

**THE NOVICE PRINCIPAL:
CHANGE AND CHALLENGES**

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Rachel Wilson is a novice principal and new school leader of a large English junior-senior high school located in a rural township of a maritime province in Canada. Upon her appointment, she was challenged with having to establish herself as a credible leadership choice for the venue in addition to having to engage in new role learning as a first-time principal. Immediately, Rachel was charged with having to attain to provincial accreditation for her school while she faced leadership resistance from an informal veteran power group within the school. This case focuses on the challenges a beginning principal must manage in developing different dimensions of early-phase leadership, while, at the same time, achieving school improvement goals.

Case Narrative

Novice principal, Rachel Wilson, has been managing many of the challenges associated with new school leadership. This has included negotiating leadership and management tensions, developing leadership trust, and utilizing and participating in socialization processes. Currently, however, Rachel is in the midst of a leadership dilemma. As part of securing school accreditation required by the provincial Department of Education she has been charged with ramping up standards of teacher practice that involves the use of formative and summative evaluations of student progress in the areas of numeracy and literacy. Unfortunately, Rachel is experiencing resistance from members of an informal veteran power group within the school. They have ignored professional development designed to supplement their traditional classroom teaching

practices and dismissed her collegial and supervisory efforts to improve their student assessment and evaluation methods. What should Rachel do? From whom should she seek advice and support? To whom is she accountable? And how can Rachel best utilize her time and effort to help impart instructional leadership necessary to ensure that the school achieves school improvement goals?

Rachel's School

The school is a large junior-senior high school (Grades 7–12) employing 62 teachers and staff and serving close to 1,400 students from the surrounding community. It has been undergoing an extensive physical plant renovation and expansion the past year with project completion slated for academic year's end. Traditionally, the staff has been divided both physically and professionally along junior–senior lines with teachers referring to their division leaders for direction concerning daily operations and to their division colleagues for professional and personal support. Divisional distinctions in teachers' identities, functions, and leadership alignments have been exacerbated in the recent past due to numerous changes in principal. This has resulted in the balkanization of staff and the fracturing of teachers' professional responsibilities.

The school has had four principals in the last nine years, including the insertion of two individuals seconded from the school board. The two other principal placements were short-term assignments filled by senior members from outside the school. At this point, staff members have learned to inoculate themselves from the effects of rapid principal turnover and, as a result, ceded leadership allegiance to their division coordinators (vice-principals). However, this also resulted in many of the long-serving individuals from the high school teacher group, including

the high school vice-principal, to come together as a veteran coalition to serve as the de facto decision-makers for the high school section of the school. As a result, the position and the efficacy of the school's principalship has disappeared.

Enter the school's new principal—Rachel Wilson—who was promoted from vice-principal of the junior high division of the school. As a competent and committed “insider,” it was hoped by the school board that her appointment as the school's new leader would bring internal continuity and leader stability to the principalship. The school board had communicated to her that, in conjunction with the facility's upgrades and expansion, it was her responsibility to do much the same with the school's academic programs and administrative protocols. Ultimately, this meant leading the school and improving processes necessary for achieving “accreditation.”

School Accreditation

In an attempt to individualize educational objectives and align programs and resources for individual schools and their constituent communities, Canadian educational jurisdictions have ceded responsibility and participation for devising school improvement plans to the site level. In Rachel's province, the Department of Education has instituted a program requiring that all schools use onsite success planning to achieve school accreditation. Provincial School Accreditation is a five-year school effectiveness program intended to facilitate continuous school improvement focused on maximizing student learning and achievement.

School Advisory Councils (SACs) are the mechanism for driving change and improvement for each school within the province. These councils include school leaders, who, in consultation with school staff, parents, and school association members, are required to devise,

implement, and follow through on School Improvement Plans (SIPs). These plans include collectively constructed goals and objectives that address specific educational issues or challenges for individual schools and their learning communities. The School Accreditation Program requires schools to meet a standard of excellence based on goals that are specific and strategic, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound (SMART). Under the program, schools establish internal review teams to collect and evaluate data to identify both strengths and areas needing improvement. Based on those areas needing improvement, schools develop goals and a five-year school-improvement plan.

Once an improvement plan has been developed, an external committee comprised of administrators, teachers, and a parent from another educational institution evaluate the plan. Schools implement their improvement plan for years two and three and provide annual updates via school advisory councils to provincial educational authorities. Then, an accreditation team comprised of independent educators and administrators returns to the school after four years to assess progress. Finally, schools receive accreditation after they show progress toward the goals in their improvement plans.

In Rachel's case, she entered the accreditation process as school leader during the beginning of its third year of implementation. As the school's previous junior high vice-principal, Rachel worked to ensure that SIP goals were being met by her division. Unfortunately, the high school had fallen behind on implementing and monitoring school improvement goals, specifically in the area of increasing teachers' use of formative and summative evaluations of student progress. It was now up to Rachel, as the school's new leader, to remediate this situation.

Rachel's Challenges

Rachel Wilson entered the post in good standing. She was regarded by her junior high colleagues as an accomplished grade-level curriculum expert/advisor in addition to being a well respected junior high administrator. She entered the fray feeling confident and optimistic. However, Rachel also knew that, as a beginning principal, she would most definitely engage in new role learning as well as encounter numerous context-related challenges unique to the organizational dynamics of her school.

Rachel had a number of initial leadership challenges. As the school's new principal, she had to establish herself as lead authority and overcome accrued levels of staff indifference to the principalship due to numerous changes to school leadership in recent years. As a novice principal, Rachel had to develop trusting professional relationships with her colleagues by using both task-related and interpersonal abilities to support her staff in accomplishing organizational goals. This meant successfully negotiating the multiplicity of roles, functions, and duties associated with the principalship for the first time. In part, this also meant effectively participating in and carefully responding to the socialization processes influencing her leadership.

From the outset, Rachel felt determined to fulfill her superiors' leadership expectations and to prove to her staff that she was a good choice for principal. Her challenge was to demonstrate that she could handle the job as a leader. Given the distinct divide in organizational dynamics, Rachel felt it was imperative to harmonize the factions of her school as well as develop and fortify leadership trust with all members of the staff, especially with cynical long-standing faculty members connected with the high school. With the support of the school board's goal to bring stability to the position, Rachel announced that she would commit to take on the

school's principalship for at least the next five years. Unfortunately, Rachel's proclamation was met with skepticism and outright indignation from veteran members of the high school section of the school. Comments included these: "She only has junior high experience. What does she know about running a high school? We don't need her. She won't last."

Upon her announcement to the position in mid-summer, Rachel immediately set up shop at the school to read files, check policy manuals, converse with site builders, and get up to speed with and review progress on the school's accreditation process. The school was in its third year of a five-year process. During the final two weeks of summer, Rachel sent out an open invitation to all staff members to meet with her informally to discuss goals, ideas, issues, and possible concerns for the upcoming year. Rachel wanted to establish an open door policy with her staff. It was about getting to know the people and the organization from a leadership standpoint. Unfortunately, a noticeable number of high school teachers refrained. As a result, Rachel made sure to address the entire staff before school start-up. She briefly outlined her educational and leadership philosophies as the foundation for her values-based decision-making and action orientation. Teaching and learning processes were to be student centered with leadership being participatory, action-based, and distributed.

Immediately, Rachel experienced a sharp learning curve in responding to the multitude of tasks and responsibilities associated with the position. Initially, it was about learning administrative protocols and tending to the incessant bombardment of daily communications—phone calls, emails, and details, most of which were from the school board and outside agencies. She experienced administrative overload with the never-ending paperwork, forms, and letters to be sent. There was hardly a moment to move from her office to visit teachers or get together with her administrative colleagues to plan and problem solve. For the first few months, Rachel always

felt like she was forgetting something. The job was fluid and in constant motion with no real sense of completion at any time.

Eventually, Rachel learned to prioritize, discern, delegate, or dismiss aspects of her administrative workload including taking essential paperwork home with her during school nights or on weekends for completion. She did this to be visible and accessible with staff during the day. It was something she valued when she was the junior high vice-principal and something she chose to actively continue entering her third month of the principalship. Rachel decided to demonstrate her brand of leadership by spending time interacting with staff and students in the hallways, in classrooms, and during extra-curricular events even if it meant receiving criticism and reprimand from school board authorities for not returning emails and reports promptly. Although Rachel felt pressured to remain in her office she knew from her experience as a teacher and vice-principal watching other principals suffer from burn out and isolation that she would not succumb to the same fate. For Rachel, it was people first and paperwork second.

Rachel remembers having to gain an aggregate school perspective as part of being expected to deal with large scale organizational issues, something that required her to coordinate people and processes, embrace forward thinking, problem-solve, and differentiate the relative urgency of concerns and matters that were constantly presented to her on a daily basis: “Until you are actually in the trenches doing this job, I don’t think you can understand how demanding it is and how much you are constantly having things fired at you. . . . The tensions, pulls, and pressures seem to come from everywhere, all the time, and, sometimes all at once.” Whether it was working with Family and Social Services to deal with child support issues or figuring out ways to pay the tab to feed underprivileged students breakfast at school, Rachel soon realized that her job was all encompassing. It was when any kind of delimiting or displeasure arose that

Rachel felt the pressure of being in full authority. Whether it was responding to the constant barrage of bureaucratic requests from the school board, filtering the onslaught of business and commercial interests, subduing disgruntled parents, diffusing staff conflict, or dealing with student learning and behavioral issues, Rachel knew that, ultimately, it was her responsibility to resolve these issues.

During the first few months, Rachel relied heavily on her veteran support staff to teach her proper protocol with regards to fulfilling her administrative duties including attending to time-lines and keeping current with staff, school board, and community related communications. For any immediate policy related concerns Rachel would call the school board office for assistance where she would usually receive direction from the secretary: “For questions or requests requiring consultation, I was able to contact different coordinators within the school board. They were wonderful. Early on, I had a few that I called upon quite often. As I got to know people and responsibilities I was able to figure out where specific questions could be answered—It was all part of learning the system.” For leadership matters requiring discretion in dealing with staff and students issues, on occasion, Rachel would consult a retired principal who served as her mentor when she attended postgraduate studies years ago. Most of the time, however, Rachel relied on the counsel of one or two current school administrators whom she knew and trusted for advice.

Although Rachel attended monthly principals’ meetings led by school board officials to receive updates on administrative and policy matters, she did not find them very useful as a means of support: “Really, it was the downloading of more work, more initiatives, and more reports to be completed. Any discussion time was dominated by experienced principals where everything in their schools was great.” As a result, Rachel organized her own informal gathering

with first and second year principals she knew from her Master of Education cohort an hour before the official meeting. It was a chance to share their thoughts, concerns, and issues specific to being new principals. There was much commiserating but there was also useful problem solving. From this, the group formulated their own individual questions to be directed to the school board and their leadership coordinator.

Near the end of the year, the school district announced that they would be implementing principals' meetings specifically designed to support novice principals. With increasing numbers of first-time principals taking the helm, the school board decided to assist newly appointed and second year principals in meeting the challenges of new leadership. This meant organizing timely information sessions for school start-up and throughout the year, as well as providing a collegial forum for learning and sharing strategies to proactively trouble-shoot issues and concerns specific to novice leadership.

Over time, Rachel found herself spending countless hours in closed-door, one-to-one conversations with many of her staff. Although this allowed her to get to know many of her staff, she was quite surprised with the amount of counseling, redirection, and reassurance many of her colleagues required. Most of the time, it was about listening and empathizing, not necessarily providing answers. Individual conversations with staff members enabled Rachel to establish an ongoing dialogue and more personalized professional bonds with some of the staff. In a short time, Rachel became privy to an abundance of personal or professional information, much of which could never be shared with anyone, ever—not her administrative colleagues nor her superiors. Rachel felt strongly about this: “A lot of building professional trust is in what you say and do as a leader, as well as what you don't say. You never share anything that another staff

member has told you. Even if it's positive, a family or professional anecdote, you don't share it. You have to be very careful. It stays here, like it's in a vacuum or a vault."

As Rachel promised, the new staff room and department offices were completed before second term. She had spent many of her weekend hours during the first term working with construction supervisors to get this done to satisfaction. She had redirected construction to these areas at the expense of having her own office and parking area completed. With the support of school staff and students she had also put into place a later start and finish time to the high school day in order to stagger bus arrival and departure times for junior and senior high students. This made things much safer for students with less congestion for parents.

Of course, making changes was not always easy. Well-established staff members of the high school filled the leadership void left as a result of rapid changes in principals over the past decade. This resulted in veteran teachers and administrators narrowing the scope of school programming, backing hiring and funding protocols to reflect and support their own interests and areas of expertise. Rather than acting as a valuable source of information and support for Rachel's principalship, the long-time vice-principal of the high school sided with other veteran high school members in preserving and promoting their own power and preferences. As a result, Rachel faced real resistance to any type of change in normal operating procedures. The informal power group was steadfast in defending the status quo regarding teacher assignments, extra-curricular activities, and event leadership.

The same teachers and parents had been wielding power for their own means much to the detriment of fairness, growth, and change for the past many years in the high school. To the dismay of the Parent Association, after numerous conversations, Rachel finally stepped in to redirect fundraising to support whole-school related activities and not individually directed

parent preferences, as had been the case previously. Although, this may have contravened established protocol concerning parent involvement in administrative decision-making, she knew it was the right thing to do in moving the school forward in supporting all students.

To facilitate the growth and changes needed for achieving accreditation Rachel organized regular professional development sessions with teachers highlighting different types of student assessment and evaluation methods. In part, this also included keeping to a busy schedule of teacher observations. However, finding blocks of time for observations was an issue. Usually it was piecemeal at best. Fortunately, many of the newer staff had already been incorporating the latest techniques and strategies. Rachel's frustration and disappointment was with a number of the most veteran teachers in the high school division who viewed her actions as an affront to their professionalism and an intrusion on their classrooms. Rachel remembered thinking, "some in the high school staff are so entrenched in what they do. They are still doing things that are twenty-five years old. I just wish they would understand that I'm not trying to destroy their worlds. I'm just trying to support them in doing something new for the better."

After many months, Rachel finally contacted her superintendent to get insight into how to handle this situation. He replied, "you may never make a difference with some people on staff. A number of them are retiring in the next few years so you should stay the course." Rachel was at an impasse. She wanted everyone to be on board with meeting school improvement goals. However, demanding and reinforcing compliance from staff members who remained steadfast in their resolve to resist changes in their teaching practice could be accomplished, but, at what cost? Was this more trouble than it was worth? Could achieving accreditation be at stake?

Teaching Notes

The aim of the case study is to shed light on some of the ongoing issues and challenges beginning principals encounter during early-phase leadership part of principal succession. This case study can be used in graduate classes in the areas of educational leadership/administration and the dynamics of change. It can also be a useful teaching tool for professional development and learning programs concentrating on school leadership/administration and principal preparation, especially with regards to exploring aspects of the beginning principalship and principal succession.

Students participating in the following activities will investigate the complex nature of beginning school leadership by exploring three separate yet related areas of challenge: leadership/management tensions, leadership trust, and socialization. Below are three activities constructed to examine educational leadership concepts linked to the case described above. The first activity explores areas of challenge beginning principals encounter when executing leadership and management tasks. The second activity examines the nature and criteria of leadership trust for neophyte leaders, while the third activity highlights aspects of socialization experienced by new school leaders. Each of these activities is designed to be utilized independently. Instructors can choose to modify these teaching/learning activities to best suit their particular leadership goals, instructional objectives, and learning outcomes.

Activity 1: Negotiating Leadership/Management Tensions

This case highlights the multifaceted and challenging nature of the beginning principalship. For instance, instead of a mediated entry, novice principal, Rachel Wilson, was immediately responsible for the full range of principal duties. She had to learn and enact a new

role as well as fit into an organization as leader while being charged with effecting purposeful and positive changes within it. This was no easy task.

The growing complexity regarding the principal's role and associated leadership tasks, combined with the changing societal realm and educational reform dynamic pose serious challenges to even the most experienced educational leaders. At any one time, and often at the same time, principals are expected to be facility managers, educational change agents, school visionaries, instructional leaders, co-curricular and extra-curricular coordinators, support service managers, resource and budget allocators, institutional and community liaisons, and guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives (Davis et al., 2005).

The increased need to attend to expanding technical and policy aspects of the job, including financial, personnel, and site responsibilities coupled with pressure to focus on professional matters such as curriculum and instruction, have left principals pulled in different directions. In effect, the current context of educational reform places greater responsibility on principals to positively impact student achievement via direct influence on the teaching and learning process, while, at the same time, requiring those principals to perform increased bureaucratic and management tasks that ultimately limit and reduce their ability to be instructional leaders. Although principals are being asked to do more, their ability to do so may actually be reduced.

Note to instructor. In preparation for the next class meeting ask students to individually construct definitions of leadership and management and bring them to class for discussion. Also, require that students provide brief explanations that compare and contrast these terms as they relate to education. Encourage students to draw upon their own experiences to provide exemplars. In addition, ask students to read the case independently before the class meeting. Let

them know they will encounter a number of leadership/management challenges experienced by Rachel. Students should identify each of these by circling or underlining them in the text and, then, as best as possible, record them in a list attached to categories of “leadership” or “management.”

Ask students to read Walker and Qian (2006) and one of the two following articles before class: Nelson, de la Colina, and Boone (2008) or Walker, Anderson, Sackney, and Woolf (2003). Walker and Qian (2006) discern areas of challenge and strategies for survival for beginning principals (pp. 300–304). Nelson et al. (2008) discuss challenges associated with meshing aspects of the “lifeworld” and “systemsworld” for novice principals (pp. 696–700), while Walker et al. (2003) examine unanticipated experiences complicating and accounting for first year principalship success in rural jurisdictions.

After reading the assigned texts, students should respond to some or all of the following questions:

1. Choose three of Rachel’s leadership/management challenges in the above case and explain how they relate to any of the seven difficulties experienced in the “life of beginning principals” referred to in Walker and Qian (2006).
2. Describe the use and utility of Rachel’s leadership actions that coincide with two beginning principal “survival” strategies identified by Walker and Qian (2006) or “factors of success” referred to in Walker et al. (2003, pp. 208–211).
3. Using examples from the above case, identify some of Rachel’s challenges that illustrate “technical” and “relational” or “systemsworld” and “lifeworld” aspects of early-phase school leadership (Nelson et al., 2008).

Possible follow-up activities include having students interview a school leader or administrator about the ways he or she handles the leadership/management challenges inherent in his or her work or inviting a panel of novice or experienced school leaders to participate in a dialogue about their experiences in dealing with new leadership/management challenges.

Suggested and additional reading:

- Nelson, de la Colina, and Boone (2008), “Lifeworld or Systemworld: What Guides Novice Principals?”
- Walker and Qian (2006), “Beginning Principals: Balancing at the Top of the Greasy Pole.”
- Walker, Anderson, Sackney, and Woolf (2003), “Unexpected Learning by Neophyte Principals: Factors Related to Success of First Year Principals in Schools.”

Activity 2: Leadership Trust—A Multi-Dimensional Concept

A principal’s trustworthiness promotes school health, reflects positive school culture, and is positively correlated to the use of collegial leadership practices (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002). Trust based relationships increase the ease and incidence of organizational communication and decision making in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Overall, the effectiveness of schools has been linked to school leaders who foster and develop trust with their staffs and educational stakeholders (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011; Hoy, Tarter, & Witkowski, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2004, 2009).

From an organizational standpoint, trust between individuals and groups of individuals is known as “relational trust” and is deemed necessary for the attainment of institutional objectives, as people and groups rely on each other to perform and carry out expected tasks. In schools, principals have to trust that teachers will make good efforts in advancing student learning, will help to improve the school, and will work to sustain positive relations with parents. Correspondingly, teachers expect school leaders to impart procedural fairness in adjudicating competing interests among faculty, maintain a predictable environment governing basic school operations, acquire adequate teaching and learning resources, and provide professional development and support (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

For beginning principals, leadership legitimacy begins with trust and can be developed over time as relationships mature and individuals are able to gather and evaluate increasing amounts of trust-relevant information (Greenleaf, 1977). The early phase of school leadership marks the beginning of building relationships and developing trust with staff members while also navigating issues related to power. While neophyte leaders are required to take the helm and exercise legitimate authority, they must also work to develop trusting professional relationships with staff members so that they can find ways to adequately motivate, support, direct, and supervise their colleagues' best efforts.

Given the leadership challenges associated with the organizational dynamics of her school, novice principal Rachel Wilson had to take immediate action to solidify her position as the school's legitimate lead authority. At the same time, it was important for Rachel to develop and utilize interactive mechanisms designed to nurture relations and engender teacher support and confidence in her leadership. The amalgam of leadership and trust is a complex and dynamic process, one that requires careful analysis.

The purpose of this activity is to encourage reflection and discussion about the ways in which leadership trust can be defined, described, understood, and developed. It assumes that leadership trust is an essential component of successful schools and that it is something that principals can develop and strengthen over time. It responds to the recognition that although positioned at the apex of a school's organizational pyramid, new principals are required to lead within a complex web of interpersonal relationships (Murphy, 2002) and, as such, they need to exhibit both task-related and interpersonal abilities as part of their leadership profiles.

Note to instructor. Prior to having students read the assigned articles connected with this activity ask them to independently define the notion of "trust" as well as provide specific

examples how this concept is or is not exemplified in school leadership. A working definition of “trust” is provided in each of the assigned readings listed below. Also noted below, is another more current definition of trust attached to the concept of Three Dimensional Trust in the Figure.

Ask students to read Northfield, Macmillan, and Meyer (2008) and one of the two following articles before class: Kutsyuruba, Walker, and Noonan (2010) or Walker, Kutsyuruba, and Noonan (2011). Northfield et al. (2008) focus on the definition, description, and development of leadership trust and describe the gamut of trust as one that operates as a fluid four stage continuum. The article provides the Action-Policy-Values (APV) framework illustrating how principals can progress to greater levels of trust with teachers. Kutsyuruba et al. (2010) examine the moral agency and trust brokering roles of Canadian principals with regards to establishing, maintaining, and sustaining trust, while Walker et al. (2011) discuss the fragile nature of trust as perceived by Canadian principals.

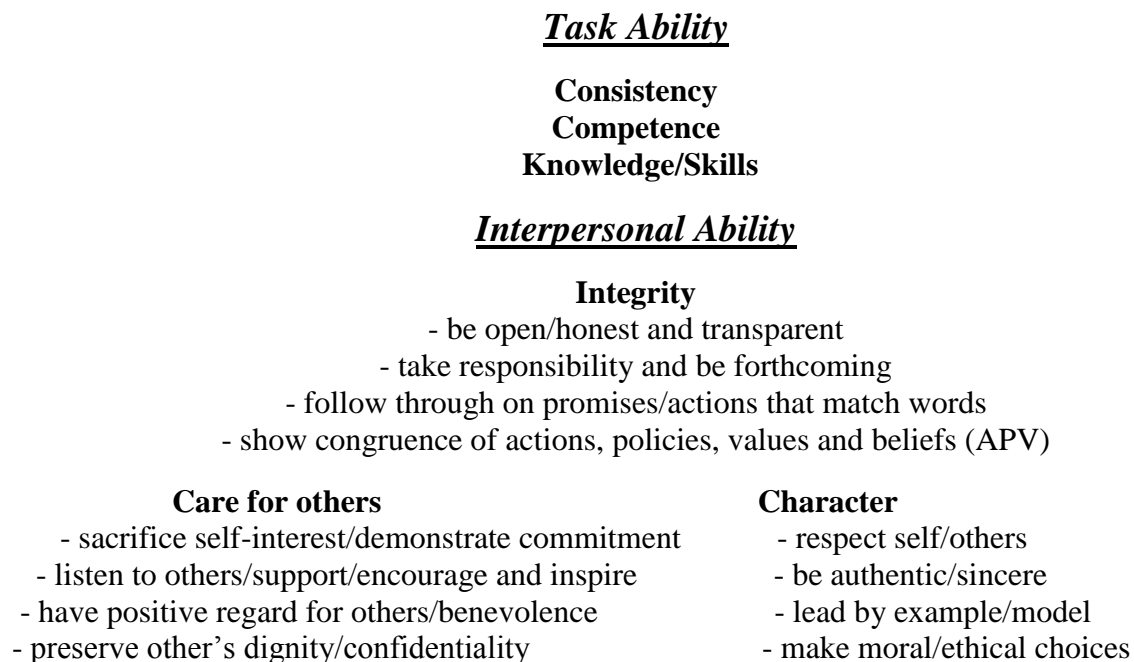
After reading the assigned articles, students should respond to some or all of the following questions:

1. Identify and explain two instances of where the Action-Policy-Values (APV) framework for building “integrative” trust was or could have been applied to Rachel’s leadership/management actions.
2. Provide examples of how Rachel’s actions, challenges, or circumstances reflect aspects of “developing” and “maintaining” trust (Kutsyuruba et al., 2010, pp. 34–37).
3. Discuss how “trust challenges in relationships” (Walker et al., 2011, pp. 482–485) were reflected in Rachel’s leadership/management experiences.
4. Can broken trust be restored? Explain why or why not.
5. Having trusting relationships in the workplace can positively impact the quality of one’s professional and personal life. However, some argue that, in the end, leadership is about responsibly using authority to get results and, as such, building trust with subordinates is not necessarily needed for getting the job done. What do you think about this statement?

In class, ask students to examine the Figure below entitled “Three Dimensional Trust” (Northfield, 2011, 2013). This conceptual construct separates leadership trust into two areas of ability—*task ability* and *interpersonal ability*. The three dimensions of actions related to *task ability* are knowledge/skills, competence, and consistency. The three dimensions of action for *interpersonal ability* include those behaviors which demonstrate character, integrity, and care in areas of critical interdependence. The dimensions of character and care set the foundation for integrity which can be demonstrated immediately but is most often accrued over time.

Ask students to provide examples from the above case describing how Rachel attended to, or could have dealt with, any one or some of the listed components of Three Dimensional Trust. In addition, ask students to provide how they may have experienced or demonstrated both task ability and interpersonal ability for building leadership trust in their life, education, or workplace.

Figure. Three Dimensional Leadership Trust



Trust can be defined as an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that they can rely on the latter party's competence, character, integrity, and ability to demonstrate care in areas of critical interdependence (Northfield, 2011, 2013). These criteria subsume a number of associated ideals, traits, and abilities: knowledge/skills, authenticity, transparency, respect, responsibility, personal regard/dignity, benevolence, honesty, openness, ethical/moral action and decision-making, congruence of actions and values/beliefs, selflessness, commitment, and confidentiality (Bennis, 1999; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Day, 2009; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Mishra, 1996; Northfield, 2011, 2013; Northfield et al., 2008, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Questions for discussion or reflection:

1. Is trust conditional? Can someone trust a person in one situation but not in another? Explain why or why not. (Please consider the "trust continuum" and the difference between trust associated with task ability and interpersonal ability.)
2. Which of the listed components of Three Dimensional Trust are most or least important for beginning principals? Explain which of these, above others, are most important for you as a leader or when you are dealing with school administrators/leaders.
3. How do the two areas of trust (*task ability* and *interpersonal ability*) relate to each other in leadership practice? Are they separate entities, or can they be one in the same depending on the leadership situation?

Suggested and additional reading:

- Kutsyuruba, Walker, and Noonan (2010), "The Ecology of Trust in the Principalship."
- Northfield, Macmillan, and Meyer (2008), "Succession and Trust Development."
- Walker, Kutsyuruba, and Noonan (2011), "The Fragility of Trust in the World of School Principals."

Activity 3: Learning to Lead: A Process of Socialization

First-time principals enter the fray devoid of the tacit knowledge, expertise, and positional experience that are acquired through practice. In fact, they “grow into leadership” and are required to lead while they are learning to lead (Alvy & Robbins, 2005). Gaining the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead a school may not be forthcoming and easy to enact for newcomers. As a result, novice school leaders rely on their superiors, colleagues, and staff members as sources of information and “socialization” to help them pace themselves in response to the enormity of the job and to gain much needed self-confidence to survive crisis situations (Crow, 2007).

Socialization is the process through which an individual acquires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to perform a social role effectively (Merton, 1968). It comes from oneself, the expectations of others, the norms of the profession, and the interactive dynamics and prevailing culture of the specific organization (Leithwood, Steinbach, & Begley, 1992). Organizational culture sustains itself and exists as a self-regulating mechanism reinforcing “how things are done,” serving to demarcate preferences and boundaries for individual behavior and group protocol. It is through this process that new principals experience pressures from superiors, subordinates, parents, and the community at large to act in ways consistent with previously established norms and expectations.

Problematic for new school leaders is the inherent conflict that may ensue between professional and organizational socialization mechanisms. To some extent, each type of socialization may want something in contradiction to the other. In light of the pressures of the prevailing environment of reform and criticisms of traditional preparation and support tactics, purveyors of professional socialization may be more inclined to emphasize change, innovation,

and reform accommodation, while organizational mechanisms are likely to encourage stability, maintenance of the status quo, and tradition (Crow, 2007).

In Rachel's case, she was the first new principal to seriously take on the school's leadership in many years. Previous to her appointment, a number of senior administrators from outside the school were posted for brief stays resulting in inconsistent and non-effective leadership for the school. This led to the erosion of the position, the fracturing of staff along divisional lines, and the emergence of a self-perpetuating informal power group. This context brings into highlight issues of preparation and induction for Rachel. It was assumed that Rachel's successful experience as an administrator in the school along with her education and leadership training received as part of her Master of Education degree would be sufficient for taking on her new leadership post. However, she had to learn the rudiments and perform the subtleties of the job for the first time in a uniquely challenging context. As such, Rachel experienced several socialization processes and influences in learning to execute her emergent leadership practice.

The purpose of this activity is to identify and examine different aspects of socialization that beginning principals experience as part of early-phase school leadership. Ask students to read Crow (2006) with an eye for discerning the content, sources, methods, and outcomes of socialization (pp. 316–321). After reading the assigned text, students should respond to the following questions:

1. Using examples from the above case discuss how Rachel contributed to and experienced professional and organizational socialization.
2. Provide examples of the sources, methods, and outcomes of socialization experienced by Rachel as a beginning principal.
3. How have you contributed to and experienced socialization in your own professional and personal lives?

4. What are the leadership obligations of the district school board in helping Rachel navigate her way through new leadership issues? What is the proper (or desired) role of district leadership in this context?

Suggested reading:

- Crow (2006), “Complexity and the Beginning Principal in the United States: Perspectives on Socialization.”

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