

Why school co-leadership suits me better, a reflective essay

Five years ago, I dared to make the change from being a teacher to being a principal. First and foremost, the search for a new challenge was one of the main reasons for this decision. I was hired as the sole principal for kindergarten and elementary school with a workload of 68%.

From the beginning I was fascinated by the new job, which brought me in contact with new people and new content, but above all with a new and significantly greater responsibility. From the very beginning, however, I was also doubtful whether I could do justice to all the tasks I was given.

I was very surprised how little I knew about the school as an institution after 16 years as a teacher. As principal I had to read, ask questions and try out many things. My role and relationship with the teachers who had previously been my colleagues also changed. I quickly realized that I could not possibly please everyone and had to make unpleasant decisions, which was harder than I thought. I realized that I have not internalized important competencies such as role distance and frustration tolerance, which led to procrastinating pending decisions or unpleasant situations for a long time, much too long, and I could not free myself from them in my private life.

By taking over a second school as principal, I completely overstretched my personal capacities so that my mental health deteriorated, which made me to reflect and act. So, I'm now starting a new school year only at one school with a workload of 58% and a job-sharing partner who takes over 15%.

For me, this primarily changes the sharing of responsibility and the burden that can arise in demanding situations. I expect that through weekly exchanges we will be able to coordinate, discuss and plan much more about what has been done before. And also it will be a relief in any case to know that I can communicate decisions in the "we" form and that they are based on two opinions and views.

In the last 5 years I have realized that I have positive leadership skills and that I am appreciated by many teachers because of my clear and human manner. The co-leadership enables me to continue to be healthy in this profession and to pick up my less suitable sides for the job.

- Sophie Hofmann, August 2019