A few years back, the U.S. Navy lured recruits with the slogan, “It’s not just a job. It’s an adventure.” Principals can certainly relate to those words. Today’s schools, like today’s military or today’s business world, operate in a demanding and fast-changing environment with drastically different expectations than were the case two decades ago. It almost makes you dizzy to think about what changes might lay ahead.

The principal’s job is like no other. It involves major responsibilities to children, teachers, parents, and the wider community. It requires balancing expertise in management, instruction, public relations, data analysis, and more. In short, it is a role probably best filled by the special kind of educator who can find energy and encouragement in total commitment and unending challenge.

We are fortunate that public education continues to draw the kind of people who are willing to share their talent, knowledge, and enthusiasm with children. We are also lucky that many of these people develop the leadership skills that prompt them to accept the challenge of the principalship.

The Job Keeps Growing

In our 2001 guide, Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do, we sketched the broad themes of the modern principal’s job description. I hope that our guidelines encourage principals to do even more than what their formal job descriptions call for. We envision the principal as the linchpin connecting school and community.

We have already seen principals who have expanded their responsibilities and devoted valuable time to developing relationships beyond the schoolhouse, reaching out to local business and religious leaders, politicians, and community agencies that serve children. They have shown that the principal’s job requires not just abundant energy, but sophistication in building relationships outside of their school. Today, the job doesn’t stop when the last bell rings, and it doesn’t stop at the campus property line. In truth, it may hardly stop at all.

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So where does the work stop? Even the most dedicated principal needs to maintain a balance in life and leave adequate time for family and self. There are principals who seek to achieve this balance by blending some of their duties with their personal lives. We know of principals who bring their young children to school during after-school activities to play in the gym or do homework in the library. Spouses often come along to events where principals meet and mingle with community leaders.

In balancing life and work, principals must master the skills of prioritizing and delegating. They need to recognize which tasks demand immediate attention, which may be possible for others to handle, and which offer opportunities for the school staff to develop leadership skills. In fact, building leadership capacity is yet another part of the principal’s job. The most successful principals are endowed with a clear sense of purpose and organization. It is no coincidence that their schools produce more than their share of leaders.

An important element in keeping principals in their demanding jobs is an internal sense of success and satisfaction. Because the position is so multifaceted, knowing how and when you’ve succeeded is difficult to determine. There aren’t many days when people come along and tell you what a great job you’re doing. There are always ways to improve, and there is always more to do. If anything, the mission is likely to get tougher and more challenging. Big challenges push people and demand a lot, but today’s principals are prepared.

Today’s Navy slogan is “Accelerate your life.” We get that message, too.
Healthier Students and Better Test Scores!


SPARK is different from traditional PE programs in many ways:
SPARK is more active and fun, and there is equal focus on health-related fitness and skills, with social skills reinforced throughout the curriculum. SPARK integrates other core subjects with physical education while keeping activity levels moderate for more than half of the class time.

SPARK is the ONLY PE program ever shown to increase standardized test scores! (Research Quarterly, June 1999) Call SPARK today for a free copy of their 1999 “Paper of the Year” and inquire about “SPARKing-Up” YOUR teachers and students.

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• **On-Site Staff Development** – With unit of credit, certification award, SPARK banner for school, and more
• **Lifetime Follow-Up Support and Consultation** – “SPARK Star” training ensures SPARK lasts!
• **Equipment Sets** – Matched to SPARK content by our specialized education team – discounted for SPARK schools!

SPARK is more than elementary PE. Our menu of research-based programs include Early Childhood, Middle and High School PE, and After School for ages 5-18.

Here’s what Kathleen Kahn, an elementary school principal from Coalinga, CA said about SPARK:

“SPARK is still being used (training occurred more than 4 years ago) and is very popular with teachers. I even see them using some of the management and organizational techniques in the classroom. This was one of the best staff development decisions we have ever made. Thank you.”

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Mesa Public Schools, Arizona’s largest school district is nationally recognized and an award winning K-12 school district with high academic standards serving over 74,000 students.

Applications for elementary principal vacancies for the 2007-2008 school year are being accepted.

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