Dynamic School Leadership: Transforming Your Campus Culture

Transcript of Speakers

Module 3. The Composition of a Dynamic Leader
Topic B. Ethics and Values in K-12 Education

Clip 1: The Importance of Values and Ethics In the Principalship

DON BROWN: We believe it may be more important than all of the data, statistics, laws, codes and other kinds of things that you will use to direct your role as a campus principal.

My name is one that will help the principal avoid some of the pitfalls and some of the problems that we deal with on a daily basis.

Research tells us that the principal’s role and the decision-making part of the principal’s role is one of the most difficult in education. All research and data tell us that the principal is on the frontline and is responsible for more day-to-day decisions than any other person in the education community. Even superintendent polls will tell you that the principal is the most important person in the educational process in terms of making a successful school or making a school become successful, whichever the case might be.

This morning it’s my privilege to join a longtime friend, colleague and currently the Executive Director of TASSP. May I introduce Mr. Archie McAfee.

ARCHIE McAFFE: Thank you, Don. And it is a privilege to be here with you and talking about the values and ethics of the principalship. The Texas Association of Secondary School Principals is honored and privileged to be a partner with Educational Impact to bring to you the Web of Support. My name is Archie McAfee. I’m the Executive Director for
TASSP. I have also been a principal for about 25 years in Texas and have enjoyed my role as a principal and enjoyed working with students and staff. I’m excited now about this opportunity we have to work with principals in bringing online professional development opportunities to our leaders in education in this state.

DON BROWN: Archie, values and ethics is very much like the weather. Everybody talks about it, everybody likes to dialog about values and ethics, but I’m not sure we really spend a lot of time on it. Hopefully, as we share with you this morning some of those issues and behaviors and characteristics relative to the values and ethics, maybe we can help some of our younger principals, as you look at the two of us and our illustriously white hair—and all of that came from those decisions that we made—but maybe we can help some of our younger principals avoid some of the problems and pitfalls that you and I had to deal with over our career as secondary principals.

I’d like to begin this morning by talking about values. Of course, values happen to be a measure. Webster actually says it’s a principle or standard of a quality; and, in the school business, we’re very much caught up with standards and quality. But a value is a measurement of the quality of something. And I think, obviously, in the principal’s role that’s something that we should be aware of and cognizant of as we make our plans and decisions.

The other word, ethics, is one that we like to shy away from. People want to jump
on and say schools can’t be involved in ethics, and you know that our behavior every day
and our decisions every day have a great deal to do with ethics. Webster says that ethics
is a system, a system of behavior and a system of decision-making.

Today, I hope that as we explore the whole concept of values and ethics we’ll be
able to create a system that will allow a principal to measure their decisions, their
behaviors, their attitudes, their relationships—as you well know, relationships probably
goes to the top of the list. I listed it fourth, but it's probably at the top of the list—relative
to the kinds of things that have to do.

Clip 2: School Administrators: Character, Competence, Commitment & Concern

DON BROWN: Those are all very good, and our introduction, I'm sure everybody's completely
convinced we're going to solve all of their problems with our great introduction. But I'd
like to kind of throw the ball back to you at this point and talk about these expectations
that are so challenging; that are so far-reaching; that are so critical to our success.
And there are codes of ethics, as you well know, and you and I will have talked
about that, about the codes of ethics and about the standards that are in Texas law
specifically, and I'm sure in law throughout the country. Those are the kinds of things
that we have looked at, and we're going to look at today as minimum standards and not
necessarily the behaviors and characteristics and relationships that a principal needs to
I'm going to throw the ball at you at this point and let you talk a little bit about
some of the common behaviors and common considerations as a principal considers
values and ethics and their role as the instructional leader on their campus.

ARCHIE McAFFE: Let me begin by just sharing with you what I call the four Cs when we talk
about
values and ethics of the principalship. And I'm going to cite the results of a recent survey
that was conducted by North American workers, everyone from executives to
maintenance personnel, even educators. And the question was posed: Who do you
follow? The respondents all said they followed people who possess the four Cs. And
those four Cs are leaders who possess character, competence, commitment and concern.

And I'd like to elaborate on each one of those four Cs just for a moment.

Character is truthfulness, integrity, courage and perseverance. Competence is the
disposition, more than the ability, to do things with excellence. Commitment is
dedication in deed to the purpose of the group and the unwillingness to give up. And the
last C is concern. And that is empathy for all those joined together by a common
undertaking, and you're loyal to them.

As principals, and as a principal, I was very conscious of trying not make the oops
list. And I'd like to share the oops list with our audience at this time. And this was also
done from an educational survey, and it’s called the top 14 categories of mistakes most frequently made by school principals. And it’s interesting. Some of these are very minor, but principals wish to lead. I believe that principals wish to be good leaders. The Department of Education and the State University of West Georgia conducted this survey. Let me read to you the 14 top oops list.

Number 14. Public address system interruptions.

Number 13. Snap judgments.

Number 12. Failure to hold staff accountable and the failure to follow through.

Number 11. Showing favoritism.

Number 10. Inconsistency.

Number 9. Forgetting what it’s like to be a teacher.

Number 8. Being control oriented.

Number 7. Lack of knowledge about instruction and curriculum.

And the number six item on the oops list is failure to lead.

Number 5. Avoiding conflict.

Number 4. Lack of educational priorities.

Number 3. Poor interpersonal communications.

Number 2. Ineffective human relations.

And the number 1 oops list item was the lack of values and ethics in leadership.
DON BROWN: I'm glad you didn't say, Don, I want you to say oops every time one of those gets you as you went down that list, because unfortunately some of those were things that I had to say oops about over the years.

You talk about courage, the five Cs that you talked about, and the one that really stood out—and they're all very important as you have articulated already—but the one that really stood out to me is courage. It really takes a lot of courage. And that goes beyond using the school board or the state law or federal law or the code of ethics or whatever. It goes beyond all of that in being able to stand up and be courageous. And I can think of those instances, and I know you can too, where we had students and parents or even teachers in our office and discussing very, very difficult, difficult issues and have the courage to make those decisions. That is something that—I actually don't think you can exist today as a principal without some real strong courage. And, hopefully, you have some support for that courage. But it's a courageous thing to be involved as a principal.

Clip 3: Code of Ethics for Administrators: A Texas Example – Part 1

DON BROWN: Let's backtrack a little bit. I think you are exactly right; I think those things are above and beyond. Let's talk a little bit about the standard of ethics, and particularly the Texas Chapter 247, the Code of Ethics. There are five of those principles that are listed
in the Administrative Code for Texas. And these are things that we are required to do by law. Again, in the whole context of what we're trying to say, the point I think we're trying to get over to our audience is that these things are a must. It's like a TAAS test or a TAKS test, or it's like other kinds of things in Article 94142, Special Ed. We don't really have a choice about these things. We're going to be held accountable for these things.

Above and beyond that, the decisions we make relative to values and ethics really will probably be more of a stamp of our leadership and our principal role than anything else. The five principles of the Code of Ethics. And interestingly enough, of the five principles, three of those deal with relationships, and we talked about relationships a moment ago as being one of the critical attributes of the behaviors of a principal and the actions of a principal.

But number one is professional ethical conduct. And that deals with the business of the school; it deals with the integrity of the school; it deals with does the school do what it says it's going to do; is it fair; is it up to the standard; is it up to par with what the expectations are. I think that's something that most principals find—I don't want to use the word easy because it's not easy—but I think it's relatively less challenging than some of the others. But standard one, or principle one, is professional ethical conduct. Are you ethically treating people, not people, but are you ethically following out the requirements and expectations of the school?
The second one is professional practices and performance. And that’s about how you manage your school. Most of spend most of our time managing the school, and that could be fortunately or unfortunately, depending on which side you come down on that. But it's one of the things that we have to do. We have to manage the school. We have to follow the policies, the regulations and expectations of the school.

But those two, I think in my experience, were much easier for me to deal with than the next three. And those next three deal with people, and they're about relationships.

Standard number three deals with professional colleagues, your ethical conduct toward professional colleagues. And that would be, obviously, your staff; that would be, obviously, the people in the central office or the people that you deal with in the school, in what we call the school community.

And then number four would be your ethical conduct relative to students. And I guess probably on our epitaph that's really where we're going to be measured. Were we ethically fair and upright, and did we make decisions that were positive for kids and that helped kids learn, which is obviously what we're all about.

And then the fifth one, the one that we may flunk from time to time, is your
ethical conduct toward parents. And as that parent is sitting or standing in your office—
hopefully sitting and hopefully not standing over you—but as they're sitting or standing
in your office and calling you some of their favorite names, it's very difficult for you to
remember that I must maintain my ethical conduct relative to that.

I think it's interesting that of the five standards in Chapter 247, the Code of Ethics
for Principals, three of those deal with relationships. And I think that's really what values
and ethics is all about; it's about relationships and how we deal with those relationships.

**Clip 4: Code of Ethics for Administrators: A Texas Example – Part 2**

DON BROWN: The other one is the TAC 241 that deals with the principals. Would you share
that.

ARCHIE McAFEE: In Texas, we have the Texas Administrative Code, and as Don mentioned,
Chapter 19, Section 241, dealing with the principal certificate. The principal certificate is
titled, "Creating a Professional Pathway for the Texas Principalship." And the opening
statement of this section of the Texas Administrative Code says that each individual
serving as a principal or assistant principal is expected to actively participate in
professional development activities to continually update his or her knowledge and skills.

Currently in best practices and research as related to both campus leadership and student
learning, both of those are essential. You just mentioned student achievement.

The following knowledge and skills base must serve as a foundation for preparation, certification, assessment, professional growth plans and continuing professional education for principals and assistant principals in Texas. And we have several—they're titled Learner-Centered Values. I'm going to share all of them with you, but I'm only going to expand on one. And that first one is values in leadership. The others are leadership and campus culture; human resource leadership and management; communication and community relations—and you talked about relationships, Don, and how important that is for the principal; organizational leadership and management; instructional leadership and management; and curriculum planning and development.

Let me just talk about values and ethics of leadership. And these are the issues or the standards by which the Texas Administrative Code wishes principals and assistant principals to gain professional development.

Values and ethics of leadership—and it says that a principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity and fairness in an ethical manner. At the campus level, a principal understands values and is able to do the following:

Number one: Model and promote the high standard of conduct, ethical principles and integrity in decision-making actions and behaviors.
Number two: The principal implements policies and procedures that encourage all campus personnel to comply with Chapter 247 of this Title and relating to the Code of Ethics, as you mentioned, and the standard practices for Texas educators.

The third learner-centered value of ethics of leadership is to model and promote the continuous and appropriate development of all learners in the campus community.

The next value and ethics of leadership that is learner-centered is to promote awareness of learning differences, multi-cultural awareness, gender sensitivity and ethnic appreciation in the campus community.

And to articulate the importance of education in a free democratic society.

Those are the learner-centered standards for the Texas Administrative Code. It's embedded in the pathway of the Texas principalship, and is a standard by which all principals are asked to be judged.

**Clip 5: Applying the Ethics Code to the Day to Day Job of Being a Principal**

DON BROWN:
I imagine at this point our audience is probably saying those are all fine and good;

I knew about those, and I can look those up, and they're on the internet, and they're in my code book, and I can probably get to that. But what does that really mean for me? What
does it really mean in my day-to-day operation of the school? What are the things that I specifically have to deal with as it relates to what we're calling the outline, the legal outline, of what is expected of a school principal in the state of Texas?

As principals typically do—we're pretty pragmatic, we like to pretty well have the thing organized; we don't do too well at just assuming when we get to the end of the day everything is going to be okay. We like to have that planned. And that's probably because we're doing so many things, we can't even remember. And when you get as old as we are, that's probably another reason we like to have a plan.

But talk to the audience a little bit about, in your role as the executive director of TASSP over these last 18 months, and what principals come to you about; what do they talk to you about relative to the whole framework of ethics and what we'll just call an ethical framework. What does that really mean? Kind of articulate that to our audience about how you deal with those people and what they're looking for and what kind of circumstances they've gotten into.

ARCHIA McAFFEE: Let me first of all just define the phrase he just mentioned; that's the ethical framework. And there are really three questions—and you talk about principals being concrete, sequential and wanting things in order. There are basically three questions that provide a specific framework for judging the ethical aspects of any potential action or decision. And those three questions are, that can be judged against any potential decision
or aspect is:

Number one, is it legal? That’s the first principal should ask himself or herself when they're dealing with a decision. Is it legal? Am I doing what legally is right? Am I going to stay out of the courthouse if I make this decision?

The second ethical framework question is: Is it balanced?

And the third question is: How will it make me feel about myself after I make this decision? Probably the most gut wrenching question of the three is: How will it make me feel about myself after I make this decision?

Let's talk about the first question. Is it legal? And you can go further and say, Will what I am considering break any laws? Will I violate any moral prospects? Number two, is there the slightest hint of illegality in our behaviors? The obvious legal meaning is typically is it criminal or civil. But educators should go beyond the basic legalistic considerations. Principals should examine the protocols and procedures embodied in regulations, in handbooks, embodied in school board policy. And each organization should have the high standard of honesty, integrity and fairness.

Talking about the question of balance. Said another way, is it fair. As a former orator, that was one of the first questions we used to ask ourselves in dealing with situations—is it fair to all concerned. But the second question or statement about balance
is: Will the actions and behaviors produce win/win outcomes? And as school administrators, we strive to produce win/win outcomes. The third statement concerning balance—will one of the parties to the dilemma be treated unfairly or, rather, unjustly as a result of the outcome. Is there really balance in the decision that’s about to be made.

And then the question: How will it make me feel about myself? You could ask yourself this question: Will I have a clear conscience after I make this decision? Number two: Will I be able to sleep at night after I make this decision? Number three: Will my colleagues still respect me after I make this decision? And, then, number four—probably the most important of all is: Will my family’s reaction be positive after I make this decision?

I’d like to make three points that capture the essence of ethical behavior in the ethical framework. Number one is: Be nice. Sometimes that’s hard when you’re in a very difficult situation to actually be nice. One that we all learned in kindergarten: Play fair. And the third point, above all else: Do no harm. And as we work with students and parents and community, that’s what we, in essence, try to do.

In developing this ethical framework, there are certain skills that go with developing the ethical framework. Let me ask you, Don, if you have some thoughts about the skill aspect of ethics.
DON BROWN: Before I comment on that, let me just say how will I feel after I've made the decision. And you related that to can I go home and go to sleep at night. And I've got to tell you, you've got to be able to do that. A simplistic view would be if for no other reason you need to examine how you're going to feel after you make the decision so you can sleep at night, so you can go back the next day for another dose. But I think that's a really critical part of our decision-making, because we do have to make difficult, difficult decisions.

I don't know if there's any doubt, I haven't seen as you may know, but how many of the decisions a principal makes on a daily basis are confrontational-type decisions or decisions where the principal is seeking, with all of the wisdom and all of the illustrious grandeur that they can muster up to make it a win/win situation; to make the student a winner, number one, and then, of course, make the faculty a winner or make the parent a winner or make the other school staff member a winner, but how do I feel about myself after I've made that decision.

Clip 6: Guidelines for Doing What Is Right

DON BROWN: Maybe you can use some of the other, and at this point we're beginning to get probably into some kind of what most people would consider just jargon about how you make those decisions. But you talked specifically about ethical skills. The first thing that jumps out in my mind about that is the old axiom that I don't just do the right thing, do all
But doing the right thing, a lot of times we can follow the law or we can follow the rules and we can do the right things; but to do it right, to give that person that maybe you’re making a decision against, the dignity of having the opportunity to present themselves and to—well, a good example would be a listener. A principal is a listener.

Before you make that decision or before you make a final decision that you spend time listening and giving the person who has the opposing view or a different kind of view the opportunity to be listened to, to be able to focus their ideas. So, not just do the right thing, but do it right when you do the right thing may be a good way to do it.

Ethical skills have significant moral and ethical implications, and some of those must be to act out of a sense of what is good for all. That’s the win/win. To be able to be a global—again, I don’t believe there’s anyone else in the school setting that has a global perspective more than the principal—to be able to look at all sides and understand the student’s side, to understand the parent’s side, to understand the teacher’s side, to understand the program’s side, to understand the political side—and be able to weigh all of those kinds of things, as we said before, and try to make everyone a win/win. But to have a good sense of what is good for all; to have a clear mental picture of the right thing.

To be able to visualize this is not just doing the right thing, but it’s doing it right.

To identify the best behaviors for the members of the staff. We are a role model,
and you're not going to, or we're not going to, and I certainly did not as a principal, was not able to change the behavior of my faculty by sending out a bulletin or, certainly, getting on the PA and say, Guys, we need to do this or that. They need to see us as a role model. And I believe the role model may be one of the most powerful roles that a principal has in the building, and you set the standard with that role model.

To define what is acceptable. I have visions of all kinds of things, and I know some particular stories that I won't share with you today, where principals set standards in the building by being willing to accept something less than the moral or ethical best on the part of the faculty. Again, you will be the standard. If it's acceptable to you, guess what? It's going to be acceptable to the rest of the staff. And whatever you do is going to speak so loudly, they're not going to be able to hear what you say if you don't model that.

Define what is unacceptable. Again, your behavior, our behavior, our role as the role model on the campus will do more to define what is unacceptable behavior than anything else. If I act some way, I should expect my faculty to follow in suit. If I act unacceptably, I can guarantee you there will be some unacceptable behavior on their part.

To create an environment where questionable activities are never considered appropriate. That's the unspoken word. Where everybody just understands the whole premise of what the principal is about, what the leadership, the integrity, the values of the principal; that just never comes into question. It's not really a debate. So you don't have
the situation where people in the lounge saying, Well, what do you think Mr. McAfee
would think about this; or how do you think Mr. McAfee would react to this; or do you
think he would be upset if we did this? I think a principal who exhibits the characteristics
of positive values and ethics, that kind of conversation will not go on, because they know,
they already know how you're going to respond and how you're going to react.

To explain and model why the behavior is wrong—as we said before—and to
refuse to compromise on ethical issues. We, in a day and time when probably other than
learner-centered, the most typical common buzzword is standards, we understand. And
you can't put that down. You can't say, I don't want to be the standard in my school. We
will be the standard in our school, and you as a principal on your campus will be the
standard in your school.

Clip 7: Leading By Example: The Principal As the Standard Bearer

DON BROWN: Talk a little bit about how you actually manage that role as the standard bearer, as
setting the standard for your campus, Archie.

ARCHIE McAFFE: Well, the way you do that, Don, I think, is by averting trouble. I have in my
hand

here eight important trouble averters. If these are followed by principals, then their
ethical skills will be enhanced.
Number one—the number one of the eight trouble averters is to be clear about
your own ethical principles. As you said, leave no question in your staff’s mind about
what ethically will be done on your particular campus.

Number two: Know the difference between being a professional and being a
friend. Sometimes that’s difficult, especially in any school when you have a staff that has
been together for a long time, and you develop those friendships, sometimes it's difficult
to know the difference between being a professional and being a friend.

Number three: Never violate the trust of those you work for or of those who work
for you. It goes back to where you mentioned in the very beginning about trust, having
trust of the staff.

Number four: Understand that most ethical issues are rarely as simple as they
appear. Sometimes a decision made—as one in the oops list—snap judgment can
become a very critical issue in a particular school or on a school campus.

Number five: Communicate your ethical principles in speaking and in writing.
Again, setting the standard for the staff so they know what your expectations are as a
principal in terms of ethical behavior.

Number six: Discuss ethical issues with faculty and with staff. A good time to do
this is at the beginning of the school year. Reinforce each year the ethical standards you
expect from your staff.

Number seven: Deal with violations of ethical principle. Sometimes that’s difficult, especially if the person who is in violation is a friend.

Number eight: Live and model your ethical beliefs in all your actions. And we’ve all heard the expression "actions speak louder than words." And the number eight trouble averter here is the one that speaks loudest to all of us.

Don, in talking about the eight trouble averters, there’s also what I like to call the ethical checklist. And this is a self-administered test that you can give yourself to determine if you’re on the right course of action. The three tests are simply this. Number one, the stench test; the front page test and the mom test.

The stench test is, is there something about the way we handle this situation that will cause a stink. Does this course of action have the odor of corruption? Does it seem to run against moral grain?

The front page test question is: How would you feel if you or a staff member or the school were to appear on the front page of the local newspaper as a result of what you just did? How would you feel if this apparently private matter suddenly became public?

If your answer is not so good, then you had best not make that decision.
The mom test says: Ask yourself what would my mom say about this decision?

How would my mom judge my ethical and moral behavior?

If you use these three tests as an ethical checklist—and if you're dealing with a problem that fails any of these tests, then you might as well forget about going any further, simply because you have a right versus wrong situation.

DON BROWN: That's personal, Archie. The mom test. You talk about standards. That's a standard for all of us to try to meet up to the mom test. Of course, moms are pretty forgiving, too, even though we fail our test, they're pretty forgiving.

Clip 8: Considering Ethics and Values In All of Your Decisions

DON BROWN: What we've outlined today probably seems overwhelming, particularly to new administrators. To some of the more experienced administrators, it might be I've been telling you this all along. But it really is empirical that we make decisions with the consideration of our own particular standards of values and ethics. I think that once we make those decisions, if we have given those considerations that you—and even as simplistic as they may sound—that particular litmus test or the stench test and the front page test and the mom test is a pretty critical standard for all of us to make. And it will probably be successful if we can meet those standards.
This extraordinary behavior that we're expecting principals to possess and to be able to model on a daily basis, is there a way that you can do that more easily? Can we kind of make that more simple, more easy, more easily done by the principal? Do you have one more little niche that you can add in there so the folks out there can say this is something I can really hang my hat on and this can make my impossible task somewhat possible?

ARCHIE McAFFE: In closing, I will share with you what I call the five Ps of ethical power. And I believe if a principal follows the five Ps of ethical power, he will pass the stench test, or she will pass the stench test, will have the trouble averter, will not make the oops list, et cetera. Let me summarize and complete our segment here by talking about the five Ps of ethical power. And the five Ps are: Number one, purpose; number two, pride; number three, patience; number four, persistence; and number five, perspective.

Let me talk about purpose just for a moment. Purpose is an ongoing objective, an intention in which one always is striving. It's not a goal, rather it is a road you choose to travel, and it's your personal mission statement.

The second P of ethical power is pride. And pride is the sense of satisfaction from accomplishments, yours and others, in the organization. It comes from a strong, healthy sense of self, often called self-esteem. One must be careful of false pride which reveals itself if the leader's taking all of the credit.
The third P in ethical power is patience. Good things do not happen quickly.

Effecting shortcuts often cause problems. Trust that things will work out and keep moving with purpose.

The next P of ethical power is persistence. Persistence means stick-to-it-ness.

You need ethical toughness. As Churchill said in perhaps his shortest speech, "Never, never, never give up."

And the last of the five Ps of ethical power is perspective. This is the capacity to see what is really important in any given situation. It is the ability to separate the urgent from the important. As you said in the very beginning, it's simply not just doing the right thing, but doing things right.

DON BROWN: Thank you for joining us. Archie, it has been my privilege to visit with you this morning. Hopefully, some of the bridges that we've had the opportunity to cross over the years, and some of the things that we've been able to share today for our audience will help principals understand there's no diminishing to any degree the challenges and the expectations that they will face. But we do really believe for you to be a successful principal, you will have to model the values and ethics that we talked about today, even above and beyond all of the rules, regulations, policies and laws that you'll have to deal with on a daily basis.
We think this is the standard. Thank you for taking the time and your expertise in sharing that with us this morning.

ARCHIE McAFFE: Thank you.