



“The Principals 101”

Editor's Note

This *Bulletin* represents a milestone event for the Illinois Principals Association. The IPA has provided principals with relevant information to enhance their leadership and do what is best for students for 35 years. You read correctly... 35 years! When significant anniversaries roll around, I think it is critical to take time to reflect on what is most important. You will find in this *Bulletin* a smorgasbord of suggestions and “Principals 101” basics as Brian Schwartz, General Counsel, John Ourth, Field Services Director-North, Fred Singleton, Field Services Director-South, and I hope to encourage you as an educational leader. Enjoy, and know that IPA is here to serve you for years to come.

– Jason Leahy, Executive Director

The Principals is Relationships

By: Jason Leahy, Executive Director

Two important considerations must be given when reflecting on leadership: character and relationships. Take a look at The Principals Principles at www.theprincipalsprinciples.blogspot.com to read more about character. Where relationships are concerned, the technical knowledge of curriculum and instruction along with the latest leadership theories, though important, will not move an organization forward alone. Trusting relationships built on a foundation of character and integrity is the necessary ingredient for a leader to be effective. Research has proven this.

Robert Marzano, Brian McNulty, and Tim Waters's 2003 working paper, *Balanced Leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of*

leadership on student achievement, lists 21 responsibilities Principals have to raise student achievement. Of the 21 responsibilities, I argue that 20 of them require a relationship component. Fostering a student centered culture, maintaining order and discipline, seeking input, and having situational awareness are a few examples that require educational leaders to have a quality relationships with the members of their learning community. Having knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment was the only responsibility that did not contain an obvious relationship component. Visit www.mcrel.org to find a copy of the *Balanced Leadership* working paper.

Another thought to keep in mind where relationships are concerned is that the number one reason people lose their jobs is their inability to get along with others. You do not have to look very far for your own examples. Oppo-

site of this, many people who are incompetent technically do fine because they are masters relationally. Be mindful of these words from President Theodore Roosevelt, “The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.”

With knowledge that relationships are important and that they do improve student achievement, the obvious question is, “Now what?” I enjoy studying this topic, so when I run into successful leaders, I ask them what they do to foster and sustain quality relationships. Listed are some common responses.

- **Listen** – Nothing is trivial, and be sure to give your full attention.
- **Effective Communication** – Keep dialogue open and honest.
- **Praise** – Give credit where credit is due.
- **Support and Follow-Through** – Say what you will do and do it!
- **Empower through Autonomy and Providing Resources.**
- **Compassion** – Recognize people as individuals with individual needs.
- **Write Notes of Encouragement** – Research shows that this is more meaningful than verbal encouragement.
- **Professionalism** – Lead by example.

John Maxwell states that, “He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk.” I

encourage you to constantly invest in relationships to ensure you are not just “taking a walk” this school year. Best wishes.

Top 10 Occupational Hazards of Being a School Administrator

By: *Brian D. Schwartz,*
General Counsel

Over the past several years, it has been my pleasure to serve as the General Counsel of the Illinois Principals Association. During that time, however, I have observed several areas where building administrators frequently incur legal problems. I have grouped these problems into ten specific areas, which are below. For each area, I have attempted to offer some practical advice.

1. Make Sure That All School Financial Accounts Are Properly Maintained

State law sets out specific parameters for the management of student activity accounts (such as student club accounts, student council account or yearbook fund) and convenience accounts (such as a flower fund, scholarship fund or PTO account). In the management of these accounts, the following guidelines are important:

- All transactions must be documented and should be witnessed or approved by two individuals.
- Each fund must have a treasurer, who shall, on a monthly basis, reconcile the cash in the bank and investment balances with the liabilities from each fund.
- Each account must be audited annually by a licensed certified public accountant.
- Funds must be included as "Agency Funds" in the district's Annual Financial Report to the State Board of Education.

2. Copyright Infringement – The Next Lawsuit Waiting to Happen

The use of copyrighted material is strictly prohibited, unless use of the material fits into one of the limited exceptions below. Copyrighted material extends to all original works of authorship, including software programs, CD-ROM and web pages. Exceptions to copyright laws include:

- The fair use doctrine, which provides that the “the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright.”
- Face-to-face teaching at nonprofit educational institutions provides that instructors may generally read, perform or display copyrighted material in a face-to-face address.
- Educational broadcasting, which allows instructional broadcasting performances of a non-dramatic literary or musical work for instructional purposes.
- Not-for-profit performances allows for the non-public performance of non-dramatic literary or musical works that are not for monetary gain.

3. Maintaining Student Records – Not the Most Exciting Job

Maintaining accurate and secure student records can be one of the most difficult jobs of the principal. Below are several tips to make this task easier.

- Keep a written log of all persons accessing a student’s record.
- Clearly delineate in the handbook the difference between directory information (which can be released unless there is a written objection) and personal record

information (which usually cannot be released without written permission).

- List school staff members and other professions that have a “legitimate educational interest” in a student’s record and therefore have ongoing access to such record.
- Establish an informal procedure whereby parents or eligible students can seek changes and revisions to records.
- Review the student’s record every 4 years or when he/she changes attendance centers.

4. Keep Your Religions Beliefs Personal

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states that individuals shall have freedom of religion. The First Amendment further states that there shall be a separation of church and state. Teachers and administrators are considered “state actors” and must be careful when balancing the above. The following tips are meant to keep you safe and out of court:

- It is permissible for teachers and administrators to wear as part of their dress a small, unobtrusive symbol of their faith, such as a cross or Star of David.
- Refrain from discussing religion with students.
- Be careful about participating in religions events at school, even when such events are held outside of the school day.
- Make sure that school events are free from religious references and activities. Prayers at school events are strictly prohibited.

5. Never Fail to Appreciate the Visibility of Your Position

A recent survey has shown that more people know the name of their local principal than know the name of their mayor. This reinforces the fact that the principalship is a highly visible and highly political position. With visibil-

ity comes the need to remain vigilant, even in your personal life.

Dr. David Turner, retired executive director of the Illinois Principals Association, stated that when he was a building principal he would never order an alcoholic beverage when dining at a local restaurant. He said that “people won’t see the principal having a drink with dinner, they will see the principal drinking at the bar.”

6. Don’t Forget Your Family

Between 1965 and 1985, the divorce rate more than doubled among schoolteachers and administrators. Factors for this alarming statistic include long hours at work and high stress jobs. I have found the following to be useful in balancing family and work:

- Share your job with your family. Include your family in school events to the extent possible.
- Set aside a time each week specifically for family activities.

7. Update Your Handbook

The school’s handbook serves as an important tool in informing students, staff and parents of the rules and policies of the school. Additionally, a well-written and complete handbook can serve as the basis for deterring lawsuits. Below are several tips in developing and updating your handbook.

- Review your handbook often. Whether this is done by a committee, board or individual administrator, your handbook should be reviewed at least yearly. State and federal laws and case law changes frequently and your handbooks must be updated to reflect the latest thinking.
- Publicize, publicize, publicize. Make sure that all parents and students get a copy of the handbook and are aware of the policies of the school and district. Some ways to accomplish this are: student assemblies, open school meetings and student and parent sign-offs.

- Notify the staff. Make sure that all staff members are aware of the school and district policies, especially as they pertain to discipline. An increasing area of lawsuits is the failure of teachers to follow the due process requirements of the handbook when disciplining students.
- Do not presume your handbook to be all-inclusive. Every year, and probably more often, we see new situations develop that could not have ever been anticipated by the student handbook. For example, who would have ever predicted the prevalence of laser pointers, Pokemon cards and reality pets. Make sure that your handbook allows you the flexibility to discipline for the unexpected and unanticipated.
- Look at your handbook from the student and parent’s perspective. Handbooks should be user-friendly. Make sure that your policies are clear and understandable to students and parents.
- Make sure all school policies are adopted by the school board. Significant legal problems can occur if your school’s policies are not consistent with board policy. Having your policies adopted by the board is an easy way around a potentially embarrassing legal mess.
- Have your school attorney review all proposed changes in your handbook. As noted above, the law changes quickly and these changes must be taken into account when handbooks are revised. Lawsuits are no doubt expensive, and a properly reviewed handbook can save you thousands of dollars down the road.

8. Develop a Relationship with the Media – But Don’t Get Too Close!

Dealing with the local media can be difficult. (I would venture to guess that most of us believe that schools don’t always receive fair and balanced

media coverage!) Below are several tips when dealing with the media.

- Develop a relationship before a crisis. Invite local media to your school to see all of the good things that are going on. Send them information on school and student success stories.
- Know who should speak to the media. Many districts have a central spokesperson or specific procedures to handle media inquiries.
- Always return phone calls. News outlets will publish their story, with or without your input. Returning a phone call helps to control the information that the media is receiving. Even if you can’t say much, at least indicate that you will provide additional information when you are able.
- Be careful not to reveal confidential student or personnel information.
- Never assume that anything is “off the record.” This term has no legal significance. Reporters are not prohibited from using information that is “off the record.” If you don’t want to see it in print, don’t say it!

9. Get a Contract

Every building administrator should have a written contract for two reasons: to protect yourself and to make sure that all parties are on the same page as far as duties and expectations. The Illinois Principals Association has developed a model principal’s contract for your use. To obtain a copy, please visit the IPA website at: www.ilprincipals.org.

10. Keep Up To Date on New Requirements

Each year, the General Assembly, Illinois State Board of Education and the federal government impose a number of new mandates and requirements on school districts. It is important for school officials to review these new requirements each year and make sure that policies and practices are adjusted

accordingly. In order to keep up to date, the IPA suggests the following:

- “New School Laws,” published by the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance. This publication is a digest of all laws affecting public schools that were enacted in the current year. This publication is available through the IPA.
- “Alliance Legislative Report,” which is emailed to subscribers on a weekly basis when the Legislature is in session and at other times as necessary. This report is a synopsis of important legislation and happenings at the State and federal level. To subscribe, contact the IPA office.
- “Weekly Message,” distributed by the State Superintendent. This is a comprehensive report detailing critical information. To access this publication, see the ISBE website at www.isbe.net.
- IPA website, at www.ilprincipals.org, which is updated regularly with latest information impacting building level administrators.

I hope that the above tips are helpful in your career. If you are ever in need of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Illinois Principals Association for guidance. We are here to help!

Tips From the “Old, Old Pros”

By: *John Ourth, Field Services Director-North & Fred Singleton, Field Services Director-South*

The following is a list of tasks that will assist you in having a successful year.

1. Review the New School Laws Bulletin which is available to you by IPA as a member service. What policies and procedures do you need to change to be in compliance?

2. What language has been added or changed in:

- Parent Handbooks
- Student Handbooks
- Staff Handbooks
- Teacher Contracts
- Transportation agreement?
- Teacher Evaluation Procedures

3. Contact First Responders to refresh standard and emergency procedures. An invite to the school for coffee and juice is a pleasant gesture from you. Include key staff from the school.

4. Refresh yourself and key staff regarding:

- Responsibilities when the fire alarm goes off.
- How do you shut off the fire alarm? Who has the authority? Can the principal do it? Where is the key or code?
- Where are the utility shut offs? Under what conditions can they be terminated and how do you do it?
- Does the phone system function without power? If not, how will you have phone service? Have you tried it? Cell service is not reliable in an emergency. Helicopter noise seriously impedes traditional communication functions in an emergency.

5. Crisis management mode does not permit time to double check procedures and policies. A key to crisis management is communication with:

- First Responders
- Students
- Staff
- Parents
- News and Media
- Central office and other administrators
- Whose job is it to communicate with these and how and where is it done?

6. Any new names on your sex offender list? What plan do you have in place if a student is on the list? Can you assure your community and explain how pornography is blocked from students?

7. Have you presented an in-service to all staff about school law, student records, and each staff member responsibility for it.

8. How will you involve staff in planning professional development? What data will be used to drive professional development?

9. Research emphatically supports the importance of a warm friendly environment for schools. How will you make that happen?

- By example, meet students arriving, passing and leaving and greet by name. Ditto for staff and parents.
- Support each student with an advocate.
- Send notes of congratulations to students, staff and parents.
- Keep track of events in each person’s life, ask about it, support it and follow up later with a comment.
- Everybody has a birthday, celebrate it with a card. Establish a lottery system for birthday recognition.
- Do you have and does staff apply a standard bullying policy?

10. School culture that is permeated with values of student learning is “Ritz-Carlton.” How will you establish or continue or reinforce it? Some suggestions include:

- Adult and student conversation is about student learning.
- Frequent local student assessment results and benchmarks are discussed among and between teachers and students.
- Student and teacher expectations

about learning are clearly defined, valued, shared, and reinforced.

- Do all teachers have access to and understand current student assessment reports and guidelines for discussion?
- How will the culture incorporate results in a positive diagnostic way that will enable behavior or tasks be done differently by teachers, pupils, and the principal?

11. Teacher meetings are your opportunity to be a master teacher! If they are perfunctory you lose. Remember to:

- Send out the agenda in advance. That includes discussion points, problems, definitions and objectives.
- Agendas should be a joint effort with opportunity for staff to put items on the agenda.
- Have a staff member keep minutes of detailed discussions and give staff the next day.
- If you don't need a meeting... CANCEL IT.
- Refreshments are nice.
- Start on time.

12. Review your sexual harassment policy with staff and students.

13. Special services to students are a key to a successful school.

- What triggers and how aggressive are the intervention strategies for students who need help and support in curriculum and personal areas.
- Who monitors and measures it?
- RtI (Response to Intervention) is a key issue this year for students. This is not a special education matter. This is a result of NCLB and IDEA 2004 and requires a regular education function.

14. Practice the three rules of leadership success.

- Listen
- Listen
- Listen

15. Practice the IPA belief.

Educational leaders should balance their personal and professional responsibilities.

Twenty-Some Tips for a Successful Career

The following tips were developed by experienced building level principals and were originally published as part of our February 2001 *Bulletin*. They remain good advice.

“Keep [your] superintendent well-informed and listen to your students, teachers, parents and other community patrons.”

– Gale Wiedman

Keep an “alphabetized ‘blue’ notebook which contains copies of all parent communication [as a] quick and easy reference for future use.”

– Louis Obernuefeman

“Work at getting better in some aspect of your personal or professional life everyday.”

– Dean Tucker

“Keep a clean shirt and tie on the back of your door.”

– Rob Zielinski

“Try not to internalize the criticisms you will undoubtedly receive and think of the many positive differences you are making.”

– Candace Passaglia

“The best way to get fired is to be afraid of being fired.”

– Chuck Dill

“Listen more than you speak.”

– Marsha Parr

“The 7 P’s: Prior Planning and Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance.”

– Richard Beck

“Treat all students, parents and staff equally.”

– Lenn Jamerson

“Always keep your sense of humor...especially the part that involves being able to laugh at yourself, and when you feel yourself not being able to do this, go home and start fresh in the morning, it will always be there waiting and you can tackle whatever it is with a renewed sense of vision and vigor.”

– Leah Mitiu

“Form a leadership group from 3 or 4 teachers... [to] be an active voice for the staff... [and] be responsible for helping to develop solutions to some questions.”

– Darryl Taylor

“Compliment your student body and staff when they do something good. We don't do this often enough.”

– Wayne Trumann

“Take time to get the facts before making a decision.”

– Charlotte Davis

“Communicate clearly... be consistent... and understand the ‘change’ concept.”

– Scott Horsch

“A principal's attitude contributes a great deal to the building climate.”

– Chad Allaman

“Never become engaged in competitive exercises involving the endocrinological functions of Mephetus-mepheti.”

– Le Whitton

Illinois Principals Association

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“View all problems as opportunities. These will be in the form of opportunities to grow, to sell our product, etc.”

– *Bob Doan*

“No matter how busy you are, make time for regular cardiovascular exercise, like running or walking.”

– *Mark Cross*

““Keep a life of your own.”

– *Linda Searby*

“Administrators: Build relationships, believe in yourself and what you do, have a heart, walk the talk, build a collegial network, forgive and forget and take care of yourself.”

– *Paul Mikulcik*

“Seek a mentor.”

– *Fred Singleton*

“Listen, Listen, Listen.”

– *John Ourth*

“Keep your nose to the grindstone.”

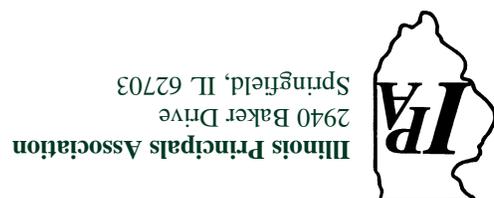
– *Dave Turner*

Thoughts for Reflection

- List three things you learned.
- What is one thing you could do immediately to enhance your leadership?
- What action step will you take immediately to enhance your leadership?



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