



THE MODERN SCHOOL MANAGERS GUIDE:
Everything to know about Running a School,
Simplified

PART one

Is this for you?

You're here because you want straight to the point advice about handling your school leadership.

If you've taken the quiz and you're satisfied with your answer, below is a 13 point checklist of time tested effective principal traits. Whether you are a principal, you aspire to be one or you're looking to hire one to manage your school and need to know what to look out for, this list will give you an idea of how to be best for the job.

It's very hard to narrow down traits required to run a school properly but consider this checklist carefully before you continue to the next section.

Go to Next page to see 13 point Checklist of School Leadership traits

Personality traits for 21st Century School Managers

- ❑ **Communication skills:** It is important for you to be a good communicator as you will be required to inspire, negotiate, motivate and correct both staff and students.
- ❑ **Open to change/innovation:** “Change is the end result of all true learning. Refuse to be one of those principals stuck in rigid ideas of their time. Your school and classrooms must welcome new tools, skills and ideas. See these [5 innovative school trends](#) to help get the wheels turning in the right direction.
- ❑ **Creativity:** Of course you have to be resourceful, flexible and ready to make on the spot decisions.
- ❑ **Decisive / makes good judgment calls:** One thing a principal cannot be is fickle. Be confident in your ability for rational thinking when faced with important decisions.
- ❑ **Professionalism:** Education is serious business. So is running a school. Good principals know this and put their organizational skills to play. Even with utmost preparation, some chaos is unavoidable but it is always better to be as prepared as possible.
- ❑ **Ability to strategize and execute:** This goes without saying. All of the school projects, activities and events aren't going to put themselves together. Excellent planning skills are a must.
- ❑ **People skills:** With good interpersonal skills, it's easy to get your staff to rally round you and your decisions. You will also be able to motivate your students and command attention and respect from parents. These skills will also help you better handle complaints and staff fall-outs, which even the best of schools will have.
- ❑ **Be Strict:** Even if you're an inner softie. Don't be scared to be harsh occasionally and mete out punishments and correction as needed. Most of all, avoid being a pushover or staff, students and parents will stop taking you seriously.
- ❑ **Inner child:** In order to create school programs that actually work, you have to be able to enter the mind of your students and see life through their eyes.
- ❑ **Think like a parent:** You also have to see things from the parents' point of view- they are paying the bills after all. What do they ultimately want? How can you preempt their expectations and meet them even before they ask?
- ❑ **See the bigger picture:** Think of yourself as a visionary. Any manager should be able to see past the imminent benefits and consequences of decisions or actions. For example, while to some people school attendance records are just routine figures, they can actually help you identify patterns and target solutions based on them. Read [How top schools are using school records to get ahead](#).
- ❑ **Good with numbers/record keeping:** Before you panic, you don't have to be Isaac Newton, but figures do need to add up! It's great if you have a basic understanding or at least, have someone trustworthy on your team to handle all of that stuff.
- ❑ **Passion:** You need this because the job is hard and this is the only thing that will ensure you perform at your best despite that. Passion is infectious; so you'll also be able to inspire your staff and students.

It's okay if you don't see all 13 of these qualities in yourself. In fact, you can't have them all. No-one does. But there's always room for improvement.

If you are passionate about what you do, then by all means, don't let a list like this one stop you. Print this list and take note of your strengths and weaknesses using the activity section below. Keep track of what you need to work on and cross them off as you improve. You can follow up immediately by trying these [3 little changes](#) that are guaranteed to make a huge difference to your school management.

ACTIVITY

- 1. Print out this 13 point checklist**
2. Tick the qualities that apply to you. These are your management strengths.
3. The un-ticked qualities on the list are those you do not possess yet, but you'd like to work on.
4. As you improve, tick them off the list.

You're ready for the next section!

PART two
School Management Guide

Contents

1. **Goals**
2. **Managing School Finances**
3. **Managing Academics**
4. **Managing staff**
5. **Managing Students**
6. **Managing Parents**
7. **Managing Suppliers, investors and vendors**
8. **Managing Yourself**

1. GOALS

First things first! Once you get on a job, you need to set goals. So before you read this section, you need to set some goals if you haven't done that already. Every school isn't after the same thing and casting your net blindly will only wear you and your staff out. What do you want your impact to be on the school? What direction do you want to take? These questions are very important in making decisions and also in keeping staff inspired.

Possible goals could be:

- To have more motivated or skilled teachers
- To foster a team spirit among staff
- To encourage excitement for learning
- To increase student population
- To keep costs down
- Completely change the school's learning approach
- Improving certain aspects of the Curriculum that are important for the entire school

The possibilities are so many. Think up yours right now!

ACTIVITY

1. Take out a piece of paper and write down 3 goals.
2. Write down the policies/programs you could implement to make these goals happen. Are they feasible?
3. Plan for challenges
4. Give yourself a time frame
5. Discuss these goals and deadlines to your staff using any of the communication channels you have previously decided

2. MANAGING SCHOOL FINANCES

Running a school is expensive; which is why you need to keep close tabs on spending. But understand that managing costs doesn't have to mean a trade off in quality. Read this post for tips on [finding a balance while saving costs on school admin](#)



This is also where your skill with numbers comes to play. Basic management protocol demands that all your cash decisions at least balance cash flow (Income and expenses.) The accountant may claim to have a hold on everything but as principal, it is your job to monitor what everybody else is doing. That means, you should also do regular inventory checks, even if you have a store manager.

Mismanaged inventory is like a leaky tap; and it is one of the most common ways schools lose money without knowing. Read [Managing Inventory for the Busy Principal](#)

3. ACADEMICS

This is the reason why we're all here in the first place; though it's sometimes easy to lose track of the real goal in all the frenzy. Learning is the whole aim of parents sending their kids to your school to begin with, so make sure you give them a run for their money.

That means all classroom modalities need to be monitored and revised closely. This includes [overseeing timetable organizations](#), class records management, school activity schedules, extra-curricular etc. You might not be a teacher yourself but you will have to get hands-on and familiar with the intricacies of running a classroom.



The best advice? Automate it all with an easily manageable system like [SAFSMS](#). That way, you have a few less things to stress about.

4. MANAGING STAFF

In a school, you'll have 2 broad categories of staff - teachers and non-teachers. Teachers of course will require extra attention from management and it is always best to deal one

on one with them right from when they are hired.

How do you hire a teacher? *A teacher isn't just any old expert on a topic. He/she MUST be able to successfully transfer their knowledge and inspire learning in an audience.*

“Good Teaching is not like filling a bucket; rather it is like lighting a fire”. Keep this in mind next time you're hiring. Degrees, training and teaching experience are all very important but so are patience and the ability to learn and unlearn. Encourage your teaching staff to be better by sharing resources.

Recommended: [Why Your Best Teachers are Leaving and How To Make Them Stay](#)

Among the non-teachers, admin staff are key players. Use them as your right hand. Managers often tend to want to do it all but when you hire competent staff, your job as a manager becomes much easier. This includes cleaners, secretaries, drivers and security. The most important thing is that everybody you hire meets your preset hiring standards and are all aware of the values and goals of the school. It is also your responsibility to define the work culture of your institution. Many principals recommend treating all your staff like one big family and your organization will be better off for it.

While all your staff should trust you and your decisions, mark out a couple of trust-worthy staff, preferably other management staff you can consult with on management decisions. It will come in helpful.

Lastly, it's a good idea to have an open door policy but keep it down to specific times of the day or you will get swamped by staff requests.

5. MANAGING STUDENTS

Generally as a principal, you should interact with your students often but not too much. Your presence should have an air of seriousness attached to it, to pass across to the students that the school is a serious, important place.



Your ability to balance strictness with your gentle nature is your most important trait while handling students, as a school leader. You do not want to come across as scary or unpleasant, as this can affect the mood and impact learning but at the same time, your limits should be clear.



6. MANAGING PARENTS

The school as a business, needs parents as its biggest backbone. Maintain a good relationship with them and they will be your Number one marketers and under no circumstances should they be made to feel like their opinions aren't welcome or appreciated.

Complaints: More often than not, a few parents are going to have complaints about the school, your staff, your policies or even another student. Be patient while dealing with their concerns; it shows your readiness to improve. Listen well to complaints, investigate if necessary and try

to achieve resolution at the lowest level possible.

Communication: Run major ideas by them and inform them of every change that directly or indirectly involves their children. [See how SAFSMS can help](#) make school-parent communication seamless.

In addition, You should already have a communications strategy to help information flow optimally between you, parents, teachers, students and everyone involved. You can use a table like this to figure things out.

Who?	Why?	How?
Students Leadership Team Teachers Parents		Newsletter, face to face, presentation, phone, SAFSMS inbuilt messaging
Office staff Caretaker Board members Local principals, mentor		

Source: educationalleaders.govt.nz

There is the tendency for managers in their quest for alliance with parents to often compromise their standards or values. **Never do that.** If you, and the rest of your staff have made a valid decision that reflects the school's standards or values, do not be coerced into changing it. Try to explain your viewpoint to any angry parents but if they persist then stick it out and let them go if they must. You will

be better off for it and much better respected. Don't forget to collect regular feedback in the form of old fashion suggestion box submissions, feedback forms, PTA meetings, online polls via email etc. Potential and existing parents will really value this sense of approachability.



7. MANAGING SUPPLIERS, INVESTORS AND VENDORS

Nobody thinks about this often but suppliers can be one of the school management's biggest stressors. Every school needs quality uniforms, up to date books and resources, ICT solutions providers, materials and all the resources that keep a school running. One wrong move from your suppliers and you are in trouble.

There's no definite way to managing or avoiding this but it is generally wise to do your own background research beforehand and pick the most trusted suppliers. These are not automatically the biggest or most elite school-kit merchants. Instead, seek partnership with those ones that have trusting relationships with their current customers and have easily recognizable values.

Need automatic alerts when inventory on a particular item is running low? Try [SAFSMS for free](#)

8. MANAGING YOURSELF

A principal's job is a stressful one and it can be tough on even the best. The top 3 ways for coping with it are:

1. Manage your time - If you can manage your time well, then half of your problem is solved. This involves knowing how to delegate, among the other tips discussed in [this post](#). Schedule set times when staff, students and parents can see you. Communicate these times and stick to it so that you can use other times to actually do some work.
2. Relax - You need a hobby to get your mind off the stress of work. De-cluttering your life, your home and office space will help you do this. Rest regularly - even at the office if you feel particularly stressed. Allocate specific rest times to yourself at night and during the weekends.
3. Keep learning - A good leader is always willing to learn and improve as a person. Accept mistakes. Solve problems but don't dwell on them. Most importantly, have fun at your job! There might be times you wish you were doing something else instead. Take breaks when you feel that way but if you find yourself constantly unhappy with your job, there's always time to consider a change of careers.

Read: [4 Tips for a meaningful career](#)

ACTIVITY

- Write down the top 3 things you have learnt from this guide and how you hope to use them to make a positive impact
- [Take the free quiz](#) now if you haven't, to see if you're really cut out to be a principal.

Congrats, you completed the guide! You're on your way to becoming the best you can be. If you found this helpful, please do us a small favor in return by answering [this short survey](#)!

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