**Effective principals cultivate self-knowledge and customer focus to create success for all**

**stakeholders.**

Introduction and Rationale:

Of all the traits that quickly come to mind when one imagines a particularly successful leader…courage, vision, commitment, integrity, service- rarely do we place on the A list the trait of honest self-awareness. An insatiable curiosity about the nature of those one purports to lead, likewise, does not make the top ten. These two leadership attributes, however, are directly and tightly linked to success in all enterprises, inside and outside education. The degree to which a school administrator knows well both self and others is the degree to which the administrator is able to design and act for success- both personal and organizational.

In their work *Heart, Smarts, Guts, and Luck* (Tjan, Harrington, and Hsieh, 2012) Tjan states “In my experience — and in the research my co-authors and I did for our book, *Heart, Smarts, Guts, and Luck*

* there is one quality that trumps all, evident in virtually every great entrepreneur, manager, and leader. That quality is self-awareness. The best thing leaders can do to improve their effectiveness is to become more aware of what motivates them and their decision-making.”

A logical complement to self-knowledge is the leader’s knowledge of others, customers and coworkers. The best in the business not only study their customers, they have a persistent curiosity and keen fascination with all aspects of their customers’ habits, motivations, home life, relationships, fears, goals, and preferences.

A focus on understanding self and others is the basis for creating a culture of trust (Hurley, 2006). When school administrators spend a great amount of time and energy learning about and studying others, they are rightly perceived as being other-focused, rather than purely self- focused (Russell, 2013). The often quoted observation by former president Teddy Roosevelt “Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care” rings especially true for school administrators. Andrew (2015) explains “When people know how much you care, you have begun building the foundations of trust-based relationships. In business, developing and sustaining relationships based on trust puts you on the track to success, as relationships, particularly trust-based relationships, equal success” (para. 2).

One of the keys of being a successful leader is the ability to build and develop relationships of trust with pertinent stakeholders (Covey, 2006). From the students you serve to the colleagues with whom you collaborate and the community members with whom you engage, creating and sustaining relationships is essential

Effective principals work to

* 1. develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of self, including one’s motivations, talents, weaknesses, preferences, personality, values, purpose, temperament, and tendencies;
	2. discern how the complementary elements of mission, vision, and core values can create clarity of purpose for self and school;
	3. use capacity mapping to build awareness of the unique and valuable skills and abilities possessed by the current faculty and staff;
	4. develop a deeper understanding of students by connecting their school and home contexts; and
	5. build and sustain positive, trusting relationships with stakeholders and stakeholder groups.