

CASE STUDY: *THE PASSIVE PRINCIPAL*



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THE PRINCIPALSHIP: THE PERSON & THE PROFESSION

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WORKING THE CASE

WHAT IS THE CENTRAL IDEA?

1. This case is about an experienced principal who volunteers to participate in a first phase implementation of SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT (SBM) mandated by the state.
2. In creating a school council, he decides to permit council members to be elected by the groups they represent (TEACHERS,PARENTS, STAFF), and *although he too is a council member, he assumes a passive role.*
3. Mr. Batz, *a super friendly but passive principal* was assigned to a school where infighting among teachers began to occur on the heels of SBM established norms.
4. He was assigned an initiative by the Superintendent (by way of the State) but was unable to cut through the negative energy of the warring factions of teachers.
5. He operated in a type of laissez-faire existence, but all that did was frustrate everyone around him to his ultimate demise.

WORKING THE CASE

WHAT ARE THE PERIPHERAL ISSUES IN THE CASE?

- **Teachers representing two warring factions are elected to the council. (KEY POINT #1)**
- **The principal's "hands off" or laissez-faire attitude angers the council chair, a parent and the president of the school's PTA. (KEY POINT #2)**
- Since Principal Batz doesn't want to take sides in any matter he finds himself being disrespected by all sides.

WORKING THE CASE

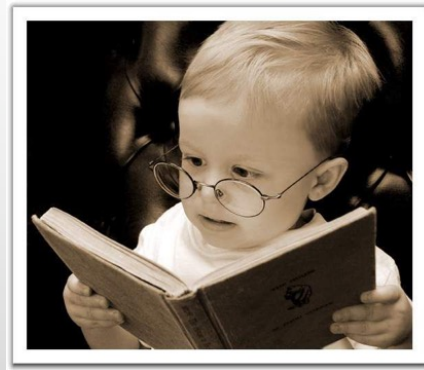
WHAT IS THE MOST ENGAGING ASPECT OF THE CASE?

THE PRINCIPAL KNOWING THE HISTORY THE TWO TEACHERS, TAKING A GAMBLE ON THEM
COLLABORATING.

THOUGHT: THEY WILL BE FORCED TO WORK TOGETHER WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF THEM GETTING ALONG.

THOUGHT: WILL THIS ALL GO SOUR?

THOUGHT: IT WILL ALL JUST IRON OUT



WORKING THE CASE

- WHAT ARE THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IN THE CASE?

Social conflict among individuals and groups in schools (or any organization where more than one person is working...really) can be a contributing cause to this case.

- THE PRINCIPAL'S PASSIVITY WAS AT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Batz' leadership style and decision to not have participatory involvement in the decision-making led to a disastrous dilemma thus shining a spotlight on the leader's role in conflict resolution.



WORKING THE CASE

Analyze the actions of the characters

- **ALBERT BATZ** – PRINCIPAL OUTGOING A SUPER FRIENDLY BUT PASSIVE
 - "MANAGING BY WALKING"
 - "SPENDS VIRTUALLY ALL OF HIS TIME WALKING THE HALLS"
 - USED PHRASES LIKE "I **HOPE** WE CAN WORK THIS OUT" AND "I **BELIEVE** THINGS WILL GET BETTER..."
 - A "NOVEL" PROBLEM **FOR HIM** WAS HAVING "TWO FACTIONS THAT DIVIDED THE FACULTY" (HE HAD NEVER DEALT WITH CONFLICT OF THIS NATURE)
 - THE PTO HEAD TELLS HIM PRIVATELY "AS PRINCIPAL YOU HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR."
 - SHORTLY (DAYS LATER) AFTER HE IS CONFRONTED BY THE PTO HEAD, THE SUPERINTENDENT TRANSFERS HIM TO A DISTRICT DESK JOB (ASSISTANT CURRICULUM DIRECTOR)



WORKING THE CASE

Analyze the actions of the characters



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- **AMY RADDISON AND TIM PAXTON** – THESE TWO TEACHERS RECEIVED THE MOST VOTES
- **BARBARA WHITLOW**, PTO PRESIDENT – SHE WAS THE WOMAN WHO OPENLY CONFRONTED BATZ AND IDENTIFIED HIS FOIBLES AND IDIOSYNCRACIES...CLEARLY AND POINTEDLY
 - “TWO DAYS AFTER VISITING THE PRINCIPAL, WHITLOW RESIGNED FROM THE COUNCIL BECAUSE OF BATZ’ INEFFECTIVENESS.”
- 1ST FACTION **JENNY BALES AND ARLENE MCFADDEN** (TEAM BALES)- ALPHA TEACHER WHO SPENT A LOT OF TIME INFIGHTING WITH TEAM TEEL
 - 2ND FACTION **LEONARD TEEL AND LUCILLE ISACSON** (TEAM TEEL)- ALPHA TEACHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS
- AMY RADDISON AND TIM PAXTON – 2 NOVICE TEACHERS NOT ALIGNED WITH FIGHTING FACTIONS.



STANDARDS

ELCC 1.1: Candidates understand and can collaboratively develop, articulate, implement, and steward a shared vision of learning for a school.

ELCC 1.3: Candidates understand and can promote continual and sustainable school improvement.

ELCC 1.4: Candidates understand and can evaluate school progress and revise school plans supported by school stakeholders.

ELCC 2.3: Candidates understand and can develop and supervise the instructional and leadership capacity of school staff.

ELCC 3.1: Candidates understand and can monitor and evaluate school management and operational systems.

- School-Based management (SBM) is arguably the most recognizable product of contemporary school reform strategies.
- The job of the principal was to decentralize the authority and decision making in public education.
- His belief was based on the fact that teachers become more effective when treated as true professionals. (Marzano, 2003). Democratic decision-making is at the core.

EXPAND THE CASE

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- NOW THAT BATZ IS GONE ON TO HIS DISTRICT JOB, THE NEW PRINCIPAL SHOULD NOT AVOID CONFLICT BUT DO HIS/HER HW ABOUT THE PREVIOUS PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE FORMER PRINCIPAL
- MAKE JOINT DECISIONS AND FLUSH OUT PROBLEMS
- ALLOW INPUT TO BE HEARD
- HAVE MORE COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS
- SUPERINTENDENT CAN SUGGEST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE BATZ' PASSIVE BEHAVIOR & POSSIBLY PUT IN BACK AS A PRINCIPAL IN 2 YEARS.



EXPAND THE CASE

REWIND AND REPLAY THE CASE –

What could have been done differently?

- Principal Batz' could have represented a more leader-like presence with a confident posture.
- He needed to be firmer and more confident in his stance. His Superintendent gave Batz' the option to establish a governance committee.
- The size and composition of the committee was not specified by the superintendent. He was too soft and fuzzy in selecting the size of the committee.
- Knowing his challenge in the teacher pool, he could have limited the number of teachers on the board OR he could have hand picked the group of teachers being mindful of the faction challenge that he was very fully aware. He needed a stronger BACKBONE!





EXPAND THE CASE

WHAT IF THE CASE WERE IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT?

- IF BATZ GAVE HIS STANCE IT COULD HAVE BEEN RESOLVED WITHOUT BALES AND TEEL GOING AT EACH OTHER CAUSING STRESS TO OTHERS
- IF MR. BATZ WERE TO GIVEN HIS OPINION IT COULD CAUSE ONE OF THE TEACHERS TO BE UPSET BUT IF WERE TO GIVE THE REASON FOR HIS ANSWER TO BE ITS WITHIN OR NOT WITHIN THE BUDGET IT WOULD BACK UP HIS STANCE.
- BARBARA WOULD REMAIN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE COUNSEL
- BATZ WOULD STILL BE PRINCIPAL OF ELM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



MOVE BEYOND THE CASE 2

CONNECT TO RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN SHAPING SCHOOL CULTURE

Principals know from experience that piecemeal reforms, reforms which ignore the inner realities of schools and who they are at their core will ultimately fail.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Ferris, j. (1992). School-Based Decision Making: A Principal-Agent Perspective. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Winter, 1992), pp. 333-346

Five Conflict Resolution Approaches

- Avoidance Conflict Style/Strategy
- **Yielding Conflict Style/Strategy (Batz)**
- Competitive Conflict Style/Strategy
- Cooperation Conflict Style/Strategy
- Conciliation Conflict Style/Strategy



QUOTE

“The heart of recent efforts in school decentralization involves shifting responsibility for decision making from the district to the school site. The district would have to gather extensive information to develop appropriate policies and enforce them.”

MOVE BEYOND THE CASE 3

WHAT IF YOU WERE THERE?

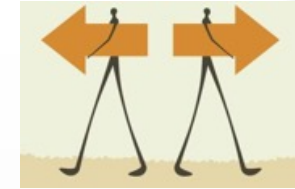
DEIRDRE

AS A SCHOOL LEADER IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH A CULTURE WHERE YOU CAN WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH A VARIETY OF PEOPLE. IF I WERE IN THE POSITION, I WOULD PROBABLY HAVE SELECTED THE PEOPLE TO BE ON THE COMMITTEE RATHER THAN LEAVE THE CHOICE UP TO A VOTE. KNOWING THE CHALLENGE OF THE TWO 'ALPHA' TEACHERS COULD BE AVOIDED. STAFF SHOULD HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR LEADER, EVEN IF THERE IS NOT ALWAYS AGREEMENT.



JOSEPH

IF I WORKED IN THIS SCHOOL THERE PROBABLY MIGHT HAVE NEVER BEEN THIS CONSTANT BICKERING AMONG THE STAFF MEMBERS. I WOULD HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY TRYING TO RESOLVE THESE INDIFFERENCES BY HAVING THEM MEET WITH THE LIAISON COMMITTEE. WE WOULD COME UP WITH STRATEGIES AND TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES TO TRY TO GET THEM TO FIND COMMON GROUND OR JUST TO LEARN THAT THEY NEED TO BE THERE FOR EACH OTHER. SOMETIMES EVEN JUST TALKING OUT THEIR FEELINGS CAN OPEN UP WHAT THE CORE ISSUE COULD BE AND THAT CAN MAKE BOTH PARTIES REALIZE WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON NOT WHAT THEY ARE THINKING IS THE PROBLEM.



MOVE BEYOND THE CASE 4

HOW IS THE CASE SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES?

DEIRDRE

MY PRINCIPAL HAS SOME ASPECTS OF MR. BATZ' CHARACTER, BUT NOT TOTALLY. SHE WAS NEW TO THE OLDER STUDENTS AND THE LARGE SIZE OF OUR SCHOOL AND TENDED TO WANT EVERYTHING TO BE "NICE." SHE IS VERY ACCOMMODATING OF THE STUDENTS AND STAFF, BUT SHE HAS A BREAKING POINT AND REPRIMAND VERBALLY ANYONE SHE FEELS NEEDS IT. SINCE THIS WAS OUR FIRST YEAR IN THIS LOCATION (BECAUSE IT IS A BRAND NEW SCHOOL), IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THE CULTURE WAS A LITTLE UNSTABLE. I CONCLUDED THAT HER ADMINISTRATOR ROLE MODELS MAY HAVE BEEN A FACTOR IN HER LEADERSHIP APPROACH OR HER LEADERSHIP STYLE JUST COULD BE WHO SHE IS.

JOE

MY PRINCIPAL IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THAN MR. BATZ. HE IS OPINIONATED AND HE DOESN'T HOLD BACK FROM GIVING HIS STANCE ON ANY GIVEN SITUATION. HE EXPRESSES THE WAY HE WANTS THINGS DONE AND IS CLEAR ABOUT IT WITH THE ENTIRE STAFF. HE WOULD HAVE HAD NO PROBLEM GIVING BARBARA WHITLOW HIS OPINION ON HOW THE MONEY SHOULD BE ALLOCATED. I COULD EVEN SEE HIM REMOVE THOSE TWO STAFF MEMBERS FROM THE COMMITTEE AND HAVING SOME STATE CODE THAT GIVES HIM THE AUTHORITY TO DO SO.