

Preface

To paraphrase M. Scott Peck in *The Road Less Travelled*, “Being a principal is difficult.” The purpose of this book is to speak to those who are thinking of becoming an administrator and to support those who are already in the profession. For newcomers, it is hoped that it will help lead to understanding of the socioemotional pieces of the job that were not discussed in university programs for training administrators.

For experienced administrators, the book may affirm and clarify why some things happen as they do. The book is unique in that the literature does not deal with socioemotional aspects of the profession. As more nontraditional, such as women and people of color, enter the profession, and because the demands placed on school leaders have changed, the necessary style of leadership has changed. Schools are forced to be more collegial within the organization and with the community at large. It is hoped that the rigid hierarchy is softening to incorporate more collaborative, shared leadership. However, as long as there are administrators who supervise others, it will be important for those leaders to understand the unspoken, unwritten rules. Many books are written about the positive aspects of administration, but they neglect the socioemotional, human elements that are surprising to practitioners. For some people, it is those aspects that make or break them as a successful or content administrator.

Administrators have obviously been successful learners. Training programs have provided instruction in learning theory, pedagogical strategies, and management needs. However, it is one thing to learn *about* something and another to *apply* those ideas in a human organization and understand the human responses. Much like an iceberg, where most of the ice is underwater and unseen, the socioemotional components of administration are rarely, if ever, described and discussed.

My own career journey has taken a rich path from classroom teacher to special education teacher, staff development trainer, and administrator, both at building and central office levels. The experiences have been in different districts. My educational preparation and doctoral research led me wonder why the psychosocial aspects of training are omitted. My doctoral research allowed me the opportunity to probe this dimension with the women who were head principals of high schools in Minnesota. In 1993–1994, there were only 26, a mere 5.6% of the total.

The words of these unique people and my experience led me to the realization that many socioemotional aspects of administration were not part of the formal training required for licensure. Women and persons of color are still nontraditional in the position of high school principal. In fact, because the population of students of color is growing faster than the numbers of adults of color in the profession, the gap is growing between the numbers of students of color and teachers/administrators of color.

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