commitment to quality education.

Volunteers are considered valuable assets to assist educators with the day-to-day running of the school's operations. When the school was reconfigured to include elementary students, parents and guardians wanted to continue to provide the volunteer support and assistance that they had previously enjoyed in their former schools. The principal readily agreed to facilitate such request and set out to ensure that a committee of parents and teachers

was formed for such purpose. Furthermore, the principal provided a room of the building specifically designated for volunteers to meet and work. He also provided the necessary tools and equipment needed to make the work environment a pleasant one in which to work. He had the room painted, bulletin boards decorated, mailboxes built, and a coffee maker installed. Volunteers could get a key from the secretary and work in a comfortable environment while doing tasks that would, otherwise, have been performed by the teaching staff.

Communicating with the public, regardless of the means, is critical to building positive relationships among all stakeholders of the school community. It is necessary to convey the message of what the school is all about in order to create the links that are vital to effective schooling. Relating well in public is a skill to be learned by school leaders. For some it may be a natural talent. For others it may require practice. However, one cannot ignore the importance of communicating with, interacting with, and working with the larger society from which the school evolves. As the principal of X Intermediate explained

It becomes again the responsibility of the leadership at the school level to make sure that the community is aware of what the school is, the programs that it's offering, and how it's offering those particular programs and then you get into the whole area of course of community relations and we've reached a point now in the year 2001 where every school needs a structured, organized program of community relations or public relations.

Schools often become the center of neighborhoods in both the physical and psychological sense. Many community agencies and organizations look to the school to support or even carry out their programs and services. Principals frequently find themselves in a position of having to deal with law enforcement agencies, child welfare agencies, health and safety organizations, and other community-based groups. Effective principals recognize the importance of establishing good relations with these agencies for the betterment of the

students and family populations they serve. Developing close ties, for example, with the police department in delivering programs such as drug awareness education can only enhance the health curriculum. Moreover, making students aware of the other sources of help beyond the school can only serve to improve the effectiveness of community agencies and the well-being of society in general. Ubben and Hughes (1997) posit "A high-performing school requires broad-based community support, and support will come from communities that are well informed and well engaged in the educative processes that go on in the school" (p. 50).

Summary

It becomes abundantly clear from both research and practical experience that the roles and responsibilities of a school principal are both multifaceted and complex. It is impossible to clearly define what an effective principal must do in providing school leadership on a daily basis. The actual roles are too many and the tasks too multidimensional to address adequately in a paper this size. In sum, the principal's role is to be both a manager and a leader in performing the five major task areas. While theorists and researchers may attempt to categorize the roles and responsibilities of a school principal, in reality, these categorizations only scratch the surface of true nature of the job. The principal must wear many hats and perform many tasks.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Reading a wealth of literature devoted to the subject of the roles and responsibilities of a school principal provides one with an understanding of the complexity of the task of leading an educational institution. However, it only scratches the surface of the diversities, challenges, and expectations thrust upon a principal in today's schools. It is only through actual participation and observation that one can truly appreciate the multi-dimensional role that a principal must play in the overall operation of a school.

In my role as participant and observer at X Intermediate it became clear to me that the roles and responsibilities of the principal could be categorized into two main functions. The principalship involves serving the dual role of manager and instructional leader. As manager, the principal must ensure that the school is organized in a systematic way to facilitate curriculum delivery. These functions include scheduling, budgeting, staffing, organizing the physical plant, and overseeing the maintenance of organizational procedures. As instructional leader, the principal must provide curriculum delivery, professional development, home-school-community leadership, and pupil services. While managerial functions are important to the organization of staff, students, facilities, curriculum, and community relations, it is the instructional leadership that needs to be the driving force behind all the other facets.

A principal who defines a vision for the school with collaboration from all stakeholders, sets plans for goals attainment, and provides the leadership that fosters characteristics of a learning community will do much to achieve the ultimate goal of effective, good quality instruction for the school. In order to do this, a principal must become an instructional leader first and an organizational manager second. Ramsey (1999) states

“Managers spend all their time carrying out other people’s plans. Leaders make their own.”
(p. 38).

The internship placement provided me the opportunity to observe the roles and responsibilities of a successful school principal in an authentic setting. Moreover, the experience afforded me opportunity to participate in the duties of school administration and leadership. These practices enabled me to gain valuable insight into the multifaceted tasks a principal must undertake in providing effective educational leadership. As the principal of X Intermediate posits, “Leadership in the school sense is very dynamic. It’s always changing. From one day to the next the demands can mean a total change in terms of the approach you take as a leader.”

Perhaps the most important realization that became clear to me from my internship placement was that there is not one prescription for defining the roles and responsibilities of a school principal. The complexities of the task, coupled with ongoing changes, make it virtually impossible to completely prepare an aspiring administrator for the challenges of the role of principal. The responsibilities of the principal are never finite and one cannot ever predict the impact of a multitude of variables that exist in schools to alter the course of leadership needed. Effective leadership must be flexible enough to meet the challenges as they arise. My experience at X Elementary proved that the roles and responsibilities of a school could be categorized into the five areas suggested by Ubben and Hughes (1987): staffing and personnel development; pupil services; curriculum development; finance and facilities management; and community relations. However, I would not presume to make generalizations to all schools of Newfoundland and Labrador based on my experience in just

one. Gathering enough data to make such a generalization could be the goal of future researchers.

To conclude, principals are, first and foremost, leaders in education. "Leadership is not something that one does to people, nor is it a manner of behaving toward people: it is working with and through other people to achieve organizational goals" (Owens, 1998, p. 206). The principal is merely a facilitator of the values, goals, and inspirations of the organization he or she leads. Leading the stakeholders toward improved learning for all is the most important goal to be accomplished. Principals can greatly influence that process. Becoming an effective instructional leader is the greatest challenge for the principal. Fortunately, it does not have to be a solitary endeavor because the true nature of instructional leadership is to create enabling conditions and relationships for others to empower themselves so that they may work together toward improved teaching and learning. Hart and Bredeson (1996) state, "A good principal must teach, learn, and lead simultaneously" (p. 2).

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