



The Principal's Challenge: Learning from Gay and Lesbian Students (Hc)

Nicholas J. Pace

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This unique book presents lessons a straight principal-turned-professor has learned through personal experience and research with gay and lesbian high school students. It begins with a young principal acknowledging that he, nor his administrative education program, had given any thought to issues surrounding students' sexual orientation. However, when a senior in his tiny rural high school came out, the principal started down an unexpected path that would change his outlook on school leadership-and transform his practice. Presented in eight unique stories in students' own words, we experience their challenges, fears, and triumphs-and see how their schools and the people in them both helped and hurt. Through their poignant, honest, familiar, and often surprising stories, we see how these eight students navigate what Unks (2003, p. 323) calls "the most homophobic institutions in American society." Their stories also reveal an unexpected, yet vital lesson for educators, policy makers, and all those concerned with meeting students' needs-that being gay or lesbian in high school does not automatically lead to bad outcomes. The students' firsthand accounts, along with lessons learned by the once apprehensive principal, show that there is a much more positive, optimistic, and seldom-told story. The book challenges practicing and aspiring school leaders to:

- Move beyond what we think we know about gay and lesbian students and see them as unique people with strengths and struggles, gifts and challenges
- Examine the unique context of their schools and see how one size solution doesn't fit all
- Understand agency, agendas, and how gay-straight alliances can benefit all students
- Summon the courage to transform our mission statements from slogans and live them everyday

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