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A preferred vision for administering secondary schools : a reflective essay

Abstract

Monroe (1997) said, "School should not reflect what society is, but rather school should model what society should be" (p. 193). This statement summarizes my reasons for becoming an administrator. Iowa's public schools are some of the finest learning institutions in the nation. These same schools, however, frequently reflect the negative characteristics of society. Lack of respect, segregation of students, and elitist attitudes are prevalent characteristics of today's society and today's schools. I want to be a leader who will make the necessary changes to maintain our high academic standards for all students and make our schools a welcoming place for all students, staff, families, and community members.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

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Master of Arts in Education

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Maria Trese Cashman

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The classroom door is locked. Students knock and ask their teacher to let them in, but the teacher says that they are late by two minutes. The door is closed, and the student remains outside. Teachers blame each other and claim that other people on their team don't care about kids when they disagree with a decision. Morale is low. Teachers slam doors in the face of other teachers when they are angry. The Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) includes only upper-class mothers who do not work. The meeting is held at 10:00 a.m. on weekdays specifically to avoid "working class" parent involvement. While these incidents may be isolated, they have each occurred in my presence while working as a Speech/Language Pathologist.

Each incident creates a building culture of reduced respect for students, teachers, and families. Aronson (2000) stated, "everything the adult community does or does not do in a school sends a message to the students" (p. 54). All individuals in a building should feel respected, cared for, and appreciated. Every action should demonstrate caring, respect, and acceptance. Only then, will the building climate be a true learning climate for students, staff, and families.

Monroe (1997) said, "School should not reflect what society is, but rather school should model what society should be" (p. 193). This statement summarizes my reasons for becoming an administrator. Iowa's public schools are some of the finest learning institutions in the nation. These same schools, however, frequently reflect the negative characteristics of society. Lack of respect, segregation of students, and elitist attitudes are prevalent characteristics of today's society and today's schools. I want to be a leader who will make the necessary changes to maintain our high academic standards for all students and make our schools a welcoming place for all students, staff, families, and

community members. In these settings, according to Thomas, Fitzhugh-Walker, and Jefferies (2000), “students, teachers, administrators, and parents all see themselves as learners, pursuing shared intellectual goals, often in collaborative settings where collective responsibility for learning is the norm” (p. 83).

Personal Characteristics

A quality administrator must have many skills beyond those learned in a college preparatory program. Administrators must be able to handle a variety of challenges, work with a variety of people, and present him/herself positively in a variety of situations.

I have always enjoyed challenges. During my career as a Speech/Language Pathologist, I have most enjoyed those cases that were the most difficult. I enjoy trying to figure out innovative solutions to difficult, long-standing problems. This passion for conquering challenges will serve me well when I become an administrator. Rather than becoming frustrated at the difficulties associated with running a building or department, I will be energized. I thrive on taking a problem and fixing it. I don't give up easily and rarely have I found a problem I couldn't impact with hard work and commitment.

I have learned to appreciate the little things in life. As an administrator, I realize that progress will sometimes be slow. This slow progress only makes the change more significant when it does occur. My biggest success as a Speech/Language Pathologist occurred when working with a 57 year-old woman who had a stroke. She was aphasic and could not produce any intelligible speech. I worked with her for several months and cried with her husband when she was finally able to look into his eyes and say, “I love you.” This may seem like minimal progress, but for my patient, it was extremely

significant. I believe that being a school administrator will yield similar experiences. Much hard work will occur before seemingly minor changes will be evident, but those changes will be significant to the staff and students affected. That is why I continue to work; I want to make schools better for the staff and students of my building.

I believe that it is imperative for an administrator to form strong, working relationships with colleagues. As a Speech/Language Pathologist, I depend on teachers to implement speech and language programs for my students when I am not in the building. My students will make very little progress if teachers do not implement my programs on a daily/weekly basis. Because I have developed the ability to form strong relationships, teachers are more willing to work with my students and me on speech/language goals. This experience should assist me when I have the opportunity to function in an administrative capacity. I know how to establish a working relationship with people even when our educational philosophies don't agree. Respect and acknowledgement of differing teaching styles is key. Shared commitment to student learning also promotes strong teaming between staff members.

A quality administrator must ensure that he/she has some balance in life. The demands of an administrative position could become overwhelming if an individual does not maintain outside interests. Speck (1999) stated, "Developing and practicing good habits of physical and emotional health provide the principal as administrator with a necessary balance in the hectic pace of the principalship" (p. 88). I have a strong family that supports my career and me. I also have a variety of hobbies that help to relieve stress such as cycling, running, reading, and gardening. This life balance will assist me in handling the stress that will inevitably arise when working as an administrator.

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) stated, “A manager has got to remember that he is on stage every day. His people are watching him” (p. 16). When I became the consultant at my high school this year, the climate between the AEA and LEA staff was strained. My main goal for the first term of the year was to try and improve that climate. I began greeting every teacher in the hallway with a smile and a cheerful “hello” every morning. I greeted teachers whether I knew them or not. Slowly, teachers began initiating greetings before I could say “hello”, and they all started calling me by name. Then, the psychologist from my team came to me and said, “What’s going on? Mr. X just said “hi” to me. He never says ‘hi’.” This culture change continues today, and working relationships are beginning to improve. My simple action was noticed by other staff members and became the catalyst for school-wide change. One person can make a difference if others look to him/her for leadership and emulate his/her positive actions.

Lyman (2000) stated:

A leader grounded in caring enhances learning by honoring emotions and empowering teachers to change and grow; by contributing to safe and supportive environments for students, parents, and teachers; by caring personally about teachers, students, and their families, and by viewing everyone from a positive perspective. (p. 149)

I make every effort in my current position to make school a welcoming, safe place for everyone who enters the building. Only when the educational environment is safe and supportive can true teaching and true learning occur. As an administrator, I will continue to provide a caring school environment in which all students and staff can feel successful.

Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes from Experience

Every administrator brings different knowledge, skills, and attitudes to their position based on their personal and professional experience. I will bring the knowledge,

skills, and attitudes from my twelve years of experience as a Speech/Language Pathologist. I have worked with special education and general education students as well as their families and various community members. My experiences include work with universal design, an ability to think about problems and discover unconventional solutions, and an ability to motivate staff as well as students.

Knowledge Base for Leadership

Cunningham and Cordeiro (2000) said, “New schools are expected to provide many more learning options for students who have different learning styles and brain functioning” (p. 69). Universal design refers to designing the curriculum so that all students can access the information needed to be successful. Different learning styles are recognized and honored by providing students a variety of activities that allow all students to successfully complete the curriculum. The universal design philosophy espouses the belief expressed by the National Association of Secondary Principals (1996) when they said, “Teachers should identify students’ strengths and then structure teaching to appeal to these attributes, leading students to help they need to succeed” (p. 32). Universal design applications may include low-tech, medium-tech, or high-tech solutions to common problems that prevent students from learning.

Low technology applications include rubber grips on pencils for individuals who have trouble writing legibly. They may also include the use of calculators for students who have difficulty with basic computation. A final low-tech example may be providing a footrest for a student whose feet don’t touch the floor when seated. This footrest would improve posture, thereby improving penmanship, ability to focus on the teacher, and basic comfort. Medium tech applications may include the use of word processing

software for students who have difficulty writing or other basic software to assist with learning math. Finally, high tech applications are solutions that require a little more time and money. I currently assist a student who uses the Dragon-Speak software. This student suffered a brain injury and is no longer able to use his hands to write. The Dragon-Speak software allows him to speak into a microphone, and the computer types his words. Universal design applications assist students at all levels to become more successful learners and are a beneficial addition to any school.

Attitudes for Leadership

I have had the privilege to work with a wonderful supervisor during my career at Grant Wood Area Education Agency. She encourages her employees to be creative and to put their ideas to work for themselves and their students. She is passionate about her work, and her enthusiasm rubs off on the people around her. She motivates people to do the best possible job, and the students in the area are the clear winners. This supervisor has made a strong impact on my career and me. I stay in education because I love it, but this manager helped me understand what I could gain from education personally. She helped me realize that beyond the pay and benefits, I could gain personal satisfaction from the progress made by my students. She helped me reach a point in my career where it is fun to go to work. I will always be indebted to her for teaching me this valuable lesson. I strive each day to motivate the staff in my building the way she has motivated me. I know that I am excited about education and its possibilities. That enthusiasm has assisted me when working with my co-workers. The students at Washington High School have been the primary beneficiaries of this increased motivation and enthusiasm.

Skills for Leadership

In both my personal and professional life, I have frequently been told that I “think out of the box.” Whenever I am faced with a problem, I first like to look for conventional solutions. These solutions are usually easy to implement and require little effort to achieve success. Some problems, however, do not respond to conventional solutions. When these more difficult problems present themselves, I enjoy searching for unconventional ideas to solve the difficulty. These solutions typically require more effort from all individuals involved, but when the solution is successful, the outcome is extremely significant.

When I returned to Grant Wood AEA six years ago after a three year stint as a Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP) in the medical setting, I believed, and still do, that SLP’s in the schools needed to take a stronger look at serving students with oral mechanism deficits and swallowing difficulties. Because students are expected to eat lunch at school it seemed logical to me that some students with more involved medical diagnoses might require swallowing therapy. SLP’s are trained to perform this kind of therapy although we rarely utilize this knowledge when working in the school system. I stated my position and soon realized that my colleagues perceived this idea as very unconventional. They expressed extreme discomfort at treating students with swallowing disorders, and the issue was promptly dropped from the agenda. Garmston and Wellman (1999) stated, “A group’s beliefs determine its behavior” (p.9). Because the SLP’s as a group did not believe they could successfully treat students with swallowing difficulties, they did not attempt to treat this population. McAdams (2000) stated, “district and school administrators are the only ones who know how the current systems work. They are the

only ones who can design and operationalize new systems” (p. 257). While I am not yet an administrator, I do know how the system operates. Change happens slowly in my district, but it does happen. Knowing that education is the key to creating change, I assisted in the formation of a study group that explored ways that SLP’s could provide service to students with oral mechanism difficulties. We provided the information to other SLP’s in our department and slowly we began treating more students with this disorder.

This experience taught me that it is acceptable for me to think unconventionally, but when moving people toward my way of thinking, I must give them time to adjust. Some people don’t like change and insist that change come slowly. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1998) said, “If change is forced on them, not only will they rebel, but the act of force will contradict the very spirit of the change” (p. 218). When presenting new ideas, I must remember to present the information in pieces, support the reasons why this idea makes sense, and help everyone to move toward that change from wherever their starting position might be. Only then will people begin to look at unconventional ideas as possible and worthwhile to implement. Only then will beliefs change, consequently changing behavior.

Personal Professional Vision for Administrative Practice

Quality administrators must have a vision of what they want their building “to look like”. This vision should be developed collaboratively with staff, parents, students, and community members. Administrators must then work on a daily basis to assist the students and staff of the school to move toward this vision. When I achieve the position of administrator, I would like to impact curriculum, teaching strategies in classrooms,

extra curricular activity participation, team building among staff members, school calendars, and the school culture/climate.

Vision for Instructional Leadership

As a principal, I will visit each teacher during class time at least once each week. This visibility is extremely important. Students will understand that their learning is important, and teachers will understand that their teaching is important. These observations will provide me with information regarding classes that will be valuable when I visit with community members and parents. It will also give me an idea of the morale and climate of the building on a regular basis. Monroe (1997) stated, "it's impossible to run any organization from behind a desk in an office. You've got to walk around, watch people work, schmooze with everyone and make yourself visible" (p. 111). I must be the organizational and instructional leader of the building. The best way to accomplish this goal is to be highly visible in classrooms.

These observations will also assist me in ensuring that students are learning in classrooms. The only way I can help instructors be good teachers is to observe and know what is happening in classes. I can then be a positive mentor in helping teachers develop effective lesson plans and deliver those lessons in a way that will be most beneficial to students. Monroe (1997) stated:

if the kids don't know any more at the end of the period than they knew at the beginning, the lesson is unsatisfactory... 'You taught it, but they didn't learn it is oxymoronic.' Often I had to say this three times before the significance of the statement *they didn't learn it!* got through to them. (p. 129)

All school staff must begin to take responsibility for the learning of our students. I have frequently heard teachers say that their job is done after they teach a lesson. Whether a student learns is up to that individual student. This mind-set completely absolves the

instructor of all responsibility for student learning. As an administrator, I must help teachers understand that they must improve their lesson plans and the delivery of those lessons so that all students learn the content. Frequent observations of classrooms will help me accomplish this goal.

While it is important to be an instructional leader of a school, a strong administrator must also be a role model for the staff and students of a building. I believe that I am ready to be that role model. Whenever I meet with a member of the staff, a student, or a community member, my first job is to treat that person with respect. I always try to discover the reasons behind why this person is acting the way they are. If I can take that perspective, frequently an individual's seemingly irrational behavior becomes rational, and I can begin to look for solutions to the problem. For example, I frequently encounter parents who are upset with some aspect of their child's education. Sometimes, there are underlying events that I am unaware of that are contributing to the parent's emotion. The parent may have graduated from the same high school fifteen years ago and may not feel that they were treated well when they were a student. This parent may be upset because they believe their child is receiving the same treatment. If I, as an administrator, can be sensitive to these issues, it will assist me in talking to the parent and resolving the difficulty in a way that will satisfy everyone involved. Hopefully, the rest of the staff will observe me treating a difficult parent with respect, and they in turn will treat that person with respect and understanding. Progress may then be made toward solving problems and building a community that works for all students, parents, and staff.

Administrators must also be aware that regardless of where they are, they are a role model. If a student or parent sees an administrator at the grocery store, that administrator will be recognized and their actions will be observed. The administrator needs to ensure that their actions are above reproach. I believe that I have demonstrated that I am a good role model for students, staff, and the community. I will continue to be a strong role model and demonstrate that if all individuals are treated with respect, much progress can be made to improve the school climate for all students and staff.

When I become an administrator, I want to question the traditional calendar that most schools currently follow. This calendar was developed many years ago when the United States operated as an agrarian society. This traditional calendar of school attendance during nine months of the year with three months off for summer break may have outlived its usefulness. Johnson (1998) stated, "If you do not change you can become extinct" (p. 46). Schools must change in order to continue to meet the varying needs of its students and the community.

When I become an administrator, I, therefore, want to move my school toward a year-round calendar. Year-round schooling would assist students in learning, provide much needed shorter breaks at various times of the year, and would better utilize the school building itself. Most teachers spend the first four to six weeks of each school year reviewing last year's information. By switching to year-round schooling, breaks away from school would be shorter, and information loss would be minimized. Year-round schooling could provide much needed short breaks at various times during the year. Many parents have reported that their children are bored by mid-summer. These parents feel that summer break is simply too long. By shortening summer break, short vacations

could be provided in October, February, and April when students are beginning to tire of the school routine. This may reduce the amount of time students experience boredom and keep them more fully engaged in learning.

Finally, year-round school may better utilize the school building itself. For ten weeks each year, most schools are closed, ultimately rendering libraries, computers, and gymnasiums useless to the general public. If we had year-round schools, breaks would be shorter, and it may become easier to provide skeleton staffing to keep some of these facilities open.

Vision for Curriculum

As an administrator, I would like to impact the curriculum for all students. There appears to be two primary philosophies when discussing special education curriculum. One philosophy believes that students should receive a functional, life-based curriculum that focuses on the skills needed to survive in the world, i.e., reading a bus schedule, doing the laundry, cooking a well-balanced meal. The other philosophy believes that special education students should be educated utilizing the same curriculum as regular education students. This curriculum is simply delivered more slowly. I would like to bring these two factions together. I believe that the special education curriculum should be eclectic, drawing the best elements from both philosophies and combining them into one effective program.

More assistance needs to be provided to regular education students to facilitate their learning in all classes. An after-school program, which focuses on learning strategies, test-taking skills, and completion of homework, will be established in my building. Wilson and Corbett (2001) wrote:

The key to success of the after-school program, according to students, was that the atmosphere was more conducive to learning. With fewer of their peers around, the students were not as distracted as they were in their regular classrooms and as a result felt that they could put more effort into their work. (p. 29)

The after-school program in my building would be voluntary, but students identified as struggling in classes would be strongly encouraged to attend.

Research indicates that students perform better academically when they are involved in extra-curricular activities. At this time, only a handful of special education students at my high school are involved in an after school program. Most of these students avoid school because they do not feel successful there. They go home immediately following the conclusion of classes and do not return until the start of classes the following day.

More special education students need to become involved in extra-curricular activities. Peer sponsorship of special needs students may assist them in becoming more involved. A regular education student would be responsible for helping a special needs student arrive at practices on time, interact appropriately with peers, and learn the skills required to successfully participate in the activity. The regular education student who sponsored a special needs student in an after school program could earn credit toward graduation.

One of my biggest passions in my current position is to facilitate the use of a variety of teaching strategies in classrooms to assist all students in the learning process. Thomas et al. (2000) stated:

Traditionally, schools have focused primarily on linguistic and logical-mathematical skills. As a result, children who express a high level of intelligences in other domains are often not provided an opportunity to showcase these intelligences. (p. 31)

Students learn best when a variety of teaching strategies is utilized which incorporate a variety of learning styles. Unfortunately, many teachers focus primarily on auditory strategies. This method is the primary learning mode for only a portion of learners. The other learners in each classroom learn best through visual, kinesthetic, or tactile means. I enjoy helping teachers build these other teaching methods into their lessons. As an administrator, I hope to not only provide continuing education opportunities for staff regarding a variety of teaching strategies, but also provide a safe forum for teachers to discuss and implement innovative teaching techniques.

Vision for Team-Building

Gibbs (1995) said, "When teachers work in collegial groups their inherent isolation from each other disappears" (p. 20). An administrative role would allow me more opportunities to build teamwork among staff members. I take great pride in my ability to make people feel comfortable and safe. Only when individuals feel comfortable, will they share their ideas and thoughts. Building a staff into a cohesive team that feels comfortable with each other allows them to share and learn from each other. The greatest asset of every school is the people. Students and staff must work together as a team to achieve the most significant results. I want to be an integral part of building that teamwork in a building.

Thomas et al. (2000) stated, "Empowerment becomes a challenge to determining what is right and good, instead of just being told the answers" (p. 36). Teachers will, therefore, be empowered to work together to solve problems in the building. All teachers who have feelings regarding a decision will be invited to work on the decision-making team. Because they are a part of that team, it will be difficult for them to blame

others for a decision that has been made. This practice will begin to reduce the culture of scapegoating and blaming that is prevalent in many school buildings today.

Teachers will work in teams of four or five across disciplines. Students will be assigned to teams and will stay in those teams for a year. This design will ensure that teachers have an opportunity to discuss common students, co-teach, and share successful teaching strategies.

Teachers on each team will have a common planning time each day. This could be accomplished by requiring that all students go to an exploratory class at the same time each day, i.e., Physical Education, Building Trades, Music. This common planning time could be utilized to discuss students and how to best serve their needs. Units and lesson plans could also be discussed during this common planning time. Periodic administrator involvement in these meetings would ensure that the planning time was being utilized productively and efficiently. The administration could also answer team and individual questions at this time that would make the building operate more smoothly.

Each teacher team will also be a book club. The team will choose three books regarding education to read each school year. One team meeting time will be devoted to discussion of the book each trimester. As the administrator, I will be at each of these book club meetings to support the continuing education of myself as well as my staff. Building continuing education/staff development opportunities into the school day is the only way to ensure that staff development and continuing education occurs.

Outside professionals will be treated as part of the staff of our building. Outside professionals may include School Social Workers, Speech/Language Pathologists, Goodwill Services, or Drug Prevention Workers. These individuals perform vital

services to the students of the building yet they frequently must perform their services in the hallways and closets due to lack of office space. In my building, these professionals will have a place to work. If I can't give them a space of their own, they will work in the rooms of teachers who don't have a class that hour. Several professionals could share one room if they each worked in the building on different days. A final possibility is to give them use of the principal's office. We must work together for the good of the students. This may mean sacrifice at times, but the rewards will far outweigh the pain.

Outside professionals will also be invited to all staff meetings, child study team meetings, and staff get-togethers. Frequently, these people are left out of these activities and, consequently, they are forgotten team members. Lyman (2000) stated, "By being creative and overcoming territoriality, much more can be done with the same resources. Knowing the resources available in the community and the willingness to work with other agencies are also critical" (p. 47). We must work to include these individuals in our staff. They have important information regarding our students that is lost when they are not invited to meetings. An inclusive, well-rounded staff is vital to providing inclusive, well-rounded services to students.

Vision for School Climate

The nonconformists of our schools are an ignored population among many teachers and administrators, and an insulted, harassed population by their peers. These nonconformists frequently do not enjoy going to school and also find school to be a scary place. We must find ways to celebrate the diversity of our students while we maintain a safe and supportive learning environment for all learners.

Recently, I was walking through my school cafeteria. A group of young men was standing around a table where a single young man was seated. The group of men appeared to be athletes, and they were wearing a “trendy” style of clothes. The lone, young man who was seated was wearing an older T-shirt and baggy jeans. As I walked by, it was apparent that the group of men was teasing the seated man. Upon questioning, the group began to disperse, and one of the men said, “Aww, it doesn’t matter. He’s just a nerd anyway. Nobody cares when we get after him.” Aronson (2000) stated, “Most members of the ‘in-group’ consider taunting ‘outsiders’ a reasonable thing to do” (p. 71). As I visited with these men about harassment and its many forms, it became clear that no one had ever talked to them about nonconformist harassment. They had only discussed racial and sexual harassment.

My lesson may well be a lesson that many other teachers and administrators need to remember. To make schools safe places for all students, we must not only have rules and policies in place to protect students, but we must also educate our students about those policies and then enforce them. Another lesson may be that we need to celebrate all kinds of diversity. Aronson (2000) wrote:

Students who see themselves as being outside the select group of ‘winners’ have far more negative views of their school than those inside that charmed circle...They become part of the invisible middle and suffer in silence, alienated and without any real connection. (p. 81)

As an administrator, I will make every attempt to ensure that no student feels alienated and that each student will feel like a “winner” in some way. The following ideas will be implemented in my school to help each student feel accepted and an important part of the school. We have an ethnic food fair every year at my high school. Students from different parts of the world volunteer to prepare food from their native countries.

Students go to the different booths during their lunch period and sample the food while learning about different parts of the world. I would like my school to expand on this wonderful approach by celebrating the diversity among students that is not visible to the naked eye. Students involved in computer club could create interesting programs that other students could try. Tables could be set up in the school library with books selected as the “top picks of the month” chosen by students involved in book club. Members of the debate team could ask a question each day during the school announcements. Students could write their answers on a slip of paper, and a winner could be drawn from all correct entries. The winner may receive two free tickets to an upcoming school event such as a basketball game, play, or concert. These ideas will be implemented in my building when I become an administrator and, hopefully, all students will feel that they are valued, important members of the school community.

Schools should be a welcoming place for all stakeholders including students, staff, families, and community members. As an administrator, one of my responsibilities will be to ensure a welcoming, positive, respectful building climate. Teachers will not lock their doors unless there is some type of building emergency. Students will be welcomed to class even when they are late. The only way we can teach students is to have them in the same room with us.

As an administrator, I must treat all staff and students with respect. This will set an example for the rest of the building, and students will begin to treat each other and the staff with more respect. Staff will also become more respectful. No teacher will be allowed to slam doors in the face of others when angry. This lack of respect simply cannot be tolerated in a service-centered organization. Respect is the key.

Educators must also remember to make their classrooms interesting and fun.

Students will then want to come to school rather than avoid it. Wilson (2001) stated, “As students talked about the kinds of work that helped them learn best and what teachers could do to make learning more interesting, they repeatedly stated: ‘give us projects,’ ‘make it fun,’ and ‘let us work with other students’” (p. 47). Children want to learn. We must make our lessons interesting so that we turn students on to school rather than turn them off.

Wilson and Corbett (2001) also stated:

Students wanted to be in classrooms where:

- The teacher “stayed on students” to complete assignments.
- The teacher was able to control student behavior without ignoring the lesson.
- The teacher went out of his or her way to provide help.
- The teacher explained things until the “light bulb went on” for the whole class.
- The teacher provided students with a variety of activities through which to learn.
- The teacher understood students’ situations and factored that into their lessons. (p. 64)

As an administrator, I must assist my staff to become the most effective teachers possible.

I must create an environment in which each teacher can provide these things to each student. If this environment can be created, teachers will be able to teach and students will be able to learn.

Conclusion

Bennis and Nanus (1997) stated, “Present problems will not be solved without successful organizations, and organizations cannot be successful without effective leadership” (p. 19). Iowa’s public schools are some of the finest learning institutions in the nation. These same schools must change in order to meet the growing expectations of

society. Public schools need strong leadership from individuals who will make changes and assist in meeting the needs of all students, staff, and community members. This is a huge task but by leading with respect, commitment, and cooperation, the job can be accomplished.

McAdams (2000) stated “school district administrators and building principals are the people who develop reform policies, put them into practice, and make them work” (pp. 256-7). I believe I can make positive changes by being a school administrator. I enjoy challenges and am not easily frustrated by problems that may occur in the administration of a building. I want to be a role model for students, staff, and community members, and I want to make all students and staff members feel that they are important members of the school community. My professional goals are to effect change in school curriculum and to facilitate the use of a variety of teaching strategies in regular education as well as special education classrooms. I believe that through hard work and commitment, I can change my little corner of the world in a positive way.

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