



School Principal: Managing in Public

Dan C. Lortie

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When we think about school principals, most of us imagine a figure of vague, yet intimidating authority—for an elementary school student, being sent to the principal’s office is roughly on par with a trip to Orwell’s Room 101. But with *School Principal*, Dan C. Lortie aims to change that. Much as he did for teachers with his groundbreaking book *Schoolteacher*, Lortie offers here an intensive and detailed look at principals, painting a compelling portrait of what they do, how they do it, and why.

Lortie begins with a brief history of the job before turning to the daily work of a principal. These men and women, he finds, stand at the center of a constellation of competing interests around and within the school. School district officials, teachers, parents, and students all have needs and demands that frequently clash, and it is the principal’s job to manage these conflicting expectations to best serve the public. Unsurprisingly then, Lortie records his subjects’ professional dissatisfactions, but he also vividly depicts the pleasures of their work and the pride they take in their accomplishments. Finally, *School Principal* offers a glimpse of the future with an analysis of current issues and trends in education, including the increasing presence of women in the role and the effects of widespread testing mandated by the government.

Lortie’s scope is both broad and deep, offering an eminently useful range of perspectives on his subject. From the day-to-day toil to the long-term course of an entire career, from finding out just what goes on inside that office to mapping out the larger social and organizational context of the job, *School Principal* is a truly comprehensive account of a little-understood profession.

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