

PREFACE



THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

Like many who enter the profession of education, I wanted to do my best. I was a happy and contented classroom teacher, and my students improved as readers and writers. When offered an administrative job, I thought I could manage the transition. Certainly, administration would be similar to leading a class of students. I was wrong. Quickly, old memories of my days in school returned.

On the night before I started high school, I lay wide-awake in my bed. Staring at the ceiling, I felt scared and excited, and I wondered whether I would find friends and do well in my classes. Now as I reflect on that night, specific details have faded away, but those anxious feelings remain.

The old fearful thoughts I felt the night before high school returned the evening prior to my first day of being a school principal. I felt a sense of wonder as I thought about leading a school. But the emotion that dominated and replayed in my mind was the same fear I experienced the night before I started high school. Was I ready for the journey I was about to take? I wasn't sure.

Finally, I was able to push negative thoughts from my mind and think about my success in graduate school and the mentors I had when I was assistant principal of a junior high school. Fears and worries battled with wonder and excitement because I realized that as the principal, others would look to me to make decisions and provide guidance, support, and leadership. The responsibility, the enormity of the task, overtook my thoughts. Just as I did before starting high school, the evening before my first day as principal, I stared at the ceiling in my room. Sleep wouldn't come. What truly worried me was that my fears seemed reasonable.

While I lay awake, one specific thought bombarded my mind, a thought that rings true to this day. For my school to develop a positive and collaborative culture, have a staff and students who look forward to coming every day, and have parent and community support, my leadership would be needed. Reasons for a lack of success would be my failures. I had big challenges to face and address, as well as a legit reason to feel nervous. Nevertheless, the first morning I walked into school as the principal, I walked in determined to build a successful learning community.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Being an effective administrator can be challenging. I quickly found myself reacting to situations instead of planning a successful path forward. At one time or another, like me, you might find yourself reacting to events instead of being proactive. It's important to keep this idea in your mind: Continually reacting to situations (instead of following your plan) is a roadblock to success.

During my first year as a principal and for many years after, I wished for a book to help me gain insights and offer ideas on how to do the following:

- Prioritize my time
- Build better relationships with staff and students
- Make teaching and learning a primary focus
- Collaboratively shape the culture in my school

My hope is *The Ten-Minute Principal* will help you avoid many of the errors I made. I don't have it all figured out and continue to learn every day. However, experiencing fifteen years on the job, reading professional materials, and having conversations with other administrators and teachers have all taught me a great deal. Note, too, that there are no magic fixes, and it isn't possible to be a successful principal in ten minutes. Ten-minute opportunities occur several times during the day. As you read on, you'll explore ways to refine your craft and become a reflective and intentional thinker and leader.

Ten minutes. Short intervals of time allow you to focus on the diverse needs that arise all day for students, staff, parents, and community. These ten-minute opportunities can occur during each day of the year. I will be sharing how ten minutes of focused time can improve your leadership, effectiveness, and, ultimately, your school.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Throughout the book you will find these recurring features:

- #10MinutePrincipal (key points to remember)
- 10-Minute Opportunities

- 10-Minute Tips
- 10-Minute Collaboration suggestions
- Vignettes from education leaders offering reflections on how to improve leadership
- End-of-chapter 10-Minute Reflections on Opportunities for Change
- End-of-chapter podcasts that elaborate on the main points of the chapter

10-Minute Opportunities: Notice I use the word *opportunity*. As you explore ideas in this book, I encourage you to view challenges as opportunities. This is a subtle shift that can impact your outlook and set a good example for staff and students. Each chapter has several ten-minute opportunities for you to consider, as well as reflective questions and suggestions that can lead to positive changes.

10-Minute Tips: Every chapter will have several ten-minute tips. I include these to help you navigate a challenge with the understanding that your time is valuable.

10-Minute Collaboration suggestions: School leaders expect students and staff to collaborate. Each chapter will offer suggestions for collaborating with students, staff, or parents to address challenges that inevitably come your way. It's helpful to remember the old saying "It takes a team to find success; failure can be done alone."

A QUICK CHAPTER OVERVIEW

I have organized *The Ten-Minute Principal* so you can easily access information. You can read the book from cover to cover or go to specific sections in each chapter based on your needs or interests.

Chapter 1. The Six Pillars of School Leadership. I have pulled together six aspects of leadership that have been my

guide and called them the six pillars of leadership: vision, relationships, trust, efficacy, a student-centered environment, and instructional knowledge. In Chapter 1, I discuss and connect each pillar to leadership, knowing that as you deal with daily challenges, they will support your interactions and collaboration with staff and students and enable you to build a positive and inclusive school culture.

Chapter 2. The Principal, Communication, and School Culture. Here, you will find ideas on communication and school culture. Schools that have positive, learning-focused cultures do not happen by accident—they are created. Communication is the key to establishing a positive culture. You'll explore how to create a culture that is positive and student focused.

Chapter 3. Relationship Building. Relationships are a foundation of effective classrooms and schools. You'll explore strategies to cultivate partnerships without compromising what you believe. I will guide you through detailed information on the importance of relationships and provide ten-minute strategies to help you cultivate and enhance relationships with students, staff, and parents.

Chapter 4. Purposeful Meetings. I used to dread meetings but not anymore. Meetings are opportunities to model behaviors, communicate expectations, problem solve, and work collaboratively with staff and students. The ten-minute strategies show you how to organize and lead meetings, as well as how to model classroom best practices through meetings.

Chapter 5. Fostering Creativity. Educators often hear, read, or discuss the importance of creativity and creative problem solving. In this chapter, you'll reflect on ideas and suggestions for enhancing or creating a school culture focused on creativity, innovation, and growth mindset.

Chapter 6. Choose Your Path. This chapter will ask you to reflect on where you have been, where you are, and where your future path might go. In addition, there will be suggestions on how to handle challenges that aren't working and ways to measure your success.

As you read and reflect on the six pillars of school leadership in Chapter 1, I'm hoping they will guide you and your staff as you collaborate to create a trusting and positive school culture. Moreover, the six pillars can support you as you work daily to make a difference in the lives of every student and member of your school's staff.

The following resources are available through the companion website (<https://resources.corwin.com/tenminuteprincipal>).



Video 2.1 Cougar News Clip

<https://resources.corwin.com/tenminuteprincipal>



Podcast 2.1 Words and Actions

<https://resources.corwin.com/tenminuteprincipal>



Podcast 3.1 Accentuate the Positive

<https://resources.corwin.com/tenminuteprincipal>



Podcast 4.1 School Initiatives

<https://resources.corwin.com/tenminuteprincipal>



Podcast 5.1 Mindset Matters

<https://resources.corwin.com/tenminuteprincipal>



Podcast 6.1 Your Path

<https://resources.corwin.com/tenminuteprincipal>