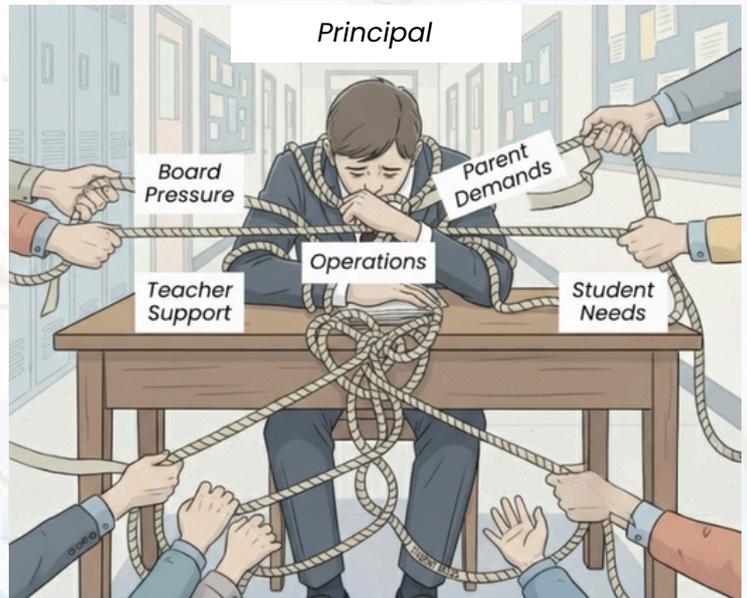


The Learning Compass - Vol 1 - Issue 6

Let's
Explore
This
Together



We're losing good principals to exhaustion, not incompetence.

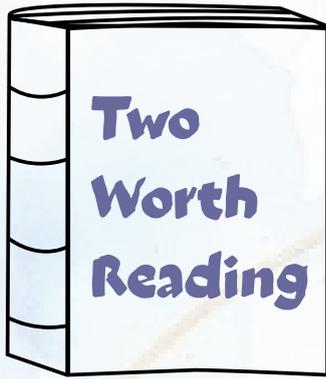
I sat with a school leader last week who broke down in tears. Not because she's failing—her school's test scores are rising. But because she spent another day managing bus schedules, fielding parent complaints about mascot designs, and responding to board emails about bathroom policies. Meanwhile, the cultural shift her school desperately needs—building teacher collaboration, developing instructional leadership capacity, creating systems for student belonging—sits untouched. Again.

This is the hidden crisis in education: we promote excellent teachers into leadership roles, hand them impossible job descriptions, provide minimal training on leading adults, and then wonder why they default to managing tasks rather than transforming schools. They're not authoritarian by nature—they're drowning in operational minutiae with no lifeline for the strategic, relational work that actually changes schools.

Principals face relentless pressure from every direction: boards demanding immediate results, parents expecting instant responses, teachers needing support, students requiring presence, and districts rolling out new initiatives quarterly. Each stakeholder has legitimate needs. None of them see the principal's impossible math: 60-hour weeks that still can't accommodate everything everyone needs.

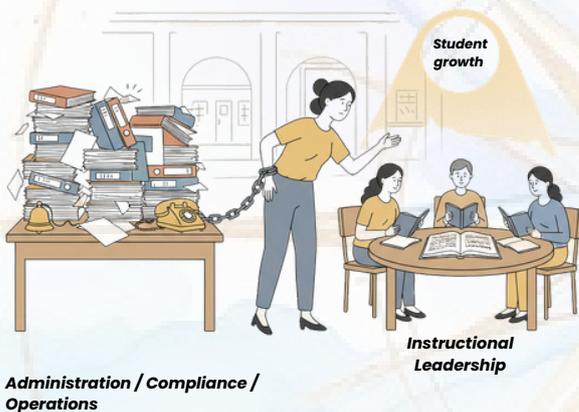
The tragedy isn't that principals lack good intentions—most are deeply committed, working themselves to burnout trying to serve everyone.

The tragedy is that we've designed a role that's structurally impossible to do well, then blamed individuals when they can't perform miracles. We need to name this honestly: we're setting leaders up to fail, then calling it a leadership problem.



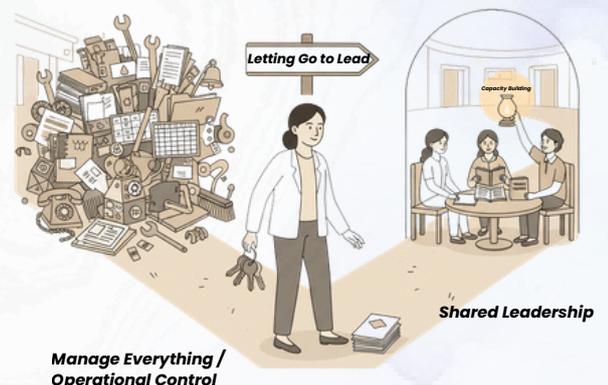
1. Research Spotlight: Leading for Learning in the Indian Context

Research from India's National Centre for School Leadership confirms what stressed principals worldwide already know: leadership is second only to classroom instruction in improving student outcomes, yet school leaders remain trapped in administrative roles. The most powerful finding? A principal's support for and participation in teacher professional learning produces the largest impact on student achievement—larger than goal-setting, curriculum coordination, or evaluation. Yet this is precisely what gets sacrificed when leaders drown in operational demands. The research is clear: we cannot expect instructional leadership while principals remain consumed by administrative management. The shift from administrator to instructional leader requires intentional capacity building, not just exhortations to "do more."



2. Perspective to Consider: Michael Fullan's "The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact"

Fullan argues that principals are trapped between two impossible demands: being instructional leaders and building managers simultaneously. His research shows effective principals succeed not by working harder, but by fundamentally redefining their role—deliberately letting go of operational control, investing deeply in a few relationships rather than surface-managing many, and building leadership capacity in others. The insight that hits hardest: principals who try to do everything accomplish nothing of lasting value. Strategic neglect isn't failure; it's survival and sanity.



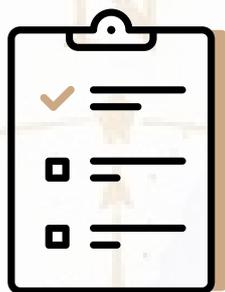
Three to Try

Try This Tomorrow: The "Stop Doing" List



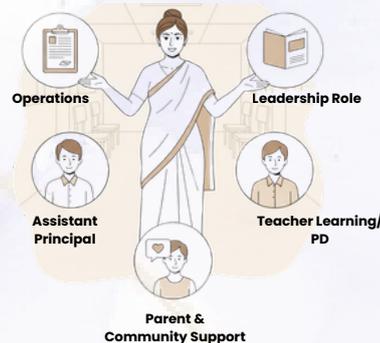
Before adding anything to your plate, write down three things you'll stop doing or delegate. Not eventually—this week. Principals rarely lack ideas for improvement; they lack permission to let other things go. Give yourself that permission. Model it for your staff.

Question to Ask



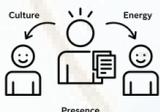
"If I could only focus on three leadership priorities this year that would genuinely transform our school, what would they be?" Now compare that to your actual calendar. The gap between intention and reality reveals where the system is failing you, not where you're failing the system.

Tool/Resource: Distributed Leadership Framework



Explore models from schools that have successfully redistributed leadership—assistant principals owning operations, teacher leaders facilitating PD, parent coordinators managing community relations. You cannot do this alone. Stop trying. Build the team that makes actual leadership possible.

On My Radar



1. What if teacher retention isn't about compensation but about whether teachers see their principal as stressed, overwhelmed, and reactive? Culture flows from leadership presence, not leadership perfection



Visible but Reactive Strategic & Effective

2. Are we confusing visibility with effectiveness? The principal who's constantly in hallways putting out fires might actually be less effective than one who's strategically invisible, coaching teachers behind closed doors



3. The phrase "instructional leader" has become aspirational fiction for most principals - when do we admit the role as currently designed makes this nearly impossible and redesign accordingly?



4. Why do we train teachers for years before they enter classrooms but expect principals to learn leadership on the job while managing multi crore budgets and hundred-person organizations?

If you're a principal reading this: you're not failing. The system is. What's one thing you wish someone understood about your reality? Hit reply—you're not alone in this. If you work with principals: what's one operational burden you could lift from their shoulders this month? Small acts create space for the work that matters.

Elevating Education to Excellence for Impact,

H. Anand

Chief Education Officer



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Excellence for Impact