Quick Pointers for Principals


Too often I don’t have the time to do all the professional reading I need to do. I always have a book/magazine “to read” pile that seems to grow in depth each day until I resort to seeking executive summaries and scanning the highlights of my reading.

You won’t feel that way about What Successful Principals Do! because the book is an extremely easy read that you can do one page at a time. Each page offers a piece of advice under one highlighted catchphrase (e.g., “Eliminate Hoops,” “Study the Experts,” “Suggested Books,” “Have Family Night Activities”) and

the rest of the page addresses the recommendation in a straightforward way, using stories and vignettes (and even research) that make the recommendations not only interesting but enlightening. The book is divided into three subheadings: “Beginning the School Year,” “During the School Year,” and “Ending the School Year.”

One of my favorite tips was “Develop a Parent Report Card.” It is a wonderful idea to give your parents the school’s expectations for their participation in their children’s education, and then to let them know how they are doing. Too often we assume that parents know what we need and expect; we are going to implement this at our school this year.

Another great tip was “Limit Classroom Interruptions.” I think we forget how intrusive we can be to the operation of a classroom. I taught a couple of hours of kindergarten class last year and instantly made new rules about classroom interruptions after the experience.

I recommend you grab this book when you find yourself with five minutes of free time (waiting for kids, waiting at the doctor’s office, principals’ meetings, etc.) and read this book a page or two at a time. And when you finish the book, pass it on to the principal you mentor or who mentors you. It will be a welcome respite of practitioner-oriented ideas for improving practice or reminding us experienced principals of a few “what works” ideas. When I brought the book with me to a principals’ meeting, I had more than a few principals pick it up and flip through it (it has a rather catchy title, after all) and then advise me to pass it on to them when I was through. It’s just that good.

Jan Borelli, Principal
Westwood Elementary School
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
janborelli@cox.net

A Guide for Organizational Change


This book outlines research and practical applications that support school changes. The guidelines are sound practice and a good reference, particularly for new administrators. If you are familiar with organizational change through the works of Michael Fullan, Stephen Covey, or James Collins, there will be no surprises in this book. However, readers will find a good analysis of types of change approaches.

In fact, one highlight of the book is Chapter 2, which leads readers through a synopsis of theories by some of the well-known theorists behind school and organizational change. This section will be particularly useful to new administrators who desire to become more familiar with specific schools of thought as the summaries are quite effective.

In Chapter 4, 21 responsibilities for school leaders are outlined—perhaps an overwhelming list for new administrators, but nonetheless a good guide and a good reminder for veteran principals. The applications of the 21 points also are correlated with student achievement.

Regarding the change process, normal progression changes, or “first-order changes,” are discussed, as well as “initiatives that are dramatic departures from the past,” or second-order changes. This is immediately followed by discussions of comprehensive school reform versus site-specific approaches to implementing change; each is examined and benefits are outlined. Factors and processes are delineated, culminating in the formulation of a plan for change.

While I found it difficult to get into, once immersed I found that the information in this book will be useful to me in pursuing our own school improvement plan.

Jeanette Gilliland, Principal
Andover-Morris Elementary School
Phillipsburg, New Jersey
jgilliland@pburg.k12.nj.us
Stimulate Learning with Die-Cut Projects

The AccuCut® MARK IV™ Roller Die Cutting Machine and steel-rule dies help you claim students’ attention with easy-to-make, interactive projects that lead them directly into the learning zone! See comprehension and retention rise when you introduce hands-on activities for all curriculum areas, including language arts, math, social studies and science.

You’ll see the benefit in preparation time, too. Cut as many shapes and letters as you need quickly and easily, so you have more time for planning and teaching!

Free Downloads! Whether you need ideas for starting a die cutting center or help selecting the next dies to buy, visit the AccuCut Education Center at www.accucut.com. Download “How to Use Die-Cut Projects to Stimulate Learning” and other helpful information.

See how easy and affordable it is to start a die cutting center.

Call 800-288-1670 or visit www.accucut.com to request a free 2006-2007 Education Catalog & Idea Book!

Special Offer: 15% off orders $500 and more