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A preferred vision for administering elementary schools : a reflective essay

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A preferred vision for administering elementary schools : a reflective essay

Abstract

I believe in being a proactive administrator. I do not want to be recognized simply as the authority figure in the school that is rarely seen. My door will always be open, and I will be seen in the classrooms as well as throughout the school. I want to be active in the teaching process.

My first year as a principal will be a time for me to become familiar with the school environment. I will not make any major changes the first year unless I am forced to do so. I believe that this time should be spent becoming competent in performing administrative duties and evaluating existing procedures, structures and goals. Also, it will be a time to develop relationships with staff, students, and parents so that I may gain their trust and confidence. This is important so that the staff and parents will be more open to change in the future.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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Over the years, my thoughts on administration have metamorphosed from a superficial educational position to an essential cog in the pedagogic wheel. As an elementary student, I viewed the principal as the person in charge of maintaining order in the school. The principal's office was not a place that you wished to sojourn, particularly on a regular basis. The discourse between my elementary principal and students was usually of a disciplinary nature rather than an exchange of pleasantries. This view was extended into my junior and senior high years, and it was during this time that I realized the severity of the discipline was dictated by whom you were fortunate or unfortunate to encounter. The assistant principal was usually in charge of handling the daily discipline problems, while the principal seemed to sit in his office and handle only the severest cases. Also, it seemed that both principals were a little more accessible and personable in their dealings with students outside the realm of discipline.

My beliefs as a student have followed me into teaching. I have always considered the principal of a school as the disciplinarian and the person who made the school run smoothly by resolving conflicts within the school setting. As I began teaching, my perceptions of the principal's role took on added dimensions. The principal became my boss and evaluator. He held my future in teaching in his/her hands. I believed that it was the principal's duty to find things I was doing wrong and correct that area of my job performance. He/she was the schedule

maker and duty assignor. If I needed permission to do something, I sought his/her consent.

My limited view was further enhanced by my belief, as well as other teachers, that principals have been so far removed from the classroom that they could not possibly offer me any worthwhile instructional advice. Teachers (myself included) have often believed that schools can get along fine without an administrator. To a certain extent this maybe true, however, this view slowly started to erode when I took my present job and started these classes. I saw both elementary principals take a little more active role in the educational development of teachers by encouraging them to take classes to improve their teaching techniques and instructional strategies. At this time, I started to see the potential leadership qualities of a principal, although I did not necessarily recognize the principal's role as being an educational leader.

I still see some of my preconceived notions enacted today. Principals have essentially alienated themselves from the participation in classroom activities. In all my years in education, as a student and teacher, I have rarely had a principal come into the classroom and participate in a learning activity. Therefore, this reinforced my belief that a principal is something you become when you get tired of teaching in the classroom. So, why did I want to be a principal if I had such a limited view of its function in education?

REASONS FOR ENTERING ADMINISTRATION

People have often asked me about my decision to enter the master's program in elementary administration. Most people have assumed that my ultimate reason behind this decision was to become an elementary principal. While this is certainly a major factor, it is not the sole criterion for my rationale of earning a Masters Degree. I was forced to think about my future in teaching when I reached the maximum amount of years in experience on the salary schedule. To support my family in the future I needed to make some lane changes. I did not want to waste my time or money by picking up meaningless graduate hours and not getting anything in return. I pictured myself ten to fifteen years from now and came to the conclusion that I may not want to be teaching elementary students in the classroom everyday while in my fifties. I thought and prayed over this decision for about a year and decided to enter administration because of three options administration offered me that other Master Degrees did not. Of course, one option it gave me was to become an elementary principal when I felt that I was ready to leave classroom teaching. This would allow me to start a new challenge in the field of education. Second, I have always had a desire to teach at the collegiate level. I enjoy teaching and look forward to this challenge as well. My final option is that I am also interested in an activities or athletic director position at a high school, or a small liberal arts college. I felt these three interests could best be fulfilled through a Masters in Elementary Administration.

During my sixteen years of teaching and coaching I have always believed that I have made a difference in a child's life. I believe that schools reflect society and that athletics is a reflection of life. I have always taken the position that I am a teacher in the classroom, and a teacher on the field of play instead of a coach. Therefore, I have a vested interest in preparing the student and athlete to be productive members of society. I am in a position to influence and have an impact on as many lives as possible, so no matter what I do whether it is a principal, teacher, or coach I need to ask myself if I am making a difference.

I would be remiss not to mention the source of my belief in making a difference, and that is my deep faith in God. He is important in my life as I believe He led me into this program, and as I seek His will for my life I will need to be open to the possible changes He has in store for me. These changes may include the options previously mentioned, or it could be to remain in teaching. Wherever God may lead me I know that He is in control, and I know it will be a position that I would have the opportunity to touch the most lives. It may not be what I want, or what I feel the most comfortable doing, but I will be faithful to serve in whatever capacity He requires of me. "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" Proverbs 3:5,6 (New International Version).

BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES

The Bible is the source and inspiration of all facets of my life. It is my playbook of life. My philosophical foundation of administration comes from four basic principles that I have developed by intertwining my Biblical beliefs with my experiences as a teacher and prospective administrator. These basic principles are (a) vision, (b) honesty, (c) brotherhood, and (d) enthusiasm.

Vision

I believe that there must be a vision for schools. Goals must be set for individual schools as well as students, teachers, and administrators. Goals may be found in four areas: academic, social and civic, vocational, and personal, and may also include attributes of character such as friendliness, respect, and independence (McNeil, 1996). These goals should strive to achieve educational excellence for all.

The development of goals should involve the people of the entire school district, from community members to administrators. Teachers and principals need to develop goals for themselves as well as building goals for their individual schools. High goals will help teachers and administrators to enact a discipline necessary to achieve them. These goals need to be evaluated and updated on a regular basis so that satisfaction does not evolve into complacency. Only when we continue to raise goals do we give ourselves room to grow. Excellent teachers, administrators, and schools have the ability to be stretched and challenged and are

willing to pursue the best, and not allow complacency to enter in. To aspire to goals set too low is to shortchange teachers, principals, students, parents and community. As teachers and principals dream, they should dream big, for small dreams do not have the power to stir our souls. "'What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us'– Ralph Waldo Emerson" (Rohrbach & Rydberg, 1993, p.99).

Of the four principles that form my philosophical foundation this one can be implemented. As the educational leader in the school I must make a point of expanding my knowledge in educational developments. Also, I will continue to grow in my areas of interests, as well as those of lesser interest. I would do this by attending seminars, conferences, workshops, and reading the latest articles in professional journals. Teachers would be encouraged to develop personal and professional goals for themselves. I would try to implement a program where teachers are evaluated every other year (except probationary teachers), and on the year that they were not evaluated they would be required to develop a professional growth target.

If the school's goals were not in place, then I would work to develop these goals for the school. Teachers would be involved by filling out a needs assessment, then a committee of teachers would be formed to study the results of the assessment and develop four goals that would enhance the educational process. I would not include parents because these goals would be more concerned with the

professional development of teachers. For example, one possible goal might be to develop and implement an alternative assessment and share this process with school staff.

Honesty

As a person, I need to be totally honest in my relationships with people. My actions can influence people's perceptions of me, therefore I must be consistent in what I do. I must know what is right and then do it. We live in a society where absolutes about right and wrong seem outdated, or irrelevant. Thus, I am not naïve enough to realize that everyone will think I am an honest and trustworthy person. However, I can and will control the one thing that nobody can take away from me and that is my ethical integrity. I will never compromise my attitude, character, or beliefs. I believe that whenever you take a stand for what is right, it helps others do the right thing.

Honesty and integrity are synonymous with trust. An atmosphere of trust can only lead to respect and good working relationships among staff, which in turn develops a positive school climate. I believe that one of the biggest deterrents in developing trust is the National Education Association. This organization perpetuates a myth that administrators are enemies rather than partners in education. Knowing this will help me hold myself accountable for my actions so that nothing hurts my credibility. However, I will do the right thing without compromise.

Brotherhood

I believe that learning should be fun and people need to learn to have fun. People need to make friends and be a friend. Sharing and caring among staff and students creates a supportive and family-like atmosphere which is more conducive to learning.

I realize that people have different personalities, and that these personalities may clash. I do not expect these types of people to be friends, but I do expect them to respect each other and their professionalism.

Enthusiasm

I believe in the old cliché that enthusiasm is contagious. If we are not excited about what we are doing, then no one else will be. Enthusiasm tends to bring out the best in everyone and contributes to optimism which is so desperately needed. If educators really enjoy the challenge of educating today's students, then it should be reflected in their attitude.

Again, I do not expect every teacher to have the same enthusiasm as me, particularly when a new idea is introduced. I will not become defensive, because I believe that it is all right to disagree. I will be aware of the mood of the staff and handle the situation accordingly. By the same token, I do not want to squelch a teacher's enthusiasm by my own indifferent attitude toward an idea he/she might have, unless it is of a severe detriment to the students or goes against school policy.

These four principles are a mindset that I believe are foundational to developing a successful learning environment. I feel that often one's attitude reflects one's beliefs, and the perceptions of others are influenced by this attitude. Attitude is a key component in performance, thus without a proper attitude our potential impact as educators is vastly diminished.

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The great teacher demonstrates. The superior teacher inspires" (Hendricks, 1988, p.62). Consequently, the same can be said of an administrator. It is my goal as an administrator to inspire teachers and students alike. Principals should try to bring beliefs, values, words, actions, and goals into harmony by modeling the kinds of behaviors they want teachers to attain (Pajak, 1993). To accomplish this, I will reflect these principles in my actions and nurture those that can be implemented into programs directly or indirectly.

ATTITUDES ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

This Masters Degree program has helped me to analyze and synthesize certain general beliefs that are prevalent in education. I have decided to focus on self-esteem, technology, student assessment, and parental involvement because of their relevance in education today, as well as the potential impact they may have on schools in the future. My stance in these areas have been reinforced, somewhat altered , and continues to be developed.

Self-Esteem

One example of this is self-esteem. I have trouble with this term because it suggests a false nurturing of self-worth. Some educators worship the god of self-esteem by doing away with tests and by accommodating rather than correcting. Retention of students is no longer an option, and failing students is frowned upon by some. We reward students for everything they do right, thus giving them a "what's in it for me" attitude. Some kids are coddled in such a way as to never experience adversity, thus becoming ill-prepared for the world that awaits them. Candy-coated kids are being created from a "feel good society," all in the name of self-esteem.

I believe that self-esteem can de-emphasize the importance of serving others by focusing people's needs on themselves. Even Christ came to this earth to serve and not be served (Matthew 20:28).

Some theorists emphasize that by promoting or enhancing self-esteem alone, people's attention is focused on themselves and this promotes a certain type of self-consciousness, self-preoccupation, and selfishness. When people focus their attention on others in order to enhance their own self-esteem, this is fundamentally a selfish type of attention, with the concern for others a secondary part of what is occurring. These theorists emphasize that the maxim, "We cannot love others until we love ourselves," is actually

180 degrees wrong. Ironically and paradoxically, this idea would

be more true, more relevant, and less harmful if we were to reverse

it --- "We cannot love ourselves until we love others." The

theorists suggest that what we ought to do is focus our attention on

the welfare of the intimate, emotional, and compassionate

connections we humans have with others. (Rice, 1996, p. 184)

I do believe in the Golden Rule of do unto others as you would have them

do unto you. People need to treat each other with respect and dignity. As an

administrator it is important for me to see that the classroom and the school is a

place of dignity and respect.

I will be careful in implementing student incentive programs such as the

Pizza Hut Reading program. All extrinsic motivation must trigger intrinsic

motivation, or it is not legitimate. Teachers must have input in these types of

decisions as well. I will also leave it up to each individual teacher to decide the use

of classroom rewards.

Educators need not look for artificial ways to prop up students' self-

esteem. Genuine praise is as necessary in a child's emotional development as is

dignified admonishment. I will recognize student achievements by having a "star

of the week" from each individual classroom. These students will be recognized

on a bulletin board outside my office by displaying class work or certificates of

achievement provided by their classroom teacher. They will receive a certificate of achievement from me as well. Students will also be recognized for their birthdays by displaying their birth dates and pictures on that same bulletin board. Their names will be read over the intercom on their specific birthday, and they will be honored with a special birthday breakfast with their family at the end of their birthday month. This breakfast will include all students and their families whose birthday falls in that particular month. This type of self-esteem is genuine, because it recognizes students for the importance of being themselves.

I will not allow standards to be lowered in the name of self-esteem. Every student is different, and not every student will get A's, B's, or C's. Thus, honest effort must be equated with success. In most cases, effort will need to be taught. This can be done by maintaining realistic high standards for students and not accommodate them by lowering expectations. True self-esteem comes from a sense of accomplishment in knowing that you did your best, and, in some instances, being humbled when deserving.

Fear of failure impedes learning. "We face the grim reality that our extraordinary efforts to produce schools without failure have not yielded the well-adjusted, enthusiastic, self-confident scholars we anticipated" (Clifford, 1990, p. 25). Students need to know that they will fail at sometime, and it is okay to do so. They must recognize that failing is an essential part of learning and that we

learn from our mistakes. Children have learned to ride bicycles by dusting themselves off when they fall, and then hopping back on the bike to try again.

Technology

Technology is another area that interests me. I believe that the potential impact that technology has on learning increases each year with the advent of more and newer technological wizardry. I believe that it is not a trend like outcome-based education or open classrooms, but a fact of everyday life. Our society is becoming more technologically oriented, so it makes sense for us to prepare our students for this type of world.

The technology class that I took two summers ago really opened up the world of technology for me. I do not know all that I should in this area, but I certainly know more than what I had previously. This class helped me develop a baseball statistical program from a spreadsheet that I still use in coaching today. It provided me with insight on how I would use technology effectively in my classroom through the use of laser discs, computers, and video tapes.

One of the best units we have in science was made even better when I found a piece of technology that really helped our students to learn. We have a microscope unit in which we look at life in a drop of pond water. The students really enjoy this unit, however it can sometimes be a little frustrating to identify the little creatures found in the water. Since I saw and heard about the various

gadgets of technology that are available to the classroom, I decided to search the Area Education Agency through the computer to see if I could locate something I could use in our study of microscopes. To my surprise I found a microscope that could be hooked up to a television, and it would clearly show the microscopic organisms in a drop of pond water.

This had a tremendous impact on our class for several reasons. Sometimes the students would wonder if what they were looking at was supposed to be what they were searching for. This technology allowed students to validate what they were actually seeing. It also allowed the students to see microscopic organisms that they would be unable to see using their own personal microscope. For example, during this unit we were able to find only one hydra. It would have been chaotic to have twenty-six students look into one microscope to get a chance to see a hydra. Consequently, I was able to show this creature to the rest of the class with minimal disruption.

I have used various other forms of technology in my classroom to enhance our studies. I have found that the students enjoy these activities tremendously, and they seem to grasp the concepts better by using these tools.

Multimedia technology has the components required to create effective instruction in a format that is suited to today's learners. It has the built-in potential for generating exciting inquiry-based, learning episodes in just about any discipline or training scenario. If

proper design tools are used and a systems approach is applied to

the design and development of the instruction, quality learning is

almost sure to be realized. This is a technology worth using.

(Hirschbuhl, 1992, p. 323)

My goal as an administrator will be to develop a computer lab for students

if there is not one already in place. I would check and utilize all the financial

resources that I would have available to me. If the school has a lab, I would then

evaluate whether or not the lab was being used efficiently. I would want to

develop a computer curriculum for the school with input from the staff.

Many teachers feel threatened from this new technology, therefore it would

be up to me to see that the staff is properly trained. Providing inservices for the

staff would be one way to alleviate this problem, while sending teachers to

workshops on technology would be another option. I would also be willing to

share my experiences with certain types of technology that I have used in my

teaching. This sharing process may be to go so far as to teach a lesson(s) using

this piece of technology. If the school lacked a computer coordinator, then I

would be willing to teach the computer curriculum to the students.

Student Assessment

The ways we assess students seem to always be an issue in education.

The latest trend of alternative assessment has been an interest of mine because the

LeMars District has recently decided to look into this form of assessment I have never been completely sold on alternative assessment, however, this stance has softened a bit since taking graduate classes.

Alternative assessment is not an easy term to define. It has been referred to as authentic assessment, direct assessment, and performance based assessment, however, each of these have a distinct characteristic that separates them. Alternative assessment would be the all encompassing term that refers to the range of assessment methods designed to supplement, or take the place of standardized tests.

> Authentic, direct, and performance assessment all exhibit two main features: first, all are viewed as alternatives to traditional multiple-choice, standardized achievement tests; second, all refer to direct examination of student performance on significant tasks that are relevant to life outside of school. (Worthen, 1993, p.445)

Alternative assessments may include essays, demonstrations, simulations, computer simulations, performance tasks, portfolios, short answers, open-ended questions that may or may not require an extended response, writings in different disciplines, and conducting research or experiments.

Assessment refers to any method used to better understand the current knowledge that a student possesses. This suggests that assessment can range from a teacher's simple subjective observation of student

performance to a more complex standardized test. The goal of all

assessment is to develop competent thinkers and problem-solvers, thus the

acquisition of knowledge skills is not enough to accomplish this goal. For

this reason, alternative assessment has become especially appealing to

advocates of assessment reform.

Teachers need not fear alternative assessment because it really is not a

newcomer to the educational scene. "Insightful teachers recognize that alternative

assessment has long constituted the core of their methods for assessing student

learning in the classroom" (Worthen, 1993, p.445).

I believe that there is a need for balance of traditional and alternative forms

of assessment. Both assessments have qualities that offer much to student

learning. Alternative assessment when combined with traditional testing is a viable

option in helping students gain knowledge through the higher-order thinking skills

and complex problem solving strategies that it can promote. "Educators should be

slow to accept claims that alternative assessment is the panacea for all of

education's ills as they are to believe critics who portray the pimples of alternative

assessment as terminal acne" (Worthen, 1993, p.454).

This year I have developed alternative assessments with a measurement

tool for the "Growing Healthy" science unit. The students enjoyed doing some of

the assessments and realized that it was hard work too. To test their retention of

knowledge, I administered a fill-in-the-blank quiz about a week later. I was mildly

surprised with the results, as this class scored better than my previous year's classes.

Also, I have found out what I have learned about the development of these assessments to be true. Time and great care need to be taken in developing these types of assessment. They must not be too broad or general that the assessment fails to do what it was intended, which is to improve student thinking skills and allow them to utilize these skills in accordance to their own individual strengths. Quick fixes to save a school district time, effort, and money has a negative impact on learning at the expense of the student.

Alternative assessment techniques and measurement tools need to be monitored and evaluated so that adjustments can be made to maximize student knowledge and the effectiveness of the assessment. These evaluation procedures need to be ongoing so that the assessment's deficiencies are improved.

Assessment can have a major impact on what gets taught. Although it is not a new idea, recently it has been brought to the center stage of the assessment issue. Some states and individual school districts have published high-stakes testing results to evaluate and compare their schools with others. Some have used these results to determine academic awards, retention, and placement in special classes. Tests and assessments should be used as a tool and not as a determiner. Some schools get caught up in the "image game" by placing too much emphasis on tests. Teachers inadvertently or intentionally focus instruction only on the areas to

be tested, thus short-changing the students and corrupting the curriculum. "Teaching to the test cheapens instruction and undermines authenticity of scores as measures of what children really know" (Shepard, 1989, p. 7).

As a principal I will be careful not to misuse or misinterpret these assessments as anything more than a tool. I feel very strongly about this because I have experienced this in my current district. It seems contradictory to me that a school district would be so concerned with building self-esteem, and yet still place a great deal of emphasis on tests such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Kids are not stupid, they can interpret their individual score. I believe these types of tests penalize the effort of the overachiever, as well as places a self-inflicted label of sorts upon the student. I have had students score high on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), yet their effort in the classroom was minimal. Some of these students could only muster "B's" in their subject area. Conversely, I have had students score average to low on the ITBS, yet, through their outstanding effort, were solid "A" students. As a principal, I would recommend that the ITBS be given every other year starting in either the third or fourth grade. This could save the district a substantial sum of money and lessen the negative impact that these tests could produce. Without the high stakes, these tests are simply diagnostic tools that can help students. I would do whatever I could to ensure that these tests are not misused and remain as a diagnostic tool.

Parental Involvement

Successful learning is an ongoing process that requires a great amount of effort among the many people of a given community. "It takes a whole village to raise a child" (R. Messerole, personal communication, September, 1996) has been the philosophy of school and community relations proponents everywhere. The LeMars District has identified parental involvement as an integral component of its strategic plan. With the amount of emphasis being placed on school and community relations, it seems only fitting that I take an interest in this area.

Research supports the idea that parental involvement is positively related to a child's learning achievement. Also, it has found that the most active forms of parental involvement produce greater achievement benefits than less active ones. Therefore, it is imperative that educators utilize this important asset in a child's education.

During the past two years I have been the coordinator for our school's parent volunteer program. I have developed and led a training inservice for parent volunteers, and I have prepared work schedules for them as well. Questionnaires were developed specifying their areas of interest in volunteering. I then tried to place them in these areas in which to serve. End of the year evaluations were developed and distributed to participants seeking input from the volunteers about the program.

I have found that the parents are very willing to volunteer, but their follow through is not very good. Some parents volunteered even though their schedule made it virtually impossible for them to do so. I believe that some of these parents volunteered because they felt if they did not, then it would reflect an attitude of indifference on their part. Having a respect for parents' schedules, I did not want them to volunteer out of this type of feeling. When I would arrange volunteer schedules some backed out completely, thus leaving me a limited number of volunteers to fill classroom needs. It seemed as if our parents were apathetic towards their involvement with the school as compared to other elementary schools in the district.

As I analyzed this situation I realized that our school has some unique characteristics to deal with that the other elementary schools do not. First of all, we have only one section of each grade level in the building. This limits the number of parents for us to utilize. Adding to this problem is the need for most parents of our school to work a full-time job. I also found that the mothers that were available had young children at home, thus they would have to either bring the youngster with them, or hire a baby-sitter. The parents want to be involved, but are not able to because of their unavailability and not necessarily because of apathy.

I decided to utilize the limited number of volunteers the best that I could. I did not want to over involve them, which would have led to burnout. Also, I

suggested grandparents, or former students' parents as volunteers, however, our district wanted to use parent volunteers only. I believe that I would use this option, if afforded the opportunity, as a principal in a school with a similar problem.

My experience in this area is invaluable to me as an administrator. I have developed a plan that I believe effectively utilizes parents by providing a variety of options for them to volunteer. The most successful parent participation programs were those that offer a variety of roles, were well organized, and long lasting (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). I have analyzed parental apathy and have come up with possible alternatives. I have evaluated the program through the use of surveys and will continue to seek feedback from parents so that I can effectively maintain community support and credibility.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP ABILITY

I believe in being a proactive administrator. I do not want to be recognized simply as the authority figure in the school that is rarely seen. My door will always be open, and I will be seen in the classrooms as well as throughout the school.

I want to be active in the teaching process. Another goal of mine is to teach a subject in each classroom. I would try to teach one class for each teacher at least once a semester. I believe this serves several purposes. First, it keeps me connected with the classroom subject matter and teaching methodology.

In recent years, teachers have become better prepared and more

specialized in their subject matter and teaching methodology. Many

teachers now question whether administrators, who typically have

been out of the classroom for several years and may have

specialized in only one aspect of the curriculum as undergraduates,

have the expertise to evaluate them. (Gorton & Schneider, 1991,

p. 298)

Also, it will help me to get to know the students on a more personal level. Finally,

it would allow the teachers an extra planning period. Hopefully this would help

develop a positive staff relationship by showing a genuine concern for instruction

and the work that teachers do in the classroom. This would be something that I

would definitely want to try to implement my first year on the job. I would also

make sure that it continued through my tenure as principal.

My first year as a principal will be a time for me to become familiar with

the school environment. I will not make any major changes the first year unless I

am forced to do so. I believe that this time should be spent becoming competent in

performing administrative duties and evaluating existing procedures, structures and

goals. Also, it will be a time to develop relationships with staff, students, and

parents so that I may gain their trust and confidence. This is important so that the

staff and parents will be more open to change in the future.

To be the instructional leader of the school, I will need strong leadership qualities. My experiences as a teacher, coach, and sponsor of the school's Fellowship of Christian Athletes has helped me to develop these important attributes. However, it is imperative for me to recognize that I have not yet arrived in developing these qualities to my fullest potential. This will inspire me to work hard and continue to grow in this aspect of my life.

I believe these four basic philosophical principles will aide me on my journey to becoming an effective leader. These beliefs guide my life without compromise. I consistently evaluate my life according to these beliefs, and I will continue to do so. Without constant personal evaluation there will be no growth professionally.

I am confident in my abilities to lead and administrate as a school principal. I know that I will not please everyone with my decisions, nor will I try to appease people. I will do what I believe is right just as I have done in the past. I am not afraid to take a stand for what is right.

The following excerpt by Wilferd A. Peterson in his essay, "The Art of Leadership," has been inspirational in the development of my leadership abilities:

The leader is a servant. As the Master of Men expressed it, "And whosoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant."

The leader sees through the eyes of his followers. The leader says, "Let's go!," and leads the way rather than, "Get going!"

The leader assumes his followers are working with him, not for him. He sees that they share in the rewards and glorifies the team spirit.

The leader is a man builder. The more men he can build, the stronger the organization will be, himself included.

The leader has faith in people. He believes in them, trusts them, and thus draws out the best in them.

The leader uses his heart as well as his head. After he has considered the facts with his head, he lets his heart take a look, too. He is a friend.

The leader plans and sets things in motion. He is a man of action as well as a man of thought.

The leader has a sense of humor. He is not a stuffed shirt. He has a humble spirit and can laugh at himself.

The leader can be led. He is not interested in having his own way, but in finding the best way. He has an open mind.

The leader keeps his eyes on high goals. He strives to make the efforts of his followers and himself contribute to the enrichment of personality, the achievement of more abundant living for all, and the improvement of all. (Wooden, 1980, p.5)

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