Management approaches used by business do not necessarily work in education. Administrators must beware of trying to find a quick remedy for education's ills by adopting business management principles. Attempts of this kind were made between 1910 and 1930 and were found to be unsuccessful. The major reason is that schools and businesses are two endeavors aimed at producing different results. If we want to develop students with values, empathy, problem-solving skills, and the ability to cope with a complex world, then we cannot adopt a production-line approach to schooling. Sound business practices make sense when purchasing supplies, but it is a mistake to apply them to decisions about teachers or the curriculum.
Don’t be duped by industry’s mystique

In hard times, it’s tempting to reach for quick fixes for education’s ills. And plenty of hucksters are around to promote snake oil that administrators are supposed to swallow: Discipline again will bloom in schools when you recreate strict rules; poor student achievement will thrive in an ear-changing society of citizens who can survive, produce, and thrive in an ever-changing society—of educating students when parents, administrators, teachers, and kids each have slightly different ideas of what education ought to be.

Public education might well need a new direction, but that course must be set by school executives who are willing to promote growth as much as “profit.” It must come from superintendents and principals who understand the process of education as well as they understand management theory and who possess the expertise to synthesize the two without abasing either.

For those who remain unconvinced, go back and look at Callahan’s 1962 study. It shows that the reason business values were pushed on education between 1910 and 1930 to apply business techniques to schools is an even greater management mistake.

If we want the schools to develop human beings who can make decisions based on values and empathy for other people, then we can’t adopt a production-line approach to schooling. If we want to educate students to solve problems and cope with a complex world, administrators must adopt a system of education that promotes personal growth as well as acquisition of basic skills.

That goal is easy to enunciate and difficult to accomplish, because running a program that fosters student growth and skills requires a unique insight about what is frivolous and what is basic in a child’s education.