

ON-DEMAND PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERIES



EPISODE 11

Principles of Personal and Professional Sustainability



EPISODE 11: Principles of Personal and Professional Sustainability

doodles and notes

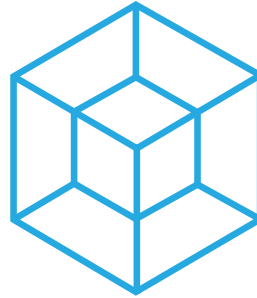
School administration is a demanding career. It is also a career where, because of the steep and long learning curve, success and longevity are linked. It is difficult to be a successful school administrator with little experience. And, it's difficult to gain that experience in a job that, because of its demanding nature, fosters short careers (Viadero, 2009).

A common attribute of the most successful education leaders is the depth and breadth of their success. They have discovered how to extend their professional effectiveness into other important life dimensions as well... the physical, social/emotional, and spiritual domains.

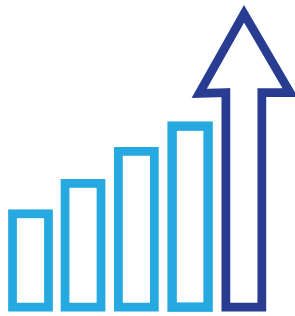
An Informal Self-Assessment

Assess your current level of development in the four dimensions:

PHYSICAL | SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL
SPIRITUAL | PROFESSIONAL



Growth, Rather than Balance



Most popular literature and common-sense advice suggest that busy administrators should seek a balance among the competing demands of life. The conventional wisdom is that there are only 24 hours in each day and one should allocate time and attention to work, self, home, recreation, rest, etc. on a daily or weekly basis. A corollary of this theme is the suggestion that we should keep the various dimensions of life separate as in “*don’t bring your work home with you*” or “*keep your personal issues out of the workplace.*”

More successful administrators understand and apply the concepts of balance and separation, but they also understand the underlying issues with greater nuance and insight. Experiences from their own lives and others’ have proven that success is not a zero-sum equation, a finite pie with just so many pieces to go around. Often, they’ve witnessed, *the more pie one eats, the more abundant the pie becomes*. They see the essential question as one of *growth*, rather than *balance*.

Growth = Increasing Complexity, Not Merely Balance

Excerpts from the national bestseller *Flow- The Psychology of Optimal Experience* by **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**

It is by becoming increasingly complex, that the self might be said to grow. Complexity is the result of two broad psychological processes: differentiation and integration. Differentiation implies a movement toward uniqueness, toward separating oneself from others. Growth in differentiation leaves one a more unique individual, less predictable, possessed of rarer skills. Integration refers to its opposite: a union with other people, with ideas and entities beyond the self. A complex self is one that succeeds in combining these opposite tendencies (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

George Bernard Shaw

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Complexity is often thought to have a negative meaning, synonymous with difficulty and confusion. That may be true, but only if we equate it with differentiation alone. Yet, complexity also involves a second dimension—the integration of autonomous parts. A complex engine, for instance, not only has many separate components, each performing a different function, but also demonstrates a high sensitivity because each of the components is in touch with all the others. Without integration, a differentiated system would be a confusing mess (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

GROWTH INVOLVES BOTH DIFFERENTIATION AND INTEGRATION

An Informal Self-Assessment

Assess your current level of development in the two aspects of complexity



Ripple effects over time. The underlying assumption that supports the *growth, rather than balance* approach to personal and professional sustainability is that by focusing on growth, development, and complexity, rather than balance, limits, and apportionment, one will benefit from the interplay of the domains over time. Increased health and vitality produce a ripple effect over time that leads to sharper

cognition and memory. Engaging in a book club causes self-reflection that produces a ripple effect over time that leads to greater awareness of implicit bias. This is the source of the growth that increases the size of the pie over time.

Recap: Principles of Sustainability

- Don't be a one-dimensional workaholic
- Think growth, rather than balance
- Seek growth in both differentiation and integration
- Hopefully, extend your career long enough to realize your potential

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“Difficult things take a long time, impossible things a little longer.”

Andre A. Jackson

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.”

Jane Goodal

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Bibliography and Additional Resources

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity- The psychology of discovery and invention*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Viadero, D. (2009, October 28). *Turnover in Principalship Focus of Research*, Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org>.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1993). 10th ed., Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

“Sustainability takes forever, and that’s the point.”

Willem McDonough