

Growth Mindset Thinkers

Video: Principals are Great Leaders

(JIM FISHER:) I have, I would say, my best day of my entire year, like, by far is that there is a program called Canada's Outstanding Principals where somehow magically about 40 or 50 people from across the country are chosen as one of Canada's Outstanding Principals. And they come from the far north and the Atlantic and Quebec and everywhere. They're from native communities and from downtown and from affluent neighbourhoods. They're just from everywhere. And so I spend about a day or so with these absolutely magnificent people who have always been called administrators, but have always been leaders. Which is why they were recognized as Canada's Outstanding Principals. Because people just said there's something about their school. There's just something about their school. And when, you know, X goes to a school, there's something -- something happens at that school. So what's wonderful about these people is this people are wonderful, natural, courageous, thoughtful leaders who didn't -- often haven't used that word about themselves. They've just done what they've done instinctively. What you would find is they're all doing it. So they just didn't know they were doing it. Or they didn't label it "leadership." But in fact, they were doing it. So they all had very clear ideas. And you know, I remember one woman, she was from -- a principal of a school in Northern Ontario. And, you know, we were in some conversation and then she just blurted out, she says, "I don't know what I'm doing at my school." She says, "I walk in every day. I look at those faces and I say, 'I never want to see one of those kids on the streets of Toronto.'" Wow. So. They need skills, they need self-esteem, they need all kinds of personal strength that will enable them, with whatever kind of background they came from, to be able to cope and resist and have a more productive life. Now that's fabulous. So, I mean, that's the kind of thing you get from people. And so she never would have said to herself -- if I said, "Who are you?" she would not have said -- she'd say, "I'm a principal. I'm an administrator." She wouldn't have said she was a leader, but she was. And my sense would be that in that school, the teachers, who had a lot of say in picking her, would have said, you know, "Our principal is a real leader." And they would have picked up from that and been more leaders in their classrooms. And then kids would have picked up and become better leaders or more likely to be leaders in their own situations.