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A vision for administering secondary schools: a reflective essay

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A vision for administering secondary schools: a reflective essay

Abstract
Being a principal is a very demanding job. All of the hats that the principal is required to wear means that he is being looked at for leadership in a multitude of areas. Some of which are not a direct part of the education program. Areas other than academics have an effect on the overall educational process. Maintaining an orderly environment, with a good staff, in a safe setting that provides needed services to children, can have a huge effect on the education of our youth. Thus, the role of the principal in this process is very powerful as the unification and direction of the school are being sought. And although it appears to be a very time consuming and stressful job, the ultimate rewards will make it well worthwhile.
A VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

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by Roger W. Francis

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Having been through the process of being interviewed for a position as a high school principal, and having been hired for that position as a result of that interview, I already have certain beliefs in place concerning what it takes to be a principal. One of the issues I had to address in my interview was concerning the hiring of new staff members. This appears to be a very important task that is often addressed by the building principal. I believe that most candidates that apply for a job, and are qualified to teach in that area, have a good knowledge base in place from which to draw upon when teaching that particular subject. Colleges and universities do a very good job of internalizing what the future teachers will need to draw from in order to teach a particular subject. Therefore, if the knowledge base is generally equal, what types of items need to be looked at when hiring staff members?

To me, one of the most important factors to consider is the character of the applicant. What kind of person are they, and how will they fit into the school and community. The first impression of the applicant character is from the references supplied by the applicant. A phone call to the people that know the applicant would also be very beneficial. The next impression on the applicants personality will come when the actual interview takes place. But probably the most important and probably most time consuming part of the hiring process would be doing a thorough background check on any applicant that you are interested in.
A couple of other areas the principal needs to be concerned with are curriculum and community relations. In the area of curriculum, the principal needs to be concerned with what is being taught in the classroom. The methods of instruction can vary a great deal, but there are certain concepts in each subject area that must be taught. Thus, the principal needs to make sure that the required standards are in place, that they are appropriate as per state guidelines, and that the staff is working on implementing the standards. Probably the most difficult part of dealing with the standards is developing and implementing the methods of assessment. It is the job of the principal to be the leader in making sure that assessments are in place and are being used, so that state and district required reports can be made at the end of the school year. One of the most common methods of assessment at this time appears to be in the curriculums that utilize some type of rubric to show performance levels.

It also appears that the community in which I will be working expects the principal to be visible both at school, as well as at many community events and organizations. This is important if the district is truly concerned about being a community school. The school and community need each other if both are going to excel. Thus, having school personnel involved in community events will help make the bond between the school and community a good one.

Staff evaluation needs to be done by the building principal, and hopefully can be done in a nonthreatening manner, so that individual
improvement can be made by each teacher in the classroom. The actual instrument used in the evaluation tends to be irrelevant in my mind, with the most important aspect being open communication between the principal and teacher on ways to improve. I feel the teacher needs to know when the formal evaluation will take place, so that he or she can be well prepared and feel comfortable about the lesson to be taught. My belief is that it would be beneficial for the teachers to do a self evaluation after completing the lesson, so that the principal can get an idea of what the individual teacher feels his or her strengths and weaknesses are. A comparison of the principals' evaluation with the teachers' evaluation would be a good way of opening the meeting that will take place after the formal evaluation. There should then be a lot of interaction between the principal and teacher on all areas where they viewed the lesson differently, as they explain their viewpoints on the lesson. The meeting can then turn to the areas where the principal and teacher agreed on how the lesson went, and the meeting could finish with choosing one or two areas to concentrate on before the next evaluation.

Areas of Concern

In one key area, I believe that most administrators need to be good managers. The political frame along with many other theories, point out that there will be conflict within schools. A lot of the conflict can be attributed to the fact that there are so many different coalitions within schools. And the problems that surface from these
coalitions tend not to surface at convenient times. There will probably be a wide range of problems occurring just when you feel you already have too many things to deal with.

Another important area for an administrator to be competent in, would be the area of human skills. Administrators need to possess the ability to work with people. After all, schools exist to serve the people within the district. An experienced administrator once noted that we are in the people business. Being able to communicate well with parents, students, and staff can be of utmost importance.

The third major area of concern would be for the administrator to be organized. With all of the government reports, committee meetings, daily activities, and numerous other duties that are assigned to administrators, there is a definite need to budget time wisely. This area could easily make or break the administrator. Without being organized, some little things may get lost in the shuffle, and turn into big problems. A little organization can be preventive medicine in this area.

An administrator will deal with many demands, constraints, choices, and values. Before taking a job a person should check into these categories to make sure it is a situation that is comfortable as far as personal beliefs and philosophy are concerned. If the local community appears to have different philosophies on the role of the school and principal, it would be wise not to become part of that situation.
No matter how good the fit is between the principal and the community, there will be difficulties to endure. When this happens, I believe you must do your best, be professional, and be persistent, while keeping the best interests of students in mind.

Thus, in looking for a school, a person may do well to determine the structural frame that the school and community operate in. It could be a human resource frame where there is an independence between people and the school, looking for collective goals and purposes. There could be a political frame in place, where you need to deal with power and conflict to achieve results. The situation may appear to be that of a symbolic frame, where there is a sharing of values and cultures, and there are many traditional considerations to deal with, which may be unknown (Bolman & Deal, 1993). I personally would be very uncomfortable working in a political frame structure. I would not like this because of the expected conflicts in the number of cliques that tend to develop. These would both undermine the school system and those who are running it.

Handling Conflict

My initial perception of the work of the principal consists of two major areas, supervision of staff, and managing conflict. You have a conflict situation when there appears to be incompatible concerns between persons or groups. In dealing with conflict the principal may need to deal with assertiveness, cooperativeness, or a
mixture of the two. (Alkire, 1995). Three conflict modes are often identified when dealing with the fore mentioned situation:

Competing: recognized by assertiveness and uncooperativeness. A person pursues his concerns at the expense of another person.

Accommodating: characterized by unassertiveness and cooperativeness. When you make personal sacrifices to satisfy the other person.

Avoiding: characterized by unassertiveness and uncooperativeness. Here the person attempts to work with the other party to try to arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution. In this situation the person needs to look at the other side of the issue in order to resolve the issue (Akire, 1995).

I personally know that my first instinct is to try to avoid conflict. But knowing that trait about myself, I try to focus my thoughts and reactions into a compromising or hopefully into a collaborative situation. From the information presented in my course work, I am aware that collaboration is the most successful technique in handling conflict. It is successful because it provides a situation where both sides are allowed to win. Both sides discuss their view of the situation and try to reach a decision that each can accept.

Supervision

The supervision of staff is an area that I felt was always the primary role of the principal. The classroom teacher is in the trenches everyday trying to further the education of our youth. With education
being emphasized more and more in our society, it is very important for the principal to work with the classroom teacher to continue to develop and perfect classroom strategies. These strategies will be the foundation of a quality academic system for the school.

To this point, most evaluation tools that I have been associated with amount to a checklist with ranges of acceptance for different categories. These instruments of evaluation tend to provide little insight to the classroom teacher in ways to become a more effective teacher. The time honored practice used in the schools I have been associated with amounts to planning a lesson, having the lesson observed and then attending a conference to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the lesson.

As you can see, there are no strict guidelines to follow in staff evaluation. This appears to leave the board and principal a lot of freedom in evaluation of staff. My starting philosophy in staff evaluation is that we need to do what is good for the students. If the best interests of the students are not being met than the principal and teacher need to set a course of action to move in another direction so that the needs of the students are being met.

The Iowa Department of Education encourages evaluators to follow certain goals and guidelines. It seems that an evaluator needs to develop trust and credibility, while identifying and analyzing performance. An evaluator needs to analyze lessons and strategies
while observing, recording and reporting on teacher performance. Evaluators need to conduct effective post evaluation conferences to develop growth and improvement plans. And finally, there needs to be an understanding of the legal aspects of evaluation.

Course work has shown me that there are four categories of supervision, each with differences in principle. The Original Clinical Model uses the principle of mutual discovery of meanings. The Humanistic / Artistic models focus on positive and productive interpersonal relationships with holistic understanding of classroom events. The Technical models accentuate effective teaching strategies, techniques and organizational expectations. The Developmental / Reflective models offer teachers cognitive development, introspection and discovery of context (Pajek 231 – 258 1993).

No matter what category of evaluation is used, we must again remember that the wellbeing and development of the students is what is of primary importance. We need to prepare students for the everchanging world. It is difficult to find an evaluation system that makes sure our teachers are completing the task of preparing our students. It is obvious that the role of the school is changing, methods of teaching are changing, and thus our methods of evaluation need to do the same. I believe that a good place to start is to implement a personal improvement program with your staff. In this process, you have collaboration in the sense that the teacher and administrator sit
down and together determine some positive steps for improvement for the year. This collaboration will take the threatening aspect out of evaluations, as it allows for the establishment of positive goals for the teacher to work toward. I feel that continually setting improvement goals will allow teachers to keep up with changes in education, and thus help to establish a situation where we are restructuring our methods of preparing students for the future.

School - Community Relations

As future administrators, we need to realize that our leadership role in this area can definitely move a school district and a community in that direction. Administrators are professionally responsible for improving the social activities in the school and community (Vandenberghe, 1995). Not only is the administrator responsible for managing the daily operations of the school, but they also cannot ignore their role in maintaining an appropriate dimension of school and community balance. Many principals are already stretched to the limit in doing the day to day operations in the school, but they still need to combine their managerial skills with the necessary symbolic functions. Taking a little time to involve the community in the school, will eventually pay huge dividends. In trying to involve the community, the major attention needs to be placed on the transition between present and future (Akire, 1995).

Various types of involvement can include parenting, or doing things to help community members to improve their skills as parents.
Another type of possible involvement is communicating, which attempts to keep families informed of both school news, and student progress. Many schools also rely on volunteers from the community to help provide services in the school and classroom. Learning at home has also become an important subject in many communities, as schools try to help parents set up an environment of interactive homework between parents, student, and teacher. Allowing community members to become involved in decision making has also become important recently, through advisory committees and advocacy groups. Also of importance, is collaborating with the community, and making sure that the school is using the community resources that are available, and making sure that the resources are available to the students and their parents.

Probably the easiest way to involve the community, and find a starting place for a program, would be in getting school leaders to focus on service. Successful organizations have cultures that value people, service, quality, and innovation (Akire, 1995). With this information in mind, the initial step appears to be to get the community actively involved. Community members appear to be willing to first become involved by donating their time in the form of service to the school. The community members seem to have a sense of civic duty, that can be channeled into a positive addition to school programs. Administrators should actively pursue that avenue of service from the community.
Most schools want to involve the public, but do not know how to go about doing it (Epstein, 1995). The effective involvement may vary from school district to school district, but volunteer help appears to be a standard in most school districts. The schools need to organize their volunteers effectively to help students explore learning (Hollifield, 1995). These volunteers can provide helpful academic information, and assist with course development. Once the volunteer step is realized and implemented, the next logical step is to strengthen the school / community relations by having active public participation in the classroom (Strickland, 1995).

In a school / community relations program, as in any program of importance, communication appears to be of utmost importance. As future administrators it is critical that we make sure the general public can understand efforts to empower the community in setting the future direction for education in the school (Pulliam, 1994). The community may be called upon to assist in safety, provide partnerships, enhance education programs, help provide answers for needs and concerns, or maybe to even assist in developing a curriculum that will serve both school and community needs. If the community is active, and informed of their expected role, both sides will benefit. Resulting will be better educational opportunities for the students of the school district. At the high school level, students must be active participants in the family- school-community partnership (Hollifield, 1995). After all, the students are the reason that the
school exists in the first place. In creating this partnership between school and community, there needs to be a strong and clear relationship between the project and the community (Thompson, 1995). To develop this partnership there is a need to communicate and coordinate, which was the role that I provide in this case as the principal.

In setting up a program that brings in the community, remember that barriers will exist, including faculty assumption of public uninterest, and a lack of knowledge on how to get the community involved (Hollifield, 1995). The school needs to take the initiative to identify a problem of area of concern / interest, then obtain willing teachers and community members to deal with the problem or area of concern / interest (Strickland, 1995). The reaching out activities or other forms of restructuring may seem to be risky or controversial at times, but will be worth the effort if they make a dent in an existing problem or area of concern. The literature tends to show that if the classroom teachers and families are willing to work together for the common benefit of the students, then maybe some of those seemingly insurmountable situations can be dealt with.

In setting up some type of school-family-community partnership, there are various areas to focus on. A good place to start would be in establishing some type of an action team to help develop the partnership, this team could then be responsible for obtaining support and funding. In developing this partnership, there will be a
need to set up guidelines and to provide training, as well as a need to identify current strengths and weaknesses so that a logical starting point can be arrived at. The common set up for developing one of these partnership plans appears to be over the course of three years. This allows enough time to enlist staff, parents, students, and community groups in the outlined activities as developed in the early guidelines. It is then important to be able to evaluate all implementations and their results, possibly tied in with progress reports and possible celebrations. After each evaluation phase there needs to be a concentrated effort to continue to work toward comprehensive goals of partnership.

Studies have shown that the climate or environment in which a child lives can affect the development of that child. Children develop naturally (Duckworth, 1987), with this natural development reflecting the atmosphere they are raised in. The community of friends, neighbors, teachers, and its social support affect a child’s development. Children need to know they are being cared for and loved. Thus there is a lot of truth to the ancient statement that it takes an entire village to raise a child. Children need an environment where they are told that they are loved and in which people are proud of them (Coontz, 1992).

Education Assistance to Students

What are schools doing to assist students as they respond to problem events in their lives? Many education programs in place
today attempt to keep children from becoming abusers of drugs and alcohol. The state government is even becoming involved, by providing money to help create drug free schools. My school attempts to assist students with problems by providing them with a peer helper organization along with a faculty team that tries to assist children. We also try to encourage our school organizations to become involved in community service, which may ultimately improve the environment in which the students live, which in turn can have long term community effects. But what is education, or teaching, or knowledge? According to (Duckworth, 1987) knowledge has 3 lines of access. They include;

1. perceptual which is how something looks as compared to how it looked before
2. action, involves the recall of what has been done
3. conceptual, concerning ideas, or formulas as links.

Yet a single one of these modes alone does not allow for understanding. It would be beneficial to make use of knowledge in a new situation, as knowledge is based on other knowledge. As a nation, we need to continue to develop knowledge if we want to remain a self governing nation. So what is the answer to the question, what is knowledge? Most definitions of knowledge refer to it as an acquaintance with facts, truths, or principles because of study or investigation.
What about the definition of education? Education could be defined as the process of obtaining knowledge, or the result produced by instruction, training, or study. If education is produced, it hardly seems correct to say that some children have while others have not (Duckworth, 1987). Education may not be taking place if we predecide what children should know at a certain point. Education is more likely to take place when children have ideas and then try them out, forcing the children to be divergent.

Having defined both education and knowledge, it is now time to look at what it means to teach. The dictionary defines teaching as giving instruction to or imparting knowledge and skill into the subject. That definition of teaching would encompass a lot of pertinent notions such as number, length, area, volume, time, and proportion (Duckworth, 1987). One of the first things to do is to develop a scheme in teaching. Educators need to understand the order in which things will work. Something as basic as language development is dependent upon level of thinking. Children spend a lot of time recognizing levels of understanding when trying to solve problems. On the other hand, children will give answers they don’t believe in, and will feel no need to solve the conflicting notions.

Teaching Styles

As educators, how are we supposed to sort through all the suggestions for effective teaching and come up with a teaching style? That may be an impossible task, but there are some good, general
guidelines to consider. First, educators need to remember that children get better at thinking by thinking (Duckworth, 1987). In order to broaden and deepen childrens' scope, we need to make them think about things they have not thought of. This brings me back to a previous thought, where we should allow children to establish a goal while choosing their own route. This usually provides a very good learning situation.

Educators also need to be accepting and respectful of the childrens' thoughts as well as their feelings. This is important as each child may look at the same thing and make a different connection. Another reason to be accepting is because some children do not have their own way of solving problems, and may be having difficulties in trying to follow someones’ problem solving problem. Children in this category develop a need to depend on others (Coontz, 1992).

Another concept to remember as educators is that children are attached to what they focus on at the moment. This may make it difficult to move to the next level, unless the right question is asked at the right time (Duckworth, 1987). Even if the timing is right, we need to realize that the children will retain a sense of meaning, and not exact words, which means the traditional method of teaching should be allowed to fade away. This is leading to a new era in the teaching field, as demonstrated by gradual changes that are taking place in the teaching styles of many teachers.
The viewpoint that I currently have of administration, is that people who pursue such a line of work need to be “universal people”. Administrators need to deal with an astounding number of different situations. Some of these situations they are prepared for, while others they may not be prepared to deal with.

**School Environment**

Research shows that a positive school environment has a great deal of importance on establishing a school that effectively teaches students, and allows learning to occur. This climate is defined as a comprehensive structure made up of culture, physical plant, organizational structure, social relationships, and individual behaviors (Bailey and Dietriech, 1996).

Schools have very complex environments with huge obstacles, not the least of which is the social context it possesses. The diversity found in the school can cause problems in the learning environment. The differences in the students economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds can put a strain on the learning environment found in a school. Diversity generally leads to multiple goals and separate programs, which take away from the effective “family” type learning climates that appear to be very successful. This diversity also makes it difficult to develop and implement solutions to problems.

The secret to a good climate appears to include dedication, communication, and clearly defined goals. Staff members in such a school call students by name, and often make positive comments to
students about their efforts. Schools must have a clear purpose and vision that can be shared by staff, parents, and community. In that vision there should be a recognized need for a nurturing environment of warmth, affection, and affirmation to thrive (Brandt, 1994). Students appear to benefit particularly from environments that are based on a family type setting, in which groups of teachers take collective responsibility for planning and delivering educational instruction to groups of students. This setting helps to develop strong bonds of student trust, while causing teachers to feel more accountable for student performance. The increased time in small group instruction seems to promote an environment in which students are more comfortable in working with peers in planning, executing and evaluating their schoolwork. This type of family environment appears to be even more successful than dramatic reductions in class size. Thus the change in organizational structure that boosts student engagement with one another, appears to raise achievement levels.

Contextual variables such as size of class, type of discipline and cultural milieu all interact to affect learning (Shannon, 1998). If teachers can be convinced to look at what they do, and why they do it, the learning environment for students will be positively affected. Some teachers are oriented toward supporting student’s autonomy, whereas others are oriented toward controlling student’s behavior (Eslea & Smith, 1998). The teachers’ orientation has a major influence on the environment of the classroom, and certain research
has shown that students in classrooms with autonomy-supportive teachers displayed more motivation, competence, and self-esteem, than the students who were in classrooms with controlling teachers. Research has shown that this slight change in beliefs can help children rise to the level of learning expected of them (Brandt, 1994). The problem in this area lies in the fact that educators do not communicate the high expectations, and still believe in fixed IQ's that are distributed along a bell curve. These types of attitudes by teachers do not lead to a positive learning environment, as the belief that all students can learn does not exist in these situations.

Research shows that good learning environments are partially created by principals who are strong instructional leaders. These principals are able to share that vision of a good learning environment with teachers. Characteristics of this vision include having a climate in which safety and order prevail, and in which high expectations are held for students. The teachers then take the vision to the individual classrooms, where reciprocal power is often in place. A critical task in developing a good learning environment is to nurture teachers’ commitment and competence in teaching students. When this happens, there is a focus on the mission of the school, which helps in the development of a caring and respectful climate in the classroom.

Educational environment can be looked at in the domains of physical setting, organization, human aggregate, and school climate (Bailey & Dietrich, 1996). The latter fit into my focus. Human
aggregate represents the human relationship at school. This relationship needs to include teamwork, collaboration, and a sharing of resources. When a sense of family and belonging is provided, students develop a positive, caring attitude. As students develop respect for one another, peer learning begins to take place, which tends to be a positive learning experience.

The social climate may be the most important part of the school chemistry. The type of environment I have been describing tends to decrease behavior problems, increase attendance, and raise success levels (Bailey & Dietrich, 1996). By setting attainable goals, and treating students fairly and consistently, higher achievement tends to be inspired. The key component in this setting is that the educational environment is student centered, with positive reinforcement being necessary.

Concentration on the learning environment as a focus for change in the school seems to make considerable sense. Although it has often been recognized that concentrating on the nature of learning environments in attempting to affect student motivation makes sense, it is not clear on how this could and should be done. There has been considerable research done on the learning environment, but it is just now being implemented into theory. Current research has suggested that students perceive classrooms as defining the purpose of learning in different ways, thus perceptions influence the students motivation and learning. Students can and do perceive classrooms as
emphasizing task or ability goals, and this perception is associated with the quality of motivation they exhibit, which is further affected by the environment present in the classroom (Moriarty & Punch, 1997).

There is a need to emphasize positive expectations and supportive strategies. It is also a good idea to make an effort to recognize individual and group accomplishments in various areas, as well as providing recognition of students who demonstrate positive behaviors. These above-mentioned strategies need to be built in a healthy and positive way through the efforts of the staff (Littledyke, 1997). These issues reflect upon the belief that we must attend to the hearts as well as the heads of the students that are in our schools.

Developing a sense of school membership helps student to feel that they are in an environment that allows them to learn. This sense of belonging is brought about when schools communicate clearly with students, have clearly defined goals, treat students fairly, and offer reliable support for their academic endeavors. These characteristics foster high student expectations and accountability in a setting in which respect for others tends to develop. Students tend to then be willing to listen to other students, and respond to other students in ways that go beyond the formal tasks of classroom instruction. When students compete to answer questions, or a teacher presents a stimulating and engaging project, the intensity of the learning environment increases.
There is a need to make sure that students and their learning experiences are the focal point of all policies and practices. This has shown to help develop a positive learning climate in the school. Ensuring an advising system that works, also helps establish a framework for positive learning experiences. The most important way to foster student motivation for learning is by creating a learning community where students and their experience are of top priority (Brandy, 1994).

Learning school environments should be meeting the needs of students. One concern in developing this type of environment is in making sure that the school environment is culturally compatible. The atmosphere must be one that respects and builds on the differing value orientations of the students. Teachers must be trained to accept and respect students for what they are, and help them grow from their strengths and prior knowledge as well as skills. The school needs to also provide access to quality materials and instruction, while striving to help the family in developing a support system for the student as well as the school. This provides a school environment in which the students have the opportunity to learn. Special attention must be given to at risk students, as they can benefit from the type of environment described above.

Setting and communicating high expectations for student performance appears to help lead to a positive environment. Students often tend to be more successful when schools discuss the goals of a
learning activities and let them know clearly what they are expected to do. The setting of high but attainable goals appears to help students achieve better academic success, as well as better attendance and behavior.

**Orderly and Caring Classrooms**

Controlling the pace of instruction, sequencing activities, monitoring students, and handling or preventing student problems seem to play an important part of the positive environment. The most crucial ingredients seem to be time management and maintaining an orderly workplace, both of which come under the direct supervision of the building principal. The orderly workplace is the foundation of a successful environment. To achieve the desired goal you must work through the process of awareness-raising, consultation, finalizing, and implementation (Eslea & Smith, 1998). There is a need to develop vigilant staff members, and assertive students if this goal is to be realized. Student achievement is higher when order and focus are present. Staff must be trained in using strategies that promote order and focus. This will help students to feel free to strive for self-direction and independence in learning. Students decide how to respond to the teachers' instructions, how to treat their teacher as well as their classmates, and how to respond to any type of distraction that may occur. Student actions therefore have a major affect on the work and learning opportunities of their classmates. Even as student behavior shapes the classroom environment, so to does teacher
behavior. Teachers influence the environment with the timing and method of handing out praise, and in how they handle a dispute. This concept of an ordered learning environment then appears to be a prerequisite to higher order learning.

Students tend to be more willing to express their ideas, and are therefore better able to learn in a school where they feel they belong, and have a say in school life (Moriarty & Punch, 1997). To students, the school is a community. In that community the students are often looking for support, and are often worried about looking bad in front of their peers. When they have a feeling of belonging, they do not worry about looking smart in front of their classmates, and are more likely to conform to school values which could include hard work and learning. To develop this sense of community, principals should support teachers as they try to build relationships with the students. This could include welcoming students to school, eating lunch with students, celebrating successes with students, and maybe even visiting students in their homes.

The learning environment needs to be well managed if it is indeed going to be a safe, supportive, and productive place. Planning is fundamental to this type of environment. Scheduling the use of time, forming groups that are defensible and flexible, as well as choosing appropriate tasks for learning and instruction, are key components in the managing of a positive learning environment (Littledyke, 1997). The best environments tend to have the students at
the center of learning, which strays away from the traditional method of teaching where the center of learning is placed on the teacher in the form of lecturing and recitation.

Setting the tone in the classroom to establish a good learning environment should start with using good organization. Many teachers like to portray the image of a mean and intimidating personality, in order to frighten students into learning. Principals should remind teachers that research shows there is nothing wrong with having a pleasant and approachable demeanor in the classroom, as long as students know that the teacher is in control (Littledyke, 1997). The best way for teachers to show students that they are in control, is by being well organized. When evaluating teachers’ classrooms, principals should look for laps of time or periods of silence, which are often invitations of activity to students.

Even the best efforts of the schools to establish positive learning environments, can be undermined by schoolwide polices and procedures. The classroom cannot be looked at as an island, but must be looked at as a part of a larger system (Moriarty & Punch, 1997). Therefore it may be very difficult to change the learning environment of the classroom without changing the environment of the entire school building. If positive change is going to take place in the learning environment, more needs to be done to involve policy makers, principals, and school leadership teams in the need to enhance
student learning through the establishment of a positive school environment.

In conclusion, I believe that the job of being a principal is a very demanding job. All of the hats that the principal is required to wear means that he is being looked at for leadership in a multitude of areas. Some of which are not a direct part of the education program.

Areas other than academics have an effect on the overall educational process. Maintaining an orderly environment, with a good staff, in a safe setting that provides needed services to children, can have a huge effect on the education of our youth. Thus, the role of the principal in this process is very powerful as the unification and direction of the school are being sought. And although it appears to be a very time consuming and stressful job, the ultimate rewards will make it well worthwhile.
References


