**Effective principals use quality decision-making skills in order to get things done, empower others, and make the right call on tough issues.**

Introduction and Rationale:

School administrators are asked daily to make hundreds of decisions. Some are simple, some are complex, and some are seemingly impossible - all are important. If the sheer number of important decisions to be made were not challenging enough, administrator decision making is made more complex by a number of cultural and contextual factors.

Communities and the schools that serve them are increasingly more diverse. In addition to demographic distinctions and implications, schools must also address a growing diversity of individual student needs. Expectations for the statistical performance of schools is higher and more visible. And, the political structures that govern and fund schools are increasingly polarized (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Since one of the fundamental purposes of public schooling is to prepare the citizenry to participate in a democratic society, it falls on schools to pattern their decision making after democratic principles. School leaders are not merely making management decisions, they are at the same time expected to model participative, democratic governance (Fullan, 2005).

School leaders have, by virtue of their official position, a good deal of power over valuable, and often scarce, resources. Administrators routinely make decisions about things that impact the quality of other’s work lives - budgets, room assignments, committee responsibilities, supervision duties, and planning periods, etc. With power over resources comes a responsibility to exercise that power in an ethical and moral manner with both integrity and transparency, (Fullan, 2005, Strike, Haller & Soltis, 2005). In his work, *Paradigms and Promises: New Approaches to Educational Administration*, Foster (1986) writes “Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life. That is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas.”

Each administrative decision contains in it a natural duality. Not only must school leaders make decisions that are rational and technically competent, but also must consider the symbolic, sometimes irrational, impact of the decision on others’ perceptions and the school’s culture (Deal & Peterson, 1994, 2009).

Effective school principals

* 1. develop a clear-eyed understanding of the importance and potential pitfalls of leadership decisions;
  2. use an array of learning designs to build awareness and basic skills in administrative decision making; and
  3. work towards mastery of participative decision making, empowerment of others, avoiding unintended consequences, and ethical/moral decision making.