

SECOND ARTICLE:

CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES

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Biography

Dr. David Samore has been a teacher and administrator of K-12 schools for 35 years in Iowa, Florida, South Carolina, Spain, and Colombia. Dr. Samore served as the Director of Global Leadership and Innovation in Palm Beach County, Florida and in

2015 was named the Florida Principal of the Year by the NASSP which highlighted his growth mindset for all students. As principal, Samore's dual language immersion school was recognized twice as the School of the Year for North America by the Embassy of Spain. In October 2021, Samore was honored by King Felipe VI of Spain and awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Isabella the Catholic. Samore is currently a guest lecturer at Cardenal Cisneros University in Madrid (Spain) and CEO of David Samore & Associates, LLC, a private consulting practice which helps organizations fulfill their highest potential through common sense leadership and purposeful talent discovery.

ABSTRACT

In the second of a three-article series, the power, and responsibilities of the public-school principal in the United States are explored. Unlike most other countries, the American school principal holds considerable decision-making control of the school where the belief that the principal's decision is the final one. Though the immense latitude afforded the principal has clear benefits, the risks are many. Faced with declining parental involvement, learning losses caused by the coronavirus, immense teacher shortages, and increasing politicization of school curricula, school administration treads carefully. Also reviewed are the shifts in thought paradigms as they relate to school leadership which currently focus on servant leadership while eschewing the authoritarian management of the past.

Keywords: leading, differentiation, wraparound, counseling, learner, collective efficacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

With 50 distinct states, the United States has always been a country with 50 different public education systems where each state has the right and responsibility to maintain the structures that make up the schools for its citizens. While the federal government does carry weight through its control of funds to the states, the governors and their state governments behave with considerable independence. However, expectations from state to state are fairly consistent, although regional differences continue to exist.

In the last 30 years there has been a clear politicization of education due to the tensions between the two main political parties. One party in particular has used access to public meetings in all 14,000 school districts to advance its political agenda of controlling (or at least impacting) free debate in school classrooms. Also, the nuclear family has transformed so there is less family support. This decrease in support is reflected in the school that today must fill the gap between the classroom and the home. School districts are perceived as solving the cultural challenges of poverty, lack of access to opportunity, and maintaining the physical and mental health of those they serve.

As in the first article of this series of three contributions, this instalment is limited to public schools. It is important to recognize that there are thousands of private schools as well as concerted ones; both share many of the challenges and descriptions with the public ones, although the latter carry the greatest weight of responsibilities because, according to the laws of all 50 states, they must accept any student, no matter what deficiencies they have.

2.THE AMERICAN SCHOOL DAY

2.1. CURRENT DESCRIPTION OF THE NEEDS OF THE SCHOOLS.

Unlike in the past, the American family relies on the school to provide students with instruction and training in many ways that previously belonged only to the nuclear family. Due to the need to hold multiple jobs to earn a minimal living, parents and other adult family members simply have less time available to deal with raising their children. As I described in the first article of this series, the consequences of this

paradigm have resulted in lack of emotional care, food, sanitation, and counseling. Those who offer counseling are qualified people who have risen to a professional level through university graduate studies. Their qualifications are strictly controlled, bearing the title of School counselor or Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

Counseling is a key service today to manage the conflicts, challenges, stresses, and emotional crises that students experience. In the past, the act of student counseling only occurred at the high school/pre-university level and was limited to academic issues. Managing the emotional needs of the student was the exclusive domain of the parents. Not now: if schools don't provide professional services that address student sensitivities, most won't receive them. Finding such public services outside the school is difficult to arrange and private services are extremely expensive.

I will illustrate more fully in a later section, but it is important to understand that the action of counseling the student from the youngest ages tells us a lot about how the integral transfer from the field of the parents to the field of the children in schools has taken place.

Like other countries that offer free education, the school day in the U.S. is almost always from Monday to Friday. With few exceptions, total instructional days run 180 days in all 50 states. Rarely are districts with less (the minimum of 178) and others with more (the maximum of 182).

2.2. TYPICAL STUDENT SCHEDULE

The hours of instruction are fixed, and the number depends on the age of the student: the older the students, the longer the school day. Typically, the elementary school day (grades Kindergarten through grade 5) consists of 6.0 hours; middle

school (grades 6 through 8) offers 6.5 hours of instruction and high school (grades 9 through 12) has a total of 7.0 hours. Although these hours listed are indeed the official hours of the “regular school day,” it must be understood that these hours include much more than just teacher-student instruction. Remember the wraparound services I wrote about in the first article of this series. This evolution of supporting traditional parental responsibilities began largely in the 1980s when a strategy called “wraparound” emerged in American education.

The concept of wraparound has grown to the point that almost all schools in the U.S. offer wraparound services. The essence of these services is that schools attempt to accommodate the family rather than the family conforming to the services available. In other words, wraparound services are a kind of tailored family support.

For example, unlike many other countries, the school cafeteria in the U.S. provides breakfast and lunch each day. For many American schoolchildren living in thousands of economically stressed communities, they are the only reliable meals they experience. In addition, most public schools in the U.S. offer before care and after care (care for students before and after academic hours). The student can arrive at the center up to 90 minutes before the start of the school day (given a snack before breakfast) and stay 90 minutes after the end of the same day (given another snack after lunch); this is nothing extraordinary. This daily scenario is repeated in each state thousands of times (McCombs, Whitaker & Yoo, 2017).

Although the minimum amount varies from state to state, all have standards regarding a minimum number of minutes of instruction to be considered a subject sufficient to receive state approval, resulting in the certificate (diploma) of graduation from grade 12 (Carnegie Foundation, 2022).

2.3. THE PRESENCE OF PARENTS

There is no one who will dispute the fundamental importance of a productive relationship between the school and the student's family. Since the success (in every sense) of the student matters to everyone, it is natural and correct to assume that the two parties share the same desire. Students who come from wealthier families have parents who are more visible and involved in the school. A useful metric to understand the point of parent availability is the Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO). PTOs exist in almost every school in the U.S. Attendance at these meetings between parents and school representatives indicates much of the influence and strength of parent communication. If attendance is strong, parents in attendance are known to have jobs that allow them to leave or finish according to professional hours, that is, before 6:00 p.m.

Another example that indicates the financial level of families is the time of day of the PTO meeting. If it is daytime, that is, during school day hours, the parents who are available to attend will no doubt come from higher financial circumstances. However, the parent's lack of attendance at those PTO meetings does not reflect the intensity of the parent's interest in their child's success. The current reality is that PTOs in many schools serving poor communities have perhaps a handful of parents instead of 25 or 30 parents in more affluent centers.

The contact between the school and the family varies a lot from school to school. However, the pressures to communicate with families and their communities remain the same: the responsibility to communicate effectively falls squarely on the shoulders of school leadership. The option to fail in this is simply not accepted.

3. THE EPICENTER OF THE COMMUNITY

3.1. THE CENTRALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Since the beginning of public education in the U.S., the school has served as the community hub. Compared to many other countries with longer traditions of educational centers, Americans have roots of barely two centuries. For much of that history, the school was historically called "schoolhouse", a term that perfectly sums up the concept of the school at that time. You still hear the term in everyday speech; the notion that the school is a home teaches us much about the comfort and intimate relationship that existed between families and that home.

To this day, the community rightly perceives that the public school, in many ways, belongs to them as much as it belongs to the school board: their opinions matter. The taxes used for the creation, construction and all aspects of the center come from the community itself. Therefore, today community meetings and municipal elections take place in the same school (Bingler, Quinn & Sullivan, 2003).

3.2. THE SCOPE OF THE SCHOOL

The public school in the U.S. has a mission that goes far beyond the academic. Although academic matters naturally serve as the basis of public education, there is a sharp competition between the public ones and the two types of educational centers that have more flexibility and less expectations (formal and informal): the charter and the private schools. The public school exists under overwhelming circumstances and demands compared to the other two: the most prominent demand is to close the gap caused by the failure of families to be able to sufficiently provide for the students who come to the center.

In academic terms, the prevailing philosophy of the educational leadership is to offer subjects and instruction that serve to improve the life of each student while preparing him or her for an unknown future. From the point of view of the teacher, the expectation of the state (and consequently the management of the school) is that they teach all students on a personal level. In other words, create a teaching system in your classroom that accommodates all the possible differences in the academic preparation of the students. This mission of acting as a personal concierge to the student is called "differentiation" (Weselby, 2021). Across the country, teachers acknowledge the intense pressure to create a classroom environment for differentiation despite being an almost impossible challenge to overcome.

The health standards of the educational center are very high. Hospitals are the only buildings that operate with higher sanitary standards. Many countries have strict protocols in place in their schools, but two additional things that set American schools apart from others are (1) serving meals four times a day from a full cafeteria and (2) operating multiple activities (including a panoply of sports) outside of classes. For example, it is not unusual for a high school to offer soccer, basketball, tennis, wrestling, and more than 30 sports. It is logical that accidents occur that require actions by trained and equipped personnel.

Maintaining and caring for the well-being of the student (in all senses) is central to the American school. Today there is an intense focus on the mentality and emotional state of the student body. The two years of existing with the coronavirus have resulted from emotional difficulties due to the isolation of the student at home. The intention to replace virtual education has been less successful than expected. Today the student body across the U.S. is well behind to the point where nearly

every state has suspended state tests for one or even two years (Kufeld, Soland, Lewis & Morton, 2022). In addition, schools have experienced a noticeable decline in student behavior. During the hiatus caused by the coronavirus, that is, the lack of being able to attend classes in person, they did not get used to conforming to the rules and norms of the school community: the students had to start all over again learning how-to live-in school culture. In the current year, students run in the corridors, act disrespectfully and fight more than ever. School districts across the nation have begun implementing strategies to implement a more civil and less rude environment (Chapman, 2021).

To a large extent, the expectation that students come to school with already formed manners of behavior is considered a thing of the past. Previously common manners like mutual respect, appreciating the value of hard work and how to interact with others are seen less each year. Although it does not mean that the families do not teach the students any of the commonly accepted manners, it is the centers that have inherited the role of teaching the basic manners to the students. The center cannot expect the student to come with an understanding of the value of patience or the need to accept that they are not the epicenter of attention when the needs of the school community number in the hundreds.

When one enters the center's lobby, one commonly sees a short list of expectations painted on the walls of the center itself. It is a kind of obvious warning to everyone warning, for example: "Behave with respect and patience here." The desired manners of even a handful of years ago have disappeared because of the deterioration of the same manners among adults. For example, the U.S. president elected in 2016 exemplified (and continues to exemplify) manners of cruelty, revenge, and pettiness. Its popularity with millions, who display these same

characteristics, has clearly illustrated to us that times of kindness, mutual respect, and self-responsibility are manners from an age perhaps long gone. It is very difficult to insist that an 11-year-old boy behave better than his own parents who imitate a man who was the leader of the free world (Merryman, 2018).

In addition to being a natural gathering place, the American school has events to create opportunities to expand the social world. For example, K-12 schools offer dances, clubs, competitions, and carnivals for families (elementary) or only students (secondary) where parents are not allowed to come.

4. THE AMERICAN SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

4.1. POWER + RESPONSIBILITY

All 14,000 school districts are each governed by a school board. It contracts with a superintendent who directs district personnel over the number of issues that exist in the educational field. Of all the decisions that a superintendent makes, the most key always have to do with the appointment of the school principal. It is important that the terminology be clarified: any reference in this contribution to principal is collective in the sense that it refers to both female and male principals.

Unlike other countries, the American school principal carries a combination of amazing power with overwhelming responsibility. The pressures of the job are described in this article reveals the varied characteristics and vast expectations that are integral to the daily work of the typical principal. It is important to distinguish at the outset that the level of the school (elementary, intermediate, or high) has an impact on the extent of these characteristics and expectations. That is, the older the students, the more complications are presented to the school principal.

The American school principal considers himself a leader in every way. That is, the concept of school leadership is that it carries awesome power over every conceivable aspect of the school itself. The most salient aspect is the power that the director has in making decisions that are perceived as final. The culture of the schools is that when the director declares a decision on almost any matter, it is the final word. An expression frequently used to capture the concept of the all-powerful school principal is "the buck stops here", an old reference to the game of poker that President Harry Truman said where passing the buck meant passing the responsibility of distributing the cards. The meaning about principals means that they must act decisively because there is no one else who can make the final decisions, be they easy or difficult. In short, it is not a matter of a teacher who serves a handful of years and then becomes principal: the position is considered a professional principal who will never return to the classroom.

First of all, becoming a principal requires a defined path. It is never a matter of being named "principal" because a school board believes that a certain teacher deserves the position. Of the 50 states, 37 require a Master's in School Leadership and all the other 13 require at a minimum that you show clear convincing evidence that you can lead others (Education Commission of the States, 2022).

Exploring the direction of American centers and the vocabulary used in the profession teaches us a lot. A comparison of Spanish and English (i.e., the American version of English) terminology serves well to illustrate the distinctions of vocabulary and philosophy. For example, the root of the term *director* comes from the verb *to direct*; the notion of *directing teachers* has already gone out of fashion 30 years ago in the U.S. Today they use "lead" and never "manage" or "direct."

4.2. AMERICAN SCHOOL PRINCIPAL QUALITIES

Of the 14,000 school districts in the U.S., the superintendent is considered the supreme head of all district personnel. However, the reality is that the 14,000 school boards are the ones who command the superintendents and according to state law, they can contract with only one employee: the superintendent. He or she supervises all staff and proposes to the school council who will serve as school principal. Principal selection affects all aspects of a school, including the essential atmosphere and the fundamental tone of the school culture. The impact of leadership is one of the most impactful elements possible in the success (or failure) of the center (Xu, X., 2018).

With considerable consistency, superintendents look for candidates who embody the following qualities:

- Passionate belief that all students can learn without exception.
- Ability to remain calm in situations of maximum stress.
- Flexibility of opinion: being able to turn and change direction if circumstances suddenly change.
- Relational: Immense talent for forming interpersonal connections and establishing shared ground between disparate groups.

The list of qualities is much longer, but in order to understand the vastness of the scope of the principal's job, consider the following illustration of typical expectations of a school principal in the U.S.:

PARTIAL List of Expectations of the Educational Leader in the USA		
peerless communicator	lobbyist	marketing specialist
accountant	budget manager	building manager
cheerleader	crisis specialist	disciplinarian
educational leader	best teaching practices	field commander
fundraiser	grant writer	grief counselor
guardian of the grounds	human resources	international negotiator
interpreter	mediator	omnipresent
omniscient	nurse	public relations
referee	training expert	staff evaluator
<p>PLUS: KEEP THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY SAFE FROM HARM.</p> <p>And being able to converse fluently with students, teachers, parents, business leaders, custodians, neighborhood leaders, cafeteria workers, and government leaders.</p>		

The reader of this article is likely to consider this grouping of descriptors a complete exaggeration. I would like to clarify that it does not contain any exaggeration whatsoever. The considerable power of the school principal, more extensive and comprehensive than the leadership powers of many (perhaps all) other countries,

comes with the ton of responsibilities and expectations listed above. The following is a relatively cursory exploration of some of them.

4.3. THE SCHOOL AS A BUSINESS

The American school principal approaches his job with entrepreneurial fervor. They see themselves as the head of a company where the desired product is a brilliant student body, a satisfied faculty, and a community unimaginably ecstatic with the school's reputation. Although directors within the same district regularly cooperate, they are regard one another as if they were competitors in the same industry.

Within this competitive environment, many superintendents try to inspire their managers by using analogies and books specifically created for private business leadership. The very vocabulary of the school principal borrows heavily from that of the private business sector. Here is a selection of business expressions most used today in the school environment:

- ROI: it is the abbreviation for "return on investment," or not losing in the investment of efforts or funds.
- Scalability: the power of being able to expand the operation or project.
- Leverage: being in the position of being able to influence or take advantage to be successful.
- Sustainability: analysis of an opportunity to determine if it can be successfully pursued (Clouducation, 2012).

In addition to being able to converse with the vocabulary of business, the school principal must follow all aspects of the businessman: a website for their school, active participation in social networks (Facebook and Twitter minimum) and business cards for his team of leaders. of their own school (for example, the assistant principal and specialists). Ultimately, the most entrepreneurial principal will win the cutthroat competition to expand their talented student body and favorable reputation in the community.

5. TRAINING

5.1. TEACHER TRAINING

From the point of view of current U.S. education, the era where "the teacher teaches, and the student learns" has passed into ancient history. Alarm bells sounded in 1983 with the publication of the report *A Nation at Risk* when it was warned, "If an unfriendly power had tried to impose on the US the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Since then, the U.S. federal government has spent untold millions and the states have embarked on a different route to fundamentally change the purpose and expectations of educators. The dynamic that existed between teacher and student began to change immediately, like leaving a known path for another dangerously unknown one.

Before 1983 the teacher was perceived in one dimension: as a presenter of information. All responsibility for learning the subject remained with the student. Whether the student was successful or unsuccessful, the teacher had presented the information and nothing else. The ability to take notes, study effectively, know how to approach a test or quiz was the sole responsibility of the student. The

teacher was the wise authority who filled the empty vessels (the students) with his instruction. Due to the reforms that started after the wake-up call in 1983, the dynamic between teacher and student changed from day to night.

Today the responsibility for learning rests unquestionably on the shoulders of the teacher as well as the student: it is clearly a shared responsibility. If the student fails, his teacher has also failed. If you experience success, you both share in the triumph. The same is the paradigm for all educators and their students: a rising tide lifts all boats. That is, while a student under the teacher's instruction fails, he must make more effort and/or implement modifications so that academic failure does not occur.

That is why teacher training emphasizes two elements: (1) how to improve teaching techniques so that you can differentiate instruction more effectively, and (2) educate yourself minimally to renew your teaching certificate in the state where you work. Certificates are typically valid for five years with an expiration date of June 30.

American teacher education closely resembles that of other countries and covers many current topics, be it technology, advances/changes in curriculum, and explanations of innovations in the profession. Due to the responsibility that the teacher carries for the learning of their students, there is an emphasis on the formation of differentiation in teaching. Even the term "pupil" or "student" has been transformed to "learner." In addition, teachers themselves must be considered "lifelong learners", meaning that the whole class, including the teacher, can teach and learn.

5.2. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Although burdened with the extensive responsibilities of the school, the school principal receives little specific training to improve the performance of their job. Like the teachers he supervises, the principal must also educate themselves to renew their certificate with the state. However, compared to the teacher, the training available to the principal has to do mostly with classroom instruction; the formal training designed for the duties of the principal is extremely scarce. In a way, once you become a school principal, you will have less training than the teachers you supervise. To say that teachers in the U.S. are better trained is right on target.

So where does the American school principal get useful training that can tell him how to best perform his duties? This is where the informal system of communications that can be called "inter-principal" comes in: an informal training network that exists between the principals themselves. According to the American staff, those who serve as principal quickly learn that their position creates a certain isolation; in the same school, there is no one else that has as much responsibility blended with the power already described in this article. The only ones who can understand and sympathize are other principals of other schools. The most experienced and mature principals advise newcomers, basing their comments on practical experience: the triumphs, defeats, successes, and scars. Principals acknowledge that this gap in training is problematic because when they stumble, the consequences can be disastrous, even defeating their entire career (Walker, Kutsyuruba & Noonan, 2011).

6. THE CURRENT PARADIGM OF AMERICAN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

6.1. ANOTHER TECTONIC SHIFT

As they say in fairy tales, "once upon a time," as when there was an excess of qualified teachers for vacancies in schools. Like other aspects of a bygone world, teacher shortages are seen everywhere in the U.S. today. The conditions that have caused this precipitous decline in applicants have been experienced over the course of two or three decades (García & Weiss, 2019).

A partial list of these causes reveals two fundamental reasons for this: (1) the failure to invest the necessary funds in public education and (2) the pressure directed at teachers due to the lack of being able to control elements outside the control of the school but within the control of the parents, government (local, state, national) and communities.

- Decline in hiring teachers during the so-called "Great Recession."
- Options where the salary is better.
- Politicization of the curriculum.
- Frustrations due to standardized tests.
- Less generous pensions.
- Concerns about the number of students per teacher.
- Lack of financial resources.
- Lack of autonomy.
- Lack of parental support.
- Lack of support from school management.

- Violence in the schools.

The reasons behind the teacher shortage are legitimate and well known. The lack of desire to rectify the obstacles that cause this clear decrease in teaching staff is known. The general outlook of the U.S. population does not favor a change in this trajectory. Although there are many exceptions, millions of Americans perceive public education as more of an expense than an investment. Until this mentality changes, the crisis of not finding teachers will continue to worsen (Partelow et al, 2018).

6.2. PRINCIPALS ADAPT

Due to a lack of qualified candidates, the current state requires the principal to recruit teachers year-round, not just when vacancies occur. A large number of schools have vacancies and must make use of substitutes, and even these are difficult to recruit. Due to teacher shortages, school administrators have adapted to acquire teachers as the first step and retain them as the next and perhaps most significant step: for many years, up to 50% of teachers have remained in the profession less than four years (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

With numbers tightly limited, competition between centers for the most talented staff is intense. Consequently, the principal must interact with his teachers with kid gloves so that he runs less risk of offending them. Furthermore, the leadership style cannot be overtly authoritarian; the best description of the most favored management style is inclusive, that is, considering and including the faculty collaboratively to make the majority of decisions. As has already been said, the vocabulary of the American principal has evolved to indicate that these changed relationships, using "team" and "stakeholders" between the school administration

and the teaching staff. Collaboration among all works: when the adults of the schoolwork side by side, the students have a better chance of succeeding. This emphasis on creating a group effort is called "collective efficacy" (Pierce, 2019).

However, the principal continues to bear the immense responsibility of supervising, observing, and evaluating the faculty. The administration of each school has to organize formal and informal observations of teaching staff and, at least once a year, carry out a formal evaluation of each teacher in their school. This evaluation includes at least one formal meeting between the principal and the teacher. Each school district must implement an evaluation system for all staff and the system for non-certified staff (secretaries, assistants) is different from the system for certificated staff (teachers, assistant principals). In short, the school year does not end until there is a formal evaluation of each employee of the school and the principal is responsible, including signing documents with cited evidence. Given the shortage of faculty, it is natural that the standards may vary somewhat in the final analysis.

6.3. THE TIP OF THE ARROW

In order to lead a teaching staff (and the entire school), the principal must be perceived as the initial link in a chain: similar to the others, but with the role of the walk first, leading others as a model, inspiring and innovative. Thus, the director is seen as the tip of the date: the defending protector of his center, humble judge with a silken hand and leader of courage for making the heartbreaking decisions. Above all, the principal's expectation is to maintain patience despite whatever stresses and circumstances arise. In order to understand the core of school leadership in the U.S., the image of a link in a chain is key.

As the initial link, the talent as a teacher facilitator is essential. To create a school culture of trust and collaboration, leading today's American faculty requires a strong ability to inspire, persuade, and understand the vast complexity of the school district in particular and American education in general. Being able to anticipate the consequences of strategies and innovations only happens when the school leader listens actively while thinking carefully. In the meantime, the director, like the tip of the arrow, takes the risks and points the direction of the school, trying hard to hit the target. If it goes well, the success is shared; if he misses, the principal stands alone.

Along with the multiple tasks of the school principal, the recognition of the active competition that exists between schools guides him to seek how to make the school stand out from other schools. Individuality has a lot of influence and power in the mindset of the U.S. public. Why and how is the school special? What are the aspects that illustrate the outstanding results? In the opinion of American families, more specializations mean greater attraction. In short, the model is to use any way to declare successes through social networks, in the marquee outside the school (almost every school has it to inform the public), or through the automatic telephone system that sends informative messages to each family in the school. The principal approaches the publicity of his school with a serious attitude: if he himself does not relate the events of the center, someone else will do it without a favorable disposition.

7. ATTENTION TO RACE AND CULTURE

7.1. THOROUGH FASCINATION

Due to the long history of race relations in the U.S., the race and culture of its citizens matter. This article will not be an explanation of the roots of racism or where and how we got to the current state today, but there is no denying that these two aspects of being human receive keen attention. Throughout its history of just 200 years, the U.S. has struggled with the heritage of slavery and mistreatment of millions of its people and citizens. The tradition of paying attention to race and culture, issues that are difficult to categorize, is also a very long one. Any application asks about the applicant's race and culture. These requirements are found in all official documents. Unlike other countries, you have to identify yourself in racial and cultural terms.

I vividly remember a time when the state government in which I was a school principal changed the categories of race and culture. It turned out that, with the new system, there were thousands of students who did not fit according to the new categories. The government's expectation: that the principals of all state schools ask that the students identify themselves again. The challenge occurred when hundreds of our students did not know how to identify themselves; they themselves just didn't know. The insistence of the government reached the point where they asked the principals to invite the confused student to the office to execute the identification. For example, a student with a Black father and an Asian mother who was an immigrant from Colombia did not have a block to check. It was a dehumanizing and offensive process. As a professional, I rejected that act of offending the student; I gave him the option to do what he wanted without any advice whatsoever.

I also remember a conversation with the Costa Rican husband of an American friend. He told me that when he arrived in the U.S., he had to identify himself according to his perceived race and culture. Confused, he told me that previously he considered himself simply Costa Rican.

7.2. CENTRALITY OF RACE IN THE SCHOOL

The American school uses the data to establish the best trajectory for student instruction. The results of formative and summative assessments produce much data that indicates student progress. Capturing student data as a whole group is neither satisfactory nor sufficient: data must be disaggregated to reveal racial and cultural divisions. Thus, the district and state can judge the center to determine the quality of the school in general and the principal in particular. If one racial group does worse on one test than another, close attention is paid, and the search (investigation?) begins. Why has that group done poorly? What hasn't the teacher done with the group with bad results? The principal is the main investigator, looking for the why. The ideal school produces similar data for all students, regardless of race and culture.

One impetus that attracts attention is the punishment of the disobedient student: throughout the U.S., students of color receive disproportionate punishment. The principal, the person who imposes official punishments of the school (e.g., suspension, extra work) must make sure that he has imposed a fair and balanced punishment. Principals who create a reputation for punishing students of color more harshly are given difficult reprimands or worse, a derailed career.

8. MATCHING THE COMMUNITY: ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS (ALWAYS IN THE RACIAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT)

Since attention to the race and culture of the student body is always in focus, it also relates to the relationship between principal and faculty. To alleviate historical tension in the minority community, identification of the principal by the superintendent is always considered. The complexity of the community in all aspects, be they racial, cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic are analyzed and considered before appointing the new director of the center. That is, one person may be highly qualified to serve as a school leader, but in the final analysis, another of a more similar race and/or culture to the local population may be elevated to the position of principal. The race and culture of the candidate is an integral consideration.

In the competition to take on the position of school principal, the candidate who has experience dealing with the most diverse communities (a euphemistic descriptor for minority populations) will fare better. Those who will have a brighter future should expand their work experiences: in the U.S., the population that attends public education tends to be more of the population of the so-called "minority" (students of color) and less of the population previously called "majority" (white students). Indeed, minorities have become the majority in many sectors and regions of the country (Chen, 2019).

The gap that exists between populations according to the financial state widens more every day. The impetus to differentiate instead of assimilate has its consequences. Exacerbated by the coronavirus, the rich have become wealthier and more influential. The rest have been left with less power and the public school

continues to fight with impressive courage despite the challenges and obstacles presented by the current politicization of education. The school principal serves, in a very real sense, as the glue between a future made better by his work and the communities that come to him for the life jacket, he offers them.

9. CONCLUSION

Due to the challenges facing American families, the public school serves an optimistic and, in a sense, romantic mission. Throughout U.S. history, the school has been one of the hubs of the community. The building itself is used for community meetings, elections, and other events of interest to generations. The less financial power millions of families have in every state, the more importance the school has assumed. Today, most of the inhabitants perceive that the public school still offers them a path to improvement, an option where dreams come true and a powerful future despite the current realities and impediments.

One hears of American Exceptionalism. This myth has its roots in the narratives of the revolution that established the U.S. in the late 18th century and the folkloric image of the lonesome cowboy of the Old West. The notion that there is something unique about the American spirit, a confidence in its own powers, a belief in individualism, and an attitude of hope where all possibilities seem within reach (Andre y Velásquez, 1992). This optimistic attitude is also seen in the field of school administration. There is no denying the seed of the romantic hero in those trying to be a school principal in the U.S. Those who yearn to serve as a school principal to have a luxurious office and respect from others quickly learn that these characteristics are only smoke and mirrors. The American principal does his job despite the challenges, because his unwavering purpose resonates in his gut.

The school principal is key in the realization of those dreams and hopes. In an essential paradigm, the combination of power and responsibility offers the principal a wide road of options and possibilities, all accompanied by possible dangers and mishaps. The talents desired in the ideal school principal are hard to find and even harder to generate. It is the leadership, the principals, and their superintendents, that points out the best path to the salvation of the public school in today's turbulent times.

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