

Development of a Virtual Principal's Office  
Dr. Charles A. Reavis

Dr. Reavis has begun the development of a virtual principal's office. It will utilize computer-based simulations to aid principals and principals-in-preparation to internalize leading edge understandings on organizational leadership. His view is that much of our current training of principals is too shallow to over-ride the in-grained practices that trainees have observed and practiced over many years. His view is supported by the findings of a recent pilot study he conducted. In a pilot study of 20 principals from three school districts, he found that 100% of the high school principals and 79% of the elementary principals scored as Sensing on the Jung-Myers-Briggs type Inventory, which measures preferences, not skills or aptitudes. Respondents who score as Sensing take information in through the senses. They are interested in tangible reality, focusing on the present, what is rather than what might be. Key words are facts, experience, present, practicality, realism. These preferences suggest that the respondents would experience difficulty in practicing the "soft skills" of leadership such as forming and articulating a vision for the organization. Yet, it is these soft skills that may be the most important in leading an organization staffed by professionals, such as schools.

The virtual principal's office will permit a high number of scenarios to be experienced by each participant, with immediate feedback on their success in exhibiting the "soft skills". Over time, after repeated trials, it is anticipated that altered ways of responding to these scenarios will begin to displace the traditional ways of responding. Since it is computerized, principals can be re-trained every six months to reinforce the new skill set and guard against "fading" of the practices. Dr. Reavis has begun development of this training aid and the development is on-going.