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A preferred vision for leading secondary schools : a reflective essay

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A preferred vision for leading secondary schools : a reflective essay

Abstract

I believe leadership is a tenuous position. Exemplary educational leaders need to be honest, forthright, consistent, fair, and caring. A failure in any of these traits often results in the loss of faith in the leader. People will not follow a leader they no longer have faith in. In addition to these traits, a good leader must be a tireless worker. Keeping the vision alive and -functioning must be a continual process, and if the principal is not willing to work at it, neither will others. Leadership involves creating an atmosphere and an environment where people are willing to adapt to change. The good leader is not reactionary to change, but anticipates it, and has a plan established for the anticipated change.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR LEADING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

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My greatest passion for becoming an educational administrator (principal) mirrors my passion for becoming a teacher. The greatest motivating factor for me being a principal is the students and my association and relationships with them. The possibility of reaching more young people in a broader scope than can be done in the classroom is exciting for me.

I was influenced to become an educator in several ways. There were many teachers that had very positive influences on me. Their enthusiasm, drive, and dedication exemplified caring and concerned teachers who believed in their students and society as a whole. I was also influenced by a number of gentlemen who were coaches. These men were teachers in the truest sense of the word. These coaches taught not only the game, but also modeled for their players the value of hard work, dedication, team work, and a sense of the value all had in contributing to the cause. The life lessons they taught and shared have impacted my development as a student, teacher, and a coach. The willingness both teachers and coaches displayed in going that extra mile to see their students and players experience success was overwhelming to me. I discovered that it was not difficult to go to class, pay attention, struggle through difficult practices for people who displayed a genuine, caring interest in my development, and most importantly, in me! I wanted to be one of them.

As a result of my experiences as a student, I have developed some definite feelings about education, children's response to being educated, and my role as a

teacher. I believe that students both want and need discipline. I also believe that discipline without consistency and love will not be successful. Children will respond to discipline with disdain and reluctance when they feel that they are not being treated in a consistent manner. When young people know that the person administering discipline genuinely cares for them and their development as a human being, they more readily accept that discipline.

Children want to be challenged. The world has become a much smaller place due, primarily, to new technological developments. Our students do not want and are not challenged by having information delivered to them like a plate of food they have to eat. As educators, we must use the technology available to allow our children a chance to create their own challenges. As teachers, we must create situations that stimulate our students to utilize all resources available to solve complex problems. When students feel they have some ownership in what they are learning, the process becomes improved.

Young people want to be treated like human beings. It is important to them that adults recognize that they have problems and all of the feelings that go along with those problems. Even though some of the trials and tribulations young people go through may not seem monumental to some adults, the young person needs to have an adult treat them with compassion and respect. Treating those problems in a trivial manner will not endear the teacher/administrator to the student. Many of the issues that our young people must deal with are beyond our

realm of comprehension. The baggage young people walk into the classroom with is often times overwhelming, and most definitely can and does have an impact on their ability to learn. The time teachers take to know their students and their situations, the more positive impact they can have on the learning process. Although it is not possible for a teacher to know completely all of their students, those who have a genuine concern will take the time to get acquainted with those they suspect have some pressing issues that might be affecting their performance in the classroom.

As an educator, my passion was and is to be a positive influence on as many children as possible. My approach has been to create an atmosphere where students feel they have someone who cares not only that they are successful learners, but someone who has a genuine interest in them as a person. I have discovered that even when students are not particularly interested in what is being taught, they are more apt to try for someone who cares about them.

My decision to enter the educational leadership program centered on the number of people I might be able to impact. The educational process involves a number of people or groups of people, from students to teachers, parents, support staff, and community groups. It is my goal to become involved in a broader spectrum of education. I believe my background can serve me well in dealing with diverse groups of people. As a coach I have had to deal with athletes and parents from varying backgrounds. Efforts to build and maintain working

relationships within a team and with all stakeholders of a program have been successful for many years, but not without a great deal of effort. Making all who have an interest in the program feel as if they are important to the program has taken on a look of total team building. Our team has consisted of student/athletes, parents, administration, and various community groups. The collaborative effort needed between the school system and the business sector is one that intrigues me. The business sector has a great deal of potential for a positive impact on many programs within our schools and our school systems. These resources need to be tapped and expanded.

I believe leadership is a tenuous position. Exemplary educational leaders need to be honest, forthright, consistent, fair, and caring. A failure in any of these traits often results in the loss of faith in the leader. People will not follow a leader they no longer have faith in. In addition to these traits, a good leader must be a tireless worker. Keeping the vision alive and functioning must be a continual process, and if the principal is not willing to work at it, neither will others. Leadership involves creating an atmosphere and an environment where people are willing to adapt to change. The good leader is not reactionary to change, but anticipates it, and has a plan established for the anticipated change.

I believe that there are four critical elements relating to effective school leadership. Although these four elements are not all inclusive with the ISSL Standards, they are essential for me as an aspiring principal. I will discuss these

critical elements and their relevance to the ISSL standards and my vision for leading the secondary school.

<div align="center">Trust and Loyalty</div>

One critical element I feel is essential to effective school leadership is the development and nurturing of trust and loyalty. As a leader within the structure of a school system, one must develop a sense of trust with the constituents of that school or system. Cultivating trust is essential in all phases of the educational process. Establishing trust within the administrative team is essential. The development of trust between the administrative team, faculty, the support staff, parents, and most certainly the students is of equal importance. Trust must be earned, and it can easily be lost. The administrator who is on top of his/her game models trust by following through with established rules and regulations, allows students the freedom to express their opinions and views, and is willing to let the faculty and support staff be risk takers in establishing protocol and the direction the school will go. By allowing parents and community groups to feel they are welcome and important tools in the education of their children and are considered assets rather than looked upon in an adversarial role helps create an aura of trust that has a positive influence on all involved. The school leader is not wishy-washy in his/her decision making and would never ask those working with him/her to sacrifice their time and/or talents without being willing to do so him/herself.

Because education is a people business, it is important for the administrative leader to treat others as he/she would want to be treated. Treating others with respect, dignity, and trust will do much to enhance working relationships. If this behavior is modeled consistently, the trickle-down theory should take effect. How staff members and administrators deal with students on a daily basis undoubtedly has a profound effect on the atmosphere and climate of a building. If the staff and administration demonstrate a caring, concerned attitude toward their students, those students will be more apt to develop their own sense of trust and loyalty to the school, staff, and one another. Bowden (2001) asks, "How important is loyalty to good leadership? Try running an organization where you are loyal to no one, and no one is loyal to you. Then call me six months later and tell me how things are going" (p.53). Capelutti and Nye (2001) say, "You should always display care, tolerance, kindness, and respect for others" (p.14). The authors also indicate, "Having positive, open, trusting relationships with staff members, students, parents, and community members is key to being successful as an administrator" (p.15). Building trust depends on the administrator's ability to communicate and model those behaviors he wishes staff to emulate with students. Students must believe that educators want them to be in school, to be successful, and to enjoy learning. Harding (2000) believes there are many ways to accomplish student-centered goals. Part of the process of building trust is living the expectations one has for others. Teachers and principals expect students to be

on time for class, to keep promises, to be polite and courteous, to be respectful, to exhibit self-control, and to be fair. If these are expectations for students, then the administrator must model and communicate these expectations to staff members emphasizing that these are behaviors to be modeled for students. Failure to do so denies the opportunity to establish a sense of trust and destroys that trust which had been earned

Once trust has been established with the schools' constituents, a sense of loyalty begins to develop. It is important for leaders, educational or otherwise to be surrounded with people who will provide a supportive atmosphere. It is important to note that loyalty does not necessarily imply that those individuals will be accepting of all that the leader has to say or think. They will, however, because of the trust that has been formed, more often than not be willing to listen with an open mind. It is common to see people who do not have trusting relationships become cynical of anything presented or proposed to them by those they do not trust. Bowden (2001) contends "The first chink in the armor of any organization is usually disloyalty" (p.43). As a highly successful football coach, he demands loyalty from his staff, and makes it clear that any deviation from that will result in the termination of duties. Bowden does, however, temper that demand by stating that they all, his staff and he, will be loyal to one another. "I will defend you, and you will have to defend me" (p.43). Bowden makes the street a two-way one. As a leader it is important to cultivate and nurture trusting

and loyal relationships with those people one works with. Adversity seems to rear its ugly head in every organization, and it works to divide those who are responsible in a leadership role. Adversity works to weaken the unity that is necessary for success. It creates doubts, and doubts become the initial phase of mistrust and disloyalty. If allowed to fester, an organization will begin to crumble along with the effectiveness of the leader. It is imperative that the leaders, under times of duress, remain stoic and have a consistent disposition. These traits have a calming effect in that they indicate to others that the leader has his/her wits about them and have not lost control of the situation.

Loyalty is the by-product of trust. It seems that people sometimes expect their leaders to be super human, but leaders are human, and humans make mistakes! When leaders make mistakes and are unwilling to admit them, mistrust begins to eat away at the fiber of an organization. Admitting ones mistakes and apologizing for them helps restore faith and trust in the leader and in the organization. Showing that human side often leads to building an even stronger bond of trust and loyalty with others than was previously experienced. Maxwell (1998) said, "Trust is the foundation of leadership. ...People will forgive occasional mistakes based on ability...But they won't trust someone who has slips in character. In that area, even occasional lapses are lethal" (p.58).

The importance of trust is paramount in the establishment of lasting leadership. Trust is not earned by talking about it. Trust is built by achieving

results with integrity and in a manner that shows real personal regard for the people with whom one works. The elements of trust and loyalty align with ISSL standards that states the educational leader acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. Maxwell (1998) summarizes the essence of leadership, character, trust and loyalty in this manner: "When a leader's character is strong, people trust him, and they trust his ability to release their potential. That not only gives followers hope for the future, but it promotes a strong belief in themselves and their organization" (p.60).

Communication

Another critical element essential for effective leadership and closely tied to the development of trust is communication. What we perceive as individuals, how others perceive us, and our responses to those perceptions result in one form of communication or another. Communication is a critical element in the success or failure of educational leaders. Effective or ineffective communication can either make or break the educational leader. With the evolution of technology, the ability to communicate has been enhanced. However, this evolution has also made it necessary for the educational administrator to be cognizant of which type of communication is appropriate for each situation with which he/she is confronted.

Current administrators have many more issues to deal with than their predecessors and consequently have a variety of stakeholders with whom he/she

must maintain effective communication. Adequate and effective communication must be maintained with parents, students, staff and local government officials, central administration including the superintendent and school board, as well as local business officials who support schools. Which group should be considered most important? They all are important, but the effective administrator must always remember he has the most direct and daily contact with the students, staff and parents. The success of the administrator depends on his/her skills in determining what the pressing issues are and the method chosen to respond to those issues.

Technology has given us the e-mail tool. How and when it used is critical in determining the perception others have of the administrator. E-mail could be the most frequently used tool for administrators, as is for most people for communication. It is imperative that the administrator set some parameters for him/herself in the use of this technological tool. Developing a daily schedule for reading and responding to e-mail is paramount. VanSciver (2002) indicates that the administrator must resist the temptation to respond to every e-mail received. "Some people are compelled to send the last e-mail. You won't beat them; don't even try. Know when to say "when" and let them have the last word" (p.65). Principal must guard against the urge to use this tool as the only method of communication, simply because it is easy. Administrators must continue to forge relationships, and often this process can only be accomplished by face-to face

communication. Even though technology brings our world closer together, we must guard against becoming more emotionally distant. Good administrators develop a sense of when e-mail is appropriate and when it is not.

Parent communication can take on many forms. When there is a need to relay information to large numbers of parents, form letters, newsletters, and the news media such as radio, television and newspaper are appropriate forms of communication. However, when there is a need to communicate with parents on an individual basis, other forms of communication are more effective. The use of the telephone is both effective and appropriate in many of these situations. Attendance and absenteeism issues are most easily handled through the use of the telephone. Cell phone wars now provide an obstacle that was not prevalent even seven or eight years ago. Maintaining current phone numbers has become increasingly difficult because of the deals various phone companies use to sell their product. Changing companies many times results in several changes in phone numbers. Often the new telephone number is not reported to the schools. Caller ID has also given those people who wish to avoid phone conversations with school officials a way to do so.

Usually the most effective means of communication with parents is a face to-face conversation. The reason for the face-to-face meeting often determines how that meeting might go if the administrator is not on his/her toes. Having an agenda, being able to take the emotion out of a meeting and having self-control

are necessary for having a productive meeting. In dealing with parents of difficult students, the goal should be to develop effective strategies that can help defuse tense situations and build trust. The realization by the administrator that the parents most often are doing the very best they can in rearing their child will help set the tone for a positive encounter. Whitaker (2003) states, "Dealing with difficult parents requires that principals first deal with themselves" (p.47). Maintaining a positive focus might take extra effort, but is essential in helping build trust and understanding. The positive focus on the part of the principal would include not arguing, yelling, using sarcasm, or behaving unprofessionally with challenging parents. It is important for the principal to remember that in every situation there must be at least one adult. The only person he/she can rely on to act as the adult is him/her self. Principals can teach others by modeling the type of behavior that is appropriate in all situations. Whitaker (2003) believes appropriate behavior should be modeled 100% of the time. He thinks people (administrators) should ask themselves two questions: "Do I expect the students in my school to behave appropriately 100% of the time? and, Do I hope that parents treat me with respect and dignity 100% of the time? If your answers to these questions are yes, then you must behave professionally 100% of the time" (p.48). Successful parent meetings encourage two-way communication. Haviland (2003) believes that the purpose of home and school meetings should be to facilitate communication between families and schools. Parents need an

opportunity to ask questions and to receive accurate, up-to-date information concerning their children. This type of communication helps dispel rumors and builds trust and confidence. As a result, with good teamwork and communication, things get done.

Administrators/principals have many occasions and reasons to communicate with faculty and staff. The methods used to communicate vary as much with staff members as they might with other stakeholders, but usually are dependent upon the scope of the communication. E-mail is a valuable tool when making announcements, setting up appointments, and distributing general information to staff members. Faculty meetings are a necessary tool and can be quite effective as long as they are well planned, have a purpose, and are begun on a positive note. Effective school leaders have an agenda, follow that agenda, allow a limited time for group discussion, and facilitate those discussions in a manner that discourages side conversations. It is important, however, to allow faculty to discuss issues relevant to them, their school and their teaching. This type of communication helps build relationships. Patterson, Breeding, Puetz, Thimmesch, Torres, Vogel, Welty and Woodward (2002) relate "Skillfully led open discussion can foster an atmosphere in which people accept one another's views and ideas and meeting participants feel that their contributions are valued" (p.39).

As an instructional leader, the principal has far fewer opportunities to communicate directly with the students than he/she would like. His/her influence must come through helping teachers become better communicators. The realm of this influence does not cease with their communication with the students, but he/she must also help the teachers become better communicators with parents. Often, principals take it for granted that teachers are adept at communicating with parents who have concerns about their children, not realizing that as Whitaker (2003) stated, "even our most veteran faculty members may not have received or made as many phone calls in their entire career as we do in a semester" (p.48). Instructional leaders must teach teachers what to say if they are expected to initiate more contact with parents and be more comfortable when parents contact them. Developing a particular approach is helpful when pursuing the unfamiliar.

Recognizing good-teaching practices during teacher evaluations will become more and more important. Being able to communicate to teachers what good practices are being observed will be a skill essential to good principal leadership. Standards dictate that principals will have a need to be effective communicators in relating their observations and in helping teachers become better at what they do. It is necessary for the administrator to accentuate the positive, but also to effectively relate to teachers those practices used that need to be improved and/or eliminated. Effective communication by the principal will allow him to do this in

a manner that is not offensive to the teacher, but rather is seen as a positive step toward more effective teaching.

In conclusion, administrators will and do have many occasions each day to communicate with various factions of his/her building and community. The method, approach and effectiveness of those skills utilized will often be the standard by which the administrator is judged. It is important that the leader means what he says, and says what he means. Giuliani (2002) stated, "Any leader is only as good as his word. When it comes to communicating beliefs and ideas, a leader's word is not only an emblem of trust but a critical device in spreading the message" (p. 197). Being an effective communicator includes saying what needs to be said when it needs to be said, using the correct mode of delivery for the situation at hand, and doing it in such a manner that the desired outcomes are achieved as the result of the communication. Some individuals are very gifted with their delivery; however, the skills can be learned and developed. Leaders who develop and nurture communication skills will have the necessary tools for success as an educational leader. Communication is a vital skill needed in all phases of the educational leadership process, especially for collaborative and political leadership.

Organizational Leader

A third critical element necessary for solid educational leadership is being an organized leader who knows and understands the constituents of his building

and his community. Having competency as an organizational leader impacts all areas of educational leadership. In our society, the only standard that does not seem to correlate directly with being an organizational leader is that of being an ethical leader.

The principal of today is required to wear many hats and must have a clear plan for the effective management his/her building. With the onset of school reform and the demand for accountability by stakeholders it is important for the principal to keep abreast of new developments and research based theories. Today's principals must be balanced managers of the schools and visionary leaders in their relationships with students, faculty, parents, and the community stakeholders. As a society we live in a state of change and the management style of the administrator must change with the times. Management has evolved from a top down model to one that functions from the outside – in. The principal is required to have expertise as a visionary leader, as an instructional leader, as an organizational leader, and as an ethical leader. To be effective in any of these areas one must be organized, aware of his/her surroundings, and have a vision for his/her building. Behar-Horenstein and Amatea (1996) state that one competency mentioned by a number of business leaders "is leader's ability to 'look ahead' and see the 'big picture' while noticing the relationships between certain events and their consequences in context-based situations" (p.32). Johnson (1998) notes several simple truths that people can use to enjoy healthier lives with more

success and less stress and can also apply to the organizational leader. These truths are; change happens, anticipate change, monitor change, adapt to change quickly as possible, change, enjoy the change, and be ready to change quickly and enjoy it again and again. Growth comes as the result of change, and administrators, teachers, and staff needs to learn to embrace it. As the complexity of the world we live in changes, so will the expectations of everyone involved with education. Organized leaders must not only recognize change, but must anticipate it. Bowden (2001) states, "the Bible teaches us to *fear not*. That's a good starting place for any aspiring leader" (p.234). Change is inevitable, and scary! We become comfortable in our current surroundings because they are familiar to us. Change creates an aura of the unknown, and we generally fear that which we do not know. The organizational leader recognizes that the seeds of growth are planted in change and the unknown. The principal is called upon to find ways for students, staff, and faculty to embrace change rather than fear and avoid it. It would seem imperative then, that good organizational leaders know their faculty well enough that he/she recognize those who work well under the stress of the unknown. These individuals will become tremendous assets in helping the principal initiate new strategies. For example, there is a growing need and demand for the diversification of instructional strategies and classroom management methods to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. The notion that what is good for the goose is good for the gander does not fit in

the education market of today. It is important for the principal to know what his stakeholders, students, parents, business leaders and faculty are thinking and believing are best practices for their children.

Maxwell's (1998) Law of Connection is an interesting concept for aspiring leaders. "Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand" (p.99). This law points out the fact that it is important for the leader to know as much as possible about those he works with, not just from a business point of view, but on a personal level as well. The more one understands about what makes others tick, the easier it becomes for that leader to display compassion, understanding, and empathy for those he/she works with. People remember kindness and consideration and are more willing to follow caring leaders in tough times or in new and uncharted directions. "The stronger the relationship and connection between individuals, the more likely the follower will want to help the leader" (p.102). I believe that once the caring connection occurs with adults it will overflow into the classroom from teacher to student.

Secure leaders are not only willing to empower those he/she works with, but realize that there is a wealth of knowledge available in the school and community that must be tapped. Organized leaders are confident in their own abilities and are not intimidated by the competencies of others, but embrace them instead. Good leaders have the ability to pick the right people for the job at hand and then have sense enough to stay out of their way while they are doing it. In a sense, this

ability is what being part of a team is all about. Everyone needs to feel like they are an important part of something. Teachers as implementers need to feel they have a say in the teaching/learning processes and what they will look like and how they will function. Teachers need to realize that students need the same things the teachers do. A good administrator will foster this attitude among his constituents. An organizational leader will have priorities and will stick with those priorities. Stakeholders want and expect to be treated in a consistent and fair manner. Inconsistency breeds distrust and insecurity which helps destroy or deny trust and faith in the leader and/or the system.

Maxwell's "Law of the By-In" summarizes the importance of being organized and knowing and understanding those whom the leader works and serves. The law states "People Buy Into the Leader, Then the Vision" (p.143). If people have faith and trust in the leader, they will follow. "People don't at first follow worthy causes. They follow worthy leaders who promote worthwhile causes" (p.146). With this type of leadership, no obstacles are insurmountable!

Political Leader

"A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context" Wilmore (2002). As an educational leader, this standard does not stand alone. All of the other standards; collaborative, visionary, instructional, organizational, and ethical leadership are

consistent with the work of the political leader. ISSL Standard 6 seems to tie all of these standards together and challenges the educational leader to use all of the creativity, wisdom, and skills he/she possesses from the other standards.

The overriding factor in being a political leader in education should be the main tenet of what we should be all about; is what we are doing in the best interest of our children, our building, our district and community? To be effective in this capacity, the administrator must be adept in utilizing simultaneously all of his/her skills and all of the resources that are available.

Knowing the context of the building or district and the clientele that is served are extremely important attributes for an educational leader. Understanding the big picture is essential. The educational leader must be cognizant of how different special interest groups, parents, district, state, and national initiatives, new laws (local, state and national) affect the children, staff, community that he/she serves. As an example, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has had a profound effect on the work of all educators, children, and administrators. Ramifications of NCLB affect the economic structure of schools as well as the daily tasks performed in the classroom. These ramifications are not all inclusive; there will be many others. It will take administrators with political savvy and vision to meet the accountability demands that will be placed upon them. Wilmore (2002) states, "The important thing is to present a standard for the

benefit of children and their families and to be a proactive voice and advocate for the needs of every child" (p.93).

Presently, financial constraints are issues that affect all walks of life; businesses, personal lives, and the schools. It takes courage to stand up for one's convictions and beliefs. These convictions in education should first be based on what is best for the children and secondly, what is best for the district the children are served by. Visionary leadership is necessary to see who will be impacted by decisions and how they will be impacted, either negatively or positively. Political decisions are often difficult to make and are frequently not very popular, especially with people who are not aware of, or refuse to see the big picture. The Davenport Community School District has had to, as have many school districts in the state and country, make some difficult decisions that appeared to not to have the best interests of the children at heart. Open enrollment from one district to another has been such an issue in Davenport. The Board, at the request of the superintendent, has denied open enrollment out of the district for many students within the past year. On the surface, this would seem to go against the principle of doing what is best for the child. Keeping in mind the big picture concept, the effects of letting certain children go would have a negative impact on the all of the children in the district. If many of those not allowed to transfer had been allowed to do so, the financial structure established by the state based on per pupil enrollment would be perilously close to jeopardy. In letting students leave the

district to attend near-by school districts those students left behind would be hurt because the per-pupil dollars would be lost to declining enrollment. The Davenport School District should be commended for having the foresight and the courage to do what was right for the majority of the students, and ultimately that decision should benefit even those who requested to leave. Although this was not a popular decision in some circles, the Superintendent earned the respect of his adversaries because he did what he said he was going to do and he did what he felt was best for all of the children in the district. Giuliani (2002) said, "you have to be a man of your word" (p.324). Blanchard and Muchnick (2003) had this to say about leadership in similar situations, "People are more apt to trust and respect you when what you say and what you do are one in the same" (p.62). As a leader in education, it is necessary to deal with people who do not necessarily share the beliefs or ideologies that you have. Those situations do not have to be roadblocks to success. Often, it might be the language or the methodology used to achieve a goal that is questioned. With active listening, however, it may be determined that both parties desire the same goal. Good leaders are capable of putting their agenda on hold for more input. Active listening is a skill essential to effective leadership. Being able to put a hold on the agenda may be all that it takes to establish a relationship that might benefit the leader in the future. Trust is something that is earned by being honest and following through with what one says he/she will do. As long as people are honest with one another, a level of

trust can be established. Giuliani (2002) states, "You owe it to those who rely on you to deal with whoever is best able to serve their interests..."(p.324). Alliances can be established in some unlikely circles if honesty and trust are evident. As long as the educational leader not only talks the talk, but also walks the walk, people will be more apt to follow his/her lead.

Knowing the constituents one serves, their thoughts, beliefs, dreams and wishes will help the educational leader build a foundation for success. If the educational leader treats others as people of worth, they will be willing to form an alliance with him/her in future endeavors. Part of the political process is identifying those individuals within the school community that 1) want to be of help in some sort of way, 2) can be of help with their talent and/or treasure(s), and 3) those who might someday be of some help or at least they have contacts who have contacts. Leithwood,Aitken, and Jantzi (2001) state that "At the district level, closer relationships with the community are strongly linked to the maintenance of political support for the school and its financial demands as well as ensuring appropriate links between school programs and the requirements of employers" (p.99). The trick for the educational leader is to step back and let those who can help, do just that! Empowering those who are either a part of the organization directly or those who work on the sidelines is essential for having an organization that feels they have a stake in what is being done. Vince Lombardi

Jr. (2001) quotes his late father, "Paint the picture, provide the tools, and get out of the way" (p.262).

Mountains can be moved, but the leader must not only be visionary, but he/she must model for those he wants to lead. Politically speaking, people might become excited by an idea, but if the person with the idea is not dynamic, often times the idea will die. Maxwell (1998) describes the "Law of the Buy In" with the statement "The leader finds the dream and then the people. The people find the leader and then the dream" (p.145). Maxwell (1998) has four rules of thumb for the "buy in";

> 1.)"When followers don't like the leader or the vision, they look for another leader. 2) When the followers don't like the leader but they do like the vision, they still look for another leader. 3) When followers like the leader but not the vision, they change the vision. 4) When the followers like the leader and the vision, they will get behind both" (p.148-149).

The political impact of influence is ever present and all of the skills the administrator possesses will be put to the test on a daily basis. It is important to note that inexperienced administrators will not demonstrate the statesmanship of someone who is experienced.

My vision for leading the secondary school has been shaped by the identification of the four critical elements; trust and loyalty, communication, organization, and political that is aligned with the Iowa Standards for School Leaders and Iowa's Licensure Standards. These critical elements are important considerations that are aligned with ISSL standards by which principals are licensed in Iowa. It is important for all who are part of the public education system to remember that we are responsible for the growth and development physically, educationally and socially of all students we come in contact with. We do not have the luxury of selecting only the best and leaving the rest. Emma Lazarus' New Colossus which is written on the base of the Statue of Liberty describes what public education exemplifies; ".... Give me your tired, your poor; Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shore; Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" (p.2). It is my goal that as an administrator I will inspire educators to recognize that all children can and must learn. I am charged with the responsibility to teach using all best practices available, and to see to it that students and children develop to their potential so they can access the American dream.

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