

Leading Authentically: A New Principal in Challenging Circumstances

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Abstract

This qualitative study was undertaken as part of the ISLDN global study of social justice leaders, focused on the leadership stories of the respondent. This study is framed in authentic leadership and examined the leader's self-awareness, authentic behaviors, and relationships, which both communicated and solidified the authenticity of the leader. Data were collected, then analyzed through the lens of the leader's story which formed her way of leading. Findings showed that leaders who possess self-understanding grounded in core values, make decisions and behave in ways that demonstrate their self-understandings, and form relationships with followers that build trust through their authenticity promote positive cultures in their organizations and lead with greater conviction.

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Introduction

Leadership models and theories have focused on who leaders are (traits, style, skills), what leaders do (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) and how leaders interact with followers (path-goal, leader member exchange, situational). Yet, these well-researched concepts do little to explain how leaders became leaders and where they learned to lead as they do. Moreover, does knowing how leaders learned to lead help in understanding the outcomes of the leadership, both personally and within the organization? The International School Leader Development Network (ISLDN), an international research project jointly sponsored by the British Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration Society (BELMAS) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) has investigated this broader question of how leaders learned to lead.

In his discussion of leadership development, Avolio (2010) offers the idea of trigger moments, that is, the “start of ‘genuine’ leadership development...[that] motivated the individual to reflect and learn from the event, which ultimately could result in enhanced leadership potential” (p. 739). The story of Ingrid, the subject of this article, likewise began with a moment when, as a new assistant principal, she was informed that she would lead a school that had just experienced an episode of violence, resulting in the transfer of the school’s entire leadership team.¹ Moreover, as the new principal, she would lead the faculty, staff, and children, many of whom witnessed the violence.

According to Schwartz (1999, 2005, 2006), when we encounter situations, we look at them in light of the values we hold. We decide what action is most desirable to take, based on the priority we assign to the values pertinent to the situation at hand. The higher priority we give to the value, the more likely we will take action and behave to express those values. When values are activated by a situation,

¹To ensure anonymity for the school and its community, the act of violence will not be detailed here.

alternative actions and consequences of these actions are internally judged by whether they support or obstruct valued goals. Thus, values are linked to daily behavior, even without conscious awareness. Values define situations, prompt goals, and influence action (Verplanken & Holland, 2002).

The values we hold influence not only actions and behaviors but also decision making. This is particularly true for people who do not have previous experiences on which to draw in decision making. This article describes the leadership story of Ingrid, a story which embraces both past and present, to answer the research question: How does a new principal placed in challenging circumstances lead authentically?

Review of the Literature

Authentic Leadership

Maslow (1962) described the self-actualized person as one who reaches full capability. Likewise, self-actualized leaders are fully functioning and, in being so, they are self-aware, understand their strengths and challenges, and accurately view themselves in accord with their values and beliefs (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011). Avolio and Gardner (2005) contended that leaders who are self-aware make better choices and behave in ways that are consistent with their values. The notion of responsible behavior, deliberate decision making, and value laden choices has evolved from a self-aware authentic person into the field of authentic leadership. Cooper, Scandura, and Schriesheim (2005) discussed authentic leadership in terms of its objective, which they describe as “to train and develop leaders who will proactively foster positive environments and conduct business in an ethical, socially responsible manner” (p. 477).

Authentic leaders are defined by Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004), as cited in Avolio and Gardner (2005) as



those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character. (p. 320)

Myriad characteristics have been applied to authentic leaders, including self-confidence, reliability, trustworthiness (Illies, Morgenson, & Nahrgang, 2005), a moral center, fair and transparent (Avolio, 2010), and one who owns "one's personal experiences be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 320).

An overview of recent literature has surfaced three components generally agreed upon as reflecting an authentic leader. These components, as gleaned across the literature, are awareness, behavior, and relationships. A discussion of each of these components follows.

Awareness

The first component of awareness involves self-knowledge of feelings and desires, valuing each (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Motivation to continually reflect upon, increase knowledge about, and solidify trust in one's "motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions" is all part of gaining self-awareness (Kernis & Goldman, 2005, p. 32). As part of self-awareness, self-understanding (the short term perceptions of one's actions) is essential. Thus, this component is not an end point but a lifelong process of continual understanding of one's strengths and challenges, values and beliefs (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Illies et al. (2005) discussed the concept of eudaemonia, whereby human happiness is based on living life with exemplary character and virtue. This Aristotelian view requires continual reflection as one attempts to live a 'true' life, deeply enmeshed in one's values. Illies et al. (2005) connected this to the notion of self-awareness and authenticity, as one achieves happiness through trust in the innate self.

Behavior

Authenticity accounts for the connection between thought and behavior. The inauthentic leader behaves to please society's mores or to avoid punishment. The authentic leader behaves according to the innate values, feelings, and perceptions of the 'true' self, rather than acting 'falsely' (Illies et al., 2005; Kernis & Goldman, 2005, 2006). Through an honest assessment of self, behavior is chosen. When behavior is authentic, leaders are free to make moral and ethical choices (Novicevic, Harvey, Ronald, & Brown-Radford, 2006). However, Kernis and Goldman (2005) caution that behaving authentically takes courage because there may be times when the leader's values are in opposition to the prevailing norms of the organization they lead. For the leader, behaving in ways that conflict with one's true self can cause damage to authentic leadership.

Relationships

Authentic leadership is also grounded in relationships through modeling values. Authentic leaders lead "by example as they demonstrate transparent decision making, confidence, optimism, hope and resilience, and consistency between their words and deeds" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 326). Followers observe this way of leading and increase their connection to work by following this model. Moreover, the transparent decision making builds trust with followers, thus cultivating a more positive and ethics based climate, encouraging all to act with openness and truth (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Illies et al., 2005). Building trust with followers is gained through consistent behaviors and decisions. Followers can begin to know the leaders' values and decide if these values are shared when trustworthy and dependable behavior is demonstrated. Authenticity is reinforced when the leader models behavior that is consistent with the values shared by the group (Illies et al., 2005).



The Importance of Stories

Leader stories provide a view into what leaders deem important, including those moments and models that particularly influenced the core of their leadership. The stories reflect what the leader has learned to value, which then informs awareness of self, shaped behavior, and informed followers. Shamir, Dayan-Horesh, and Adler (2005) argued that

The leader's biography is an important source of information from which followers and potential followers learn about the leader's traits and behaviors, that the leader's life story provides the leader with a self-concept from which he or she can lead, and that telling the biography is an important leadership behavior. (p. 13)

Sharing leadership stories benefit both the leader and the follower; the leader by way of forming the meanings they wish for the followers to understand about their leadership and the organization and for the follower through identification with the leader and knowledge about the values the leader holds (Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Stories convey messages. This can allow the leader to highlight life story events that presents the leader in a way s/he desires. Behavior and decisions are informed and supported through the stories told. Moreover, justifications are given for behaviors through stories told and known, acknowledging that stories can be used by the leader as a tool for influence (Shamir et al., 2005).

Role modeling is not the only means by which leaders can establish relationships with followers. Leadership stories serve as a source of information to the followers about leaders' traits, skills, style, and focal points in their lives that formed their leadership practice, which forms the leaders' identity and explains the leaders' actions and reactions (Shamir et al., 2005). This information shapes relationships through followers opening a door into what the leader values, thereby strengthening trust if the values are shared.

Authentic leadership is supported through the telling of life stories. Leaders are "authentic to the extent that they act and justify their actions on the basis of the meaning system" gained from their

stories. The essential outcome of this is from “the current emphasis on the development of skills and behavioral styles to an emphasis on leaders’ self-development, and especially to the development of their self-concepts through to the construction of life-stories” (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 396).

Values, the leader’s awareness of these values, and the behaviors and relationships that emanate from these values, are formed from the life stories of the leader. While leaders may have shared values, how the leader arrived at these values is built through their stories and the experiences in their stories. The ‘trueness’ of a leader’s values are not identified from the organization or through current popular culture but are created from life events that the leader has experienced and fashioned as personal belief systems (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Methods

Data for this research were collected as part of the larger ISLDN research on school leaders’ enactment of social justice. Adhering to the definition constructed by the ISLDN social justice (SJ) group, for purposes of this study, social justice leaders were defined as *principals/head teachers (elementary/primary or high school/secondary) who are committed to reducing inequalities and make this aim a high priority in their leadership practice.*

Using this definition, Ingrid was asked to volunteer, following recommendations of university personnel and school district personnel, who were given the ISLDN SJ definition of a socially just leader. No criteria regarding gender, ethnicity, years of experience, student achievement levels, or school context were considered in selection of principals who were perceived as social justice leaders. Ingrid participated in an initial interview as well as a follow up interview.

Following institutional approval, Ingrid was interviewed using a standard protocol across ISLDN countries. Interview times varied from 60-90 minutes for each of two interviews. Interviews were



recorded and transcribed, then coded and categorized (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Transcription data indicated the unique circumstances under which Ingrid took on the role of first time principal.

Site

Northside Elementary School serves approximately 475 students in grades K-5. The community surrounding the 100 year old school is an old, established neighborhood, in addition to the newer government housing projects. As the community has grown, it has also become more diverse. Nonetheless, newcomers are welcomed into the community and encouraged to become involved.

The three largest Northside subgroups by ethnicity are Caucasian (44.9%), African-American (40.5%), and Latino (13.9%). With almost 75% of the student population living in poverty, Northside has been designated a United States Department of Education Title I² school and receives federal funding to support the education of these at risk children. The Latino student population is largely concentrated in the lower grades, K-2, and two English Language Learner instructors have been assigned to the school to assist these children and their families. Moreover, additional personnel have been assigned to accommodate students with disabilities, including a speech therapist, a resource teacher, and a school psychologist.

Ingrid began her education career in 2003, working as a lower, then upper elementary teacher. After completing a specialized leadership program in the Valley City District, Ingrid was assigned as an assistant principal, then promoted to interim head principal at Northside, when the previous principal left for medical reasons. The interim status became permanent and Ingrid's first official appointment as principal was at Northside Elementary.

²The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and its reauthorizations No Child Left Behind Act and Every Student Succeeds Act, includes Title I, Part A, which provides funds to schools and school systems which have a high number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The funds are to assist children of poverty in meeting challenging academic standards.

Findings

Following the review of literature and the three major components of authentic leadership which emerged from the review, the a priori codes of awareness, behavior, and relationships were used in the analysis of data. Interview responses were read, coded, read, and compared to each iteration of transcript codes. Findings gleaned from the data follow.

Awareness

Self-awareness came to Ingrid through the lifelong process of understanding self, as explained by Avolio and Gardner (2005). Ingrid's earliest model for her value system was her mother, a teacher. Ingrid smiled as she explained:

Well, my mom is a big influence in my life. She was a teacher. She taught for 33 years and...I kind of laugh because when I went away to [university], I told my parents, "I'm not going to be a teacher." I had a whole plan mapped out but education was never in the picture. But I think, even from the time I was really small, she was kind of modeling that for me because she was the band director and music teacher...She taught in the rough, one of the roughest, inner city high schools in Memphis.

Repeatedly, throughout our conversation, Ingrid mentioned caring for the needs of each child as an important core value. In relaying a story about her mother as a teacher, clearly, that value was inherited.

Mom had one particular student who...she stayed at the house a lot and then later I found out that she had a very horrible home life. Her mom beat her. They rarely had any food... I remember growing up and seeing these kids, these high school kids just in our home. They'd spend the night. They'd have dinner with us. Of course, this was back when you could do stuff because you didn't have a few stupid people that made bad decisions and ruined it for everybody... She's very sensitive towards other peoples' needs and issues... She's just that kind of person and I'm a lot like her so we kind of tend to have bleeding hearts for people and issues and things so that is probably where I get it from so that really influences my background with the kids here. I mean, I just love every one of them... Even on the hard days when I leave at the end of the day, I feel like something went right...[if] the kids left feeling good about being here.

Ingrid's mother modeled the value of caring for others and Ingrid embraced that value as well. She became a teacher and believed her core mission was serving others.



I say all the time and I really believe this...that we are in the people business. I value people above everything else and that could mean staff, that could mean parents, community people that could mean the little people, you know, the kids, of course. I value how we are interacting with people. I kind of take that as my guiding principle.

While a teacher, Ingrid had not considered taking on the role of principal. However, the superintendent of schools at the time, spoke to her about the possibility, which led to self-reflection on Ingrid's part. After consideration, she decided she had the skills and abilities to be a successful principal.

He (the superintendent of schools) approached me and he said, "I think you have the skill set to make a good administrator...I think you'd really be great. I think you should apply." Really, at that time, I didn't want to because...I don't see myself as a principal. It looks boring. I don't want to do that. I want to be a teacher. So I tried the (principal preparation) program. It was a good experience and I loved it and that's actually how I became a principal. It was never something that I ever sought out to do. It just kind of found me so here I am.

Authentic leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses and find happiness through living their true self. Not long after becoming an assistant principal, Ingrid was once again approached by the superintendent to become interim principal at a school that had recently experienced an episode of violence. The surviving leadership of Northside was transferred to another school, leaving Ingrid to begin her initial role of principal in a school community still suffering emotional wounds.

When I found out I was coming here, it was a total shock. I didn't want to move up [to a head principal position] necessarily...I liked being assistant principal. I really liked the school where I was...the first time [her supervisor] asked me to come here I said no because I looked at the situation. It's a big no... By the third or fourth day, she called me and said "We need you to go there because we need you to help [the school]." Then I got excited about it. That is what drives me. Helping other people.

Ingrid said that "great learning moments" and "negative wisdom" came from those first few months in her new position. She explained:

I want to preface by saying when I met with [the district superintendent]... I wasn't sure [of the previous principal's] different leadership styles, different personalities [of the two of us]. "What is your expectation of me?" That's what I flat out asked him... He knew my leadership style. He also knew the leadership style of the previous leader and so I asked, "Am I expected to go in here and replicate what she did and was about?" And he looked

me in the eyes and said, "No. You go in and be you." So I said, "I got experience with that. I can do that." Now once I got here, there were a couple of incidents that were very challenging.

Ingrid was self-aware and had a firm self-concept. Therefore, she wanted assurance from her supervisor that she could remain true to her way of leading. This was far different from the leadership of the previous principal. There were situations where she had to make decisions on remaining true to herself or behaving falsely.

Behavior

As Ingrid began her new position, she encountered several circumstances that were contrary to the values she held. As Kernis and Goldman (2005) noted, in time of value/circumstance conflict, leaders have a choice to behave authentically or not. Ingrid recounted a story that touched her innate values and tested her authentic leadership.

When I got here, I started noticing that certain staff members...and these aren't teachers. These are mostly teaching assistants that may ride a bus route in the morning or afternoon or they might supervise lunch or breakfast duty every day. They don't really establish good rapport with the minority students and, by the time it's brought to my attention, it's completely erupted into a big huge thing...the child is very upset. So not only are they crying and they're upset, they got attitude because they are older and they're trying to be all tough... I'll take the child and we will kind of walk away a few steps, a few paces and get out of earshot and I'd be like "I need you to go to my office and calm down because you're very upset right now and when you get calm, you're going to tell me what happened"... By the time I get to the office, I just would approach the situation, approach the student with calm and trying to listen and I really built a lot of rapport that way... just be respectful towards them so they would exhibit respect back to me. Because nine times out of ten, they just want to be heard. They just want to be respected and lots of times, I find that's when a staff person has not really been respectful to them.

Ingrid received some push back from staff who felt the students should be dealt harsher punishment. She discovered that the previous administration handled student discipline in a manner quite differently from Ingrid. Initially, Ingrid attempted to behave in ways that went against her understanding of self to socialize into the new



community (inauthentic behavior), in the hope to socialize into the already existing norms. She quickly learned that not being true to self was more difficult than socialization.

One of the biggest challenges I encountered my first couple of months here were the differences in discipline... If I need to discipline a child that did something really bad - I really believe in respecting the child at all costs even if they did something horrible because I don't know all of the background of that child. I don't know why they did that. I don't know what's happened in their past. I don't know what happened to them that morning. I don't know. So I try to not just get in their face and yell and throw a tantrum right there to get them to cry because that's my power as a big person. But, after being here for a few weeks of trying my style on things, word circulated to teachers that discipline is not happening. Discipline is not being handled in the school... so I'm [in the school hallway checking on classes] and [Ms. X] pulls me in and is like, "Listen, I got to show you this." I had only been there two weeks. We had a leadership team meeting coming up and there was all these pieces of paper in her box that said discipline is not being handled. You know, people were worried. The kids were running amuck... So, I'm looking at it. I'm making some notes and stuff. I'm a little confused and bewildered. Because I thought things were going good... I saw the assistant principal discipline kids... And let's just say we were totally different; he's with lots of slamming doors, lots of yelling in kids' faces, if they don't leave crying then you were ineffective kind of thing, so I thought, "Well, when in Rome... Let me give it a whirl."

At that point, Ingrid decided to behave in ways that were not authentic to who she was. She went on to explain how she changed her behavior from an authentic approach to one that she believed would socialize her into the new community. She described the consequences this decision had.

One afternoon there was a bus issue. We had two little twins who were 1st graders who claimed that this 4th grader was picking on them on the bus... we call him up to the office towards the end of the day. He gets in here and instead of my typical way, I tried out [the way of the assistant principal and previous principal], so I'm slamming the door and I'm getting in his face. I screamed, "I know you're lying!" Kid shuts down. Would not get on his bus. Would not leave the same spot for like an hour and a half. Holding up staff members. We're calling the mom. "Your kid's not moving. Something is going on. He's not talking to anybody..." The mom kind of figures out what is going on. She's on the phone, "I'm on my way out there." Furious at everybody. Furious. She comes to get the kid and talks to him for a while. Over the next few weeks, that child continued to be a behavior problem and before the bus issue, he wasn't.

Ingrid realized that acting in inauthentic ways was detrimental to others beyond herself. At the risk of going against the prevailing culture, she sought to make amends and to work with the values by which she lived.

Since this situation had just gotten way out of hand, I told the assistant principal, "when we meet with his mom, I'm going to be at the meeting." So we are sitting there and the mom didn't say what the problem was but she knew something went wrong with the son and she was just furious at all of us. Well, after a while she kind of turned her anger on me, which I knew was coming...because I think she knew it stemmed from that incident that day... I listened for a minute and I just looked up and in that big meeting in front of everybody, in front of the teacher, the assistant principal and everybody, I said, "I need to apologize for that because I did not handle that the way it should have been handled that particular day." My assistant principal was completely aghast. You would have thought I sprouted 18 heads at that meeting because afterwards he said, "We never, me and the previous leader, we never admit fault ever. That's like the cardinal sin. You just broke it. I can't believe you'd admit it." I said, "Listen, let me tell you something. I know I'm new to this whole leadership thing, but I am driven by an ethical compass that guides me. I knew that I did not handle that the right way that day." I said if we are going to repair things with this mom and with this little boy, I don't mind to admit when I made a mistake. I don't. That's part of leadership. If our teachers, if I lead them down the wrong path somewhere, part of being a good leader is standing up and saying, "Hey, I led you down the wrong path, so sorry. Now, let's fix it." Ever since that day, the child has been great. He's a good kid. The mom likes me...It's all good now but that was the perfect example of when I tried to compromise who I really was and how I know handling things usually works out. It just didn't work for me. It just didn't.

Ingrid shared several stories of how behaving in ways that mirrored her authentic self not only helped her to become a better leader, but helped her to become a better 'self.' Modeling this way of being allowed the school community to view who she really was as a person and as a leader, which increased trust, support, and improved the culture of the school.

Relationships

Shamir and Eilam (2005) pointed out that authentic leaders do not lead for status or rewards. Authentic leaders do so from their convictions. One of Ingrid's most sincere beliefs was care and respect for children. As such, she was proud of the relationships she built



and hoped that this served as a model for others in the school community, including the community that surrounded the school. She illustrated this by saying:

I like to be involved in everything in the school...I like that the kids know me by name and they want to show me what they have been working on. It's just really neat to see and it helps the community, too, because I live in this community. When I go to the grocery store, it never fails...[I see] a lady with a cart slowly approaching me and my cart and I always see them out of the corner of my eye and this person usually looks kind of half embarrassed and they say, "My kid wouldn't leave the store until we came over and said hi to you." Then I'll see this little body hop out from behind the mom, "Hey, Ms. [Ingrid]!" It just makes me laugh.

Ingrid tried to instill in her leadership team and her faculty the importance of positive relationships with the children through modeling and sharing her story. This was, however, a challenging task because of the autocratic view of the previous leadership. Nonetheless, Ingrid continued to convey the message of respect and relationships.

After years of working in an urban school environment, it didn't take me long to figure out that in most of these kids' homes when mom and dad get in an argument... how do they see this handled in their neighborhood? They see slamming doors. They see yelling. They see cuss words. They sometimes, unfortunately, see guns and knives and other things like that. Why are they coming [to school] and we are modeling that for them? Why are we going to model more of that for them? Let's not slam doors on them... when they come to the [principal's] office, even if they did something that is horrible,...I get firm with them but they are learning something in the process and I am not disrespecting them through discipline. They are not so terrified or petrified that all they know is, I don't ever want to be in the office again. They don't leave confused. They just leave knowing "oh gosh, I shouldn't do that again."

As Ingrid built relationships with the children, she also communicated her values and encouraged the students to think about the person they wanted to be. Thus, in her authentic leadership, she was fostering an authenticity in the students as well.

I think the schools are great because they represent a little slice of society, just with little people... I look at this line of work I'm in and think, these are the kids I've been given. The task that I've been given is that when they graduate from high school, they've become fully functioning, contributing members to society. I have a hand in that. What am I going to do with it? You know, kind of look at it that way and it goes beyond the reading

and the math. It's like I tell kids all the time, you can be the smartest person, you can be the best person at whatever it is you do, but if you can't get along with other people and you can't work with other people, no one will want you working for them. I don't care if you want to be a lawyer or a dentist or a teacher or a basketball player, if you don't have manners and can't get along with people [life will be hard for you].

Self-awareness and behavior modeling the values gleaned from self-understanding is communicated to followers through building relationships. Making visible the deeply held values inspires followers to know, understand, and, hopefully, embrace these same values, encouraging authenticity in the larger community.

Discussion

This research described the authentic leadership of Ingrid, a new principal assigned to a school where her self-understandings, behaviors, and attempts to foster relationships were tested by the challenging emotional and cultural circumstances through which the school community was working. A leader who was firmly rooted in her values of care and respect for all, particularly for the children in her charge, Ingrid's efforts focused on communicating and modeling these values to those both inside and outside of the school building.

Initially, Ingrid, in attempts to socialize into the new organization placed salience on the existing culture, which was at odds with her self-understandings. When the results were less than stellar, Ingrid realized that her comfort in leadership stemmed from the authenticity with which she approached her agency. Ingrid's self-awareness was brought to the fore in the enactment of the behaviors and decision making she applied each day. In this way, Ingrid was able to model her values for others in the community, guiding their understandings of her as a leader which strengthened relationships with teachers, students, and parents. Learning from failures added to Ingrid's leadership story and increased her self-knowledge.

Given the challenging circumstances into which Ingrid was thrust, her leadership story became more important. Her self-awareness, the core of her self-concept, and the values she lived were grounded in



her leadership story. As Shamir and Eilam (2005) noted, “Life-stories express the storytellers’ identities, which are products of the relationship between life experiences and the organized stories of these experiences” (p. 402). In other words, Ingrid’s leadership story, both distant past and nearer present, gave her meaning, which then informed her values, behaviors, and relationships. The stories justify the leadership self (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). As Ingrid grew in self-confidence through reflecting on her role model, her mother, and, through the circumstances of her novice year as a first year principal, Ingrid solidified her self-concept and gained an understanding of her best self, her authentic self.

The heart of authentic leadership is the true nature of the leader, one which is moral and just, therefore, worthy of trust from the followers. As a relatively new theory, most research in authentic leadership has focused on the theory, not on the practice. This study may serve as one of the few application based research studies of authentic leadership. Future research should provide the field with more instances of authentic leadership and how principals learned to become leaders, specifically, case studies of authentic leadership from both the US and from myriad global contexts. Leadership stories such as Ingrid’s enhance our understanding of the whole person in an authentic way, rather than parts of the leader, such as the study of traits and skills. As Ingrid was thrust into a situation that required her to be a calming presence following the violence that had shattered the school community, to respect the previous leadership team while building her own culture and processes, to set the tone for a new way of ‘doing school’ for students, teachers, and staff, and to simply learn to be a principal, she called upon her innate values and models who inspired her to learn to lead authentically.

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