

# THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL 50

Critical Questions *for*  
Meaningful Leadership  
and Professional Growth

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It's a beautiful early October Monday morning here in Montego Bay, Jamaica, as my wife Kimberly and I celebrate my 59th birthday. I'm sitting on my balcony and plan to read a few e-mails and check inboxes and DMs before I head to breakfast. As I read the messages, there are, as always, an abundance of queries about the assistant principalship from aspiring assistant principals (APs) and practicing APs. You see, two years ago, I created several YouTube videos aimed at preparing AP candidates for both the job interview and success once in the position. I didn't realize that creating those videos would position me as an authority on the assistant principalship (which was not my intent, although I welcome the role with open arms); I just wanted to do a good deed and make life easier for interviewees in light of the numerous questions I received about how to prepare for an AP interview or about situations that APs find themselves grappling with daily.

To further respond to the needs of aspiring principals and practicing APs, I wrote *The Aspiring Principal 50: Critical Questions for New and Future School Leaders* (ASCD) in early 2019. The purpose of that book was to help new and aspiring principals transition to the principalship. The book was also intended for assistant principals. Although I am extremely proud of that book, I knew that there was yet another perspective that I needed to address—the role of APs in their current capacities—because there is so much confusion about what an AP is and is not. In fact, a few months ago, I wrote a blog post entitled *The Assistant*

*Principalship: The Most Misunderstood and Underutilized Position in Education.* Of the more than 50 blog posts I have written over the years, that one was by far the most widely read. It resonated with countless APs throughout the United States and became the motivation for this book, *The Assistant Principal 50*.

Assistant principals must be utilized effectively and maximally. When the AP is, for example, reduced to serving as a disciplinarian, everyone—the principal, the staff members that the AP supervises and, most importantly, the students—loses (a matter that I'll discuss in detail in the book).

In keeping with my previous six ASCD books, at the core of *The Assistant Principal 50* are self-reflective questions. *The Assistant Principal 50* is a vehicle for you to study your “game film.” In the world of sports, the study, analysis, breakdown, and dissection of the film from the game last played is crucial in preparing for the next opponent. It works the same way in education. Educators must study, analyze, break down, and dissect their “film.” These questions will serve as your film. I want you to look at each question and ask yourself, “How does this question relate to my work as an assistant principal?”, “How does this question relate to my growth and development as an assistant principal?”, “How does this question relate to my effectiveness as an assistant principal?”, “In what ways do I need to rethink what I am doing as an assistant principal?”, “What adjustments do I need to make as an assistant principal?”, “What do I currently do effectively as an assistant

principal?”, and “How will this question one day prepare me for the principalship?” It is my desire that these questions create discomfort, tension, and uneasiness for those who need to adjust their overall AP leadership. Discomfort, tension, and uneasiness are great motivators for change. When one feels comfortable in their lack of productivity, everyone loses. But if one can spark discomfort for another individual within their comfort of low productivity, there is a much higher probability for immediate change. I, therefore, want this book to serve as a vehicle toward creating discomfort for readers.

I am writing *The Assistant Principal 50* in the second person. I am speaking directly to you. I am having a one-on-one “conversation” with you. To make the book authentic and relevant and to “bring it to life,” it is replete with my personal experiences as an AP and as a principal working with APs. All of my books are short and readable because, as a former AP and principal, I know exactly how hard you work and the incredibly long hours that you put into your craft daily. Although I kept it simple to read, I implore you to treat it as a book to read *and* to reference throughout your assistant principalship. And when you one day become a principal, I encourage you to use it as one of the tools in your toolbox to train your APs.

I anticipate that many principals will read this book. There are some hard truths in this book for principals. When APs aren’t being developed properly, you don’t have to look too far to understand why. It’s typically what the principal is doing or is not doing. The principal must treat the assistant

principalship as an extension of the graduate school program relative to their AP's continued professional growth and development. The AP is in place to both assist the principal and to be trained to one day step into the role of principal as seamlessly as possible.

Lastly, as my goal for this book is to completely transform “the most misunderstood and underutilized position in education,” I could not confine the readership to assistant principals and principals. It is my hope and intent that this book be utilized widely by aspiring assistant principals; school districts; professors and graduate school administrators in education leadership departments within and outside of the United States who prepare students for school leadership (as while educational leadership programs typically prepare students to become effective *principals*, in most cases, one becomes an assistant principal before becoming a principal); and district-level superintendents and assistant superintendents.