Cotton discusses 24 principal practices identified in the research as having an impact on instruction and student learning. In his introduction to Cotton’s work, Robert Blum, director of the Center for School and District Improvement at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, suggests these practices fall into five categories:

- Establishing a clear focus on student learning (e.g., having a vision, clear learning goals, and high expectations for learning for all students);
- Interactions and relationships (e.g., communication and interaction, emotional/interpersonal support, visibility, and accessibility);
- School culture (e.g., collaboration, support of risk-taking, and continuous improvement);
- Instruction (e.g., discussing instructional issues, observing classrooms and giving feedback, and protecting instructional time); and
- Accountability (e.g., monitoring progress and using student progress data for program improvement).

The strength of this resource for busy principals is the approach Cotton uses to discuss each of the 24 practices. These discussions are brief, to the point, and use language that would make sense to any principal. Here, for example, is part of her discussion of classroom observation and feedback to teachers:

*Principals of high-achieving schools do not visit classrooms just for social reasons, nor do they appear only at evaluation time. Instead, they study teachers’ instructional approaches, take their turn at delivering instruction, and follow up with feedback to and mutual planning with teachers.*