

2003


A preferred vision for administering secondary schools

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Cruise, Christopher, "A preferred vision for administering secondary schools" (2003). *Graduate Research Papers*. 376.

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A preferred vision for administering secondary schools

Abstract

There are many different characteristics that contribute to being an effective administrator. I believe an administrator must have a vision for his/her school. He or she must strive to constantly improve the educational experience for students by building a strong cultural community within the school that makes every student feel welcome. An administrator must work well with many different types of people within the school and community and must be willing to serve on many different committees to open lines of communication with all of the student body.

An administrator needs to surround himself with good people who share his vision for a quality educational experience. He must work well with others in the community whether it be parents or community leaders in an effort to improve the quality of the educational experience for all students. He or she must recognize and embrace diversity within the school in an effort to maintain a quality educational experience for all students within the community. All of these characteristics are necessary for the school principal to be successful.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

And Postsecondary Education

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

By

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May 2003

This Research Paper by: Chris Cruise

Entitled: A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY

SCHOOLS:

Has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

5/14/03

Date Approved

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There are many different characteristics that contribute to being an effective administrator. I believe an administrator must have a vision for his/her school. He or she must strive to constantly improve the educational experience for students by building a strong cultural community within the school that makes every student feel welcome. An administrator must work well with many different types of people within the school and community and must be willing to serve on many different committees to open lines of communication with all of the student body. An administrator needs to surround himself with good people who share his vision for a quality educational experience. He must work well with others in the community whether it be parents or community leaders in an effort to improve the quality of the educational experience for all students. He or she must recognize and embrace diversity within the school in an effort to maintain a quality educational experience for all students within the community. All of these characteristics are necessary for the school principal to be successful.

I have been very fortunate to work with an administrator as my mentor who has years of experience and is excellent at working well with many types of people. His relationships with students, teachers, parents and others in the community are excellent. He is able to use those relationships to implement his vision for the high school and utilize the available resources to achieve the goals of the school's vision. As a former student and now as a teacher in his school, it is his work as a principal that has inspired me to find ways to contribute to the educational experiences of students. I have learned from him the importance of creating a positive culture for all students and faculty by keeping open the lines of communication and recognizing the good in all students. A positive school culture is the single most important factor of being an effective administrator, but it is not the only factor. An effective administrator must be well-

rounded and be able to serve as a salesman, a politician, a communicator and be knowledgeable about all facets of the educational experience.

In many ways, I feel that I am an educator who models many of the above characteristics. My experiences as a teacher and swim coach have taught me the value of being able to work with many different types of people. As a teacher, I have been described as someone who can work well with many different types of students in many different types of situations. I have always been someone who has looked at the bigger picture in my classroom. My classes are somewhat loose in structure, but the students know what the big rules are in my class that contribute to a productive learning environment. Students act accordingly to avoid any problems. As a result, I have very successful classes with very few discipline problems.

I feel another of my strengths as an educator is my ability to work well with different types of students. I utilize many different instructional strategies such as class presentations, games, or group activities that are designed to help motivate students and encourage them to learn. Often the students do not realize how much they are learning. Many of my students now know that learning math can be enjoyable. I feel this philosophy can be transferred over to other classes if the teachers are willing to do a little extra work and be more creative in their instruction. Thus, I feel that I have many strengths in terms of collaborative leadership that will benefit me as a future administrator.

I am always evaluating what is happening in my classroom which is another strength of mine. Instructional monitoring in my class takes on many forms, such as self-evaluation as well as student evaluation. My students receive forms at the end of each term to critique me. I am

always analyzing my teaching techniques through reflection and by using various forms of evaluation to monitor student progress. I am constantly looking for ways to improve my weaknesses as well as build my strengths to improve the quality of the educational experience in my classroom.

To improve the educational experience for students, the administrator must evaluate the system and the people within it constantly. In a case study discussed in one of my classes, the teacher worked with parents of the community to help students who were involved in gangs and other difficult situations. The principal discovered that many students were becoming involved in gangs. As a result of their gang involvement, student grades were slipping and attendance by these students was decreasing. There was also evidence of drug dealing taking place in and around the school. The principal went to the parents of the community and told them what she was seeing and encouraged them to work with her to help the students. The teachers, parents and the principal began to implement several programs designed to keep the children out of the gangs and in school. Over the course of several years, the principal was able to turn the school around. The principal in this story did an excellent job of saving her school from these problems by providing students a safe learning environment. Students became less involved in gang-related activities, and drug dealing became less of an issue. Gradually, test scores rebounded. Unfortunately, the administrator had allowed things to slip for a long time before deciding to take action. An effective administrator would have been evaluating the situation constantly and would have recognized signs of a problem well before the situation got that bad. I feel an administrator must work well with others in the school community including faculty, parents, students and other members of the community to make the vision of a quality school a reality.

Visionary Leadership

I feel an administrator who is a good visionary leader is constantly trying to improve the educational experiences for all students in his/her building. The administrator must help create a vision everyone within the community believes in and works hard to support. It is important that the administrator, in collaboration with others in the school community, is able to facilitate the development of a school vision based on proven research. The vision must also represent an ongoing improvement process. I believe a visionary leader should be someone who is involved in the community in a number of different ways. He or she should participate in all school activities and be visible in the hallways of the school. An effective administrator is someone who is as actively involved in the school community as possible. He or she should attend as many performing arts and sporting events as possible to get to know the students and to show them support. A principal's support for students fosters the feeling of caring and belonging to a community. I feel by being a visible presence, an administrator is able to maintain an awareness for what is happening in all aspects of the school building. Being actively involved also encourages the faculty and students body to become involved in a variety of different ways as they model the principal's involvement in school activities. To me, a visionary leader is someone who helps foster the implementation of the vision by actively promoting and modeling involvement in all school activities.

An administrator must begin to create a vision for the school by working with community members, the faculty and members of the student body. My personal vision for a school is to create a school where no student feels left out or unknown and all students have the opportunity

to excel in whatever aspect of education they have chosen. In order for this vision to become a reality, the administrator must then communicate that vision to each member of the school community, including the students, parents, staff and others in the community.

I believe personally this vision should not just include the ability to read, write and do arithmetic, but also must also include opportunities for graduates to be positive, contributing members of society after graduation. Students need to learn how to work with others in the community to make their community a better place to live. Part of their educational experience is learning to accept and work in unison with a wide variety of different people. Finally, students must understand that every person has strengths and differences which should be recognized as enriching, not belittled or ostracized. Many of these ideas and lessons on behavior will be learned within the schools. It is our job as teachers and administrators to help them in the process of learning how to accept and work with others.

One of the topics discussed in Elliot Aronson's book *Nobody Left to Hate*, (2000) is that the young men who did the shooting at Columbine were not bad people, but rather were reacting to a culture of exclusion. Finally they felt compelled to act out in order to be noticed and accepted. As I was shadowing my mentor for an hour one afternoon, one thing struck me as similar to the situation at Columbine. A group of 5 students who desired to have a small dance late at night after our variety show, came into his office. They planned to only charge a dollar for admission and did not want a DJ or anything elaborate, just a place to hold a small dance for a couple of hours. The students were attempting to publicize a help-line website for teens. Dr. Plagman listened to their proposal, agreed to have a security person there as well as an administrator, and gave his approval. After they had left, he explained to me that these were generally good

students, but weren't great athletes or valedictorians. Since these students didn't ask for much, he wanted to go the extra mile to help them especially for something small like this. I think if more principals were cognizant and sensitive to students who are not always in the limelight, it would help ease the tensions that are sometimes felt by students such as these.

Another illustration of the importance of inclusion of students is stated by Aronson (2000) "It is the responsibility of the school to make sure each child has a friend and feels important within the school walls." (p. 18) Aronson suggests something simple such as having a mentor for each incoming freshman to make them feel welcome and comfortable in the new school setting. We have a program similar to that at Washington which teams a senior with four freshman when they are in their first year. Students are also strongly encouraged by the counselors, administration, coaches, and teachers to get involved in as many activities as possible. The more activities students are involved in, the more friends they have the opportunity to make during the high school experience. Dr. Plagman does an excellent job recognizing student accomplishments. My mentor makes an attempt to know the name of every student in the school as well as talking to them in the halls about their participation in, a play, wrestling, choir, debate, etc. His memory and attention to detail is staggering. He goes out of his way to think of new awards so nearly every student in the school can qualify for something. For example an academic improvement award is given to any student who improves their GPA by .5 from one term to the next. Another example is an award for an increase in GPA during an athletic season. For the first time this last school year, students were given a medal if they stayed in math or science for 4 years regardless of the level achieved. This incentive has led to an all-time high senior enrollment in both subject areas. Nearly 66% of the seniors graduated having

taken 4 years of math and over 50% having taken 4 years of science. I personally feel his efforts to involve and recognize as many students as possible are the reasons why students feel very positive about their educational experience at Washington High School.

A study conducted by Jeff Kromrey and Joanne Arhar entitled *Interdisciplinary Teaming in the Middle Level School* (1994) examined several factors to determine how teaming influenced student social bonding to school, peers, and to teachers. The study focused on factors related to students' personal and social backgrounds, school organization, and students' relationships with teachers and peers. Specifically, the researchers sought to determine the extent to which particular demographic and organizational characteristics of middle level schools as well as demographic characteristics of middle level students influence social bonding. Characteristics examined include the student's ethnic group, socio-economic status (SES), family composition, SES of the school, and relationship of school organization to student social bonding. The study was guided by 4 questions: (1) Does a student's ethnic group, family SES and family composition have an effect on middle level student social bonding to peers, to teachers and to school? (2) Does school organization affect student social bonding? (3) Is there an interaction between student characteristics associated with educational disadvantage and school organization? (4) Does the SES of the school affect the relationship between social bonding and other explanatory factors? The study suggests that interdisciplinary teaming appears to have the strongest impact on student-teacher relationships in low SES schools. Organizing teachers into interdisciplinary teams provides conditions that may reduce the alienation of teachers. Empowered, supported teachers are thus more likely to provide support for their students (Kromrey & Arhar, 1994).

In another study Mary Wynne Ashford, *Preventing School Violence by Building Connectedness*, (2000), focused on school violence in Canada. She determined that violence was directly related to youth alienation and disconnectedness. In the context of this article connectedness states that people are part of a web in which each person is related to all others. The article discusses a means for developing and evaluating a school violence program prevention program aimed at reducing racism and social isolation for native students in two predominantly white high schools in British Columbia. The main focus of the program is to build links among school groups, such as the Band, the entire school and the larger community in an effort to improve communication and interaction and thereby reducing school violence (Ashford, 2000).

One of the main challenges of an educator in today's schools is to address the needs of students living in a changing society by making sure that each child within the school feels a sense of belonging. We are no longer a labor-intensive society, but rather a knowledge-based industrial economy with people working together on many different projects to provide goods and services for today's society. This transition means a dramatic change in the purpose of education. Gone are the days when an instructor stands in front of the classroom and presents information for one hour on each subject each day. Today's schools must meet different needs related to the workplace and serve a more diverse clientele. Our schools should focus on a different type of education to prepare students well for a different society.

Marilyn Bizar and Rebecca Barr in their book *School Leadership in Times of Urban Reform* (2001) discusses The Best Practice High School in Chicago. The school has approximately 450 students from primarily minority backgrounds with 58% of the students being African-American

and 40% being Hispanic. Students attending this school are selected in a lottery system and represent various abilities and socio-economic backgrounds. The school was started in 1996 as a vision of several teachers in the Chicago area as well as faculty from National-Louis University. The people designing the school wanted to show that public education could succeed with all students and a normal budget by just changing curriculum and implementing flexible schedules and other educational strategies. The Chicago High School was designed to meet the needs of the students so they could be successful in the classroom and also exit the school prepared for today's society, even though they were not at the top of their class at their previous school. Many modern techniques were used within the classrooms in an effort to make the school a success. Student-centered learning focused on the questions the students had rather than answering questions designed by the instructor. Thematic, integrated curriculum units were designed and implemented to show the connections among the different subject areas. The school was heavily into the use of technology making the curricular material more interesting and providing new opportunities for research and development. Finally when scheduling the students had the freedom to choose what topics interested them or which subjects they needed extra help with during certain periods of the day. Clearly, this school is an example where curriculum and instructional practices were designed to meet the needs of all students. The student-focused vision of this high school differed dramatically from a traditional school's vision and required a tremendous amount of collaborative and political leadership to be successful. The teachers who were a part of this program believed in it very strongly and were able to develop a very successful school in the Chicago area.

Finally, I feel that Dr. William Glasser's ideas of a quality classroom as cited in his book,

The Quality Classroom are applicable in this discussion. Dr. Glasser's studies focus on the need for a quality education, which means making sure that students fully understand the subject before being allowed to move on. The students must be encouraged to turn in quality homework and quality projects rather than just turning in something to receive a passing grade. Dr. Glasser is also a proponent of control theory which states that behavior is internally controlled and humans behave and learn to satisfy 5 basic needs: to survive, belong, gain power, be free and have fun. He believes that satisfying these needs leads to a quality classroom where the students motivate themselves and learn at their own pace. The classroom is a non-coercive environment and the students are on their own with the teacher serving as a guide or facilitator of classroom activities rather than an enforcer. In Dr. Glasser's classroom, there is no need for an enforcer because the students are having their basic needs met. When this happens, they motivate themselves. I believe using a system such as control theory is a necessity for an effective organizational leader to keep the focus on learning and allow for accountability within the school. If the school is not adhering to the standards of excellence, it is up to the administrator to make sure that learning is occurring.

Collaborative Leadership

Being an effective collaborative leader involves two main functions for a principal. First, as with visionary leadership, the principal must be an active participant in school events. Second, being an effective collaborative leader is similar to being an effective business leader. As a businessman, you want to work with all available resources to make your business cost effective and efficient to generate profit. As a collaborative leader, you want to work with others in the community to maximize the learning environment of the school. An effective

collaborative leader will engage the support of local businesses to provide financial support and other resources. The business could create field experiences for students who are interested in careers in that field. Schools and businesses could also work together on meaningful, real-life learning projects. Businesses could provide knowledge and materials while the students would contribute their work skills. A collaborative leader must also engage the support of the parents in the community. Parents often provide materials and volunteer time to help. Without their aid the school's goals could not come to fruition. I feel the involvement of parents is especially important in schools who utilize community project based learning experiences as a part of their curriculum. Emphasis on practical applications to develop skills allows students to learn a trade or skill they can use in the future or possibly study in the future. Without the resources, aid and knowledge of local business partners, parents and other community members, a school to career program such as this will fail in a short time.

A workshop presented by cohort members discussed the use of business partnerships within their school district. The main goal in their school district was that partnerships are "a handshake, not a handout". In other words, it was important for reciprocity to occur between each partner so there are benefits for each participant. To me, business partnerships are an excellent example of collaborative leadership. Working with groups within the community to create better educational experiences for the children is an important goal for any principal.

Collaboration is one of the key issues in creating a smoothly functioning school which has the faculty and resources available to meet the needs of all students. Each stakeholder within the community must be responsible for the decisions that shape the future of the school. In addition, each stakeholder must support these decisions so teachers, students and principals can work

together to enhance the educational experience. Teachers and students cannot be forced into making changes or implementing programs without this ownership. In Jo-Ellen Parker's article, *Leading as Scholars and Educators: the Case for Collaboration* (1998), the writer suggests collaborative leadership aims to "chart the safe middle ground between authoritarianism and collectivism, between managing by decree and by committee" (p. 16). This type of collaborative leadership is a model of leadership that offers greatest integrity for the schools.

Jerry Gaff in his article, *The Changing Roles of Faculty and Administrators* (1997), maintains that "the relationships between faculty members and administrators have reached a crossroads" (pg 14). He continues, "On the one hand, administrators are held accountable for the careful use of resources, but have no authority over the curriculum or the rest of the academic program. On the other hand, faculty members have the authority, but no accountability" (p. 14-15). The roles of administrators and faculty must be redefined and each party must be willing to work closely with the other in these times requiring high accountability with limited resources. Collaborative relationships are essential as each group finds ways to work with the other in an effort to restructure the educational system to meet the demands of the public and government.

Hank Rubin also discusses collaborative leadership in his article, *Back to School for Collaborative Leadership* (1998). Rubin discusses 4 principles of collaborative leadership. These principles are to develop and refine a common vision or shared goal around which people can rally and find their own self-interests; try to see the collaborative purpose and personal leadership style through the eyes of those being led; to build, manage and maintain essential relationships one at a time; and take responsibility for getting things done in the collaboration (Rubin, 2002, p. 36). As the Bush administration's educational reform effort, "No Child Left

Behind” evolves, the principal’s job becomes even more challenging. The transformation of public education is not something that principals can do alone. The effective collaborative leader will be able to excel at each of these principles and create a smoothly functioning school in which all of the stakeholders are working together to achieve the school’s vision (pg 4-5).

Political Leadership

A strong political leader is one who works with community leaders to ensure all students are receiving a quality education. Stakeholders with differing ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds must be involved in the process of establishing the vision for this educational process. A good political leader listens and works with all different types of people, respects their beliefs and ideas, and utilizes their input to create the best possible educational system for all of the students. Our principal at Washington High School has always been an excellent political leader. He is very aware of the SES differences among the students at our school. Our school enrolls students from the wealthiest and poorest families in Cedar Rapids. There are huge differences within these two groups of students as far as socioeconomic status, beliefs and value systems. Approximately 15% of students in the school are minority students. The principal does an excellent job of communicating with all students in the school. He encourages many different clubs at Washington, as well as Cultural Diversity Week to help in understanding people of different cultures. He is very supportive of our 4-term math programs that enable students who struggle with math to achieve success in mathematics. Washington High School has the highest percentage of students taking AP tests in the Cedar Rapids area, if not the state. I believe having an African-American associate principal for at least the last 13 years has also been beneficial for Washington High School. The minority students feel they have an advocate or role model in the

school which makes many of them feel more comfortable. To me, being an effective political leader means being in touch with all students in the school community to create an inclusive school culture.

A strong political leader must also be able to work with and influence all types of people within the school community. P.E. Snowden & R.A. Gorten in their book, *School Leadership and Administration* (2002), discussed the relationship between power and influence. They defined influence as the ability of an administrator without recourse to force or legitimately affect another's behavior through informal and non-authoritarian means. The authors concluded that the more influence a principal has, the greater his or her power. A principal who can facilitate a powerful shared vision and influence others to implement the vision successfully is a very powerful person in the community.

In Fighting to Save our Schools and Winning (2000), the author focused on a two different superintendents who were constantly at war with others about various aspects of the school system. The first superintendent used intimidation to coerce others into thinking the same as she did. The successor didn't really care what anyone thought because he was going to do things in his own way. Neither of these tactics proved to be effective. Therefore a third superintendent who was respected and admired was given the position. He had the ability to listen to the advice of others and was able to work with and persuade stakeholders to work toward the most effective solution. As a result, major improvements were made in the Houston Public School system.

Instructional Leadership

In my opinion, a strong instructional leader must be a leader with a vision of learning. He must have the courage, strength, and skills to shape the school's vision and build relationships to

their own learning. Holzemer states that learning through technology encourages group learning, which is an excellent way for students to learn how to work with others and develop leadership skills, organizational skills and basic mentoring skills.

My own experiences as a student teacher in a Chicago high school allowed me to see the value of technology in the classroom. Some students took Algebra I for two years. The students spent 60% of their time each week working in a computer lab using a program, Mathematica, designed to teach algebra-related topics. The instructor lectured two days each week and developed activities aligned with the assignments that could be done using the computer. The slower paced learning combined with the technological approach allowed students to be more successful in mathematics than in previous years.

A second aspect of being a strong instructional leader is having the ability or flexibility to make substantial changes to the current system as necessary. As seen in McAdams (2000), Dr. Frank Petruzielo was only making an effort to change what was currently in place. Petruzielo was making what Lew Smith in his article *Can Schools Really Change* (2001) described as “very superficial changes” to the schools and the curriculum. This type of change was not having a significant impact on learning throughout the district, but was a minor change or reform of a system already in place. The Houston Board of Education wanted much more than that. The Board outlined their ideas in a document entitled *Beliefs and Visions* and were looking for Dr. Petruzielo to implement their changes. However, as is often the case, the leader had failed to grasp the core of the board’s vision. A strong instructional leader must begin with an evaluation of the current practices. He or she must then have the wisdom to listen to a variety of different sources for input. He or she must have the knowledge to make the correct decisions for his or

her district. Finally he or she must possess the courage to implement a plan of change, even if the change does not come easily or if it is criticized.

Making sure that all students feel included in the school is the one aspect of being an effective administrator I feel is most important. In Aronson (2000), he argues that often the middle child is overlooked in our schools. The "in crowd", valedictorians and athletes, are all readily accepted in the social picture and given more attention. Students with greater needs are also given more attention in our schools. However, the average athletes or average students are often overlooked in our schools, and that group, according to Aronson, was especially overlooked at Columbine High School. Aronson's comments were particularly interesting to me because of an interview I did with an external stakeholder who was a booster club supporter. She felt, and I agreed, that often the middle students are overlooked and ignored. The schools often focus on the excellent athlete or student who receive awards for athletics or academics and frequently are recognized on Senior Recognition Night as scholarship recipients. In the schools so much time and attention is paid to the special needs student as well. We invest millions of dollars in special education, by continuously assessing students and hiring special teachers and aides to help these students. We spend extra time with them after school or in class as teachers. What about students who are not valedictorians or who are not students with special needs? These students without any special talents or needs are often overlooked in the opinion of this booster club member. Recognition of all students is an issue that an effective leader must address. I feel it is important to recognize as many students as possible for as many accomplishments as possible. The greater the number of students and accomplishments recognized, the more positive the school culture will become.

A strong instructional leader must provide effective feedback to the teachers in his school.

One of the most important factors to promote meaningful learning is the use of feedback for the students. There are two main types of feedback used predominantly in today's schools. Both methods are illustrated in Richard Mayer's book, *The Promise of Educational Psychology: Volume II: Teaching for Meaningful Learning* (2002). The behaviorist method of feedback tells students only what they did was incorrect, but not why what they did was incorrect. With the second form of feedback called cognitive feedback, the student is given feedback as to why what they did is incorrect. For example, if a student misspells the word "holocaust" by spelling the word "h-o-l-o-c-o-s-t", and the teacher simply gives the feedback "No, h-o-l-o-c-a-u-s-t is the correct spelling", the teacher is not providing feedback that will help the student achieve the correct answer in the future (p 46). The teacher is only giving feedback that helps the student add another response to his or her repertoire of response possibilities. On the other hand, if the teacher gives the following feedback, "No, you spelled the first two syllables correctly, but were incorrect on the third. What word is similar to cost? Maybe cause. How do we spell cause? Or pause? By associating other words that are similar to holocaust, the teacher is providing meaningful feedback that will aid the student in future endeavors and create a base for the student to build on. Similar ideas must be used in giving feedback to the teachers on what they are doing. In order to improve and work toward the goals of the vision, the teachers must be able to discuss exactly what things are going wrong and what things are going well. The better the feedback from the administrator, the greater the teachers' improvements in implementing the school's vision for learning.

Finally, the issue of motivation must be addressed. As stated earlier, students are motivated

to learn and achieve if their basic needs are being met in the classroom. The more confident the students feel, the more motivated they will be to work. The greater role the students play in determining their own education, the more motivated they will be to work. This sense of security and control for students can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Teachers can incorporate the use of technology in their classes. For example, in mathematics, the use of computers or calculators in daily lessons can pique student interest. Programs such as Geometer's Sketchpad or Mathematica facilitate discovery learning in the classroom. Learning through use of technology actually satisfies the student's needs to participate in their own education plus the enjoyment of working with computers. Teachers can be motivated in much the same way. If the teachers have the freedom to teach utilizing their strengths, they are thus more motivated to work as effective classroom leaders because they are also having their needs met. An effective instructional leader will give teachers the flexibility to teach however is best for them as long as the means are appropriate and students are achieving the goals of the school. By providing all members of the school community the flexibility and freedom of choice in their roles, students and teachers alike will become more motivated to work at a much higher level.

Organizational Leadership

Organizational leadership must begin with the principal who facilitates a shared vision for improving learning at all levels. Quality instruction must be a part of the educational system. In too many situations today, students are just being passed along or doing just enough work to get by without learning the subject or the things needed to become a functioning member of society. Accountability must start with the principal and continue with the educators. If there are no accountability measures utilized by the administrator, the teachers and students will continue to

do just enough to get by.

A great deal of thought and work go into being an effective organizational leader. A good administrator must wear many hats. He or she must be willing to evaluate what is going on within the school on a daily basis and focus all efforts on improvement. For improvement to occur, the leader must be active in every aspect of the building's day-to-day operations and listen to and work with others to make them feel significant in the educational process.

I also feel that an effective educational leader is someone who is very flexible. By flexible, I mean that the administrator realizes that teachers teach best in different ways, just as students learn best in different ways. One of the major points of emphasis in Dr. Glasser's vision for quality schools encourages teachers to allow the students to work on their own projects on their own time and in their own way. In this way, the students are having their basic needs of survival, belonging, power, freedom and fun met. The philosophy of Tribes Learning is based on fostering cooperation and acceptance in a group learning environment and ties very closely to Glasser's ideas. By changing the student's academic experience to allow the student a role in their own learning and by providing them the flexibility to choose their assignments, the teacher is empowering students to assume a role in their own learning. In my opinion, the same principles must hold true for teachers as well. If teachers feel their basic needs are being met, they will become more effective learning facilitators. If their needs are not being met, they will be unhappy in their jobs which will then be reflected in how they choose to teach in the future.

Ethical Leadership

Finally, an effective principal must a strong ethical leader. As the leader of the school, it is important for the principal not only to model ethical behavior, but to promote ethical behavior in

all aspects of the school. Ethical leadership can take on several appearances within the school. All students must have equal opportunities to succeed regardless of race, ethnic group or SES. The need to reach all students can mean an alternative strategies for teaching and assessment in the classroom. Donald Hackmann, Vicki-Nord Petzko and Jerry Valentine in their article *Beyond Interdisciplinary Teaming: Findings and Implications of the NASSP National Middle Level Study* (2002), discuss trends and implications of interdisciplinary teaming practices in middle level schools. The study challenges schools to create a support system that facilitates high-performing teams and, thereby, promotes improved student achievement. The emphasis of these teams must be focused on the issues related to learning and not so much on “programmatic features such as curriculum integration, advisory programs, teaming, exploratory programs and cocurricular experiences” (p. 23). At Washington, I feel there is probably too much emphasis on programmatic solutions. For example, we are attempting to teach remedial students the same curriculum in algebra, but with more time allowed for each chapter. At the Chicago high school where I worked the course for remedial students was not taught out of a textbook, but through the use of computers. This computer based course dealt with the learning issues of remedial students by enabling them to use technology to aid in their education. However, the computer based program also took more time and resources than a regular algebra class. Finding resources is an essential task for an administrator. The principal needs to be a strong political and collaborative leadership in order to obtain the resources necessary to address the learning needs of different students.

A study by Freya Zipperer, Thomas Worley and Michelle Sisson entitled, *Literacy Education and Reading Programs in the Secondary School: Status, Problems and Solutions*. (2002),

focuses on the status of literacy education and reading program at the secondary school level. The ability of students to read, write and communicate is one of the chief concerns pertaining to academic achievement in public education. Principals are responsible for selecting teachers who will be creative and innovative in selecting their instructional methods and for the allocation of resources for reading specialists or other additional services. The study maintains that the presence of a strong instructional and ethical leader is essential in establishing programs with the resources necessary for students of all backgrounds and abilities to succeed.

Finally, Herbert Walberg, author of *Building Educational Resilience*, (1998), focuses on the increasing number of children at risk of school failure because of school poverty, illness, divorce, drug or alcohol abuse, frequent relocation, or other adverse circumstances. Although teachers sometimes feel these problems are beyond them, research indicates an educator's actions can alleviate such problems by fostering educational resilience defined as the capacity of students to attain academic and social success in school despite exposure to personal and environmental adversities. To assist educators in fostering resilience, discussion centers on the roles of teachers and other educators in promoting educational resilience and shares findings that many children demonstrate remarkable achievement despite conditions that put them at risk for failure. The article includes a description of what we know about resilience, student diversity and poverty. The next section of the article indicates several factors that promote resilience including family, peer group, community and school. Suggestions on how to form a classroom that fosters resilience through teacher attitudes and expectations, instructional practices, classroom climate and organization, curriculum are also discussed. Finally, there is a section in the article about programs and reforms that build resilience. These programs include discussion

about targeting children at risk of school failure by initiating comprehensive school reform that has direct influences on student learning, meeting children's basic needs, strengthening a student's sense of belonging, and adapting curriculum and instruction. The idea of promoting resiliency in students and thus increasing the chances for success are directly tied to meeting the needs of the students. One of the main characteristics of a school successful in meeting the needs of its' students is a school where the students all feel a strong sense of belonging. By creating a caring, nurturing, positive environment in the school, students can achieve and excel, even if other factors are working against them.

As I envision becoming a principal, I want to create a school where the needs of students and teachers are being met. I feel it is important to begin my work with the teachers because they are the eyes and ears around the school. No matter how effective an administrator is at being visible in the building and communicating with others, the teachers will always hear and see things that are missed by the administrators. Thus, I feel it is important to empower teachers to do what they were trained to do, teach. Teachers need to share in the development and implementation of the school's vision to ensure they are meeting the needs of the students in their classrooms. They should also be allowed freedom to meet student needs in the way that is most appropriate and professional for them. As long as the goals of the school are being met, it should be up to the teacher to select methods that are most effective to help all students learn. The classrooms should also be structured in such a way that students are having their learning needs met as well. In this way, both students and teachers are motivated and will do high quality work.

A second major component of my vision is that all students feel important within the school community. I often marvel at how our principal knows the names of nearly all of the students at

Washington and is able to talk with them about their activities during the school day. He makes communication with students high priority. As principal, he takes time to visit classes several times each week, especially in the fall months. He picks up a seating chart and tries to put names to faces for those few minutes before moving on to another classroom. In this way, he is able to get a sense of what is happening in classrooms and also to learn student names so he can communicate more personally with students. Students are more willing and open to talk to him because they feel he cares enough to get to know their names. I feel that it is also important to model this type of student recognition with the faculty for relationship building. The more people that share this philosophy and become involved with others in the school, the easier it is for a child not to be overlooked or slighted in the learning process. I feel relationship building is extremely important in terms of the overall vision for my school. If the students are being recognized for their achievements and made to feel welcome and accepted, they will be willing to work harder and will be more motivated leading to a quality high school experience in the classroom, the gymnasium, or the auditorium.

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