

# The Role of the Principal

## At a Glance

- Duties and Responsibilities: An Overview
- The Principal's Role
- Additional Roles and Skills: A Quick Overview
  - Emotional Intelligence: A Key to Effective Leadership*
  - Roles*
  - Skills*
- Your Personal Vision of Your Role as Principal
- The Role of the Principal as Legally Defined
  1. *Responsibility Guidelines*
  2. *Student Safety*
  3. *Student Instruction*
  4. *Student Supervision*
  5. *Staff Supervision*
  6. *Staff Evaluation*
  7. *Staff Cooperation*
  8. *School Administration*
  9. *Access to School*
  10. *Building Maintenance*
  11. *Community*
  12. *School Advisory Group*
  13. *Reports to District*

## 4 ■ Organization and Management

### **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: AN OVERVIEW**

A principal's primary duties are to

- maintain proper order and discipline in the school;
  - be in charge of, and supervise, the instruction of students; and
  - organize and manage the school.
- 
- See “The Role of the Principal as Legally Defined” in this chapter for an overview of the legal aspects of the principal's role.
  - Check your state department of education Web site regularly for updates to this legal definition.

#### **TIPS**

Remember: Education Web sites are where many parents get their information about education.

### **THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE**

Principals, under the direction of their district school boards, take a leadership role in the daily operation of a school. They provide this leadership by

- demonstrating care and commitment to academic excellence and a safe teaching and learning environment,
- holding everyone under their authority accountable for their behavior and actions, and
- communicating regularly and meaningfully with all members of their school community.

In addition, principals are responsible for the organization and management of individual schools, including the budget assigned to the school by the district. The principal is the head teacher in the school and, in addition to any teaching duties, each principal is responsible for

- determining the organization of the school and ensuring ongoing maintenance of the school buildings;

## The Role of the Principal 5

- administering the school's budget;
- admitting and placing students;
- ensuring that report cards are sent to parents;
- attending meetings, acting as a resource person at those meetings, considering recommendations, and reporting back on actions taken (or delegating those responsibilities to the vice-principal);
- developing a safe school environment with the help of parents and the community.



### **ADDITIONAL ROLES AND SKILLS: A QUICK OVERVIEW**

The following are a few ways to describe the roles and skills required of a principal.

#### **Emotional Intelligence: A Key to Effective Leadership**

School leaders bring their values, knowledge, experience, and skill to their work each day. The understanding and appropriate application of emotional intelligence (EI) is key to effective leadership. As the challenges, demands, and complexities of the principal's role increase, this knowledge will continue to be the foundation of dynamic, successful, and effective leadership.

Emotional intelligence, unlike IQ, can be learned and enhanced. Principals and vice-principals are encouraged to read and/or take training in assessing and enhancing their emotional intelligence.

The FIVE components of emotional intelligence, as defined by Dr. Reuven Bar-On, together with their subscales, are as follows:

#### **1. Intrapersonal**

Our ability to be aware of ourselves, to understand our strengths and weaknesses, and to express our thoughts and feelings nondestructively.

- Independence
- Self-actualization
- Self-regard
- Emotional self-awareness
- Assertiveness

#### **2. Interpersonal**

Our ability to be aware of others' emotions, feelings, and needs and to be able to establish and maintain cooperative, constructive, and mutually satisfying relationships.

## 6 # Organization and Management

- Interpersonal relationships
- Social responsibility
- Empathy

### 3. Adaptability

Our ability to manage change, by realistically and flexibly coping with the immediate situation and effectively solving problems as they arise.

- Problem-solving
- Reality testing
- Flexibility

### 4. Stress Management

Our ability to manage emotions so that they work for us and not against us.

- Impulse control
- Stress tolerance

### 5. General Mood

Our ability to be optimistic, positive, and sufficiently self-motivated to set and pursue our goals.

- Happiness
- Optimism

SOURCE: *The EQ Edge*, S. Stein & H. Book.



#### Further Reading

Goleman, D. (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*

Goleman, D. (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*

Stein, S., and Book, H. (2000) *The EQ Edge*

#### Roles

*As Leader*

1. Advocate
2. Articulator

## The Role of the Principal 7

3. Climate builder
4. Communicator
5. Motivator
6. Negotiator
7. Organization developer
8. Planner
9. Researcher
10. Professional leader

SOURCE: Adapted from *A New Time—A New Schoolhouse Leader*, A. J. H. Newberry, pp. 32–40.

### *As Manager*

1. Interpersonal roles: figurehead, leader, liaison
2. Informational roles: monitor, disseminator, spokesperson
3. Decisional roles: entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator

SOURCE: Adapted from H. Mintzberg, as quoted in *The Rookie Manager*, J. T. Straub, Figure 1-1, p. 2.

### **Skills**

1. Interpersonal skills: leadership, sensitivity, motivation of self and others
2. Administrative skills: problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability
3. Communication skills: oral, written
4. Knowledge of self

SOURCE: *Skills for School Leaders*, National Association of Secondary School Principals, Developmental Assessment Center.

## **YOUR PERSONAL VISION OF YOUR ROLE AS PRINCIPAL**

Consider these questions as you develop a personal vision:

- What are your duties and responsibilities under the acts and regulations, policies and procedures?

## 8 # Organization and Management

- What tasks must you carry out?
- What professional roles must you play?
- What skills do you need?
- What principle(s) will guide you?

After a couple of hectic months on the job, one new principal started to develop this personal vision statement:

*First, I'll consider what's in the best interest of the students.*

*I'll strive to promote academic excellence and continuous school improvement.*

*I'm responsible for the safety and well-being of students and staff, the instruction and discipline of students, and the organization and management of the school.*

### **My Personal Vision of My Job as a Principal**

What is your personal vision of your job as a principal? Whether you are a new principal or a veteran, it's important to be able to answer this question readily, if only for yourself.

## **THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AS LEGALLY DEFINED**

The role of principals and vice-principals is defined largely by statute and by the terms and conditions of their employment with school districts. Local district policies vary from district to district and cover a range of

topics. Although relevant statutes and regulations are reasonably precise in their imposition of duties and responsibilities, the documents describing terms and conditions tend to refer vaguely to a principal's responsibility to enforce and abide by "district policy."

Set out below are various categories of principal and vice-principal responsibilities. Some duties relate to more than one category and so are reproduced in more than one section. This document is intended to provide an overview only, and does not purport to be all-encompassing.

Please note that the acts and regulations are constantly changing. Be sure to keep yourself up-to-date with all changes in statutes and the resulting revisions to district policies and procedures.

**TIPS**

### **1. Responsibility Guidelines**

- a. Maintain order and discipline in the school.
- b. Be responsible for the instruction and the discipline of students in the school.
- c. Report promptly any neglect of duty or infraction of school rules by student to parent.

### **2. Student Safety**

- a. Ensure that all reasonable safety procedures are carried out in courses and activities for which the teacher is responsible.
- b. Report to the appropriate agency when there are reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse.
- c. Ensure care of students and property.

### **3. Student Instruction**

- a. Supervise instruction in the school.
- b. Obtain permission to evaluate students.
- c. Arrange for home instruction for students in appropriate circumstances.

### **4. Student Supervision**

- a. Ensure supervision of students when the school buildings and playgrounds are open.

## 10 :: Organization and Management

- b. Ensure supervision of students during the conducting of any school activity.
- c. Ensure that teachers carry out the supervisory duties and instructional program assigned by the principal and supply such information as the principal may require.

### 5. Staff Supervision

- a. Supervise the instruction in the school.
- b. Assign duties to the vice-principal. A vice-principal shall perform such duties as are assigned by the principal. In the absence of the principal of a school, a vice-principal, where a vice-principal has been appointed for the school, shall be in charge of the school and shall perform the duties of the principal.
- c. Administratively supervise psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and other professional support staff where such persons are performing their duties in the school.
- d. Assign duties to vice-principals and teachers in charge.

### 6. Staff Evaluation

- a. Conduct performance appraisals of “new teachers” as mandated by district contract.
- b. Conduct performance appraisals of all teachers as mandated by district contract.
- c. If a performance appraisal is unsatisfactory, the principal must
  - (i) document concerns;
  - (ii) consult regularly with his or her supervisor regarding the teacher’s performance and steps that may be taken to improve it; and
  - (iii) provide feedback and recommendations to the teacher to help improve the teacher’s performance.

### 7. Staff Cooperation

- a. Ensure that principals and teachers display personal and professional qualities.
- b. Establish and maintain mutually respectful relationships with students, staff, and parents.



**8. School Administration**

- a. Maintain student records including attendance.
- b. Examine all data in a timely manner.
- c. Enforce all local policy and codes of conduct.

**9. Access to School**

- a. Monitor visitors into the school (i.e., visitor's book).
- b. Monitor student health records according to district policy.
- c. Direct a person to leave the school premises if the principal believes that the person is prohibited by regulation or under a district policy from being there.

**10. Building Maintenance**

- a. Monitor condition and maintenance of property.
- b. Inspect the school premises regularly and make reports to appropriate officials.
- c. Provide appropriate facilities for instruction and other activities.

**11. Community**

- a. Promote and maintain close cooperation with community and business.
- b. Promote and maintain close cooperation with the parents and guardians.

**12. School Advisory Group**

- a. Act as resource person to any school advisory groups, and assist such groups in obtaining information.
- b. Solicit views with respect to local code of conduct, school policies respecting appropriate dress, and school action plans for improvement based on data.
- c. Consider recommendations and advice when determining action to be taken in response.

## 12 # Organization and Management

### 13. Reports to District

- a. Report to supervisors as required.
- b. Transmit reports and recommendations to the district through the appropriate supervisor.

#### **Always Put the Students First**

Always put the students first in any decision that you make. Let this be the philosophy upon which you structure the school.

Establish a strong vision that puts student well-being and achievement first, and use that as your guide when dealing with parents and staff.

*The Voice of Experience*

# Legal Framework

## At a Glance

- Hierarchical Legislative Framework: An Overview
  - Federal/Country*
  - State*
  - District School Boards*
  - Individual Schools: Policies, Procedures, and Rules*

## **HIERARCHICAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: AN OVERVIEW**

The key is to follow your district school board's policies and procedures; they are consistent with *all* relevant legislation.

**TIPS**

All of your day-to-day duties, responsibilities, and activities are carried out within a hierarchical legislative framework.