

# Preface

**T**he real challenge in writing this book has been the attempt to justify two divergent philosophical positions. Whatever metaphor was proposed for the subtitle read like an oxymoron. How does one align the need for a principal to be humanistic and collaborative with the need occasionally to demonstrate and utilize a firm, seemingly dogmatic operational style?

When the current research data about the characteristics of principals were examined, the task became even more daunting. Of the hundreds of personal, educational, and philosophical criteria enumerated for candidates for positions in educational administration, none was deemed to be unworthy. However, the data included requirements for potential principals both to take unilateral action when necessary and to be inclusive and collaborative. It was decided that the only way to explore and perhaps justify the dichotomy was to examine how both these kinds of qualities are utilized in situations involving all of the school's constituencies.

Each chapter explores the characteristics and competencies a principal uses to address the challenges of children, teachers, parents, and community leaders. There is also an emphasis on the day-to-day operational demands that principals must meet in a timely fashion. Finally, many situations are explored that require immediate action on the part of the principal. The urgent need to respond to these instances usually excludes the possibility of seeking collaborative advice. Ultimately, there are times when the principal must take unilateral action and view situations as nonnegotiable. A principal who is able to internalize and project these disparate qualities is indeed a miracle worker.