

Preface

You are reading this book because you have an interest in pursuing a career as a most important educator. As the research over recent years has shown, the school principal is one of the most important ingredients of a successful school—a school where children learn. The purpose of this book is to help you make an important decision about whether or not you really want to take the step toward becoming such a critical part of effective education by serving as a principal.

Becoming a principal involves more than merely applying for a job and then getting word that you have been selected by a local school board to run one of their schools. It really means taking a long voyage toward becoming as effective a leader as you can become. After you receive word that a school district has offered you a job, you have to make an important commitment to lead a school so that everyone in it can learn and grow. And that means that you must be personally committed to those same goals and objectives. This book is dedicated to helping you to not only take a job but, more important, to commit yourself to service in one of the most important jobs that exists in the field of education.

You will find in this book some of the most critical issues you are likely to face as a principal. You will need to think about your personal values, exactly what types of jobs in educational administration appeal to you, and how you will personally define such major issues as administration and leadership. You will also be challenged to think about how it will feel to be designated as the person who has legal and formal authority and control of a school and how you will deal with the inevitability of conflict as part of your life. Finally, you will be expected to review how you will cope with the fact that as the leader of a public school, you will need to determine how to best serve the needs of a wide variety of actors who regularly seek control.

To assist you on your personal and professional voyage to leadership, you will follow the first year of Ms. Kelly Marshall, a beginning principal. Kelly has recently taken the journey that you are about to undertake. She was a teacher, she completed a graduate degree at a university, and she fulfilled the various requirements of a state department of education to obtain

an administrative license. Now she is in the hot seat of the principalship for the first time. The issues and challenges that she faces in this book will soon be yours.

As you read each chapter, you will be asked to respond to a number of questions designed to help you make a personal connection between what you have just read and your own situation. No answers will be provided to you, largely because there is no hiding the fact that whatever your individual plans, pursuing an important job such as the school principalship must be something to which you make a personal commitment. No one can force you to take a journey of this sort, and no one but you can guarantee success.

Good luck and bon voyage!

JOHN C. DARESH