

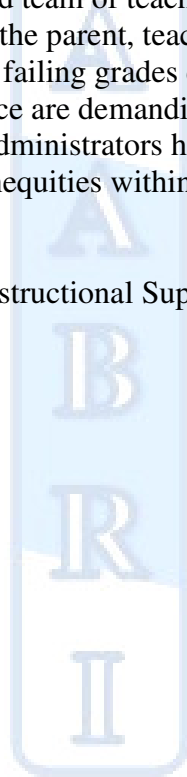
Leadership effectiveness and instructional supervision: the case of the failing twin

Collette Madeleine Bloom
Texas Southern University

Abstract

This case study examines the leadership practices of an effective versus an ineffective elementary school principal. The background of this case involves two fourth grade teachers, each teaching one of a set of identical twins. Discrepancies in teaching and grading practices result in one twin failing. The decision-making choices of the principal in working with a strongly engaged parent and a disgruntled team of teachers are reflected by a behavioral and leadership style that ultimately alienates the parent, teachers and central office personnel. Upon investigation, the principal finds that the failing grades do not appear to be well substantiated. The parent, the teachers, and central office are demanding action from the principal. Implications for practice suggests how administrators have a duty to supervise and monitor instruction regularly, thereby reducing inequities within the horizontal and vertical instructional delivery system of the school.

Keywords: Leadership Effectiveness, Instructional Supervision, School Climate; Communication, Organizational Change



Case Narrative

The Principal

Principal Janet Rivington was confused and frustrated as she sat at her desk, thinking about the recent events in her school. She listened to the mingling of teachers' voices as they checked their mailboxes outside of her office, joking and discussing plans for the weekend. Rivington sighed, as she knew her weekend would consist of returning phone calls, finalizing paperwork, and community meetings.

A bilingual campus, Oren Elementary is comprised of approximately 60% Latino and 40% African-American students. Rivington was pleased that her staff was closely representative of the student body, though she did believe with such a high Latino population that either she or one of her two assistant principals should be bilingual. Oren had low levels of parent involvement, with the involvement it did have coming largely from parents of students in the bilingual program. Located in a high crime area, the students who populate the school come from extremely low socioeconomic backgrounds. Rivington has been principal of Oren Elementary School for five years, and she had recently started to wonder if it was time for a change. At the middle school level would she encounter these same problems, or would she merely be trading them for a worse set of problems?

Rivington prided herself on being an administrator that her teachers could confide in whenever they needed assistance in the classroom. She believed in empowering teachers to make sound instructional decisions, and she saw her position as largely an advisory role. She felt in tune with the attitudes of her staff, although she knew she did not pry into their day-to-day activities as much as other principals did. She viewed her staff as professionals who did not need micromanagement. She expected to be made aware of issues as needed. She viewed the principalship as a position of guidance and instructional leadership that she believed fostered a collaborative effort that was highly conducive to student achievement.

When Rivington became principal, Oren Elementary was in danger of being sanctioned by the state for 3 years of low test scores and possibly supervised by a state school monitor. The low test scores, high teacher turnover, and the negative teaching was a challenge that Rivington believed that she was well prepared to handle. She was proud during her tenure as principal, scores on the state assessments had risen slowly, but steadily. Within the past two years, she felt the staff had stabilized. The beginning had been a bit uncomfortable. Some people believed she was not realistic in her expectations for her teachers and many had difficulty transitioning from the transactional leadership style of the previous principal. Her predecessor used a penalties and rewards system to gain control of teacher behavior. Rivington engaged in a transformational leadership style that encouraged teacher empowerment and fostered individual professional development. She believed this would then lead to improved and increased student learning.

At times, Rivington struggled to reconcile her vision of the principal's role with other conflicting outside expectations. However, as time passed, most teachers who did not share her philosophy of teaching and were not willing to adjust to it left the school (with a few notable exceptions). She felt that most of her teachers appreciated her approach to leadership. Rivington attributed much of the ongoing growth at Oren largely to the degree of instructional freedom her teachers were allowed. She was enjoying the positive climate of her school, which she attributed to her energetic, positive, and supportive staff. She expected to see continued student and teacher achievement in the future. In this case, however, it seemed her ideology was backfiring. Where had she erred so gravely? She sat back in her chair, tracing her current problem back to

the beginning.

The Parent of the Twins

Twins Tanya and Teresa Boyd had enrolled at Oren in September. As is standard procedure for twins, they were placed into two different fourth grade classes. Tanya was assigned to Myra Dary's class and Teresa was placed in Kayla Johnson's class. Trouble began brewing the first day of school when Ms. Boyd became quite upset that Ms. Johnson was collecting all the students' school supplies, rather than letting them keep them. Ms. Boyd sent out vicious, accusatory e-mails and bombarded both Ms. Johnson and Rivington with phone calls. Rivington knew Ms. Johnson's rationale for keeping the supplies in the room. By making school supplies "community supplies", they stretch much longer into the year, and it takes the pressure off students who are unable to bring their own supplies. Eventually Ms. Boyd was calmed down enough for discussion on the topic. Rivington remembered thinking that was the end of it. How naïve, she realized now!

Essentially, everything the two fourth-grade teachers did was inconsistent between them. From the organizational management of the classroom to the discipline to the workload of the students – nothing was the same, and Ms. Boyd flew into rampages, regardless of how Rivington and the teachers attempted to address the situations. Within the past few months or so, Ms. Boyd had seemed to shift her focus from attacking both teachers, to only Ms Dary. Not only that, but she had begun comparing Ms Dary with Ms. Johnson. She barraged Rivington with phone calls and surprise office visits on why Ms Dary did not assign the same homework as Ms. Johnson, why Ms Dary did not give weekly reading tests like Ms. Johnson did – the list seemed endless.

At one point, in the middle of the front office, Ms. Boyd declared that Tanya's entire education was essentially being compromised at Ms Dary's hands. Rivington had informed the front office staff not to allow Ms. Boyd to go to the fourth grade hallway, but with so many students and parents in the morning, she was often able to slip by the office, unnoticed. Ms. Boyd had, on several occasions, been in the classroom when Ms Dary arrived in the morning, or returned following her afternoon duty, hurtling accusations and insults. District office personnel were aware of the situation, as Ms. Boyd had included them in numerous e-mails and phone calls. Rivington realized this was reflecting poorly on her, as she should be able to handle this one parent without the situation escalating. For that reason, Rivington had chosen not to inform her supervisors that the situation with one parent was polarizing a large portion of her staff, and severely affecting faculty morale. She was embarrassed that the situation with Ms. Boyd was escalating into public relations nightmare.

The Teachers

Rivington knew Ms. Boyd was right in some ways, and she thought about how different Myra Dary and Kayla Johnson were. Both were recently hired, but not novice teachers. Ms Dary came to Oren three years ago, and she was currently in her fourth year of teaching. Ms. Johnson began her teaching career with Rivington at Oren three years ago, the same time that Ms Dary transferred to the campus. Any similarities seemed to end there. From her first year of teaching, Rivington had been impressed with Ms. Johnson's classroom management and structure. She held her students to extremely high standards (academically and behaviorally), and her students were among the very best behaved class in the school. Rivington winced as she

thought about her last visit to Ms Dary's class. It seemed the antithesis of Ms. Johnson's class. Children were all over the room, apparently with no sense of direction, while Ms Dary yelled at them to stop talking. "I Will Survive" began loudly playing from Ms Dary's purse, and she told the kids to "hold on" while she answered the cell phone. Rivington knew (or at least hoped) that was not typical behavior for Ms Dary's class, but she also knew she had never observed anything like that in Ms. Johnson's class management style.

Following that observation, Rivington conferred with Ms Dary, detailing her concerns, and she had given Ms Dary an opportunity to ask questions and outline the means by which she would address the various issues. A firm believer that teachers feel morally and professionally obligated to do what is in the best interest of their students, Rivington thought that with appropriate guidance, Ms Dary would learn from the experience and use it to become a stronger teacher. Unfortunately, Ms Dary was far from receptive to the feedback and did not follow through on Rivington's request to discuss how she would improve her instructional delivery. Rivington had been in the process of following up on this when this current situation with Ms. Boyd emerged.

Ms Dary taught language arts and social studies, and she blocked with Ms. Andrews, who taught math and science. Ms. Johnson, on the other hand, was self-contained, and she attributed much of the structure in her classroom to that. The eight fourth grade teachers were a tight-knit group, and they all had commented that Ms Dary has a "tough" class. Prior to the start of the school year, Rivington had considered making the entire fourth grade team self-contained, but she had decided to allow teacher discretion for one more school year. Rivington felt that different teachers taught better in different settings, and she felt she could be flexible on this issue to best support their interests and development. She had noticed, however, that several of the teachers attributed behavior problems, at least partially, to being blocked. Initially she had wondered if that was an attempt by teachers to shirk responsibility for the behavior of their students, but she dismissed that, as she felt it was important to her philosophy as the leader of the school that she believed in her teachers and believed they wanted the best for their students. Still, at times, the thought resurfaced, particularly when dealing with Ms Dary. She knew Ms Dary's class would likely look (and sound) the same if she were self-contained, as would Ms. Johnson's if she were blocked.

There were four bilingual and four monolingual/ ESL fourth-grade classes. Even if she wanted to, it would have been impossible for Rivington to give both Tanya and Teresa different teachers, while keeping the children in separate classes, due to Ms Dary and Ms. Andrews blocking. She had considered the possibility of moving Tanya out of Ms Dary's class and into Mr. Ewin's, but Mr. Ewin was a first-year teacher, already with a "tough" class of his own. He seemed very overwhelmed, and she did not want to add to that. In addition, she preferred to avoid class changes, as she felt it was important that students learn to deal with different situations, and parents learn that the principal stands by her teachers. Rivington felt that, at least initially, immediately switching the children's classes may have been perceived as legitimatizing Ms. Boyd's claims of differences in teaching and management in the fourth grade classes.

Rivington was surprised when the fourth grade team (all eight teachers) had come to her office, expressing their concerns over this situation. It seemed they felt Rivington wasn't supporting them enough. Ms Dary and Ms. Andrews had been the most vocal in the group, but others expressed the same sentiment. Essentially, they felt Rivington was working too hard to appease Ms. Boyd, and she needed to take a strong stand that she was behind her teachers.

The Communication Network

Caught off guard and feeling defensive, after she explained her situation, Rivington turned the conversation toward some of the particular issues Ms. Boyd had raised. In reflecting back to the meeting with the fourth grade teachers, that perhaps she made an error in communicating her perceptions about the state of the fourth grade. Perhaps, her language and decisions served to solidify in the teachers' minds that she was just out to cover herself. The following week, at the weekly department head meeting, a fifth grade teacher brought up this issue. Fifth grade, it seemed, wanted clarity on this issue as they would have to "deal with this" next year. Department heads are responsible for reporting back to their teams what is discussed at the weekly meeting with the principal, and it was at that point it became a school-wide issue, though Rivington believed it was still containable and manageable.

She held a meeting with the fourth grade teachers later in the week. She knew she had lost their confidence in her as a leader, and she felt that right now, she needed to do damage control with her staff, to prevent any further escalation of this problem. She thought this meeting would be an opportunity to demonstrate her support for the teachers and her understanding of how stressful these situations can be. She began by outlining some of the problems Ms. Boyd had raised and that she had rejected or dismissed as untrue. These seemed fairly mundane issues that Rivington thought would help her reach some common ground with the teachers. These concerns included classroom homework policies and restroom privileges, which she understood were grade level policies. Each teacher may give different assignments, but policies on incomplete or late work were the same. She found this not to be the case, specifically noting the differences between Ms. Johnson and Ms Dary. Ms. Johnson stated reading and math homework are assigned daily, possibly with spelling or other assignments as well. She also stated that she does not accept late or incomplete homework, aside from extreme circumstances. Ms Dary, on the other hand, seemed to have no clearly articulated policy regarding assigning or turning in homework. The other teachers varied as well. Rivington recalled that what she had thought was common ground was already problematic.

Restroom policies across the grade-level varied as well. Ms. Johnson's students used the restroom as a whole class twice a day. There were no individual restroom breaks in her class, emergencies aside. She expressed mild resentment toward teachers who seem to "just let their kids go", as Ms. Johnson's classroom was right next to the restroom. Ms. Ms Dary seemed immediately defensive when Ms. Johnson made that remark and had begun whispering with Ms. Andrews.

Change Happens

Realizing these differences, Rivington saw that her initial plan of this meeting to serve as a consensus-building session had to be changed, as she felt there needed to be consistency across the grade levels in certain issues. She then outlined several issues that the fourth grade teachers needed to reach consensus on to avert further discrepancies among teachers. She hoped in doing so they would have a more conciliatory attitude with her as well. If there is agreement and consistency in these matters, then there will be much less opportunity for others (such as Ms. Boyd) to question them. Rivington saw this as an opportunity to empower the teachers to improve the school, as well as protecting themselves from incidents in the future.

The teachers however, viewed these newly implemented policies and practices as

catering to Ms. Boyd and not supporting the teachers. While Ms Dary and Ms. Andrews were willing to compromise on most of the issues, Ms. Johnson was resistant, particularly when she viewed the compromise as a lessening of her expectations. She adamantly refused to accept any homework past the due date. Rivington realized that this meeting, which she had scheduled with the intention of bringing the teachers together and opening the lines of communication, now had the potential to become extremely divisive. She saw that not only was this happening between her and the teachers, but among and between the teachers themselves.

When they discussed the issue of grading, Rivington was discouraged to find out that not only was there no consensus on the grade level of how many tests to give per subject, but that the first-year teacher, Mr. Ewin was unaware there was a required number of grades per marking period. Rivington made a mental note to schedule a conference with the fourth grade department head to address this lack of communication on the grade level. Rivington also regretted not recognizing this earlier in the year, and realized she was to blame for many of these inconsistencies. She showed Mr. Ewin the page in the staff handbook detailing the grading policy, and he became quite flustered and embarrassed. The other teachers said they give two grades per week, but they had no consensus for class work, homework, or major test grades. Mr. Ewin read from the handbook that grade books, along with lesson plans, are supposed to be in an easily accessible area for administrators to review. Rivington noticed the looks several teachers exchanged. No one left the meeting feeling any sense of improvement, and Rivington overheard Ms. Andrews grumble about "always making more work for us to do". Rivington realized she needed to address these issues with all grade levels, as it was unlikely fourth grade was the only one with such communication issues.

When she returned to her office, it was time for the weekly meeting of the administrative team. She sat down with her two assistant principals and began by informing them of what was happening with the fourth grade teachers. She asked if they were aware of other grade levels or departments with such inconsistencies. One assistant principal remarked that several of the first grade teachers had voiced concerns over "parents running the school". Together Rivington and the assistant principals began brainstorming a list of the different policies that they wanted to ensure had grade or school level consistency. The administrators met several more times over the course of the next few days. Rivington confided in her assistant principals that she hoped that she was making more out of this issue with Ms. Boyd than there really was, and after several days, she began to suspect she was right. No one had heard from Ms. Boyd, and things seemed to be running smoothly. Rivington was looking forward to this opportunity to improve relationships with her staff as well as remedy the inconsistencies.

Then she received a call from her supervisor and found out that Ms. Boyd called the superintendent, furious. Tanya, despite earning a commended performance on the statewide assessments, was failing social studies and earning a D in writing on her progress report. Ms. Boyd was demanding Ms Dary's resignation because her child, she repeatedly asserted, "is not an F student"! She continually compared her to Teresa, who also having earned commended performances, was earning A's and B's in Ms. Johnson's class. Rivington told her supervisor she had some background on the situation and she would look into it further and call her back this afternoon.

Rivington went to Ms Dary and asked to see her grade book. Ms Dary seemed immediately defensive, and Rivington tried to assure her that it was merely to make sure she would be fully informed at a later meeting. In reviewing the grade book, she found that Ms Dary was in compliance with the two grades per week policy, but that over the course of the past six

weeks, she had only included one writing homework grade, and Tanya apparently had not done the assignment. According to the district policy, homework is fifteen percent of the overall grade, therefore that one zero effectively lowered her grade fifteen percentage points. Rivington asked Ms Dary about this, and Ms Dary responded that there is no policy regulating the number of homework assignments in a given marking period. Rivington asked her to recall the meeting they had to discuss and prevent these sorts of issues. Additionally, the principal asked Ms Dary if she thought it fair that missing one homework assignment brought Tanya's grade from an 86% to a 71%. Ms Dary replied, "So because her mom is up here all the time, you want me to change her grade? Are you going to look in everyone's grade book in the whole school? Other teachers do this. Two grades a week, that's what the handbook says."

Rivington then asked to see Tanya's social studies work. Tanya had failed several major tests, and Ms. Boyd had argued that as a parent, she wasn't given notice or resources to prepare for the test. Ms Dary explained that they do social studies in class, and the in-class work prepares the students adequately for the tests. Rivington studied the grade book and after a few moments noticed that the vast majority of students had failed the major tests. Many of the grades were 30% or 40%, with only two or three higher than 80%. She noticed then that many of Ms Dary's students were failing social studies. She asked Ms Dary why this was so, and she replied that the students just aren't putting in the effort. Rivington suggested that if so many students fail a test, the problem may be with the test itself, or perhaps the preparation the teacher required was inadequate. Ms Dary responded that she uses the tests that accompany the textbook and the students need to complete the readings and the assignments.

Leadership Decision-making

Rivington returned to her office, pondering her next move. She had no doubt that the fourth grade teachers were clustered around Ms Dary, listening to how unjust Rivington was. That alone did not bother her much, but she was concerned about the widening rift between herself and the teachers. It was important the administration and teachers were a cohesive team, and Ms Dary's defensive and antagonistic attitude was troubling. Rivington wondered how this situation had gotten so out of hand. She should have been checking up on teachers more often, not only to prevent situations such as these, but so that teachers do not react so adversely when she does. She wanted to convey that she respected teachers' professionalism, so she tried to avoid scrutinizing their every action. She thought it was important to build teachers up, and she at times found herself trying to avoid criticizing them. She wondered how many other inconsistencies were present across her school. She also wondered how much of this greater issue of miscommunication and inconsistency she should share with her supervisor. By isolating the problem as only with Ms. Boyd, she knew she was masking the deeper problem.

Late in the day, two fifth grade teachers came in, asking if there is a grading policy change. Rivington, while knowing the answer, asked why they were asking this, and they muttered something about "everything going on in fourth grade." Rivington said that no, there is no policy change, and one of the teachers suggested they receive a new copy of the grading policy in writing, reflecting precisely how many homework, class work, and test grades are expected each marking period. The other teacher asked if it was true that they were no longer allowed to give tests from the book. Rivington said she would consider the suggestion and in the meantime advised the teachers to review their handbooks. She assured them that they are allowed to give tests from the book, as well as tests they devise on their own, provided that they

are fair tests, and assess what the students have been working on and are expected to know. On the way out of her office, one of the fifth grade teachers stopped and asked Rivington if it would be possible for neither of the Boyd children to be in her class next year.

Rivington closed her office door and popped two aspirin. That conversation had given her a pounding headache and raised questions as to her next course of action. Already the gossip mill was churning, and she knew she needed to take action to stop it. Oren had come too far and she had worked too hard to foster an environment conducive to communication and confidence among the staff. It could not be unraveling like this. The next faculty meeting wasn't scheduled for two weeks. Was that the forum in which she would bring this up? A staff-wide memo? Surely, this warranted more than that. How could the complaints of one parent turn this school upside down?

Why did the Boyd family have to move here anyway, she grumbled to herself. Couldn't they have just stayed where they were? In any case, she knew if it hadn't been the Boyds, it would have been something else that brought these inconsistencies to light. Now that some inconsistencies were being unearthed, how deep was this going to go? Was the whole school just out of control? Either way, it was rather depressing that the Boyds would be returning as fifth graders next year.

Now, Rivington's supervisor was expecting a telephone call, explaining the situation and informing her supervisor what the remedy would be to resolve this conflict that now was a discussion topic at the central office level



Appendix A: Selected e-mails from Ms. Boyd to Ms Dary

To: Dary, Myra
Cc: Rivington, Janet
From: Boyd, Camilla
Subject: Tanya Boyd

Ms Dary,

You gave my daughter a D in behavior yesterday for pushing another student. Did you SEE her push the other student or are you just going by what other students say, like usual? The other students pick on Tanya because they are jealous of how smart she is. She told me that a student pushed her and then lied to you. Why do you always believe the other kids? This is extremely unfair to my daughter!

Please call me immediately.
Camilla Boyd

To: Dary, Myra
Cc: Rivington, Janet
From: Boyd, Camilla
Subject: Tanya Boyd

Ms Dary,

Tanya told me you gave her a zero for talking during a spelling test. I'll have you know that my daughter takes her education very seriously and she would never talk during a test. She told me she had finished the test early (because the words were far too easy for her) and another student asked to borrow a pencil. When she gave the student a pencil, you said she was talking. Tanya is an excellent student and a zero will unfairly damage her grade.

Did you actually SEE Tanya talking or did you just assume she was?

Camilla Boyd

Appendix B: Selected e-mails from Ms. Boyd to Janet Rivington

To: Rivington, Janet
From: Boyd, Camilla
Subject: Tanya Boyd

Ms. Rivington,

Tanya has always been an excellent student and I do not understand why Ms Dary CONTINUES to neglect her academic needs. She is very advanced in reading and the homework Ms Dary gives her (when she bothers to at all) is silly. She is reading sixth and seventh grade level books at home and she gives her this baby stuff to work on. Do you know that she actually laughs at her homework? Ms. Johnson sends Teresa home with real homework, and it takes him about two hours to do. And she sends homework every night! After Tanya finishes Ms Dary's work, I have her do the same assignments Teresa has to do. At least then she starts learning something!

This is unacceptable. Tanya needs to receive work that challenges her.

Camilla Boyd

To: Rivington, Janet
From: Boyd, Camilla
Subject: Tanya Boyd

Ms. Rivington,

I e-mailed Ms Dary three times yesterday (you should know this as I cc-ed you) and left her a telephone message requesting that she call me immediately. She has not gotten back to me yet. This is extremely important and I find it insulting to me and to my daughter that she has not made the effort to return my calls. Aren't teachers supposed to be checking their e-mail?! Tanya is not being treated fairly in that classroom and I want to talk to that teacher!

Camilla Boyd

Teaching Notes

This case study will assist future administrators to analyze the **role of leadership and decision-making** in a school setting, and the effects that strong or weak leadership may have on the functioning of the school. It also involves considering and analyzing different and competing perceptions of leadership. A parent has twins in the fourth grade and she has become extremely upset at the apparent discrepancies between her children's teachers. Throughout the school year, she has attacked the teachers, frequently involving the principal and central office personnel as well. The fourth grade teachers feel insufficiently supported by the principal, and as a result, much resentment has built up between the teachers and the principal. This resentment has spread to the other fourth grade teachers and is starting to reach the rest of the school. Now, despite exemplary test scores, one of the twins is failing, unjustly according to the parent. Upon investigation, the principal found that the failing grades do not appear to be well substantiated. The parent, the teachers, and central office are demanding action from the principal.

This case is particularly relevant to the new administrator as it crosses the bridge from the teachers' perspectives to that of the principal. Most new administrators come from the classroom, and this can help provide insight into situations that seem simple at the surface, but are in reality more complex, or at least have the potential to become so. See *Cultivating Leadership in the Schools* (Donaldson, 2001) for more information. This case study will be useful for classroom teachers (both to those who are considering a career change to administration and those who are not) to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges in the role of principal and the interplay of personal attitudes toward teaching versus the various expectations of the role of leader of the school.

This case illustrates how poor **communication of expectations** from leadership to staff and failure to effectively **supervise and monitor the staff** can adversely affect the quality of instruction at the school. Recommended reading includes *The Nature of Managerial Work* (Mintzberg, 1973) and *Best Practices of Award-Winning Elementary School Principals* (Harris, 2005). For some insight into common mistakes made by principals, see "What Was I Thinking?" in *The School Administrator* (Davis, June 2005).

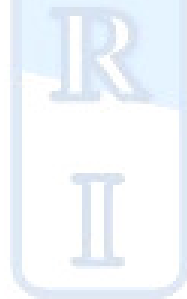
Additionally, this case brings up issues of the different perceptions of the role of the principal, and how these perceived roles could be in conflict at times (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). It addresses the issue of the principal as a strong leader in the school along with the issue of what constitutes a "strong" leader. It illustrates how a minor problem, initially between one parent and two teachers, has the potential to dramatically affect staff morale and confidence in the principal. It may seem easy to initially criticize Rivington's apparent lack of day-to-day supervisory activities without considering her personal philosophy toward her teachers and learning, as well as the value she places on respecting her teachers as professionals inclined to act in the best interest of their students and their own personal development. In addition, her particular implementation of the principalship has brought her school a significant degree of success. For a discussion on different **theories of change** for a deeper understanding of Rivington's personal beliefs, see *Educational Governance and Administration* (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy, & Wirt, 2004, pp. 37-40) and *A Conflict of Visions* (Sowell, 1987).

The changing of grades can only be completed under certain conditions. In certain cases, the principal can give an administrative directive to reassess and to change a grade when substantial evidence is present. Although these conditions vary in their wording from state to state (see your state education code guidelines), usually the conditions under which a teacher

and/or administrator can change a grade are as follows:

1. **Mistake**- A miscalculation with no malicious intent involved. This could also include a data input error.
2. **Incompetence**- The person assigning the grade is not certificated and therefore not allowed to legally record or determine a student's grade. (Ex. An uncertified long-term substitute with no teaching credential fails a student. The parent's have a right to question and demand evidence of how the student failed.).
3. **Fraud**- With purpose and with intent, a teacher assigns a failing or passing grade to a student without evidence of how the student earned the grade. (Ex. A teacher asks a student to commit a crime or engage in a sexual act, and in return the student will get an A or pass the course. If the child does not commit the act, the teacher punitively assigns a failing grade).
4. **Bad Faith**- The teacher represents on the course syllabus how students' grades will be calculated, but uses a different system to calculate the grade without telling the students. (Ex. The teacher deducts points from a test because the student was late for class.) The student's behavior cannot be used lower the score on a test. Tests are used solely to determine the student's acquisition of the tested subject matter. Students must be graded on what they know, not on how they behave. Behavior is a part of a deportment, or conduct, grade.

Finally, this case may promote a discussion on **school climate** and how that is related to the principal's leadership. Rivington worked to develop a positive atmosphere at her school, and in doing so seems to have masked a variety of problems. Perhaps the positive environment is more superficial than Rivington believes. For a discussion on school climate, see *The Spirit of Community Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda* (Etzioni, 1993).



Discussion Questions

1. What is the central problem in this case?
2. In retrospect, what was Rivington's most glaring mistake before school opened?
3. What should Rivington tell her supervisor? What should her course of action be to amend this problem?
4. Should Rivington make Ms Dary change her grades? What is the legal basis for changing grades?
5. Should Rivington make all of fourth grade self-contained next year? What are the advantages of departmentalizing in the upper elementary grades? What are the advantages of the self-contained classroom?
6. What do these inconsistencies in leadership indicate about the school, teachers, and administration?
7. How could Rivington have prevented this situation?
8. What should Rivington do now to foster faculty morale and confidence, particularly among the fourth grade teachers?
9. How does Rivington's attitude as a principal determine her leadership style and capability?

References

- Bloom, C. M. & Erlandson, D. A. (2003). African American women principals in urban schools: Realities (re)constructions, and resolutions. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 339-369.
- Davis, S.H. (2005, June). What was I thinking? *The School Administrator*. Retrieved June 19, 2005, from http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2005_06/davis.htm
- Donaldson, G.A. (2001). *Cultivating leadership in the schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Etzioni, A. (1993). *The spirit of community rights, responsibilities, and the communitarian agenda*. New York: Crown.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Harris, S. (2005). *Best practices of award-winning elementary school principals*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- McEwan, E.K. (2004). *How to deal with parents who are angry, troubled, afraid, or just plain crazy* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Mintzberg, H. (1973). *The nature of managerial work*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Queen, J.A. (2002). *The block scheduling handbook*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Sergiovanni, T.J., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M.A., & Wirt, F.M. (2004). *Educational governance and administration* (5th ed.). New York: Pearson.
- Sowell, T. (1987). *A conflict of visions*. New York: Morrow.

Biographical Statement

Collette Madeleine Bloom, Ed.D. is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas, USA. A former teacher, instructional specialist, assistant principal, and principal in public and private schools in Texas, her research interests are in the areas of qualitative research, urban school leadership and social justice. . She earned her doctorate from Texas A & M at College Station, Texas. She has published articles in *Educational Administration Quarterly* and *Qualitative Inquiry*.