



## ***The Principal Story*** Discussion Prompts

*The Principal Story* illustrates many of the essential roles school principals perform each day. Principals can use the documentary—or segments of it—as a tool to stir discussion, producing confidence in school leadership and building greater understanding of the principals’ ability to positively influence school communities. Use the following questions to prompt discussions with distinct stakeholder groups: students, community members, principals and other educators, and the media.

### **Students:**

- What is the most important part of a principal’s job?
- If you were a principal, how would you make sure that all students reached their potential?
- Based on what you saw in this documentary and what you observe your own principal doing in your school, what appeals to you most about the possibility of one day becoming a principal? How would you fill in the blank for the following statement? “I’d like to be a school principal because \_\_\_\_\_.”

### **Parents, Community Members, and Public Officials:**

- How did the principals in this documentary create and communicate high expectations for students and teachers?
- Identify three actions you think parents and community members could take to support principals in developing high expectations and helping students reach them.
- What three characteristics define a strong instructional leader?
- Do you believe that effective, insightful school leadership is an essential ingredient in student success? Why or why not?

### **Principals and Other Educators:**

- Identify 10 ways you relate to the principals featured in this documentary.
- What counsel would you give each of these principals as instructional leaders?
- What do you consider to be the key characteristics of an instructional environment that addresses the learning needs of each student and teacher?

### **News Media:**

- What new insights about school principals did *The Principal Story* reveal?
- How did the documentary address education policy issues, such as principal authority and accountability, teacher excellence, professional development, focusing instruction on the whole child, and meeting the needs of students with disabilities?
- How do the experiences of school principals compare with other types of educators or other types of professional leaders?

### **General Questions for Any Group:**

- How did the principals in this documentary challenge the status quo and lead their schools toward positive change that would prepare students for the future?
- The education climate increasingly demands accountability, the need to consider data in decision-making, and the expectation of working in harmony with the community and helping each student develop unique talents, abilities, and skills. In light of these requirements, which qualities would you expect of a school principal?

These questions were developed in preparation for the National Association of Elementary Principals’ (NAESP) National Leaders’ Conference by Gary Marx, president of the Center for Public Outreach in Vienna, Virginia, considering numerous discussion-starters posed in *The Principal Story, Field Guide*.