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# A preferred vision for educational leadership : a reflective essay

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## A preferred vision for educational leadership : a reflective essay

### **Abstract**

Educational leadership is a calling. Changes in the world are reflected within the school walls; principals must be ready to accept the challenges the lie ahead. Effective leadership means embracing the desire to accept this calling, reflecting upon practice and experience for continuous improvement, modeling effective instructional strategies, inspiring learning in students and adults and being a catalyst for positive change. The responsibilities are vast, but the success of our students and community is dependent upon steadfast leadership.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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## What I Believe About Leadership and Education

### *Why I became an Educator*

The education profession, unlike others, is often referred to as a calling. Educators are passionate about teaching and learning. My familiarity from a young age with this calling was the driving force in my choice of this noble profession. Some of my most important childhood memories involve helping my father prepare his classroom every August. My father was a dedicated educator; he saw education as a lifestyle and career, and not just a job. As a young person, I was aware of the impact education had on the lives my father touched. In my own professional career, the desire to emulate this dedication motivates me.

In addition to my familiarity with the teaching profession, I became an educator because I enjoyed working with young people. I also enjoyed literature and writing. Teaching provided me the opportunity to help young people become better readers, writers, and thinkers. It is often said that the journey is the reward. I create the best “journey” that I can for my students. I utilize my creativity, energy, and resourcefulness to prepare concerned and knowledgeable citizens who will embrace life-long learning at any level.

### *What I Believe About Education*

Aristotle said that the quality of society is determined by the quality of the education. Education is the foundation of our society; creating an educated citizenry is paramount. I teach with the philosophy that all students can learn. It

is the role of teachers, administrators, and the educational system to provide opportunities and resources to support this philosophy. All students can learn, but not all students learn in the same way. Education must involve differentiation. In a typical school day, I work with advanced readers, stellar writers, students with IEPs, struggling writers, non-readers, and ELL (English Language Learner) students. This is quite a mix of students with diverse needs. Each of these students, regardless of abilities or background, has the right to an education that helps them develop and pursue their dreams.

Education improves individuals, and ultimately enhances communities. Education should provide opportunities for every child. It should also offer resources for the school community. The educator's job is to nurture student's content knowledge. Educators also nurture a student's integrity and character. Quality education can have a cyclical effect. Parents can learn from children and the school community, and children pass down the importance of education to the next generation, thus creating a quality society.

### *Why I Decided to become a Principal*

From the moment I taught my first classroom of students in Denver, Colorado, I have been passionate about teaching and helping all of my students achieve success. My six years of teaching experience have been rewarding.

Now, the desire to advance in my career and meet new challenges entices me. The administrator's role is to ensure the success of all stakeholders in the community. Just as I am passionate about helping my students achieve, I will work to find the best ways to benefit the lives of those in the school community.

My enrollment in the Educational Leadership program has changed my perspective about many elements of my profession. I have started to focus on the larger picture, as an administrator must do. As a teacher, my focus is more exclusively classroom-based. An administrator must consider what is best for the building as well as the entire school community. I observe the administration at West High and have a newfound appreciation for the amount of work they do and the difficult decisions they make on a daily basis. My perspective has truly changed since I began "thinking like an administrator." This perspective both challenges and interests me.

I decided to become a principal because I see the need for effective leadership within the school community. The face of education will change drastically throughout my career. With these changes comes the need for a strong educational leader. Districts will need administrators who will introduce strategies and opportunities for training teachers in differential instruction. Our student's diverse needs will continue to grow and change. Districts will also need leaders who will monitor accountability. New teachers will need leaders who

will encourage and guide them as they enter the profession. Veteran teachers will need opportunities for staff development to learn new strategies that are best for students. These are just a few of the tasks that will be a part of my job description. They are all of great interest to me. My perception is that I will be a strong, dedicated educational leader; I will work diligently to make my reality the same.

### *What I Believe about Leadership*

In the book, Principal Leadership, Wilmore often refers to educational leadership as a calling or a mission. Those of us who are called to be educational leaders must be the catalyst for the success of all stakeholders within our school communities. Successful leadership involves adhering to the standards of visionary, instructional, organizational, collaborative, ethical, and political leadership. These standards are a base for creativity and innovation in leadership.

Leadership involves developing a plan for the success of all students and members of the school community. A good leader is obligated to involve all necessary members in the decision-making process and do all that is appropriately necessary to see the plan in action. Curriculum and instruction set educational leaders apart from other leaders. Educational leaders promote success by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture focused on student learning.

Leadership means making sure that facilities are conducive to student learning and community success. A school leader manages the organization, operations, and resources to ensure this efficient and effective learning environment. Communication and collaboration are crucial elements of leadership. A leader must work with the families and community members to respond to the interests and needs of the stakeholders. Resourceful leaders are successful leaders. Leaders find the funds and support needed to make sure that their vision is achieved.

Leaders are in the public eye and act as role models for the community. Leadership means acting with integrity, ethics, and fairness. A strong leader makes decisions based on complete information, rather than personal bias. Finally, leadership means advocating for what is right for the community. Leaders are the voice for the community, and they must be informed, active, and steadfast for the rights of the stakeholders.

Educational leadership is a calling. Leadership involves defining your mission and deciding how that mission will be executed. Educational leadership will not be easy, but the success of our students and the community is dependent upon effective, efficient, dedicated leadership.

## Reflective Practice in Educational Leadership

The role of the principal has evolved to include an eclectic array of responsibilities. Today's educational leader is a master teacher, building facilitator, personnel manager, and public relations representative. Wilmore (2002) described the changing role of the principal by saying, "The primary emphasis has shifted from one in which the principal truly was a master teacher, a recognized leader of instruction, to one in which the principal is a manager of the school facility. The role of the principal has transitioned again from school manager to the school catalyst for success for all stakeholders" (pp. 4-5). To be a successful leader in this diverse position, one must be a reflective practitioner. An effective leader is a reflective thinker who examines the issue or problem, critiques the decision made, and reconstructs the decision or practice for future improvement.

Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) defined a reflective practitioner as one who "pays close attention to theory, research, and successful practice in order to enhance judgement and improve the quality of decision making. Reflective practice means staying abreast of the latest research in practice, researching your own practice, experimenting with new approaches, reflecting on your own approach, and sharing your insights" (p. 168). An effective leader makes informed decisions based on research and examination of all facets of the

problem. Reflective practice is crucial in order to make the decision that is best for students and the school community.

Reflective practice is innovative in the sense that it proposes change, thus challenging the past. Short (1997) stated, “reflection has been proposed as a means for changing administrative behavior through analysis of individual beliefs, position, or culture” (p. 1). Reflection serves as a means of helping administrators rethink problems in a different way. In this way, reflective thinking is a part of collaborative leadership. The administrator must consider other’s views and the priorities of the community in addition to his/her own ideas.

Norlander-Case, Reagan, and Case (1999), described three different types of reflective practice. A reflective practitioner should distinguish among “reflection-*on*-action”, “reflection-*in*-action”, and “reflection-*for*-action.” Norlander-Case, Reagan, and Case (1999) clarified further and defined each depending upon when the act of reflection takes place.

Reflection-*in*-action refers to reflection in the midst of practice and reflection-*on*-action refers to reflection that takes place after an event. Reflection-*for*-action, on the other hand, is “the desired outcome for both previous types of reflection. We undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing, but to guide future action (the more practical purpose).” In other words, reflection-*for*-action is proactive in nature (pp. 30-31).

For the principal as a reflective practitioner, reflection-for-action applies best to the practice. The principal can examine the decision made, analyze the result, and decide what needs to be changed or improved in future decision-making or problem solving.

Reflection is a necessary element of successful educational leadership. Therefore, the practice of reflection should begin before an individual takes his/her first administrative position. Short's article, "Reflection in administrator preparation" (1997) suggested that reflection is an important component of any administrator preparation program. Reflection is seen as an important tool for developing expertise and changing behavior. The article offered several suggested activities that develop reflective practice in administrators. These reflective activities include group reflection, reflective journals/writing, educational platforms, case stories, and shadowing or interviewing. Reflection in administrator preparation programs models a mode of professional practice that should become vital to the work of practicing leaders.

The importance of reflection in my own practice is examined by following the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL). Reflective practice means improving existing decisions or situations for a more successful future. This sort of "looking ahead" for change and improvement is characteristic of visionary leadership. An instructional leader would use reflection-for-action to implement

change in curriculum design and school culture to promote the learning of all students and staff.

An effective organizational leader is one who makes difficult management decisions to enhance smooth operation, learning, and management of the building facility. Osterman (1991) suggested that “reflective practice can facilitate organizational change by bringing about changes in the behaviors of individuals in those organizations” (p. 1).

Principals do not work alone; they engage in shared decision making to do what is best for the students and all stakeholders in the school community. Collaborative leaders must utilize reflective practice. Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) stated, “Reflective thinking is crucial to helping educational leaders improve their problem-solving expertise. In the real world of schools, problems are not solved independently. The complexity of the problems addressed by school leaders requires collaboration. Collaboration requires learning to listen to others, collectively reviewing outcomes, and responding to and partaking of relevant discussion” (p. 334).

Every decision that a principal faces must be considered an ethical decision. Ethical leaders make decisions by acting with integrity and fairness. A reflective practitioner would use the value of reflection to bring ethical principles into the decision making process.

The final standard deals with political leadership. As a reflective practitioner, I would have to be continually aware of the political, social, cultural, and economic systems and processes that impact the school. I would be an advocate for policy and laws that will benefit my students. To do these things requires reflective practice. Norlander-Case, Reagan, and Case (1999) stated that the reflective practitioner must be not only a consumer of knowledge about his/her school, but a producer of knowledge as well. "An important feature of the successful reflective practitioner will be his or her ongoing efforts to understand educational issues better, in both the classroom context and the broader social or community context"(p. 40).

An effective leader is a reflective thinker who examines the issue or problem, critiques the decision made, and reconstructs the decision or practice for future improvement. The current research affirms the correlation between being a reflective practitioner and an effective school leader. Effective school leaders adhere to all seven standards for school administrators. Each of these standards connects to the idea of reflective practice. Difficult problems, often the kind facing administrators, require being informed, reviewing possible outcomes, and making the best decisions for students and the entire school community.

## The Leader's Role in Educational Change

In the progress of educational change, effective leaders are the catalysts. Educational leaders must be prepared to implement change and “not just sit there” in order to improve existing problems in education and in the school community.

The role of the educational leader is critical in the change process.

Cunningham and Cordeiro(2003) stated, “principals play an ideal role in mediating and integrating bottom-up with top-down forces” (p. 157). New leaders may find this mediation difficult; however, it provides the educational leader with the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students, teachers, and parents. “Bender, Sebring, and Bryk (1998) found that the quality of the principal’s leadership is a critical factor in determining whether a school moves forward to improve learning opportunities for students” (Cunningham and Cordeiro, 2003, p. 157).

The principal plays a central role in the process of educational change. Reavis and Griffith (1992) defined the role by saying, “It is largely up to the principal to model the change practices, to install them, and to learn to lead groups in collaborative decision making on a consensus basis. It is also the job of the principal to form and operate school committees and to resist engaging in bureaucratic leadership practices when teachers, parents, and others may expect him to do so and may even be critical at the slow pace dictated by consensus decision making” (pp. 129-130). This definition of the principal’s role is

thorough, however it fails to mention a key component: effective leaders in educational change are visionary leaders who establish and nurture their vision in order to advocate for the needed change. “Leaders must love change (instead of fighting it) and instill and share and inspiring vision” (Cunningham and Cordeiro, 2003, p. 158). Visionary leadership is the first standard for school leaders and emphasizes the importance of school improvement through change. According to Stephen R. Covey, excellence in organizations is achieved through commitment to a shared vision. My role as an educational leader is to have a clear understanding of the need for change and how to get there. This is necessary so that others will support, or “buy into” this change process.

Not only does vision motivate leaders and stakeholders for improvement, it creates focus. To successfully bring about change, a leader must empower others within the school community to support the vision. According to Reavis and Griffith (1992), the “buy-in” of the change process consists of four steps: pre-selling (seeking support of key personnel), tin-cupping (seeking support for the idea, either monetary or official), sanity-checking (testing the feasibility of the idea with an experienced colleague), and push-back (a test of the commitment of the team being formed)” (p. 24). The process being described is empowerment. With a clearly communicated vision and a school that allows for shared decision making, permitting subordinates to gain power, the leader has motivated all to try out the ideas for change and nurture the vision.

In addition to creating and implementing a vision, a leader's role in educational change is to build relationships. Building relationships will create an effective professional community among the school staff. This is a necessity for change. "Leaders need to respect diversity, see the potential in all employees, and communicate persuasively. They must model a commitment to continuous education and self-growth" (Cunningham and Cordeiro, 2003, p. 157).

According to the "manager as developer" model of leadership described by Reavis and Griffith (1992), the first component of successful change leadership includes maintaining good leader-subordinate relationships. This involves an element of collaborative leadership as it "allows participation in decisions that affect the subordinate's interests" (p. 34). The second component is maintaining good relationships with peers and superiors. This component addresses both collaborative and political leadership. In this component, the leader is "monitoring events in the organization, network building, and representing the organization in the larger community. If the leader is unable to gain the necessary resources, protect subordinate interests, and gain approval for necessary changes from the board, state agencies, or other power sources, the leader is not likely to exert much influence with his subordinates" (p. 35). The educational leader's role of maintaining positive relationships with colleagues at all levels helps to build the shared vision and implement change.

These are complex times in education. Leaders are asked to substantiate change efforts with written accountability and results. In addition to shared vision and sustained positive relationships, educational leaders must effectively gather and use data in the difficult decision-making process that often accompanies change. Reavis and Griffith (1992) stated, “a large part of a leader’s job is gathering, analyzing, and disseminating information” (p. 35). This era of data-driven decision-making challenges leaders to analyze problems, identify patterns and trends, and make decisions based on research.

The entire process of change within a school organization involves difficult decisions on a daily basis. Educational leaders are the visible change agents that make decisions reality. According to Calabrese(2002), when faced with complicated decisions, change agents embrace seven characteristics: “they are catalysts for change, they see things differently, they have an attitude of optimism, they are tenacious, they are self motivated, they believe in people and in life, they are real people”(p. 121). Whether the decision is simpler and management based, or more complex and systematic, a leader must be equipped to decide what is best for all individuals. Schlechty (1997) described three different types of change that educational leaders will experience. These types are procedural change, technological change, and systematic change. “Systematic change, which usually involves procedural and technological changes as well, calls upon leaders to think, conceptualize, to see relationships between and among

events that might escape others, to help others see these relationships and overcome fear, and to assure, cajole, coach, and inspire hope. Most of all, systematic change calls upon leaders to be wise and sometimes demanding, but to always be supportive and reassuring to teachers” (p. 208). According to this definition, in order for systematic change to occur, the principal must utilize all six standards for school leaders: visionary, organizational, instructional, collaborative, political, and ethical leadership.

All schools will experience procedural change (altering the way a job is done) or technological change (changing the means by which the job is done), but the biggest challenge for the educational leader is systematic change. It will involve facilitating alterations of both the structure and the culture of the school. Schlechty (1997) stated that a leader who would promote systematic change would ask these four important questions, “Why is change needed? What kind of change is needed and what will this mean for us when the change comes about? Is what we are being asked to do really possible? Has it been done before? Can we see it in practice? How do we do it? What skills do we need and how will they be developed” (p. 208). Answering these questions exemplifies reflective practice of an effective educational leader.

Educational leaders in today’s school systems will undoubtedly face the myriad of challenges associated with the change process. Legislation, test scores, and increased accountability constantly remind leaders that change is inevitable.

To meet these challenges, leaders must fulfill a vast array of roles. In my role as a principal, I will serve as mediator, motivator, visionary, and decision-maker, among others. I will infuse the value of vision, collaboration, and reflection into my practice in order to embrace change to promote the success and improve existing problems for students, teachers, and parents.

### The Leader of Learner's Role in Student and Adult Learning

Leadership promoting the improvement of learning for both students and adults may be one of the most important aspects of being an administrator. All of the research and information gathered falls under the true essence of the instructional leadership. An effective educational leader will adhere to the standard of instructional leadership. She will advocate for the education of every student and family by understanding the need to take risks and embrace change.

The principal, as the leader of learning, plays a crucial role in ensuring success of the teachers and students within the school community. Cunningham and Cordiero (2003) explained, "How principals choose to spend their time, what they do substantively and symbolically, and what they believe are steeped in values, intentions, and understandings about teaching, learning, and educational outcomes for children"(p. 169). The traditional idea of staff development is one that promotes the learning of adults, and ultimately, students. Current research examines school's practices of professional development and takes a closer look at its positive impact on student learning.

Effective instructional leaders know the importance of learning on all aspects of the school climate and culture. Cunningham and Cordiero (2003) enforce the role of the principal as facilitator and active participant of learning. “If learning is important in a school, the principal will model the behaviors of and active learner. Principals who read broadly and remain knowledgeable in their fields, who participate actively in professional development opportunities, and who see their own learning as an important part of their professional work are modeling the beliefs and behaviors they espouse for others in schools” (p. 169).

One opportunity or strategy for professional development to increase adult and student learning is known as lesson study. Lesson study asks teachers to collaborate and reflect upon what they do and how they teach. This type of reflective practice gets teachers working at their best level while creating meaningful learning opportunities for their students. The key to making this type of learning work is dedication to the program and creating opportunities and flexibility with time frames. Boss (2002) explains, “lesson study involves much more than having teachers team up to plan a lesson. Rather, it is a long-term process from improving teaching, centered in the classroom and focused on student learning” (p. 13). The process of lesson study is one that would need to be a part of the principal’s vision for the school. Lesson study involves teachers learning from other teachers about how to best improve their students’ learning. If this were a professional development strategy that an administrator valued, they

would have to provide necessary support. Boss (2002) highlights the leader of learner's role by saying, "some decisions-funding for released time, policy about using substitutes to cover classes when teachers are observing one another's lessons, and so forth-must be made by administrators" (p. 14). A leader of learning must learn to facilitate, rather than struggle for power. In many professional development opportunities, like lesson study, administrators need to be willing to let teachers take the lead. Educational leaders cannot rely on the top-down approach; they must move from dictating to supporting. The result of a learning strategy such as lesson study shows an educational leader's dedication to teaching and learning.

Another strategy for improving the learning of adults and students is called job-embedded learning. According to Killian and Wood, job-embedded learning will "focus staff development less on traditional inservice workshops and more on integrating professional learning into the day-to-day work activities of teachers and administrators through strategies such as action research, study groups, team planning and teaching, faculty sharing during grade-level departmental meetings, and formal and informal peer observations" (pp. 3-4). This type of adult learning is reflective of best practice and creates a climate where teachers trust, share, and help each other learn and improve. This sounds like the ideal environment for improving student learners as well as adult learners.

The quality of teaching and learning can be enhanced by providing professional development opportunities for teachers. What they gain from these opportunities will, ideally, be reflected in the learning and performance of students. Professional development is not alone in the principal's role to improve student and adult learning. Educational leaders also have the responsibility to hire and support the best teacher's possible for the benefit of students. According to Kaplan and Owings, "Increasingly, research confirms that capable teachers are the essential link between public aspirations for high-quality schooling and student achievement" (p. 64). Administrators must fill positions with quality teachers; quality has two broad areas: teacher preparation/qualification and teaching practices. Kaplan and Owings continue by saying, "teacher quality concerns the inputs that teachers bring into the school, including demographics, aptitude, professional preparation, college majors, SAT and teacher examination scores, teacher licensure and certification, and prior professional work experience. Teaching quality refers to what teachers do to promote student learning inside the classroom" (p. 64). Educational leaders can influence both facets of teacher quality. First, they must scrutinize applicants and hire only the best for their schools. This, in turn, increases student learning, but also increases adult learning as teachers learn from each other in professional development situations. Secondly, educational leaders must provide support and continued evaluation and feedback to ensure the teachers are maintaining a positive learning environment,

selecting appropriate learning goals and assessments, using curriculum effectively, and employing various instructional behaviors that help students learn at higher levels.

The importance of teacher's learning is parallel to the importance of student's learning. Kaplan and Owings (2001) confirm this belief with "current research shows a large body of inquiry confirms that what teachers know is the most important factor influencing what students learn"(p. 65).

Improved student achievement and learning depends on improved classroom teaching quality. Principals have the responsibility and accountability to provide the best learning culture for teachers and students. Teachers improve learning through meaningful professional development opportunities. Students improve learning through meaningful classroom experiences provided by quality instruction and teaching. Effective instructional leaders take risks, model the importance of learning, provide support and opportunity for professional development, and nurture the best school climate by hiring and maintaining quality teachers.

### The Role of Service in Educational Leadership

The educational leader is a reflective practitioner, change agent, and catalyst for improvement. Above all of these roles, however, the educational leader is a servant; he/she is there to provide and implement a vision that will help the students, parents, and staff in the school community. The administrator, as a

leader of service, must be willing to prioritize other's needs. Helm (2001) describes this priority by saying, "The servant-leader's first concern is with others: they make sure that other peoples' highest priority needs are being served" (p. 41).

The words servant and leader are usually thought of as being opposites. Robert Greenleaf, a retired AT &T executive, deliberately brought these words together in a meaningful way. Greenleaf is credited with the term and concept of "servant-leadership." Greenleaf's ideas on servant leadership have brought a new paradigm to what present-day leadership entails. According to Spears (2002), Greenleaf defined servant-leadership as leadership that "seeks to involve others in decision-making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and it enhances the personal growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organizational life" (p. 1). This definition encompasses many of the standards that educational leaders adhere to. The definition refers to collaborative, ethical, visionary, and instructional leadership. All of these standards are necessary to be an effective servant in the realm of public education.

The leader of service possesses distinct characteristics. Spears (2002) summarized these characteristics: "listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community" (pp. 2-3). Relating each of these characteristics to the role of an educational leader is a simple task. Effective

administrators are good listeners. In the course of a school day, difficult decisions must be made. It is crucial to listen to all parts of an issue before making a rash decision about a situation or an individual. An effective leader must be empathetic certainly to the students in his/her building, but also to the faculty. As Spears (2002) described empathy, "One assumes the good intentions of colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when one may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performances" (p. 2). Healing is a necessary component of relationship building. No school is perfect, and a good servant leader knows how to lift broken spirits. General awareness, especially self-awareness, is an important asset of a servant leader; it is helpful in understanding issues involving ethics, power, and values. When an educational leader has a vision for the school, it is important that the stakeholders "buy into" this vision. Servant leaders have the characteristic of positive persuasion. This may be against the traditional authoritarian model of leadership, but it is more effective than coercion.

With the vision in mind, educational leaders must "dream great dreams." According to Spears (2002), "the ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities" (p. 3). This is the essence of visionary leadership. Reflective leadership asks us to learn from the past. The servant characteristic of foresight does just that. Spears (2002) continued by saying, "Foresight is a characteristic that

enables the servant leader to understand lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence for the decision for the future” (p. 3).

Stewardship is a common term used when discussing servant leadership. The basic premise of stewardship is that the leader has the first and foremost commitment to serving the needs of others. This idea of service is why most dedicated professionals join the teaching profession in the first place.

Educational leaders are continually seeking to improve all facets of the school community. As instructional leaders, they have the responsibility to nurture the professional growth of employees and colleagues. The final characteristic of a servant-leader is one who effectively builds community. These ten characteristics of servant-leadership may occur naturally for many gifted leaders, but they can be enhanced through learning and practice.

Servant leadership is not something that may happen overnight. It is, for many, a new way of thinking and acting in a leadership role. The traditional administrator was in charge primarily of the management and operations of the building. Now, educational leaders are the leaders of instruction and use shared collaboration to achieve a positive vision for the entire school community. This change in the role of educational leaders makes service a necessity. As Covey (1994) stated, “servant leadership requires humility of character and core competency around a new skill set, not just directing, motivating, and evaluating people using traditional performance appraisals” (p. 1). There is a paradigm shift

evident when one embraces the idea of servant leadership. Covey (1994) went on to explain, “the leader then takes the position of one who no longer directs, controls, or judges, instead, he becomes a coach and resource who can interpret the experience, but the individual or team makes most decisions including staffing, budgeting, and coordinating” (p. 2). Although it is a break from tradition, servant-leaders value individuals, which will ultimately change the entire organization for the better.

Servant-leaders are truly committed to serving the larger vision and putting other’s needs first. In his book, James C. Hunter (2004) described service as the world’s most powerful leadership principle. He continued that an important role of the servant-leader is to maintain a foundation, gain feedback, and welcome friction. In reference to maintaining a foundation, he stated, “get educated on the timeless principles of servant leadership and continuously update your knowledge” (p. 183). Gain feedback for continuous improvement. One form of 360 degree feedback that he recommends is the LSI survey. Hunter (2004) reminded leaders to “make sure you know where your gaps lie. Remember, you may have been behaving this way for decades and may have lost your perspective” (p. 184). Finally, learn from others. Friction means finding people who will help you maintain accountability as a servant leader.

A leader of service creates the type of environment in which students want to learn, teachers meet high expectations, and the entire school community feels

empowered. Educational leaders can be inundated with the complexities of maintaining an entire school. However, servant leaders know that people are the priority. Servant leaders believe that providing for people, building relationships, and providing for people's hearts and minds will foster an environment sure to succeed. As Hunter (2004) stated, "To lead is not to be "the boss," the "head honcho," or "the brass." "To lead is to serve" (pg. 1).

### Conclusion

Educational leadership is a calling. Changes in the world are reflected within the school walls; principals must be ready to accept the challenges the lie ahead. Effective leadership means embracing the desire to accept this calling, reflecting upon practice and experience for continuous improvement, modeling effective instructional strategies, inspiring learning in students and adults and being a catalyst for positive change. The responsibilities are vast, but the success of our students and community is dependent upon steadfast leadership.

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