A Report of a Principal Internship in River Valley School System

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A REPORT OF A PRINCIPAL INTERNSHIP
IN RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL SYSTEM

by

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A REPORT OF A PRINCIPAL INTERNSHIP
IN RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Western Michigan University, 1986

This report describes an internship with the River Valley School System, Three Oaks, Michigan. The internship took place from January 4, 1983 to February 22, 1983. This internship consisted of a total of 240 hours.

This was an excellent experience for the intern because of the many opportunities to view and experience the principalship. The internship enabled this intern to work with several capable principals, viewing all grades, K-12. This gave the intern a full view of the nature and scope of the principalship.

Basically, this internship was designed to gain experience in the following areas:

1. Leader Styles
2. School and Community Relationships
3. School Climate and Discipline
4. A View of the Central Office
5. Committees
6. School Management
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to those who have supported me as I have pursued my internship. First of all, I thank Dr. Larry Schlack for enabling me to intern with the River Valley School System, Three Oaks, Michigan. Without this opportunity it would have been hard for me to participate in the internship program. I also would like to thank Dr. Charles O. Williams, Pete Petros, Jim White, Shirley Kahn, and Bob Schroder for allowing me to poke my head into their business. Most of all I would like to thank the Three Oaks Church of Christ for allowing me to study while being their pastor during the greater part of the work, and my dear wife, Connie, for her loving support of me.

Richard D. Kelly
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CHAPTER I

PROSPECTUS DESCRIBING PROPOSED INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

The description of the proposed internship is as follows:

1. The organization in which the internship is sought is the River Valley School System, Three Oaks, Michigan.

2. The organization supervisor for the proposed internship is Dr. Charles O. Williams, Superintendent of the River Valley School System. Others who will be assigning tasks are:
   (a) Pete Petros, Principal, Three Oaks Elementary School
   (b) Bob Schroder, Principal, Chickaming Elementary School
   (c) Shirley Kahn, Principal, New Troy Elementary School
   (d) Jim White, Principal, River Valley Middle School

3. The proposed internship will be done on a full time basis from January 4, 1983 through February 22, 1983.

4. This internship will be approached with the following tasks and experiences in mind:
   (a) The student desires to observe the management function of the organization.
   (b) The student wishes to observe several principals and witness their leadership styles.
   (c) The student wishes to observe interaction of the diverse populations that make up the school.
(d) The student desires to observe and participate in the schools' climate and discipline programs.

(e) The student wishes to accompany administrators to the central administrative office and attend school board meetings.

(f) The student wishes to observe and participate on committees.

(g) The student desires to study school policies and job descriptions.

5. The intern will develop the following:

(a) Conceptual skills:

   (1) Develop an understanding of school administration, elementary through high school.

   (2) Observe various leadership styles being used by the principals in the school system.

   (3) Understand the impact of positive school climate and discipline.

   (4) Gain insight into the central offices and their role in the local school system.

   (5) Acquire an understanding of the policies and job descriptions of the school system.

(b) Human skills:

   (1) Observe communication between the principal and various groups that make up the school population.

   (2) Observe the impact of the principal's leadership styles on the faculty and staff.
(3) Observe and participate in incidents relating to school climate and discipline.

(4) Develop a working knowledge of the organization and functioning of committees.

(5) Observe school administrators' implementation of school policies and procedures.

(6) Differentiate the attitudes of school populations toward each other and the administration.

(c) Technical skills:

(1) Develop a working knowledge of the system wide climate and discipline plan.

(2) Acquire an understanding of the committee functioning and organization.

(3) Acquire a practical understanding of the system's policies and job descriptions.
CHAPTER II

REPORT ON THE INTERNSHIP OBJECTIVES

The prospective objectives were categorized into three skill areas: (1) conceptual, (2) human, and (3) technical. They were placed in categories according to their scope. The objectives overlapped and were found in several categories. Skills evidenced in the categories had the following contents:

(1) A recognition of each principal's leadership style and the resulting effect on his or her school.

(2) The school's relationship with the community.

(3) The system wide school climate and discipline programs.

(4) A view of the central office's relationship with the River Valley School System.

(5) A view of the committee function in the school system.

(6) A view of school management.

Leadership Styles

It was obvious from the onset that the five principals of the River Valley School System varied in their leadership styles. A perception of each principal's leadership style is included in the log, so comment will concern itself with the other evidence.

Variety was evidenced in the school system and it was obvious that the leader's style was only as effective as its match with
the school's climate. It seemed that the match between principal and school was the key ingredient; what worked in one school may not have worked in another.

Styles ranged from autocratic, task orientation to a free atmosphere where relationships were emphasized. While one principal had a hand on everything, another allowed freedom to the extent that teachers initiated their own programs.

For the most part, the leaders were matched well with their schools. Such matches may have been either by chance or design.

School and Community Relationships

Immediately upon joining the school system, it was obvious to the intern that River Valley was suffering from poor school and community relationships. At the intern's first meeting the major agenda item was the schools' community images.

Each of the River Valley's four schools was responsible for its own public relations. Three of the four were having some problems doing so, the other was doing well. Because of the community involvement in the Chickaming Elementary School, it had been able to develop a positive image. There always seemed to be parents, elderly persons, and other community members helping in a variety of ways. Obviously, community involvement helped considerably with the school's image in the community.
School Climate and Discipline

River Valley Schools, under the supervision of Dr. Charles Williams, initiated a system wide discipline plan. With this they attempt to set the climates of the schools through strong and consistent assertive discipline modeled after the techniques in Canter and Canter (1976).

The school plan stressed faculty and staff implementation through grades kindergarten through twelfth. This enabled the student to know what was expected of him or her and defined the teacher’s and administrator’s role in the discipline process.

Relationship with the Central Office

Several times each week someone from River Valley attended a meeting at the Berrien Springs Intermediate Offices. Meetings ranged the spectrum of school related topics.

Even though most of the agendas did not immediately effect the intermediate offices, they did inform the system of possible governmental policy changes. The meetings enabled the central office to head off potential problems. Through such initiative the intermediate office would lead toward the goal of effective schools. Their leadership would enable schools to be prepared for eventualities.
Committees can be both over used and under used in an organization. A school can be so committee oriented that the result is a climate lacking creativity and crispness. On the other hand, an organization can under use them resulting in total administrative control. An organization controlled by one administrator is often unprepared for eventualities.

River Valley seemed to have a balance between the two. Committee involvement allowed insight and brought good productivity, but always allowed for strong administrative leadership when it was needed.

River Valley had the usual committees and oriented them towards both problem solving and preparation for the future. They functioned by design; some functioning throughout the year and others came into action when the need arose.

All of the committees were appointed by the superintendent and were staffed with both faculty and administrators. They were responsible to both the chairman and the superintendent.

A committee of note was the curriculum committee. This committee operated throughout the year because its work demanded year round effort.

River Valley is on a six year curriculum review cycle. Each year certain subject areas were examined and after that review they will not be looked at again until the cycle is complete. One excep-
tion would be in the event that the state guidelines were found to be different than River Valley's.

In the area of curriculum, considerable freedom seemed to be given. For instance, if the committee came up with a creative way of teaching a subject, consideration was given to that proposal. If the idea had merit, it was shown to the superintendent and then to the board.

The River Valley committees functioned well. They enabled the administrators to see directions and information that they might otherwise have missed.

School Management

River Valley's management hierarchy was similar to most school systems its size. From the top to the bottom, River Valley was designed with checks and balances. The superintendent was responsible to the board and the principals to the superintendent. The teachers, staff, and students were responsible to their respective principals, and each school had a teacher appointed who functioned as principal when the administrator was out of the building. These assistant principals were directly responsible to the building principal for their actions.

As well as being in charge of building functions, each principal chaired a major committee that had been matched with his or her abilities. This match between the principal's strengths and a major
committee ensured that the school system would be prepared in the future for educational directives.

The booklet *River Valley School Management Guide (1982)* was the system's policy handbook. Statements and descriptions included in the handbook have been formulated in previous years. These policies and procedures are intended to guide the principal as he or she manages his or her respective school. Each statement dictates policy and procedure by which to handle situations requiring attention.

Management skills are a necessity for the principal to function effectively. The principal must master many management areas. Those used in a typical day might include budgeting, interpersonal skills, time management, grantsmanship, and possibly even some understanding of the legal statutes.

The many skills needed in school management demand that the principal always be learning. The university that the principal attended might provide many of these skills, but it is unreasonable to expect everything can be learned there. The volume and variety of skills needed by the principal demand a lifetime of learning.
Tuesday, January 4, 1983: This was the initial meeting of the intern with Dr. Charles Williams, superintendent of the River Valley School System. Present at this meeting were the various principals of the school system. They will divide the 240 hours of my internship between them. Present at this meeting were Pete Petros, principal of the Three Oaks Elementary School; Shirley Kahn, principal of the New Troy Elementary School; Jim White, principal of the River Valley Middle School; and Bob Schroder, principal of the Chickaming Elementary School.

This was a cordial welcome and visit. They immediately mentioned that they have never had such an intern before. I supplied each with a prospectus and noted exactly what I hoped to learn from the experience. They all expressed their interest in using me, but came to the conclusion that I would be shared between them.

I was happy with this initial meeting and impressed with the possibilities. The superintendent seemed to communicate well. It looked as if responsibility was delegated well and good planning was being used. Each principal seemed to have freedom and latitude to use me in any way mutually agreeable.

I am happy with the possibility of seeing several principals in action. I am going to be allowed to observe the leadership
styles of all the principals, grades kindergarten through twelfth.

Wednesday, January 5, 1983: As was decided yesterday, my experiences began with Pete Petros, the principal at Three Oaks Elementary School. We met briefly and discussed my prospectus. He stated that he would keep my prospectus in mind as the days went by and that he would try and involve me in activities accordingly.

Pete noticed my interest in learning about school discipline and assigned me to listen to some tapes about discipline (Canter & Canter, 1976). The school had just adopted this program as their system wide model and he assigned this material to me in order to understand their program.

Thursday, January 6, 1983: I had no idea that salesmen showed up at school to sell their products. This morning a salesman from the Macmillan Publishing Company came to the office looking for Pete, since he is the curriculum committee chairman. Pete examined the textbook plan and pointed out to the salesman that the series did not follow the River Valley's curriculum plan.

Pete mentioned that River Valley is reviewing social studies, physical education, and fine arts on the six year plan.

During the afternoon I wandered around the school. Basically, I wanted to observe how the school operated. At various times I went into rooms and asked teachers what their expectations were for the school principal. Later in the day a couple of parent meetings were held. Pete felt because of the confidential nature that I should not attend with him. I visited classes.
Friday, January 7, 1983: The morning started out with the lunch ticket sales lines. Each morning River Valley sells the tickets out of the principal's office. The principal is right in the middle of it all. Pete said he wasn't really needed there, but it gave him a good opportunity to get to know the students. He is on a friendly basis with most of them. Once the school day starts, the only contact he has with them is when they are in trouble.

Once school started, most of our time was spent with student related problems. Early on, I realized the time the principal puts in on problems, e.g., a complaining child, another mildly injured, a child with severe emotional problems being transferred to a special school. Meanwhile, paper work piled up on the desk. It will not get finished today.

I spent most of the afternoon studying policies and job descriptions of the River Valley School System (Handbook, 1982). I feel this is one area that I might be required to develop in my future principalship. Policies studied pertained to hiring, evaluation, finance, contracts, and job descriptions.

Around 3:00, I prepared to go home and walked out into the hall for one more look around. Down the hall I noticed that a little boy had a teacher pushed up against the wall and was hitting her with an object. I rushed in, picked up the child, and began to carry him to the principal's office. He began to hit, kick, and bite me. Eventually, the child calmed down. He was one of the emotionally impaired students and something had disturbed him. When Pete entered the room,
he quipped, "Welcome to the principalship."

**Monday, January 10, 1983:** Pete was out for the morning, so I observed two classes. They were gracious to let me participate.

Upon Pete's return we discussed teacher evaluation and tenure. He maintained that it was important to never hire a poor teacher, rather than attempt to fire him or her later. At River Valley, tenured teachers were evaluated once a year, while non-tenured teachers were evaluated twice yearly.

Our conversation evolved; and as it progressed, Pete mentioned that several of his teachers did not have classroom styles he agreed with. His authoritarian style monitored everything that happened in the school. When he saw relaxed discipline in a classroom, he questioned it.

I believe a variety of teaching styles should be evident in a school setting, since many learning styles are evidenced in the classroom. Variety present in the teaching ranks would ensure each child experiencing at least one teacher that matched his or her learning style.

The afternoon was spent talking with a speech specialist from the central office. She spends a major part of her day traveling from school to school. She is able to see only a few students a day because of the distance she travels.

Tonight was the semi-monthly board meeting. I traveled to New Troy Elementary School for the meeting. River Valley rotates the meeting place to invite more community participation. Only a few attended the meeting.
Tuesday, January 11, 1983: Pete was busy again today and it was difficult to keep his pace. He investigated several assignments before the executive committee meeting that morning.

The executive committee met every other week. Discussion today involved committee progress. Following committee reports, a legal matter was discussed. Just before the meeting concluded, a World Book representative spent several minutes expounding on the merits of his encyclopedia.

From the meetings today, I saw the importance of delegating responsibility. Each principal pursued his or her assignment, concentrating on it, thus allowing the system to be prepared to handle crisis.

Wednesday, January 12, 1983: The morning was spent at the school. Several opportunities came to ask questions of Pete relative to procedures in the school. We spent four hours on campus, giving me some positive experiences.

In the afternoon, we attended a meeting discussing River Valley's computer literacy program. This is a weakness in the River Valley curriculum. Except for the sixth grade, the schools have no computers in the classrooms. Next year, they will begin giving their gifted elementary children computer training. However, this would include only ten to twelve children. Several of the principals remarked that this was too small a percentage of the student body.

Thursday, January 13, 1983: We spent the day at the school. Pete gave me several duties to allow him to concentrate on his paper
work. A majority of my new duties involved monitoring hallways, lunchrooms, and playgrounds. A great deal of his day was time involved with such duties.

**Friday, January 14, 1983:** This day was oriented around the visit of a Michigan State Department representative. He came to River Valley at Pete's request. The topic was social studies, the subject of River Valley's curriculum review.

River Valley was not following the state guidelines prescribed by the gentleman. Response to the discrepancies was openness and willingness to change. Comments were made that several of the textbook series which the curriculum committee was considering will not satisfy the state guidelines.

**Monday, January 17, 1983:** This was my first day with Bob Schroder, principal of the Chickaming Elementary School. As well as being a principal, he is also the director of the special education services at River Valley.

I met him in Berrien Springs at the Intermediate School offices. He is the chair of the budget committee for the district. The budget committee is attempting to find ways to make budget cuts because of the financial difficulties in Michigan.

At the meeting, they had problems making the cuts. Everyone was cutting to the bone now. How were they going to find more? This meeting was not a productive one at all. The committee recessed with no changes.
Later that day, we returned to Chickaming. There I met teachers, staff, and students. It was obvious from the beginning that the climate of this school was different from that of the Three Oaks Elementary School. It was much more open and free.

Later that afternoon, a teacher needed to leave early and I substituted for her.

**Tuesday, January 18, 1983:** This morning, one of the second graders was referred to the emotionally impaired school at St. Joseph. Bob and I examined her records and completed the paper work to accomplish the task. Such referrals involve extensive paper work. This process is required by law and cannot exceed one month. In that month, papers must be completed and conferences arranged with teachers, principal, parents, and the child. The psychologist for the River Valley School System directs the process to make sure that it is handled correctly.

It was interesting watching Bob today. He works much differently from Pete Petros. Bob is relationship oriented. He gives his teachers a great deal of freedom in their work. Because of his style, he spends a great deal of his day working on his relationships with teachers and students in order to build strong friendships.

**Wednesday, January 29, 1983:** Chickaming Elementary School relied heavily on voluntary help from the community. This seemed to cause a friendly, happy atmosphere in the school. Various volunteer aids were always around the school helping in the classrooms, the office,
the library, and the cafeteria. The volunteers do a great deal of work here.

Chickaming ran smoothly despite its free atmosphere. I asked Bob about it; he replied that the day doesn’t always run so smoothly.

About 2:00, the two of us went to the library to view story hour. This is a great program in the River Valley system. Its purpose was to orient four-year-olds to the school. It was operated at Chickaming on volunteer help.

Thursday, January 20, 1983: Bob attended another meeting at Berrien Springs. I had the option of going or staying and acting in his absence, so I stayed. He left with the comment, "Looks like you are in charge."

I was amazed how smoothly Chickaming operated while he was away. Consistent with his style, he had everything delegated. When he was gone, the school functioned well.

Friday, January 21, 1983: This was the last day of the grading period and was evidenced in both teachers and students. Both were hyper, and there was a certain electricity in the air.

Grade cards for the elementary school children varied. The kindergarten had a check sheet. The bridging room, a class for first graders who have not developed the necessary first-grade skills, used a check sheet with a long list of skills. The rest of the grades used the letter-grade approach. Such variety of cards allowed for student differences.
Monday, January 24, 1983: Again, we traveled to the Intermediate Office in Berrien Springs; and as in previous meetings, the purpose was to find areas for budget cuts. The results of the meeting were similar; no answers were found.

The present economy will demand that all schools make budget cuts. But where are they going to find excess? All schools have had to trim their budgets previously, and decisions made in the future will have drastic ramifications.

Tuesday, January 25, 1983: Bob arranged a tour for me at Blossom Land Training Center in Berrien Springs. The purpose was to familiarize me with one of the areas affected by the budget cuts.

This was an enlightening experience. The center was filled to capacity because many of the area's clients had returned from Coldwater. The training center there had been closed because of state budget cuts, as a result the Berrien facility was overcrowded.

Wednesday, January 26, 1983: Again, Bob was out of the office because of meetings in Berrien Springs. All ran smoothly with only a few discipline problems.

A dramatic difference could be seen at this school. The most obvious difference was the lack of disciplinary visits to the principal's office.

Thursday, January 27, 1983: Several times a year, in-service workshops are given in the area of reading instruction at each elementary school. To allow the teachers to attend, Chickaming staffed the classrooms with volunteers. I taught the first grade for the
entire day. I have been in this classroom several times and am getting to know the children.

Friday, January 28, 1983: Bob and I talked several hours discussing his committee work, teachers, and the discipline plan at Chickaming. His feeling was that Chickaming operates smoothly; I would have to agree.

I had noticed an obvious comradery between Bob and his teachers. He mentioned that he had taught several years at Chickaming, and his fellow teachers were happy when he was contracted as principal.

Monday, January 31, 1983: Today was my first day at New Troy Elementary School. Shirley Kahn is the principal. She is also the reading committee chairperson.

New Troy is unique among the other elementary schools. It has five buildings that house the usual kindergarten through fifth-grades, but it also houses the system's sixth-grade program. Two of the buildings are mobiles; they house the library, the kindergarten, and the fifth-grade. The remaining buildings house the other grades with the sixth-grade located in the largest building. This was by far the greatest challenge of the school system relative to the principalship. The principal was unable to monitor the grounds well because of the distance involved. Because of this, Shirley was most office-bound of the principals. She used the phone and the intercom rather than trying to cover the distance on foot.

Tuesday, February 1, 1983: Today we attended the executive meeting at the high school. The major agenda item was "Project Outreach."
This project was designed to enhance the school's image in the community. It was in the process of being organized by Dr. Charles Williams, and he wanted input from the principals.

River Valley needed to do something to involve the community in the schools. This was to be their greatest emphasis in the months ahead.

As far as I saw, only one of the schools was attempting involvement of the community in the school. As previously mentioned, Chickaming was involving many volunteers in their school.

This afternoon I visited New Troy teachers and classrooms. Teachers were willing to express their ideas of a good principal. Their comments were usually personality-oriented. Some were even directed at their administrator's shortcomings. I guess it was a chance for some of them to criticize what was not acceptable to them.

Wednesday, February 2, 1983: The principals had decided in the previous executive meeting that "Project Outreach" would be explained to the teachers. I observed Shirley as she explained the plan to her teachers and asked them for input. She had their attention, but obviously not their support. At Chickaming such a setting would have resulted in many responses. This was a different group of teachers reacting differently to an opportunity.

The rest of the day was spent with Shirley learning about her school. We discussed school discipline; she supported the system wide approach. To her, the strength of the system wide approach was that students know what is expected of them in the River Valley schools
in all grades. Each school follows the prescribed plan.

Shirley was a strong disciplinarian, with her students and with
the teachers. She had the strongest personality of all the principals.

Thursday, February 3, 1983: I spent the day with Shirley. She
was extremely assertive in her leadership. She approached her job in
a businesslike manner and expected others to be as professional as
she was. She was well-read, organized, and strong in leadership
qualities. She mentioned that her ambition was the superintendency.

Friday, February 4, 1983: This was the day of reward for all
of those who did not receive any detentions in the last grading period.
It was part of the system's discipline program, using the principle of
positive reinforcement. The afternoon was spent watching movies as
formulated in the plan. It must be working; most students were there
today viewing movies.

Monday, February 7, 1983: This morning was spent observing
various classrooms and the general climate of the school. New Troy
was different from other River Valley schools because of the number
of buildings. One could have easily felt isolated from the rest of
the school.

Shirley and I met with several teachers discussing problems
and strategies relative to reading instruction. Several of the
teachers had ideas that could improve their reading program.

Tuesday, February 8, 1983: I was not in school.

Wednesday, February 9, 1983: Shirley was ill today, so I acted
as principal for her. I was amazed at the number of children who
came to school sick. Many were sent to school because no one was home to take care of them. Today I called a parent at work and had her meet us at her home. The child was simply too ill to remain in school.

What a day to fill in. I kept busy with discipline problems and sick students. Students came in and would pour their hearts out; many were from negative home situations.

**Thursday, February 10, 1983:** Shirley was ill, and once again I assumed the principalship in her place.

At New Troy, I saw the importance of having a capable secretary. The secretary handled less dramatic problems allowing the principal to concentrate on important items.

**Friday, February 11, 1983:** Shirley was absent again because of sickness. I am more involved with the school each day. It was a busy day because the teachers were using me as they would Shirley. Most of the needs were in the area of discipline.

**Monday, February 14, 1983:** Shirley was back today after a long bout with the flu. She had considerable paper work to catch up on, so I spent the day in various classrooms. I wanted to observe the sixth-grade departmentalized approach and drifted from classroom to classroom.

**Tuesday, February 15, 1983:** Today Bob Schroder called and asked me to return to Chickaming and help in the bridging room. Allowing first grade children who need skill work a chance to catch up before returning with their peers is a good idea. When they were able to
catch up, they rejoined their classmates.

**Wednesday, February 16, 1983:** This was my first day at the River Valley Middle and High Schools.

From the first moment I walked through the front door, I noticed a profound difference from the other schools. There was action everywhere.

Jim White was my supervisor here. He was the middle school principal. As well, he directed all middle and high school athletics. His work load kept him busy.

While with him this afternoon, Jim had three committee meetings, lunchroom duty, and a trip into town for supplies. At school he had three student discipline cases, introduced me to teachers, walked the halls, and involved himself with scores of other activities.

**Thursday, February 17, 1983:** Jim took time this morning to discuss River Valley with me. For several minutes he explained his version of the system wide discipline plan. The middle and high schools modify the program. In lower grades the teachers kept the records, and in the middle and high school, Jim kept records. If a student violated the specified rules, he or she was required to go to Saturday school. Obviously, the upper grades were oriented to a negative approach rather than the lower grades' use of positive reinforcement.

**Friday, February 18, 1983:** Jim had his share of discipline problems today. It was interesting to observe his work. He had a detached but businesslike look as he performed his duties. Students
were sent to his office; he handled the problem, and usually they left his office agreeing to his conditions. Most, who were angry when they entered his office, usually left calm.

Bob was most visible throughout the day. High school principals seem to be office bound. Their administrative duties rarely allowed them to leave their offices. To compensate, Bob made many attempts to be seen all over the school. He put a great deal of effort in his job, and it seemed to pay off for him because everyone saw him often.

Monday, February 21, 1983: Jim and I took two students home today who did not show up for detention Saturday. This was the rule of the detention process: If you had a Saturday detention and did not attend, you would not be allowed to return to school without a parent-and-principal conference. This process demanded parental involvement.

There have been some strange events at school so far: a girl wore garbage sacks to school as clothing, and a student "mooned" a visitor. Often the hallways had a "circus" air about them. You never knew what you were going to witness when you stepped into the halls.

Tuesday, February 22, 1983: This was the last day of my internship. Again, we were always on the move. Same old routine; in and out of the office, up and down the halls, working at a mad man's pace.

They found the mooner. Jim talked to him bluntly, suspended him for two days, and sent the student home with his parents. He had done it on a dare.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The River Valley internship was entered into by this intern with eyes open, heart ready, but head spinning. Having been awaiting this experience for several months, I was ready to begin. The last of the school work had been plodded through, and the time to experience the principalship was here. All the book knowledge would now be called on to aid me in my attempts to round off my rough edges.

Without a doubt, the internship is the strongest tool in a student's education. One would have to agree with Unikel and Bailey (1986) as they boldly stated, "Surveys asking principals what has contributed most to their effectiveness generally rank academic preparation near the bottom" (p. 37). One could well state that despite the strength of an academic program, the internship provides input that could not be supplied in a textbook.

Conant (1963) did shed light on the content of internships when he stated that the "effectiveness of education courses is substantially increased when accompanied by appropriate 'laboratory experiences'" (p. 161).

Conant of Harvard may have led the way in his call for internships, but many others have continued his cry. Scannell (1986) has called for "a series of carefully designed and supervised campus and field based experiences," but he then continues the thought with the
statement that these experiences should be "conducted throughout the period of professional study" (p. 15).

Regardless of the scholarship of these writers, their message is basically simple: To learn anything you have to involve yourself in that activity.

Principals are the most important educational leaders in the schools today. Obviously, teachers are important; but as Unikel and Bailey (1986) stated, "With strong leadership by the principal, a school is likely to be effective; without it, the school is likely to be ineffective" (p. 37). This is a simple statement and does not note the difficult processes that enable the principal to be effective. The statement is nevertheless true: Without able principals, schools will fail.
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