

## PRINCIPALS AS SERVANT-LEADERS: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF ROLE

In this chapter, we discuss high school principals' perceptions of their role as servant-leaders, the metaphors and definitions they assign to servant-leadership, and some practicalities of their leadership approaches. In addition, we share from our conversations about what principals believe their school communities expect of them as servant-leaders.

### *Impressions of Role as Principals in the Catholic High School*

Without waiting to think, in describing their impressions about being principals, Angela, Denis, and Simon indicated that they loved it, felt honoured in the function, and viewed their service as a privilege, and a gift. Gerald, Terese, and John perceived their role as principals as an opportunity to express their faith. All viewed their position as a tremendous challenge, to make their schools happy, joyful, faith-filled, and academic communities where students and staff achieved their potentials and to assure parents that their children were being served according to Catholic educational objectives.

*Table 2. Principals' impressions of their servant-leadership role*

<i>Principals</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Angela	A tremendous honour, a tremendous gift, a tremendous challenge. In fact, I love it.
Denis	Well, I love it. . . . But the reason I wanted to become a principal, I think, was because I really wanted to make a difference in the lives of kids . . .
Gerald	For me it is important to be a principal in a Catholic school division, because I can talk about my faith. And talk about how Jesus taught, how Jesus acted, and because of that how we should be treating each other.
Simon	Privileged, honoured, overwhelmed at times. It is a major responsibility. It is one I do not take lightly. It is a position of leadership.
Terese	And so being a principal in a Catholic school, it is wonderful to have, to be able to express your faith, and to talk about it.
John	I think the Catholic system is a unique experience, because you are tied within the context of education to your faith. And it gives a whole different dimension in [your] relationships with staff, students, community. . . .

For all of these principals, the freedom to express their faith in their work place cannot be overlooked as it contributed to their general orientation to their responsibilities as leaders. Continuing this train of thought, John added that being permitted to express his faith at school gave him a different approach to working with staff, students, and community; it underscored the importance of the school community.

While they had a lot to say, the table, above, presents the essential mindsets of principals concerning their role. The similarity of views expressed indicates that while different locations may present different challenges, relationships and interactions with human beings are common. Glaser (2002) observed that our experiences also reflect the experiences of others, thus we need to keep ourselves “aware that our experience is but a particular expression of the common human condition” (p. 44).

#### *Metaphors of Servant-Leadership Expressed by Principals*

We asked principals: “What metaphor would you attribute to servant-leadership?” All seemed to hesitate before answering this question. This hesitancy may indicate that servant-leadership defies comparison, and that the leadership concept goes beyond the obvious. It is multi-dimensional and difficult to reduce to one single thing or category. Servant-leadership is better seen in action. The table to follow summarizes the responses that were given:

*Table 3. Principals’ metaphors of servant-leadership*

<i>Principals</i>	<i>Metaphors</i>
Angela	<i>The patience of a saint.</i> . . . Because you need it all the time, because sometimes you see the end, and you want to skip all the process.
Denis	For me servant-leadership is <i>just a way of life</i> , and you are able to do for others what you do for yourself.
Gerald	With servant-leadership, I think <i>compassion</i> , compassion for others. <i>Understanding</i> others and their job, and just <i>caring</i> for individuals around you.
Simon	Servant-leadership is like <i>a radar on a ship in a larger ocean</i> . You are trying to help guide a larger community of great existence, moving a smaller boat on the larger ocean. We take advantage of the larger movement. We create ripples through the larger community.
Terese	I think it would be <i>a mother and a child. A caring mother raising a child.</i>
John	I think <i>talk the talk and walk the talk</i> . I go back to the idea of “What would Jesus do?” “ <i>Practice what you preach</i> ,” I think is a key one.

Cadenhead and Fischer (2000) explained that:

Metaphor, in a broad sense, is more than a rhetorical device . . . it is part of our lives. Frequently we define reality in terms of metaphors, and then we act on

the basis of those metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans at least partly in response to the metaphors we use – consciously and unconsciously – to structure our experience and solve problems that are part of our personal and professional lives. (p. 76)

Metaphors that best represented the principals' servant-leadership and their understanding of it were patience, compassion, caring mother, a way of life, practicing what one preaches, and creating ripples through the larger community. This variety of metaphors indicate that servant-leadership can be understood from different perspectives issuing from difference in personalities, but at its core the leadership model is based on care and concern for followers. The background stories of principals may have dictated their metaphors. For example, while Angela reflected the patience of her mother in raising her and her seven siblings, Gerald's metaphor of compassion suggested his experience of his father who changed from rigidity to compassion as he advanced during his years as a principal. Terese might have taken her metaphor of a caring mother from her mother's dedication to raising her and her siblings.

Denis probably viewed servant-leadership as a way of life, as a tribute to his mother's sacrificial and unselfish way of life that had contributed immensely in making him what he had become. You will recall that he was impressed with the sacrifices of his single-parent mother and the foresight that led her to move in order for her children to benefit from university education. Having served under some excellent principals, each of whom he had found to be credible and trustworthy he learned the practical leadership qualities such as care for constituents. This had influenced John's metaphor of practice what you preach, while Simon's metaphor of creating ripples through the larger community probably issued from his sporting background. Again, despite the differences in metaphors, the central meaning is that of care and concern for followers.

The principals' metaphors reveal altruism, care for others and role modeling, as outstanding denominators. They stressed the need for role modeling which called for them to be a moral voice in their schools, as recommended by (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). The morality of the school principal is important because unlike other leadership approaches that concentrate on productivity and cherish followers on the basis of their output, servant-leadership with its emphasis on the growth of followers demands the moral responsibility of the leader towards constituents. In the Catholic school environment where the focus is not only on academic formation of students as future responsible leaders, but also on their growth in faith, the morality of the principal cannot be overlooked. In addition, young teachers need a principal they can rely on, as a dependable moral example for their future. McEwan (2003) pointed out that, "... the most powerful force for building character in schools is derived from the lives of adults in that school and most particularly, from the life of the principal" (p. 134). In short, good intentions of the staff, students, and parents are greatly molded by the character and the behaviour of the principal. As in the case of metaphors, principals proposed synonym definitions of servant-leadership such as personal example, altruism, self-sacrifice, empowerment of followers, care for others, and making leaders out of followers.

*The Meaning of Leadership in a Catholic High School Setting*

We asked each principal to provide a definition of servant-leadership as a way of ascertaining their understanding of the leadership approach. The six definitions in the table (below) offer a snapshot of principals' understandings of servant-leadership. We don't think these definitions contradict the views expressed through metaphors. Instead, they reflect an understanding of servant-leadership as a leadership approach that is made effective through personal example, altruism, self-sacrifice, empowerment of others, care for the interest and growth of others, and making leaders out of followers. In fact, servant-leadership is better described as a way of life in which the leader seeks to serve rather than basking in his/her position as a personal accomplishment. Gerald and Simon explained that servant-leadership is all about moving away from one's self, from the ego-centric, to really providing service to others, and living one's faith through one's work within the school community. It is about the use of authority for the growth of others.

Analysis of the definitions that the principals provided indicates that, although people might view servant-leadership from slightly different perspectives, concern for others remains their common interest. Underlying these definitions is the idea of a perceptive and intuitive sensitivity of a leader, to see and express what remains hidden. Angela's definition elicits the question of *what is right and just?* The answer lies hidden in the definitions provided by the other principals, and which can only be unraveled through practice. John summarized all the definitions as living one's faith in the context of one's professionalism.

*Table 4. Principals' definitions of servant-leadership*

<i>Principals</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
Angela	The giving of one's self for what is right, for what is just.
Denis	It is doing to others as you would have them do unto you.
Gerald	Allowing individuals to grow by directing them to do activities and things that you would expect yourself to do. . . . I show by example what I expect my staff and students to do.
Simon	Leadership by example, by living, and encouraging others to be leaders themselves.
Terese	When a person in a position of authority, uses that position to empower others to be caring, loving, Christian people, who help others empower others to do good.
John	Living your faith within the context of your professionalism, savoring the characteristics and qualities, faith, and individuals within the community, and to celebrate those successes that have taken place.

In short, for these six Catholic high school principals, their day-to-day practice of servant-leadership would be incomplete if separated from their Faith.

*Some Practicalities of Servant-Leadership*

All six principals passionately articulated their understanding of leadership in a Catholic high school as the spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ as the source of true freedom and hope for all. Furthermore, it is not enough to talk intellectually about the characteristics of leadership since students and the school community needed to see and feel these characteristics in everyday practice and be guided towards the importance of service in their communities.

Respectively, Denis, Angela, and Terese each articulated this as follows:

Well, it does mean, spreading the news of what Jesus taught us. ... We need to instill in kids today, even more so because of the message that is being taught outside our school system today, that it is not all about me. That we have service projects for kids to volunteer to help. And I think what I would be saying ... is that, if we are not teaching kids to serve others through our own actions of serving, then where are they going to learn this? Because they certainly are not going to get that from Future Shop [electronic devices and technology]. Where it is *buy now and pay later*, and it is *buy the bigger box*. ... So my comment ... will be, 'This is the only way to lead,' is by serving others and showing people through example that it isn't about me, because I think we live in a selfish society.

One of the things I would say, [is that] Jesus loved ... children and he fits all of us, everyone in the school system. And I always say he must like me a little bit, because I fit both categories. Where does He fit? He would be down there pulling in the nets, he would be down there serving the food, he would be down there cleaning the messes. But as the Apostle Paul would say, they saw in him 'nothing is too small not to do or to ignore, and no one is not as important as someone else.' And he led by doing it, it wasn't I will tell you what to do, it is I will show you what to do. And I think that is really important to the principal too, because we have too many people in our lives telling us what to do instead of walking it along with us.

For me, I think one of the key things is, my job is to be a servant-leader, and to set example for the people that I work with, whether it be for my colleagues, whether it be for my students, whether it be for parents, people in the community. My job is to set an example and to help in terms of faith development by the example that I set. So I can't expect other people to be respectful and to live a faith life if I do not model those as well. For me that is the important thing. I think that I am easy to talk to, that I am not a person who holds grudges. Or we could have heated discussions, and I do not get mad at them and take it out at them at another time or get even with them. I think people see me as somebody who is easy to talk to. Who has a strong sense of empathy, and someone who really cares about all the people in the school.

These administrators extolled exemplary leadership as the way to inspire and inculcate leadership qualities in followers. All six seemed to suggest the development of

encouraging, uplifting and hopeful relationships between principal and the whole school community. In such an atmosphere, occasional chastisements from the leader would be “readily” accepted.

Additionally, the principals suggested that demonstrating service to followers by serving them is a valuable way of helping them learn what it means to serve. Furthermore, each saw their school as a place for living out their Christian mandate of spreading the Good News. As well, they expressed that their own exemplary lives were priceless ways of teaching the people in their school communities what it means to live in healthy relationships with members of the community. Further, the principals indicated that caring for followers through empathy convinced them to imitate the good example. In summation, these leaders repeated the popular saying: *Actions speak louder than words.*

#### *School Community Expectations of Servant-Leaders in Catholic High Schools*

The reason for the existence of leaders is the followers (Bruce, 2006). In the school context, followers are students, staff, and parents, and the principal is more useful if he/she fulfills the expectations of the school community. Principals appreciated that their school communities viewed servant-leadership as an ongoing process, empowering and helping people to grow, building relationships, building communities, helping followers support one another, and showing compassion for and understanding of followers.

***Community expectations of Catholic high school principals.*** The principals were aware of the expectations their school communities held for them. These expectations were that principals serve their school communities as enablers of people’s potentials, rather than punishers of wrongdoing. Additionally, their job required them to support those in their school community. Denis described this as follows:

Well, I think [parents] expect me to do the best job I can to help their kids grow. . . . Parents want to send their kids to a school where they know their kids are safe, and that they are being treated with respect, and that they are learning. . . . I think the staff sees me as the captain of the ship. I do not like the term boss. But they often refer to me as boss. And so I think they want somebody who . . . will support them . . . So I do not think kids see as any thing other than stereotypical as high school principal who wears tie and walks around and kicks kids out of school. That is too harsh. Because, there aren’t kids that we are kicking out of school. . . . The larger community, I think is still of the mentality that they want us to produce students capable of finding their place in the larger society. A lot of it is around work, and occupational training, critical thinking skills, they just want kids that are well versed and well prepared.

Principals articulated that students expect them to be impartial, empathetic, and to treat them with respect; that staff members appreciate a leader who is organized, efficient, fair, impartial, non-judgmental, empathetic, and supportive. Accordingly parents, expect some of the above but would prefer a principal who treats their

children with respect, promotes their learning, makes them grow, builds positive relationships, communicates well, speaks from the heart, can be trusted, and is a person in whose presence people feel comfortable expressing their ideas. Additional expectations mentioned included honesty, equity, and compassion. Our principals articulated that a kind of leadership that serves its own interests to the neglect of constituents needs would have no moral legitimacy. They identified, with ease, what they thought their school communities expected of them, which reflected their awareness and sensitivity to the needs of their communities.

***Servant-leadership as an ongoing process.*** Principals agreed that servant-leadership, is a journey or a learning process. For example, the misconduct of a student in the present time does not necessarily determine what he/she becomes in the future. The patient guidance of a servant-leader enables students to grow out of undesirable habits, helping them to develop gradually to their full potential. Denis and Terese lamented that they are sometimes accused of being too soft on students because of misunderstandings about the import of servant-leadership as an ongoing process. However, as Denis indicated, it is an accusation he proudly accepted.

Principals indicated that servant-leadership requires an attitude that explores numerous ways of helping others achieve success, that the process is challenging and, at times, extremely painful. But the process sharpens one's patience, ultimately makes one a better person, and implies that the opinions of others are not ignored, but rather taken into consideration to arrive at solutions that are beneficial to the school community. To better understand these principals' ideas about servant-leadership as a process, their own words follow:

It is a process of how you reach the end. It is all the trials and tribulations and the work and the relationships, and the going back and starting again. It will get to the answer. It really will. Sometimes it takes too long, and if you are a person that likes to get things done, the process almost kills you. . . . We all know we are going to get to the end, but it is the process where everyone is involved and if there is anything you learn as an administrator, you have to learn the process. But it takes too long. . . . But it involves people, and when you involve people, it takes time. (Angela)

Servant-leadership is an ongoing process each and everyday. And my understanding of servant-leadership is really that you are never there for yourself. That everything you do within the building, is to move other people forward to understand themselves better, while empowering them to be leaders as well. (Simon)

Principals needed to cultivate the virtue of patience through which they gained a better understanding of themselves as persons. And, understanding themselves served them well in exercising leadership for the success of their school communities. Terese provided a further insight in that over the years she had come to the understanding that to succeed as a servant-leader it was more her reaction to people rather than people's reaction to her that mattered. John supported Terese's insight

and pointed out that the process of servant-leadership makes room for growth and opportunities to move forward, rather than providing occasions to blame others. Laying blame on others creates a situation where the leader concentrates on negatives rather than on positives that inspire and build up followers.

***Empowering and helping the growth of people.*** Our principals pointed out that because servant-leadership departs from self-centeredness, it empowers followers to grow. Simon gave this example of empowerment before becoming a principal:

Well, if I think back to when I felt empowered, it was when I felt that my opinion was valued, that my work was valued, that individuals were comfortable with me talking and expressing how I felt or how I went about doing those things.

This experience suggests that leaders in schools cultivate respect for the opinions of others in ways that help them grow as leaders, and that disrespect for the opinions of followers may be tantamount to a refusal to develop leaders.

Simon, Denis, and Terese pointed out that in the school community, empowerment and growth means that the weakest in the community are not overlooked, and that students' voices and opinions are considered during the course of decision making. One way of empowering students is being present at their meetings, not to control but, rather, to give support. Giving support to students does not denote approval of all their suggestions, but it does provide an authentic opportunity to affirm discussion times and collaboration. Sporting events are useful for encouraging and empowering students, celebrating their successes, and being concerned about what interests them. Simon pointed out that referring to the school as "*our school*" and "*not my school*" makes a difference in people's psychology. Implied in these comments might be the admonition that the leader who considers his/her presence at activities of students as a waste of time is throwing out precious opportunities for empowering student.

Gerald articulated his view that a good way to help staff members grow into leaders is to involve them in committee work. Looking out for skills in staff members and assigning them to activities that help them develop and grow gives them the confidence necessary to develop their gifts and skills. He implied that to make leaders out of people, it helps to trust them with responsibilities. According to Terese, empowerment not only creates a good atmosphere in the school, but it also leads to the creation of strong future servant-leaders. Empowerment means encouraging people to try different things while encouraging them to take initiatives for their own growth. She cited the example of a department head in her school to explain her point:

For instance, I have a new department head this year. I do not think three years ago she would have even considered applying for department head. But she is a very strong person. She has good ideas. She works hard, and she was encouraged to try different things and do different things. And because she did feel that she had support, it allowed her to take the risk of becoming a department head, and she is very good.



For Simon, a great danger to the empowerment and growth of followers was a leader's inability to cultivate a healthy ego that rejoices with followers, even if they should outshine him/her. Leaders must be continually aware that the development of leadership qualities in students, teachers, and parents is not an affront to their authority. Simon and Angela remind school leaders that without a healthy ego and a robust self image, authority can be misused, by a refusal to give way for followers to shine. A leader who does not rejoice in the empowerment and growth of followers offers no hope and no room for improvement and growth.

**Building relationships.** Principals were vocal with their views about relationships. They saw relationships as the lifeblood of all their communities. As John explained, "[Relationships] create trust within our student body, with our staff members," and encourage people to be more willing to talk about issues or problems within the school. People in communities crave for relationships, and leaders who promote healthy relationships among their followers succeed more easily in getting positive responses and the rewards of cooperation in their administration than those who do not. According to Terese, servant-leadership is all about relationships, and healthy relationships make people happy and comfortable in the school. She added that part of the reward of such relationships is the willingness of people to contribute their gifts to help and participate in various school activities. Angela stressed that the care and respect the servant-leader exhibits towards followers makes all the difference, because relationships cannot be faked and trust in the insincere leader is quickly lost. She observed:

You know relationships are huge, and when you are out of relationships, your whole world spins, it just doesn't work. . . . You can just say all you want, and especially if you don't believe in servant-leadership, people can see through that in a heartbeat.

Commenting on the strengths and values of relationships, John said:

The strengths of relationships is utmost. Relationships are important to building collaboration. They are important to building trust, to building understanding, and they are foundational because . . . if you do not have relationships, there is not that level of trust, there is not that willingness to do, there is not that willingness to communicate, . . . so relationship becomes one of the foundational aspects to success within any kind of leadership role.

These commentators view relationships as a lubricating oil that keeps communities alive to pursue their goals and objectives. For these principals taking part in conversations with us, however, positive relationships did not imply a refusal to call people to account where necessary. According to Terese, it is in calling people to be responsible and accountable that they are helped to grow. In communities where healthy relationships exist, constituents easily appreciate and understand situations in which they are called to be responsible and accountable.

Principals explicitly acknowledged that relationships do not come about without efforts and commitment even though people seem to naturally yearn for them. Relationships require a great amount of work and total commitment. Simon thoughtfully observed:

[Relationships are] a tremendous amount of work. A top-down approach, where you tell everybody what to do, when to do it, how to do it, probably is easier, in that it requires no personal input from your point of view. It requires you not moving outside of yourself and your comfort zone. And top-down approach allows you, without developing relationships, to still control, to still direct, and you often do so through authority and through fear, let's face it. . . . We have to be dealing with the spirit that is within each and every one of us.

Our principals' remarks were well reflected in Simon's words and are indicative of the fact that relationships demand the giving of self and some amount of inconvenience and sacrifice. Relationships demand that authority is used well to help the follower develop confidence in him/herself. As well, relationships break down barriers among people, and dissipate the fear of the unknown about others, thus turning difference and diversity into sources of strength rather than division and apprehension. These six principals were of the view that schools deprived of healthy relationships stagnate and the students' success becomes elusive.

**Building community.** All administrators were of the opinion that, community building is a *sine qua non* for success of a servant-leader; but they did not hesitate to acknowledge that a lot of effort was needed for success in community building. This effort presents challenges such as misunderstanding of the good intentions of the leader, and the uncooperative attitude of apathetic people. However, such occasional challenges were said to make them better servant-leaders. They viewed detractors as indirectly helping to strengthen their resolve to build stronger school communities, and as openers of vistas to see things from different perspectives.

According to Simon, Gerald, and John, some of the ingredients of community building include the participation of the principal in events such as meals, social activities of staff and students, celebration of successes, moments of joy and pain, graduation ceremonies, and praying and celebrating liturgical activities. Other ingredients included visibility and availability of the leader to teachers, students, parents, and the school community. According to John, concrete efforts at community building initiated by the school chaplain include the introduction of *I love you day*; a day on which both students and staff are encouraged to be extra "nice" to each other. Simon and Terese not only stressed the importance of community but detailed other ways of building community:

You will not have success in the school without community. And you would not have success in school without kids feeling that they have community with each other. Without parents feeling that they are welcome. . . . And without people feeling that you are listening to them, and empathetic to their particular situation. So when Greenleaf talked about all of those characteristics of servant-leadership,

we know he did not mean [that we] take them apart. They are circular in so many ways. Sometimes you could say triangular and some might be more at basic than others. But they all interrelate. You can't pick them separately, and okay, community. I strongly believe that we need to support staff by giving them opportunities to come together. And I am willing to spend money to bring a meal in when it means we can socially be together as a staff. That leads to community. Breaking bread was the best example Jesus ever gave us.

[Community] is essential, because if you do not have community, none of it will work. We are lucky in this community. We have a really good parent community, so not just the kids and our teachers. And they very much support what we are doing in the school. They want us to get kids involved. When we have activities in school they are here. We encourage it. We have a good relationship with everybody, where we try to get members of the community to support each other. One of the things I love about my staff and the people here, when something happens, just like the example of a boy whose mother had died; a number of people who came in to provide support for this young man. And I thought that was amazing. That is what community is about.

Angela and John added that in the Catholic school context, the bedrock of community building is faith in Jesus Christ, and that with faith as the foundation, community building cuts across the different challenging life situations that confront people. Denis passionately expressed the construct as follows:

I think that is what being Catholic is: Building that community. That sense of belonging. That there is a greater purpose and it is not just about you. That, there is a larger society out there. ... Again, we live in a society that really promotes getting ahead, being number one, and often number one is a lonely place to be. Community is about doing for others. Being successful but doing for others, and so, yea, I think servant-leadership is doing that ... you serve others. When you look at any society where there are elders, they are not there for themselves. They are there to build a stronger community.

Denis viewed individuals as being more than just themselves; they are the building blocks of society, community, and the human race. Continuing this train of thought, Gerald observed that community building is visible everyday in classroom activities, liturgical celebrations, periods of retreat, sharing of food and drink, fundraisers for specific goals and many other extra-curricular activities. Community is also seen through the support that staff and students lend to colleagues in events of illness and death. Building community is about life itself, at its various stages in the school community.

Angela, Denis, Simon, and John noted that stronger community building happens with work; inputs are needed. These efforts include: providing appropriate information to the school community, listening to what the school community is saying in order to better serve them, looking at what the community provides in terms of programs, exploring how the Church may be more effectively linked to the

school community, examining the interests of stakeholders within the community, and learning about the fund raising activities of the community. In effect, community building is not possible without the establishing networks of Others.

Building community entails seeing beyond one's self, acknowledging other people, being sensitive to other people in the community, cultivating an awareness of happenings in one's environment, establishing connections with other people for the pursuance of goals for the success of the school community. Denis summarized this in his observation that community building, in a sense, is an *emotional bank account* where members rely on one another for the support they need to make their existence, and that of others, meaningful.

Our principals understood perseverance as the brainchild of hope. They noted that detractors of community building should not consume the servant-leader's energies, and if allowed to do so, there will be a loss of focus. Servant-leaders should persevere in the positive things that benefit the school community.

**Support for one another.** All six principals argued that community building in the school becomes more meaningful in light of support from different constituents. About mutual support in the school context, Angela said:

Because it is the right thing to do. And you are teaching kids the important things of life. Yes, you can have all the money, you can have all the toys, you can have the "whatever position." But it doesn't mean anything if you can't turn around and offer help or support the kid beside you, and staff member beside you. . . . We are forgetting about the poor in spirit, the poor in need, the poor. You know, all of the beatitudes, they are right in front of us.

Angela's comment calls us to not neglecting but rather to take notice by lending support to the weak in their immediate environments. She draws attention to new ways of looking at the beatitudes so that school communities can become better and happier places of learning. Complacency and self-sufficiency detract from the strong among us, supporting the weak among us.

Angela's comment raises practical questions: Are stronger students encouraged to look out for the weak? And are senior students expected to take care of their more junior school-mates in the school? Terese happily noted that in her school, support for one another was exhibited among students when they, without being prompted, stood up for one another, especially in situations of injustice towards the most vulnerable.

Simon reflected on mutual care and support and asked questions that could be summarized as follows: What can be done to support the staff? How can the school community be better supported by the principal and staff? Are parents' needs for the care for their children being fulfilled by the principal and staff? Are parents being listened to and supported in ways that are beneficial to their children's learning? What can the principal and staff do that will bring hope to all in the school community? Is power given to parents through school community councils (or available structures) to make them feel they are welcome into the school community and to voice their

opinions? And, are students being supported not only academically but socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, so as to lead to their holistic development?

Denis and Simon understood mutual support as *stewardship* and argued that this involves interacting with people, helping them, and leaving them better off than they were. For Gerald, stewardship of each other, is being creative in day-to-day relationships and wanting the best for all in the school community. Upholding entrenched views, to the neglect of innovativeness is detrimental to new ways of support for one another and to the growth of the school community.

John, Simon, and Angela indicated that liturgical and charitable activities bring students together and, as such, these are part of stewardship from which students learn to support one another. Terese recalled:

One of the things we really promote in this community, . . . is that, we really get kids involved in liturgies, Masses, activities, charitable drives. We do our Christian service: The kids do volunteer work in the community and they get marks for it. But the intention and important part for them in our community is to do things in the community to help those in our community who are struggling, or are needy, or need assistance and help. That is very important.

Terese suggested that through supporting others, students learn to care not only for those closest to them in the school, but also those beyond the borders of their schools. Worshipping together establishes a spiritual bond and galvanizes student support for one another and for their community. According to John, the leader serving as a role model in the various life situations such as social gatherings, church activities, and many others in which community members are involved is also educational.

***Compassion for people.*** Our principals seemed to have been inspired by an idea similar to Thompson's (2005) that "Compassion is an important measure of spiritual authenticity, and it's essential to spiritual leadership for whole-system transformation in education" (p. 47). As if they had rehearsed their responses together, principals acknowledged the importance of compassion as an additional distinguishing mark of the servant-leader. They acknowledged that through experience over the years, they have learned to cherish compassion as they exercised leadership. Gerald noted that, young teachers do not seem to appreciate the value of compassion at the beginning of their career. Smiling, he related his experience with young teachers who relished rigidity and the application of principles and rules in their dealings with students, but over the years, gradually changed from severity to compassion and flexibility. He observed:

I think my understanding over the years has been that I try to be a little bit more compassionate, instead of rigid. Because in terms of servant-leadership, we have our rules, and we have our regulations, but we also have to care for the students and care for our staff. So because of that I think, I give a little bit more than I used to in terms of my flexibility. . . . So you are compassionate for the children, you are compassionate for the parents, and you have to weigh that against the overall

## CHAPTER 5

well being of everyone. So as you think about it, you want to do the best for those individuals too. The lost sheep and everything else, and yet you are weighing out the consequences for the entire group. When a person is young, especially I see it in young teachers, if they do not have children. If they have not been through those experiences, the rules are firm and they are not bending whereas here, as you are getting older as you have seen really good kids getting into trouble, you do not just want to send them away, you want to help them get out of that trouble.

Gerald cited his own father's change from rigidity to flexibility and compassion as he advanced in years in his leadership career as a principal. This suggested to us that experience is a factor in the development of compassion in a servant-leader. Gerald seemed to suggest that the goal of the servant-leader is not to 'lay ambush' for the faults and mistakes of their students or teachers, but to understand their weaknesses and help them develop and grow. John concurred, and as if reflecting on his past experiences thoughtfully provided the following reflection:

[Servant-leadership] has given me an increased understanding of people. ... I think it gives me a sense of trying to respect all people, work for all people, and ensure that my dealings with people are going to be fair, upfront, ethical, and technical, and honest, I guess in terms of the approach. I think when you are dealing with students in particular, what it does is, it gives me an opportunity to maintain more of a levelheaded, to be able to be passionate and compassionate, and be empathetic with the situation that has happened and to work with that student to try and overcome the different things, different problems within their lives. I think if you take a look at an individual that you are working with, there have been a number of family situations that are going on in this individual's life that helped to complicate that life. So you try to be fair in terms of how you are going to work with this student. So you talk with the teachers to let them know the plight of this particular individual, to create a sense of empathy for that individual so that they themselves can then give some benefits to this individual to help them succeed. It gives them an opportunity to increase the adaptations that might be needed for the student because of the problems that he or she may be having or experiencing.

This comment suggest that it is by being in relationship with people that the leader develops the necessary qualities needed to help followers reach their potentials. Angela pointed out that a misunderstanding of compassion could lead to the erroneous conclusion that the servant-leader allows students, parents, and the school community to dictate the direction of the school, as if the servant-leader was a puppet condemned to react to situations with no ability to give directions. Laughing as she spoke, Angela said:

Servant-leadership does not mean you are easy-going or always holding hands and singing kumbaya, everything will be good. No, sometimes you have to make hard decisions. And you do it with love and respect always at the base.

Because if it is done in anger, you can't do that. Servant-leadership does not mean you are a milk toast. It is not that you do not do things to hurt people, you try and do the best you can . . . but always done with the right base. And I guess we always come back. What is the real reason we are doing this?

For these principals, servant-leadership in the school context was not a *laissez-faire* leadership style that seeks to please everybody, but rather that the impulse of compassion made the servant-leader seek to understand situations before acting so as to see how he/she can best help the students, teachers and parents. Angela, Denis, and Gerald cited the biblical story of Jesus and the adulterous woman in John 8:1-11 as an example of compassion in which Jesus did not just end up showing compassion, but he asked the accused woman to take responsibility for her action and grow through that. Denis and Simon observed that though the interest of students was paramount this did not mean doing things to please them whether they are wrong or not. Terese explained that there are lines that students, teachers, and parents do not have to cross, but these lines need to be drawn in the sand. People must be respectfully made to take responsibility for their actions and made to see hope beyond the seeming gloom.

#### FURTHER THOUGHTS ON EXPECTATIONS FOR SERVANT-LEADERS IN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

According to Burkhardt and Spears (2002), awareness helps in the comprehension of issues and enables a leader to approach situations from a more integrated and holistic position. Principals know the expectations their school communities held for them. They are convinced of the sense of Braye's (2002) statement that when awareness provides truth, different actions lead to the development and that growth of communities and its members will follow. They were not only aware of the expectations their school communities, but they also put those expectations into practice. Their awareness of their school communities' expectations stemmed from the good relationships and open communication.

#### *General Expectations Held by Parents, Staff, and Students*

Principals indicated that in general, parents, staff, and students expected them to be enablers of people's potentials rather than punishers of wrongdoing. They were required to support the members of their school communities for the success of students. Simon pointed out:

Expectations of you will vary from individual to individual. Students are looking for an administrator who is fair and impartial, that is empathetic. Someone who will treat them respectfully and in a manner in which their dignity is kept intact. . . . I hope people see me as a support, with the ability to empower people so that with the abilities they have . . . together with the ability others have . . . [we] can help to support each other's weaknesses.

Principals agreed that despite the occasional failures of parents, students, and staff, they expected to have a principal who supported them with the ultimate aim of building a successful school community for the best interests of the students. The principals agreed that while their school communities were aware that imperfections would always remain a human factor in leadership, the general expectation held for them was that they exhibit leadership that brings hope to people. Thompson (2005) underlined the need for educational leaders to be sources and sustainers of hope in their various school communities, in congruence with the observation of the Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes* (1965) that the future lies in the hands of those who can give their followers and tomorrow's generations reasons to live and hope.

To reinforce earlier points, John noted that students expected him, as principal, to be caring, impartial, and empathetic, and to treat them with respect. Terese, Simon, and Gerald pointed out that staff members expected a leader who is organized, efficient, fair, impartial, non-judgmental, empathetic, and supportive, while parents preferred the principal as one who treats their children with respect, promotes their learning, makes them grow, builds positive relationships, communicates well, speaks from the heart, and can be trusted. In the presence of such leaders, people felt comfortable. Other expectations included honesty and equity. For the principals, leadership that exists to serve its egotistic interest has no moral authenticity nor does it have moral authority.

The principals indicated that parents, students, and staff expected to have a leader they could confide in. School community members seem to know exactly what they expect of their principal. The principal's awareness and appreciation of those expectations and how he/she collaborates with community members to fulfill them will determine their leadership success.

#### *Servant-Leadership as a Journey*

Lad and Luechauer (1998) observed that, "to take a process orientation on your journey toward servant-leadership is to recognize that 90 percent of the joy stems from the work, not the outcome or results attained" (p. 61). Principals indicated that parents and staff expected them to perceive servant-leadership as a journey, and an ongoing process, because students were in their formative years, and young staff members needed guidance to help them grow. Thus, patience is required, but at the same time this calls for dedication to work, with the understanding that the success to be garnered lie more in the process than in what the leader hopes to attain (Lad & Luechauer).

Denis and Terese pointed out that because misunderstandings of servant-leadership as an on-going process, they were often accused of being too soft, as they gave more opportunities to students to reform than others thought appropriate. Denis accepted this "misjudgment" and felt that not everyone understood servant-leadership. Because servant-leadership is a process, principals believed that more possibilities were available for dealing with situations where respecting the opinions of others and being patience was of the essence. According to Terese, viewing servant-leadership as a process meant that the leader might benefit from



its outcomes. As the years had passed, she understood that her reaction to people mattered and not people's reaction to her. John and Gerald also acknowledged having benefited from their exercise of servant-leadership by their increased understanding of people. In general, principals perceived servant-leadership as a journey of self discovery, personal growth, and appreciation of constituents and their situations. Principals' acknowledgement of having gained personally from their practice of servant-leadership harmonizes with Ruschman's (2002) contention that the servant-leader has "nothing to lose and everything to gain" (p. 139). The servant-leader is challenged to understand and enable people's potentials for development and growth.

*Nurturing Dreams into Visions: Leaving a Legacy of Empowerment*

Acephalous societies are generally fraught with disorder and confusion, either because potential leaders have not been empowered to lead, or individuals have not been nurtured to cherish leadership. Principals understand that for their school communities to continue to succeed, people need to be empowered to grow into future leaders. DeSpain (2000) explained that the legitimacy of the servant-leader lies in the fact that he/she is first empowered by those being led so that he/she can then "define reality for all, nurture dreams into visions of new reality, and then redistribute the power and authority he/she has received from those led" (p. 68). Empowerment arises as servant-leadership moves away from self-centeredness to serve the interests of followers. According to Simon, ways of empowering constituents include giving them leadership opportunities, and respecting their opinions so as to give them confidence.

While principals appreciated the examples of excellent administrators, negative authoritarian leaders were an added impetus for John, Gerald, Simon, and Terese to stay clear of the top-down style of leadership they considered as stifling initiatives and growth of followers. John and Simon indicated that students were empowered by a principal's presence at their extra-curricular activities and students' representative council meetings. For Denis, other ways of empowering students included allowing and guiding them to make decisions regarding different field activities, outside the school. The rationale for this action was to avoid obliging students to live by compliance and, instead, to challenge them to learn responsibility as part of the growth process. Showkeir (2002) observed "compliance does not create passion. Compliance does not make individuals wiser. Compliance does not encourage choosing accountability" (p. 158). According to Denis, if students are allowed to cherish the responsible use of freedom, they would be learning a valuable lesson that would serve as leverage for them to create meaning and purpose for the rest of their lives.

In Gerald's view, involving staff members on committees was a good way to empower them. As well, empowerment included the encouragement of staff and students to take initiatives that were beneficial to the school community. To empower

members of the school community, it is important that the leader cultivate a healthy ego and a robust self-image so as not to perceive budding leaders as a challenge to his/her authority. Kahl's (2004) observation is pertinent here, he observed, "the job of the leader is to grow leaders at all levels . . . The only true measure of success for a leader is the creation of a legacy that survives his absence" (p. 108). But, as Munroe (2009) pointed out, the leader must not attempt to clone followers or make everyone else in their image.

Angela and Denis gave leadership roles to staff members to share best practices in teaching, and allowed their assistant principals to preside not only over minor ceremonies, but also over major ones. The frequent reciprocal consultations and interactions between Angela and Denis, and their assistant principals were evidence of mentorship. Restine (1997) underscored the importance of mentorship. Concurring, Calabrese and Tucker-Ladd (1991) argued that a mentoring relationship between the principal and assistant principal builds a synergistic activity where the assistant principal is informally nurtured into administration.

*Building Relationships, Community and a Culture of Support for Mission*

Kahl (2004) observed, "In the end, the world revolves around relationships between people . . ." (p. 26). Principals perceived relationships as crucial for the growth of their school communities. Thus, Denis said, "relationships are very important, contacting people makes a lot of difference." To Terese, servant-leadership was all about relationships because that was the way to nurture trust as a requisite for a happy school community. Principals' thought that where the school leader rated relationships as secondary to his/her power, fear might override human initiative and human spirits atrophy into quiescence, with hope remaining an unattainable dream. When asked why she greeted students as she walked through the corridors, Angela said "just a simple good morning could be healing for them for the day if they have had a bad beginning of day." Angela explained that greetings might be seen as simple but very important for establishing relationships.

Relationships were not only limited to formal conversations but informal discussions helped relationships solidify trust and open up avenues for stronger relationships. Approachability was a strength that explained the ease and confidence with which staff, parents, and students related with several of the principals. However, ease of accessibility to school community members did not imply the need to be liked or to be a friend to everybody. But approachability served as a reliable avenue for information flow between leader and constituents without which mistrust became a possibility. In effect, approachability involves humility which, according to Thompson (2005), entails the leader making himself/herself available to followers enough to increase his/her awareness since even in our so-called areas of expertise, we do not have all the answers. According to Angela, for healthy relationships to exist between leader and constituents, it was important to keep in mind that "leadership is no more the boss telling everybody what they should do." Principals stressed

the need for respect for followers as an essential ingredient for stronger relationships. This resonates with Autry's (2004) reflection that, "... when I did it well today, it's always been relationships, even if it was just convening a good meeting filled with ideas and energy" (p. 54).

Principals viewed community building as a *sine qua non* for success in servant-leadership. They had a clear understanding of Greenleaf's (1977) observation that an organization lacking its own sense of internal cohesion could not be oriented to serve, therefore, the first challenge is to seek community from within. Angela, Gerald, Terese, and John underscored the fact that a lot of effort was needed for community building because of a possible misunderstanding of the leader's intention, or the uncooperative attitude of detractors. The principal's participation at meals with members of his/her school community, social activities of staff and students, celebration of successes and moments of joy and pain, graduation ceremonies, praying together and celebrating liturgical activities including Masses, were suggested vehicles for community building. Other suggestions for community building included: support for students, staff, and parents during illness and death, and availability of the principal to teachers, students, parents, and the school community at large. According to John, all the activities identified as ways of building community demanded the principal's visibility. Stressing this need for the leader's visibility, Neuschel (2005) stated, "the impact of leadership is a necessary ingredient and personal presence among your people is often the most powerful way to reinforce this" (p. 98). People are interested in relating and feeling the presence of the person they are to look up to, particularly a leader of the school.

Angela and Denis viewed their constant reference to either their school vision or the mission statement as a rallying point for community building, and as a reminder that in a school community, there was the need to be guided by a common objective. Praying before the start of school, before staff meetings, and on Monday mornings were also signs of community building. Prayers were not only said for people present, but also for the needs of all members of the school community. Prayer sessions and the content of prayers indicated that faith in Jesus Christ was a cherished value in the Catholic school community. In general, principals' views about community-building were consistent with Beazley and Beggs' (2002) remark that "Servant-leadership is inclusive rather than exclusive, devoted to community building rather than to isolation" (p. 59). In sum, our principals' perceptions of community-building suggested that the varied backgrounds of the members of their school communities was not a barrier to community-building because building community is the answer to understanding and appreciating one another for the success of each individual, despite and benefited by the differences.

Principals stressed that community building is unsustainable without support for one another. For Angela, this support for one another implied opening one's eyes to the needs of the weak in the immediate environment. She called for a new way of examining the beatitudes, as the way to dispel complacency and self sufficiency, as these destroy community building. Support for one another in light of the beatitudes

is an invitation for the strong to look out for the weak in the school community, where the strong protect the weak while viewing the weak as essential members of the school community.

According to Denis and Simon, support for one another implied the principal's support for staff and students in ways that meet their interests. Support for students is not only academic success, but also the acquisition of social skills, emotional balance in relationships, spiritual maturity, and physical development leading to their holistic development. Support further means listening to parents, and cooperating with them to enhance the learning and other needs of their children to bring them hope. Neuschel (2005) proffered advice to leaders who wish to elicit the support of their constituents. He wrote, "Leaders get support because they give support to others. . . . By believing in people, you increase the possibility that others will believe in you. So it is with support" (p. 39).

Stewardship forms part of mutual support, and it demands interacting with people, helping them, and leaving them better than they were. Gerald suggested a deeper understanding of stewardship as innovativeness and creativity towards the environment and the promotion of renewed relationships with one another, thus calling on school community members to treat the environment and each other with respect. Additional avenues for support for one another in the Catholic school community included involvement in liturgical and charitable activities as ways of galvanizing students' efforts and helping them learn to look and think beyond themselves and have a consideration for the wider human society.

Concrete examples of support for students were Angela's magnanimity in driving a student to and from school because the student's parents were unable to afford bus passes for her, and the support she gave to another student who had become pregnant. Referring to this young student, Angela said, "We need to be sensitive enough to help seemingly hopeless cases like this one. We need to be hope for them." Denis' care and concern for a student he considered a loner, and his constant visits to the classrooms of the special needs students, are further examples of supporting students in the school community.

#### *Compassion as Spiritual Authenticity*

Renesch (2002) pointed out that a compassionate understanding of followers helps the leader to eliminate the need to attack, to defend, or to engage in destructive politics at work. Our principals seemed to have been inspired by Renesch-like thinking. They stressed the need for compassion in leadership and as an expectation their school communities held for them. It was no wonder that Gerald's metaphor for servant-leadership was *compassion*. Simon saw the link between compassion and spiritual authenticity as important elements of the growth of the school community when he pointed out, "The exact formula for success is not here. It is work in progress. By compassion, caring and faith-filled activities our community grows."

Gerald stressed the need for compassion by relating his experience with neophyte teachers. According to him, some new teachers espoused rigidity at the beginning of their teaching careers, but gradually incorporated compassion in their dealings with students as they gained experience in relationships. Principals had learned from past mistakes of rigidity and the blunders of other leaders. Interestingly, although all believed compassion was necessary, it was the two female principals who provided a caveat to be wary of the possible abuse of one's compassion by negligent followers. Angela and Terese cautioned that compassion does not mean allowing followers to irresponsibly dictate the state of affairs in the school community; as there need to be limits set for order to prevail.

For Catholic high school principals for whom Jesus is the foundation of their leadership, it is worth remembering Thompson's (2005) words that "Compassion is an important measure of spiritual authenticity, and it's essential to spiritual leadership [in] . . . education" (p. 47).

#### *The Reciprocal Value of Service*

Our principals were unanimous about the need for service in servant-leadership. For example, Denis and Simon, respectively, observed the obvious: "Service helps you develop servant-leadership. And if you weren't a servant-leader then you wouldn't probably serve others;" and "servant-leadership is all about moving away from yourself. Moving away from the ego-centric. To really be idea of service for others." DeSpain (2000 captured the principals' ideas about the need for service when he said:

The person who thinks himself or herself a leader and expects to behave in a manner as the "boss" of yesteryear is likely to find little demand for his or her services. Further, our society is in far greater need of a leader who is willing to serve, . . . than a leader who wishes to boss. (p. 11)

The reason for their principalship was service to the members of their school communities, for without service, there was no reason for their leadership.

McCollum's (1998) story about Frankl's experience in the Nazi concentration camps explains the reflections of the principals about the need for service. He recounted that those confined apparently adopted one of two methods. While some put their energy into surviving, others concentrated on serving other prisoners. According to Frankl, "it was the latter group that survived while the former perished" (p. 330). While Frankl's example is not an exact fit in the school context, it does serve to explain their views about service. In short, service and the reciprocal advantages for the leader who serves faithfully.

Angela and Denis demonstrated that, in serving their school communities, no job was too insignificant to engage their attention. For example, they helped with the decorations, placed to welcome visitors. For Denis, apart from many other examples of good relationships and collaboration, it was also through simple acts of picking up garbage as he toured the school.

*Community-Inspired Vision*

Principals stressed the need for vision as an important expectation of their school communities of them and echoed Daniels and Daniels (2007) that “The purpose of a vision . . . is to provide the context people need to give value to the daily tasks they must complete” (p. 145). It was the general view that vision is the engine for growth and movement forward in the school community, but the leader’s vision can only succeed if it is supported and encouraged by those around him/her.

While it is the leader’s task to develop a vision (Williams, 2002), it does not necessarily mean the vision has to come directly from him/her. It is however the leader’s responsibility to facilitate the vision and give credit to followers who help crystallize that vision. This situation is only possible where the leader has learned to empower his/her followers. Kahl’s (2004) observation is pertinent here:

[The leader] can accomplish great success if he doesn’t care who gets the credit. . . . Many leaders certainly bring an ego to various aspects of their lives; it is an inevitable weakness of humanity to get caught up in the trophies, trappings, and the need to proclaim our success to others; but the most effective leader sets these egotistical tendencies aside. (p. 109)

It is important that the leader not replace the community’s vision with an inordinate desire for his/her fame or credit. It is important that a task be accomplished such that the interest of the community are best served. The success of a shared vision depends very much on the followers; where the credit for the vision is also shared. Simon explained, “If there is success in the school, it is not administration that creates it. It is rather the front line teachers that create the success of the school.” Senge (1990) provided an explanation of why members of the school community participate in a shared vision. He said:

A shared vision is not an idea. . . . It is rather a force in people’s hearts, a force of impressive power. . . . It is palpable. People begin to see it as it exists. Few if any forces are as powerful as a shared vision. (p. 206)

In short, a shared vision propels people to action, because they can feel and understand it as relevant to their aspirations. Expressing his conviction about the need for a vision to be a shared one, John said, “I think you need to ensure that your vision is set within your school and within what you do within that school.” Mulligan (2003) seemed to provide the answer when he said, “. . . leadership is the capacity to influence the behaviour of others to work together for a common project and to be passionate about a shared vision” (p. 113). The identified qualities to achieve one’s vision in the school community were listening, empathy, persuasion, stewardship, community building, commitment to growth of people, collaboration, mutual support, forgiveness, compassion, tenacity, courage, innovativeness, and wisdom. At the base of all these qualities, faith in Jesus Christ was identified. This was likely so because faith serves as the source of strength when one feels overwhelmed with challenges (Williams, 2002).

*Credibility through Consistency and Authenticity*

Posner and Kouzes (1996) argued that, “Personal credibility is the foundation on which leaders stand . . . if you don’t believe in the messenger, you won’t believe the message” (p. 5). John summarized other principals’ ideas about credibility: “talk the talk and walk the talk.” In other words, “people believe in actions more than in words, in practices more than in pronouncements” (Posner & Kouzes, p. 7). Neuschel’s (2005) idea on credibility that, “If we want to have followers who follow freely, and willingly, they must believe that the leader has interest in and affection for them” (p. 96) was echoed by the six principals. Credibility can be talked about, wished for, and desired, but it cannot be achieved if the leader does not exhibit certain characteristics. Some of these characteristics include listening, empathy, awareness, commitment to growth of people, community building, support and care for constituents, fostering good relationships with followers, admitting mistakes, humility, visibility, prayerfulness, good communication, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, forgiveness, compassion, consistency, collaboration, fairness, respect for others, sharing successes, expression of appreciation for good efforts, and openness. In effect, these leaders seemed to be saying that good intentions are fine but not enough; credibility is only felt and experienced through concrete actions exhibited through the above mentioned characteristics. For example an honest and consistent leader who collaborates and respects followers paves the way for community building where healthy relationships serve as fuel for hope and success.

*Sustained Trust*

An important realization is that position does not necessarily engender trust. People expect to have a leader they can trust. Angela observed, . . . “you can’t assume just because you are the principal, people will trust you, you can’t.” In other words, the leader’s actions must conform or atune to his/her words. Lester and Brower (2003) argued, “If trust is a psychological state held within the trustor . . . , it may not call the trustee into action until the trustee perceives the trust” (p. 17). In effect, trust was a necessary condition for members of the school community to open up to the principals and collaborate with them. Posner and Kouzes (1996) added their voice to the need for trust when they said, “A trusting relationship between leaders and constituents is essential to getting extraordinary things done” (p. 6). Caring and showing kindness were seen as necessary ingredients for gaining trust. Trust could be earned through listening, empathy, commitment to the growth of people, confidentiality, visibility, support and respect for followers, kindness, good relationships, collaboration, compassion, gentleness, and role modeling. John pointed out that trust is the element needed for a new principal to be accepted in his/her new school environment in order to build an effective leadership team. As indicated, principals agreed with Lowe’s view (1998) that trust is a journey and not a destination, and it can be gained through consistency. Denis observed “it takes a while to build that trust,” and

## CHAPTER 5

trust is earned if followers see that the leader's concern is not just about him/herself, but about service to the school community. Trust is not a one way communication as John suggested; it is the leader's responsibility to trust constituents first as trust engenders trust. Houston and Sokolow (2006) pointed out the need for leaders to be the first to trust followers when they wrote:

Trust is to people as water is to plants – everyone needs just the right amount to thrive. As a leader, you are in a position to dispense a lot of trust – or not. One of the by-products of dispensing trust is that it is truly empowering, which is one of the reasons it is such a fundamental principle of enlightened leadership. (p. 130)

Trust can be compared to an enabling invitation, because it serves as the fuel that gives motive force and progress to relationships in communities. According to Houston and Sokolow the reason the leader must be the first to trust is that most people are capable of responding positively. Trust, according to DePree (2002), is the grace that enables followers to be creative. There may however be exceptions because some people may not respond adequately to trust, but it is important that the leader not generalize. The choice to trust will always remain both the leader's and their followers.

In this chapter, we've brought to description a range of role perceptions and expectations. We've examined the impressions of role and the language used by principals (particularly a sampling of metaphors and definitions). We have considered, from principals' viewpoints, what they feel are the expectations of others for them in their role and the crucial relationship dynamics that constitute the life-blood of effectual leading and living in community (i.e., building people and community, demonstrating authentic compassion, nurturing dreams and sustaining trust). More detailed accounts of what this looks like in the daily lives of school leaders follows in Chapter 6 and Section Three.