

To Be or Not to Be? Reflections of an Aspiring Administrator

I have often wondered how many educators have earned a principal's license without ever using it to seek a job in administration. After completing all the courses, assignments, and tests, why not apply for a job as a principal? What changed between the time an educator started administration coursework and the time when he or she earned a principal's license? I am currently trying to figure out the answers to these questions for myself. Having almost completed the university requirements for the educational administration program, I should soon receive my license in the mail. I was once sure that I wanted to quickly move into the ranks of the principalship because it was the next step in my career. But as I have progressed through the program, I have begun to feel like a bride-to-be with cold feet.

The Usual Hesitations

When asking myself if I am cut out for a job as a principal, all of the generic excuses for remaining in the classroom as opposed to seeking a job in administration come to mind: it doesn't pay enough money; it requires too much time and too much responsibility; and it would be too much of a hassle. But let's face it, education students find out very early in the program from veteran administrators that if you are thinking about becoming a principal for the money or because it might be easier than teaching, you are in the wrong program! Most of us who want to become administrators feel that we have something wonderful to offer, such as a gift to lead or a desire to improve schools. But how do we know when we are ready to unleash our talents to a lucky school district? And how can we be sure that we will be as good as we imagine? Maybe it's the fear of failing that keeps so many prospective principals from taking the plunge into the world of school administration.

Let's face it, there are a lot of scary issues to think about before moving into the principalship. I imagine that most school administrators agree that being a principal is nothing like being a classroom teacher. Consequently, leaving one's comfortable classroom

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environment where he or she is well-established and fits in can be scary. Everything would change, which itself can be a scary thing! I didn't think about these concerns when I entered the educational administration program.


Another of my concerns is that school staff might not take a young, female principal seriously and that I would spend years just trying to prove that I can do the job well. I also worry that because I am the kind of person who wants people to like her, I wouldn't be thick-skinned enough to function when people were unhappy with my job performance, especially if I found the reasons to be ridiculous. Am I smart enough? Would the job requirements extend beyond my reach? Would I con-

stantly feel like a failure? And finally, has school administration become too much like a business?

Time Tells All

As with anything in life, I have always believed that there is a time and a place for everything, and people know when their timing is right. At this point in my life, I don't want to set myself up for failure, which is what I'm afraid I would be doing if I entered the principalship now. I would be moving into a principal position because it is what I ought to do and not necessarily what I was ready to do. There are many educators who probably should have put more thought into their motives for becoming a principal. We've all seen them; I don't want to follow their example.

There is no better sign of true care and concern than putting a great deal of thought into a life-changing decision. What will I possibly have to offer a school district if I take a job as an administrator only to later regret my decision? It is my true belief that a person who is unhappy in his or her job will not perform to his or her best capabilities. I want to wait until I am confident that my gifts and my desire to really make a difference can push ahead full throttle. I want to feel more comfortable in my own skin and know I really can put all of my training into effect, doing the job the way it is supposed to be done.

I know it is in me and that I will know when the time is right. All of the self-doubt will be pushed to the side and I will go for it, knowing when and where I fit in. I will do what I have been trained to do and I will make those who have influenced me proud. For those of you who might be in the same boat, you're not alone. Our colleagues should not dismiss us so easily. We will all be back when we are ready. 

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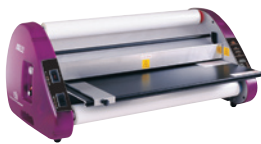
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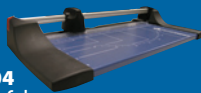
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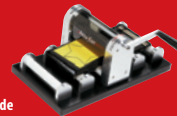


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