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The Role of the Principal Second Edition

Eric M. Roher and Simon A. Wormwell

An Educator's Guide to The Role of the Principal (2000) finally provided Ontario's principals and vice-principals a book about the specific legal issues that they faced. It is no wonder that eight years later the much-anticipated second edition had a waiting list before it even rolled off the press.

Roher and Wormwell have updated the 10 chapters from the previous book including teacher performance appraisal and safe schools legislation, which have changed considerably since 2000. Two new chapters have been added; *Labour Relations* and *Emergency Response Planning* both of which have legal implications for the school administrator.

The role of the school leader continues to grow. The number of hats the principal is expected to wear has only increased. They need to be the instructional leader, the appraiser of teacher performance, administrator of standardized tests, builder of professional learning communities, collaborator with school councils, and partner in the board management team; all the while anticipating the needs of the children and adults in their care.

Since teacher contracts ended in August 2008, the need for a chapter focusing on labour relations seemed a natural fit for this book. Roher and Wormwell introduce the topic by pointing out that the "*Education Act* ultimately prevails over any provision in a collective agreement." Thus the negotiations taking place with teachers would not allow for bargaining away duties prescribed in the *Act* such as the number of teaching hours required. The *Labour Relations Act*, 1995 is examined as it relates to the world of education. Unfair labour practice, the duty of fair representation, expedited grievance procedures and the duty not to strike are examined, providing school administrators with a good foundation to be effective in carrying out their responsibilities and leadership roles within their schools.

The authors also discuss the issue regarding attendance at staff meetings. Their view is that "attendance at a reasonable number of staff meetings is a mandatory duty of teachers." After school staff meetings have been the practice in most schools and it could be argued that attendance at these meetings is necessary to fulfill teachers' duties as noted in the *Act*. Roher and Wormwell suggest several strategies for school administrators to use in managing their staffs. Maintaining good relationships and open communications will assist the administrator in ensuring their school environment is conducive for learning. A summary list of key points covered in the chapter can be used as an easy checklist to refer to as needed.

The *Emergency Response Planning* chapter addresses two key areas - negligence law and risk management. Several past events are reviewed and the lessons learned noted. School lock-downs, referred to as the new fire drill, are examined and key elements discussed, notably the need to document what has occurred. The lock-down procedure is another method by which schools are able to demonstrate their "due diligence to protect the safety and security of students under their care."

In the *Managing Medication in Schools* chapter, anaphylaxis and Sabrina's Law are included. The components of an anaphylaxis policy are listed as well as what is required in a plan for each pupil identified with an anaphylactic allergy.

The chapter on safe schools begins with the impact the Jordan Manners case has had not only on schools but also on their communities. The highlights of the report by Julian Falconer, a human rights lawyer, hired to investigate safety concerns in the Toronto District School Board are noted. Cyberbullying is also covered in this chapter. With the increased use of the internet as a social networking tool, this has become a greater issue. Students who would not normally bully in a face-to-face situation may do so online because they think they can do it anonymously and that the action is outside the purview of the school as it was conducted from home.

As with the previous edition, the chapters in this book are easily read. The authors have used bullets to list strategies, components of documents or pieces of legislation for easy reference. The information has been updated to include the most recent incidents that have influenced legislation and policies focused on schools. Practical suggestions are offered to assist principals and vice-principals in making sure they meet their obligations to meet the standards of care required of them under legislation. School administrators need to be supported in their role and this can be done through training and in-service programs for new administrators as well as peer coaching and mentoring programs. The development of leadership strategies and skills is essential if school administrators are going to be successful in "creating and shaping a positive, productive and safe school environment."

An Educator's Guide to the Role of the Principal second edition is a must-read for every school administrator. It is available from Canada Law Book, ISBN 978-0-88804-478-5.