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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

The principal is the first teacher of the school, the instructional leader of the learning place. He / she has the professional responsibility to bring into action a new form of leadership. The role of principal is essential for creating a school where learning is the center of student experience, and learning how to cause learning will be the central mission of the staff. The principal will need to create communication, decision making, and management approaches which make this kind of learning place possible. Hill (1992) said "teachers must be selected who have a talent for leading professional peers and not just students. A vision of the school must be shared by all owners of the school" (p.16).

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research paper

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by

Elizabeth M. Calhoun

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Five years ago I had the opportunity to change my career as a teacher. In our three building system, the assistant principal was not coming back to the junior high building. I was asked by the principal if I was interested in pursuing an administrative position as head teacher in the junior high building. I talked it over with my husband and told my principal that I would like to have the opportunity. I remember that she talked to all of the teachers in the building to get their feedback and input on how they would accept me in that position. The response was favorable, and I made the change from teaching sixth, seventh, and eight grade Language Arts to being head teacher with no teaching responsibilities.

I remember it being very strange not having lesson plans and papers to correct. I really only had the responsibility of the one building where the principal ran all three and spent the majority of her time in the two K-5 buildings. We rarely saw her, and if we did, it was because of some discipline problem that I was not comfortable handling alone. I handled most of the minor problems. The teachers would send them all down to me. I really had no administrative background so I used my past experience as a teacher of sixteen years to get me through. I also filled in as substitute teacher for everyone in the junior high building.

In January my principal informed us that she was leaving at the end of the school year. I was devastated as we all were. She was principal at one of the schools before we consolidated the three into one. She brought us through all the turmoil of that decision. We looked to her as our supreme leader. We felt no one could follow in her footsteps. I

was very disappointed because I had just bridged another gap and became closer to her as a colleague of sorts. I wanted to learn and grow as an administrator and felt she was the best to learn from. Now that was all gone. I struggled through the rest of the year. We all did. It was a death that you knew was coming and could not do anything about.

A search committee was started, and I asked to be on it. The faculty decided that the new principal should be located in the junior high building. The students there needed the structure of a principal every day not just when trouble broke out. Toward the end of that year my nerves were shot. Every day I was on edge waiting for something to happen. I tried to be everywhere at once. I tried to keep the faculty alerted to possible problems. I stayed every night until the last child was gone. I, too, was pushing for the new principal to be in the junior high building. I was ready to give up my command and go to the two K-5 buildings. It had to be better than what I was now struggling with.

We only interviewed two candidates. Both were nuns. One was hired and was told by the school board that her office was to be in the junior high building. My job was still head teacher but now alternating between the two K-5 buildings.

That first year was difficult for me. I still remember the feeling of being misplaced. I did not fit in anywhere. I had a job description, but the teachers wanted to use me as a lunchroom or playground monitor. They wanted someone to do the jobs that they did not want to do. The one building I originally came from so that building felt more comfortable to me. The staff was the same that I started with so I knew everyone pretty

well. The other building was a different story. I was never really in the building and did not know anyone very well at all.

This principal was very different than the other. I gave her my complete loyalty and tried to be a bridge between the faculty and her. She was not a very good organizer so I tried to give her as much of my skills as I could. I was always afraid of stepping over the line by doing too much or saying the wrong thing. Our relationship grew through the year.

The faculty, however, felt differently. To them she was unapproachable. She did not handle discipline in the junior high building. She sent behavior problems back to the teacher. It was her philosophy that the classroom teacher handle the problem. She would intervene in the major ones, but all the rest were up to them. The teachers were use to the way it was when I was there so they had a hard time adjusting to the new policy. When the K-5 teachers tried to call her, she would often not return their calls. I tried to encourage all of them, but it was hard after they made up their minds. The principal before was a hard act to follow. I told them to give her a chance.

At the beginning of my second year as head teacher, I enrolled as a student at the University of Northern Iowa in the three year Master of Arts in Educational Administration program over the Iowa Communications Network. My principal agreed to be my mentor. I had thought about getting the degree more and more as the school year progressed. The first three year program was just finishing up, and a new one was starting the fall of 1994. So I started with around twenty-five other educators in Western Iowa.

My second year went better in the K-5 buildings. I felt more comfortable toward them and they toward me. I did not do any substitute teaching for this principal, but I did fill in for the secretaries in all three buildings. In one building she only worked four days a week so I helped out by filling in there. I got an education being secretary too. I made a lot of contact with parents and students in a different way. There is an old saying that the secretary runs the building. I believe that is true after being in her shoes as much as I was that year.

Things did not improve with the relationship between the faculty and the principal. In fact in January she was asked to resign at the end of the year. Needless to say, this put me in a very dangerous position. I remained loyal to her, but also wanted to keep my job. Those last few months were very bitter for the principal. I basically listened and did what I could but the results were the same. She left at the end of the year.

The faculty was relieved but also in limbo as to who would be coming in as the new principal. This time around there were no suitable candidates. Nobody in their right mind takes on a position of running three buildings. The school year ended with no one hired. Before the school year ended, I made it known to the school board that I would do whatever they wanted me to do. I would help in whatever way I could to benefit the school.

In July, the Superintendent called and asked if I would accept the position as system coordinator for the school. There would be an administrative team made up of one of the pastors, three head teachers, and myself. I told her I would accept that position.

We proceeded then to have several meetings in July and August preparing for the school year. I mentioned that I would be through with my graduate program in two years and would be willing to stay on as principal. At this time they were only concerned with the coming year and did not want to think about the future. I think they were still worried about how the year would go and still planned to keep searching for a new principal.

So the year started with the administrative team in place. My office was moved out of the two K-5 buildings into, or back into, the junior high building. My day was spent two thirds of the time there and alternating afternoons in the K-5 buildings. Friday was designated as an office day. Things started off well. The faculty was more comfortable with me. The tension was gone that existed the year before. The teachers still handled their own discipline. They got in the habit of doing it for two years so I let them continue that. I tried to be available whenever and wherever I was needed most. We had administrative team meetings every two weeks. We would all share what was going on in our buildings.

As I was progressing through the three year graduate program, I was also learning on the job. I made many mistakes but tried to learn from each one. I had a hard time not taking everything said to me personally. I learned through my classes that administrators should try to be accessible and nondefensive to the people who bring problems to their attention. One of my principals told me that I need to be a good listener. Even if I have my own problems I have to be able to listen wholeheartedly to theirs. Even if I felt rotten, I should not show it. I had to be upbeat and have a smile on my face.

I also learned to be a “risk taker”. I think I have been the whole time I have been in the head teacher position. I jumped in not knowing for sure if I would like it or not. I jumped in not having a graduate program to get a degree for administration. A risk taker is sensitive to humane problems and is willing to take a risk to implement a decision to solve those problems. Going back to the junior high building was a very different experience this time. I was not afraid. I was not on the edge waiting for something to happen.

I think my attitude changed. My vision changed. I was now the leader. It was all up to me. I had surrounded myself with an administrative team of capable sensitive people. All that support gave me the strength I needed to step in and take control. I still made mistakes, but I made them with open communication not behind closed doors.

The year went well. Positive support came from parents, students, and faculty. I was asked to continue as acting principal. I wrote to the Bureau of Practitioner Preparation and Liscensure for a temporary administrator’s license. I was two-thirds of the way through the graduate program so they honored that request. I willingly accepted the position as acting principal.

This year has gone by fast, and I am now approaching graduation. The administrative team is still in place and stronger than ever. I have asked the board for more help in my administrative duties for next year. With the set up of our three buildings, it is virtually impossible for one person to do it all. Someone suffers. The students and the teachers need more than what I as one person can give them. The vision

of the school is, we, as faculty at Holy Family School view ourselves as creators of a Christ-centered environment whereby students may achieve individual success through the development of Christian values in an atmosphere conducive to learning. To give the students the best we need to keep the faculty at their best. I asked for a part-time teacher to give my head teacher in the junior high building a couple of hours every day to help with supervision and evaluation in the two K-5 buildings. She has a talent for working with teachers. She is also in a graduate program through Briar Cliff College and Clark College. Part of her practicum is doing supervision in the junior high building. The beginning of each month she does pacings with the teachers. That way as she walks through the building she has an idea of what is being taught. During the first week of school, times were set up to meet with the teachers and the head teacher. She looked for their planning being within the curriculum. Week two of each month, she did walk-throughs during her free periods for a total of fifteen to twenty minutes each day. Week three were informal visits. These were ten to fifteen minutes in length. Week four were formal visits. These visits were for a whole class period. Feedback was conferencing before or after school. This plan went on for the entire school year. I would like to have her do the same thing in the K-5 buildings. Doing so will help the teachers, and they in turn will help the students.

I also asked for the media center aide to go full time. The media center aide helps teach three classes of computer labs four days a week. The teacher has the lesson plan, but she follows through with it and assists students. She also helps the students during the

rest of the day if they come in for assistance on research topics. She also attends conferences and workshops representing the school for technology advancement. She does so much for the students and faculty that we deserve as a school to have her there full time.

We also are the only private school to have an English as a Second Language Program (ESL). It has been funded primarily through grants the past three years. The grant money has run out, and we are facing the possibility of having to fund the program totally through our budget. We have the largest percentage of minority population of any school in the entire diocese. ESL is important for the viability of our school's future.

The principal is the first teacher of the school, the instructional leader of the learning place. He / she has the professional responsibility to bring into action a new form of leadership. The role of principal is essential for creating a school where learning is the center of student experience and learning how to cause learning will be the central mission of the staff. The principal will need to create communication, decision making, and management approaches which make this kind of learning place possible. Hill (1992) said "teachers must be selected who have a talent for leading professional peers and not just students. A vision of the school must be shared by all owners of the school" (p.16).

Many principals are probably in their positions because they happened to be the best of a number of candidates at the critical time when a new principal was needed. It is to the benefit of both principals and the schools that affect their professional lives to see that their professional talent is efficiently nurtured and placed. The basics needed to lead

are staff development, parent involvement, and spirit with soul. You need a staff to lead that is equipped to deal with today's changing student. You need parent involvement to bring the community and school together as one. Finally to succeed you need a leader's spirit with soul to make it work.

Staff Development

Sparks (1992) told us that there are ten recommended practices of staff and organizational development:

1. Have a clear vision for your school. A shared vision is a powerful force in shaping staff attitudes and behaviors.
2. Establish norms of collegiality and experimentation. Teachers benefit from candid discussions with each other about their successes and failures; this will only occur in schools where staff members learn together and support one another.
3. Display a collaborative attitude. Involving teachers in planning staff development activities increases their readiness for the learning that follows.
4. Use research on staff development. Staff development programs will be successful only if they are carefully planned and well implemented according to current research.
5. Recognize that staff development can take many forms. While training is the most frequently used form of staff development, it is not the only one.
6. Encourage faculty involvement in a wide range of staff development activities.

Allocate discretionary resources at your school to allow teachers to attend workshops and conferences, and ask them to share what they have learned at staff meetings.

7. Stay abreast of recent research and practice. While the demands of the principalship are never-ending, a few minutes of reading and planning each day can focus your efforts.

8. View supervision and evaluation as staff development opportunities. Help teachers see supervision and evaluation as opportunities for growth rather than as remedial activities.

9. Model what you preach. If you would like teachers to be enthusiastic lifelong learners, it is important to show them that you are one.

10. Take the long view. Lasting change takes time. Most significant school improvement efforts based in staff improvement take at least three to five years to complete -- and some may even take longer. (p. 43-44)

Teachers bring to staff development their knowledge and skills, their learning and teaching styles, and their personal characteristics such as states of growth, flexibility, and self-concepts. They also bring perceptions about their need and preferences for certain kinds of staff development.

Staff development is no longer viewed as something that is only necessary for teachers. We now recognize that everyone who affects student learning, from the board of education, central office administrators, principals, and teachers, to support staff and

parents, must continually improve their knowledge and skills in order to endure student learning. We now also understand that staff development is not the exclusive responsibility of someone given the title of “staff developer”; rather it is the responsibility of superintendents, principals, and teachers among others.

As we make plans to continue the staff development program for future school years, our direction is shifting from providing what Madeline Hunter (1988) calls “prepositional knowledge about teaching and learning” (p. 44) to provide procedural knowledge and opportunities for applying previously introduced concepts. We want to encourage more collegiality through peer coaching and mentor-internships for new teachers. The active participation of both teacher and supervisors and the encouragement to experiment with new ideas should rekindle the staff’s commitment to continued growth.

A good staff development system for teachers is a model of a good learning environment for young people. Seeing both students and teachers as learners promotes the idea of a school as a learning community for all.

Staff development is not something the school does to the teacher, but something the teacher does for himself / herself. Staff development is basically growth orientated. Traditional inservice, on the other hand, typically assumes a deficiency in the teacher and presupposes a set of appropriate ideas, skills, and methods that need developing. Inservice works to reduce the teacher’s range of alternatives - to bring about conformity. Staff development does not assume a deficiency in the teacher, but instead assumes a need

for people at work to grow and develop on the job. Rather than reduce the range of alternatives, staff development works to increase the range.

The most innovative approaches to staff development are those that rely on exploration and discovery by teachers. It is assumed that by providing teachers with a rich environment loaded with teaching materials, media, books, and devices, and with generous encouragement and support from principals and supervisors, teachers will interact with the environment and with each other through exploration and discovery. Exploration and discovery can help many teachers find themselves, unleash their creativity, learn more about their own capabilities as people and teachers, and at the same time pick up new teaching ideas, activities, and materials.

Major responsibility for informal approaches rests with teachers. Such efforts can take a variety of forms. Two teachers sharing ideas, a team or family of teachers working and planning together, teacher involvement in an in-building resource center, and participation in district or area teacher centers are examples. Informal staff development approaches should be encouraged and supported. The benefits derived from such approaches are a good reason for supervisors and administrators to advocate patterns of construction that encourage teachers to plan and work together. Team teaching schools within the school, and family groupings are examples of arrangements that naturally stimulate informal staff development activities.

When staff development works to enhance the ability to think like a teacher, the emphasis is on learning the rules which enable the teacher to select appropriate teaching

strategies that match given situations. The emphasis for staff development should be on helping teachers to go beyond the application of teaching skills and the matching of established strategies to situations creating professional teaching knowledge. Staff development cannot be conceived as something done on an institute day or in a workshop but must take place in the classroom as professional practice unfolds.

Parent Involvement

Fruchter, Galletta, and White (1992) noted two decades of research have provided substantial evidence that children's academic achievement is linked to parent involvement in their education. Parent or family involvement in education is critical if we hope to increase achievement and feelings of self-worth. A strong home-school partnership program represents an important strategy that can help this goal become a reality.

Fruchter, et. al (1992) also told us that children work successfully toward goals and values when they recognize that the attitudes and expectations of both home and school overlap. Children's academic achievement improves when families demonstrate their connection to school goals by encouraging their children's intellectual development, studying with them, showing approval of school activities, and respecting their children's efforts.

Families and educators together must recognize the need for and support the improvement of better communication and collaboration with each other. The most desirable outcome will be parent-educator partnerships that will enhance a child's dignity

and self-worth. An outcome that supports families and their changing needs. An outcome that empowers all to network for positive change.

According to the Idea Book, Resources for Enhancing Student Success (1993), there are ten truths of family involvement:

1. All families have hopes and goals for their children. They differ in how they support their children's efforts to achieve those goals.
2. The home is one of several spheres that simultaneously influence a child. The school must work with other spheres for the child's benefit, not push them apart.
3. The family is the central contribution to a child's education. Schools can either co-opt that role or recognize the potential of the parents.
4. Family involvement must be a legitimate element of education. It deserves equal emphasis with elements such as program improvement and evaluation.
5. Family involvement is a process, not a program of activities. It requires ongoing effort.
6. Family involvement requires a vision, policy, and framework. A consensus of understanding is important.
7. Families interaction with their own children is the cornerstone of family involvement. A program must recognize the value, diversity, and difficulty of this role.
8. Most barriers to family involvement are found within school practices. They are not found within families.

9. Any family can be “hard to reach.” Families must be identified and approached individually; they are not defined by gender, ethnicity, family situation, education, or income.

10. Successful family involvement nurtures relationships and partnerships. It strengthens bonds between home and school, family and education, family and child, school and community. (pp. 1-2)

Family involvement is the participation of the family in every facet of the education and development from birth to adulthood. Family involvement recognizes that families are the primary influence in children’s lives. Family includes the most significant adults in the lives of many children. This includes grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, or even neighbors. Involvement goes beyond parents or families to include all social and community agencies that serve children. Family involvement emphasizes the inherent strengths of families instead of focusing on their weaknesses.

Many families, particularly low-income and disadvantaged families, face barriers when they attempt to collaborate with schools. Research has consistently identified a number of such barriers according to Fruchter et.al (1992):

Low-income and minority families often are geographically, culturally, and psychologically distant from schools. Parents face extraordinary demands on time and energy as they struggle to meet their families’ needs. Teachers lack the training to work collaboratively with families. Race and class biases have traditionally shaped, and limited, the culture of schools. (p.35)

Schools can greatly ease this transition from home to school by working closely with the families of their students. Children need to know that their teachers and parents understand and respect each other. Children need to know that they are communicating regularly. Children need to know that they share similar goals and expectations. Teachers teach best the students they have gotten to know and care about. When families and schools work together, everybody wins.

One goal for the first year might be to have each teacher contact every parent in person or on the telephone during the first month of school. My objective in teachers contacting parents is to give a positive reinforcement to the parents. They are entrusting the schools with their greatest treasures, and the teachers taking the time to tell them how glad they are to have their child in their class, is a great morale builder for both sides. It makes both sides more comfortable with each other. No one is on the defensive. No one is looking to blame the other.

The proposed outcomes could be all sorts of positives for both the school itself and the parents. As different projects come up throughout the year, the open communication between teachers and parents could be made available. Coming in to help drive, tutor, chaperon, and raise funds, are meaningful ways for parents to become involved.

You have to sell the idea to your teachers. The task could be staff skill development in engaging and involving parents. There are teachers that do not want to do any contacting of anyone. "They are too busy", and "There is not enough time in the day."

Those are your two basic answers when you suggest parental contact. Too many teachers see only the negative side because they only deal with angry parents. The administrator has to encourage the initial contact as a pleasant experience introducing yourself and welcoming them into your school.

As this gradually gets introduced into your school system, you could come up with other contact proposals. Effective school volunteer programs focus on involving people, not on fund raising. When local scientists, business leaders, engineers, accountants, parents, senior citizens, and others form partnerships with the schools, they bring personal talents and commitments that improve education in ways that money alone cannot. Effective volunteer programs boost public confidence in education.

School volunteer programs should be the object of long-range planning from curriculum and instruction to management procedures. Only by active collaboration with teachers and administrators in these planning activities can volunteers discover how they can contribute most effectively to the ongoing improvement in our schools and its program. Parental involvement in our schools could be the beginning of it all.

Heightening Leadership Spirit

The vision that I have as an administrator is well-defined in a book that I read last summer for my curriculum course. Leading with Soul, by Bolman and Deal (1995) is about the journey to hope, faith and heart. "It is a guide to the path that leads from where we are to where we dream of being" (p. 2).

The book is a contemporary parable that tells the journey of Steve, a dispirited leader in search of something deeper and more satisfying than the bottom line. He seeks answers from Maria whose wisdom was obtained from her own hard-won business career.

Bolman and Deal's (1995) character was suffering from what Albert Schweitzer once referred to as a "sleeping sickness of the soul" (p.38). The symptoms are loss of seriousness, enthusiasm, and zest. When individuals live superficially, pursue no goals deeper than material success, and never stop to listen to their inner voices, they block their spiritual development.

Today's stressful and ever-changing world compounds the risks of having a stunted soul. Leaders try almost anything to stay current and achieve success. Sometimes their efforts are rewarded. Too often though they lose touch with the core of their organization. The leader's first response is to focus on the rational and technical features of any situation. Analyze. Plan. Change policies. Restructure. These are sensible responses to many business problems, but they miss another, deeper dimension.

The signs point toward spirit and soul as the essence of leadership. Instead of looking outside for specific answers, you need to look inward for a deeper source of inner wisdom. Life today creates many obstacles for all of us when we seek our inner self. We keep spirituality confined to churches. However, in my situation, spirituality is everywhere you look. It defines who you are. Steve is on the verge of a scary and perilous journey. He relies heavily on Maria, his spiritual guide, for support and direction. She continually resists his efforts to put her in charge. She reaffirms to recognize and

trust the power within yourself. Steve's task was to reclaim and rekindle his spiritual career. Bolman and Deal (1995) said:

It does not matter how long your spirit lies dormant and unused. One day you hear a song, look at an object, or see a vision, and you feel its presence. It can't be bought, traded, or annihilated, because its power comes from its story. No one can steal your spirit. You have to give it away. You can also take it back. (p.41)

Taking it back is rarely easy. Steve found out that reclaiming his spirit and his soul required uncommon courage. The spiritual journey that leaders must take, and inspire others to take, begins with ourselves but not necessarily by ourselves. Maria told Steve to look both inside and outside. Prayer, meditation, studying scriptures, singing hymns, following rituals, journeying to sacred places, and contemplating nature all help in the journey inward and outward of the soul. (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p. 57)

Steve found in Maria a spiritual guide who has found her way through a crisis similar to his. We can draw support from friends, a spouse, close colleagues, or a religious community. Whatever the source of our external support the first step is an exploration of our inner self. Only then are we able to lead others. The journey begins only when Steve's heart tells him that this is what he must do - even when reason and logic tell him otherwise. (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p. 58)

Bolman and Deal (1995) stated that, "You lead with soul by giving to others" (p.67). The gifts of love, power, authorship, and significance need to be given. It's easy to give love when you come from a Catholic family background. It's easy to give love

when you teach in a Catholic school for twenty years. All the love came with me, and I give it to my students and fellow teachers. I have told students many times that I love them. I have told them that they are important to me. I not only said it to them, but I also showed them by listening, caring, understanding, and accepting. The administrators that I worked for showed love to me also. All three of them were nuns. I was fortunate in that since they are a dying breed today. A big part of love is caring enough to find out what really matters to others. I struggle with that at times. Sometimes, I just do not care what matters to my fellow teachers. I guess I get overwhelmed at times. It takes a lot to have twenty-five staff members come to you with problems. Not hello. Not even a smile. They just start unloading on you as you walk in the door. It takes every ounce of soul in me to be a good listener to them. Scofield and Kuhn (1995) reveal that listening gives the leader access to people and their needs, hopes, weaknesses, and strengths. It reveals the state of the community. (p. 37)

Giving authorship provides space within boundaries. In an orchestra, musicians develop individual parts within the parameters of a particular musical score and the interpretative challenges of the conductor. Trusting people to solve problems generates higher levels of motivation and better solutions. The leader's responsibility is to create conditions that promote authorship. Individuals need to see their work as meaningful and worthwhile, to feel personally accountable for the consequences of their efforts, and to get feedback that lets them know the results. (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p. 106) Authorship is important because it has to do with ownership. Teachers will tend to follow your lead if

they feel they were a part of the decision-making process. Sometimes it is not that they want to be part of the whole process, but they just want to know what is going on.

Power fits in with authorship. It is hard to give power away. You have to remember that you can give power away and wind up with more. When you delegate tasks, you build trust within your organization. With that build-up of trust, more power is given back to you. Hoarding power produces a powerless organization. Stripped of power, people look for ways to fight back: sabotage, passive resistance, or withdrawal. Giving power liberates energy for more productive use. The gift of power enrolls people in working toward making a contribution rather than causing problems. Leaders cannot empower others by taking power away. They need to help others find and make productive use of many sources of power. Authorship and power are related. There is, however, an important difference. Authorship requires autonomy. Power is the ability to influence others. Power is only meaningful in relationship to others. You have to balance power within the organization. The gift of power enrolls people in working toward a common cause.

Summary

“Significance comes from working with others, doing something worth doing, making the world better” (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p.96). I put my heart and soul into things I do for faculty. I put little things in their boxes, hand-written notes sent to their rooms, and verbal compliments on teaching skills. I seldom get a thank you. Every once in a while I do, and it makes everything worthwhile. My spirit is reborn. Sometimes when

my spirit is dragging all I do is visit the primary classrooms in my school. They immediately give me “group hugs”. There is no better spirit rebuilding mechanism in the world. People summon spirit by coming together to mark beginnings and endings, triumphs and tragedies, births and deaths. Children come together easily. It is harder for adults to let down their guard and allow others to come in. Steve figured this out for his business. He knew the organization had to be ‘ours’, not ‘mine’. (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p. 99)

Leading is giving. The essence of leadership is not really giving things or providing visions. It is offering oneself and one’s own spirit. Material gifts are not unimportant. The gift of self will often be in material forms. The most important thing about a gift is the spirit behind it. The gifts of authorship, love, power, and significance work only when they are freely given and freely received. When the spirit is right, gift giving transforms an organization from a place of work to a way of life. Any gifts will work, so long as they affirm compassion and justice. Together with soul and spirit, gifts form the cornerstones of a purposeful and passionate community. Leaders must discover for themselves the contributions that are theirs to make. (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p. 103)

Bolman and Deal (1995) spoke of “a new generation of seekers - the Marias and Steves who have the courage to confront their own shadows and to embark upon a personal quest for spirit and heart, and who have the commitment to share their learning with others” (p.167). We need a revolution in how we think about leadership and how we

develop leaders. Most programs ignore or demean spirit. Leaders learn most from their experiences - especially from their failures. Too often, though, they miss the lessons taught by spiritual guides such as Maria. There are countless potential Marias in the world -- sources of guidance who are waiting to be used. The responsibility of the guide is not to give answers, but to raise questions, suggest directions, and to offer support. (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p. 170)

“Man is reborn, no longer born of the flesh, but reborn of the spirit, of the inspiration from within and the teacher without” (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p.170). If we look for spiritual guidance, we can find it. The key is to look. There are many teachers whose wisdom and faith may help us nurture or regain our hearts, our souls, and our spirit. I feel lucky in my career to be surrounded by teachers and former administrators like that. Find our own light within, then we can share it with others offering our own gifts from the heart. I ask for strength and courage to keep “leading with soul” vital and meaningful.

When I first started the program, I came across this quote from Glasser (1992):

A boss drives. A leader leads.

A boss relies on authority. A leader relies on cooperation.

A boss says “I”. A leader says “We”.

A boss creates fear. A leader creates confidence.

A boss knows how. A leader shows how.

A boss creates resentment. A leader breeds enthusiasm.

A boss fixes blame. A leader fixes mistakes.

A boss makes work drudgery. A leader makes work interesting.

(Preface)

The quote struck me at the beginning making me realize that there is a difference between boss and leader. Before I never thought about it. After all the classes and reading and experiences shared during the past three years, Glasser's (1992) words are very real and true. I keep coming back to it, and it deepens within me.

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