A blue print for administration of secondary schools: a reflective essay

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A blue print for administration of secondary schools: a reflective essay

Abstract
Four main target areas will be presented for successful leadership. They are: site based management through shared decision making; staff development in the area of technology; development and maintenance of a positive school culture and climate, and providing a safe school environment.
A BLUE PRINT FOR ADMINISTRATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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Jay Goulden

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The opportunity to be an educational leader is both challenging and exciting. My feelings toward administrators over the last fifteen years of teaching have been mixed. I have been at five different schools and in those years have had the opportunity to work for some great administrators who through their vision, open system leadership style, and positive influence, have made a tremendous impact on students and staff. However, I have also worked for administrators who have been lacking in various abilities such as leadership and vision. It is my belief that the actions of an administrator, or lack of, can set the tone, climate, and even culture for a school building. Most administrators I have worked with have been positive role models and great educational leaders. Some administrators however, have created walls and wedges between themselves, teachers, support staff and even students that resulted in a negative environment for all in the building.

Perhaps the primary reason for my decision to pursue a career in educational leadership is because of the difference a dynamic leader can make. In this paper I hope to share my values and beliefs as a person, teacher, and future administrator.

Four main target areas will be presented for successful leadership. They are: site based management through shared decision making; staff development in the area of technology; development and maintenance of a positive school culture
and climate, and providing a safe school environment. I will use these target areas as a blue print on which to build.

In my opinion it is critical that educational leaders have a solid foundation of what he/she believes in and what is important to them in life. During our class in School Governance and Intersystem Relations, we participated in a core values exercise. The theme of this exercise was to find out, who am I, what do I believe in, and what do I care about. It is important to be able to answer these questions because as we discussed in class, values drive actions. After reviewing my top ten values, which was part of the procedure, I found that family, and standing up for beliefs are my top two values. This is clear to me and makes sense.

In my opinion, a strong family can endure the many challenges life presents. My upbringing is from a strong Christian family and strength was drawn from the family unit. As a teacher I speak of my family often. It is important to me that students and co-workers understand how important my family is to me. Also, it is my belief that students need to see that there is still a place in our society for the traditional family unit. Many of our students come to us from dysfunctional family backgrounds. It is sometimes the school that provides stability and values for them. As an educational leader, it will be my goal to provide a family like atmosphere so that all students will feel welcome and safe.
The value of standing for what one believes in is critical in any leadership role. A true educational leader must have a vision of what direction the school should be heading. Often vision can be side tracked by some that don’t see or understand the purpose of certain policies or procedures. That is one reason I believe in shared decision-making that will be discussed later in this paper. To overcome the doubters when things are not going well and to stand up for what you believe is an attribute that is needed for successful leadership. This certainly doesn’t mean that a narrow mind and bureaucratic form of decision making is best. It just means that after careful thought, and implementation of an idea, a cutting edge leader should have the conviction to stand by what he/she believes. As an administrator these values will be shared with staff because it is important they know what is important to me. I found the core assessment package to be an important tool in reflecting on my values and will share it with others.

One of my personal strengths is my ability to communicate with people. This is important in leadership because it makes me an approachable person. Faculty, students, and staff members know they have an “open door policy” with me. They know I have this “open door policy” because I am always receptive to their ideas, opinions, and will listen to their concerns. This relationship is built over time and is shown by consistency dealing with school matters.

During my years of experience with some administrators this has not been the case. They were more autocratic. Lewis, (1993) describes an autocratic leader
as one that puts a high emphasis on discipline and they are constantly battling student and teacher behaviors. Another attribute of autocratic leaders is that they are unable to stay ahead of change. I view an autocratic leader as one who only sees things in black and white and who would have a closed door and closed mind policy. With the vast diversity of students and ideas in our public schools today, it is my belief that autocratic leaders are doomed to fail. A major contributor to an autocratic leader’s failure, in my opinion, is the fact that parents, students and staff will resent not having input on matters pertaining to the school. They will have no ownership in any of the school policies; therefore they will put forth little or no effort to see that they work. They may in-fact work to sabotage them.

Unfortunately the people who will suffer the most from an autocratic leaders’ bureaucracy and shortsightedness are students and staff. Leadership without collaboration and shared decision-making may survive short-term challenges, but will not be able to adapt to the complexities of the rapidly changing schools of tomorrow. The ability to communicate with people and accept input from other sources is a tool I have and will use in my leadership career. Faculty and staff members are tremendous resources that need to be used positively to create a better working environment. Not to be used and abused by autocratic and bureaucratic leadership styles which only see matters one way; their way.

Another personal strength I have is that I am not afraid of change. My leadership style is transformational. Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992)
describe a transformational leader as one who is for change. This is with the understanding that in education some people are not only against change, they are in fact afraid of it. I have had the good fortune of working for the Cedar Falls School District for the last five years. In those years, many important lessons have been learned. One of those lessons is that good is not good enough. We are constantly looking for ways to improve ourselves as faculty, staff, and as a school district as a whole. We do this in a variety of ways such as staff development in technology, curriculum development, workshops, and incentives for continuing education.

Our administration and staff feel we are on the cutting edge of education and continue to look for ways to improve. This doesn’t always go smoothly with all staff members. Some feel that good is good enough and what has worked in the past will work in the future. Some feel that transformation is not needed in a system that already works well. As observed in my years at Cedar Falls and after going through educational leadership classes, the reason for the success of the Cedar Falls Schools is that our administration has had vision, they have been risk takers, and have continued to strive for educational excellence. They have not been afraid of change. I am convinced this is what transformational leadership is about and will be one important element in my leadership career. Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992) note that transformational leaders: (a) maintain a
collaborative structure, (b) foster teaching development, and (c) improve group problem solving. These are sound strategies that I will use.

Sagor, (1992) identifies three building blocks of a transformational leaders: (a) have a clear unified purpose, (b) maintain a clear and common cultural prospective and, (c) maintain constant push for improvement. The combination of ideas put forth by Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992); and Sagor (1992) exemplifies the type of leadership that is needed in today’s schools. These styles may not always be the most popular, but they are what I believe in and intend to use as an educational leader.

As stated earlier, some staff members resist change for various reasons. Some have been successful in current practice. They may be uncomfortable learning new strategies and current methods in education when they aren’t having problems. Others may be unwilling to change because they have had negative experiences previously under different leadership. Still others may resist transformation feeling educational changes are just for change sake and they have no say in what type of change is taking place. According to Vann (1994) principals need to earn staff respect by clearly stating their vision for the schools. This vision is then brought together collectively in order to produce agreed upon goals and objectives. Oster, (1991) also recognizes the importance of vision. He indicates that it must be well defined and people must have a clear view of their role in reaching those goals. As an educational leader, my vision of the school
needs to be made clear. Following my vision statement, it is essential to have the
staff share their vision statements for the school. I believe this to be critical. If
leader and follower are to work as a team in an effort to reach mutually agreed
upon goals, both need input and understanding of what the goals are. By
including the staff and using shared decision making, the faculty will take
ownership in the steps needed to secure the vision. I think a critical key here is
having the staff take ownership in the vision of the schools. By doing this,
perhaps some who resist transformation will be swayed if they see themselves as
part of the change process.

School Based Management

I am convinced school based management (SBM) is an important
ingredient in the operation of a progressive, successful school. School based
management has been adopted and implemented by school systems in literally
every corner of the nation: from Washington to Florida and from California to
Massachusetts (Ogawa, 1992). As early as 1989, 14 states had fostered the
development of the SBM project (Wohlstetter, 1990). And by 1991, thousands of
school districts across the country were experimenting with SBM in some form
(Hill & Bonan, 1991). School based management comes with a variety of
definitions but has one central theme; many participants at the building level
make decisions. Reyes and Wagstaff, (1991) describe the key issue in school
based management is management through the participation of the school
system's professional staff. The fundamental feature of SBM is delegation (Lindquest & Maurie!, 1989). Essentially the approach to SBM involves creating formal structures composed of building administrator, teachers and parents at each school (Malen & Ogawa, 1988).

I have witnessed SBM work in the Cedar Falls School System in the form of shared decision making. Although Cedar Falls is not 100% decentralized, many decisions concerning policy, procedure, and purchasing are made at the building level. People involved in this decision making process include teachers, administrator, parents, support staff, and maintenance personnel. An example of shared decision making that works well is our Building Level Technology Committee. This committee consists primarily of department heads that represent the rest of the faculty. Administrators sit in on committee meetings, but for the most part do not interfere with the proceedings going on. The mission of this committee is to delegate financial resources for the next school year. Naturally the committee is limited by the initial amount of resources available, but it is their duty to distribute those resources in a fair and equitable manner. There are years that certain departments have recognized the need of others and have walked away from the table with very little in terms of material gain. However, according to our principal, this system has worked and has helped as a unifying factor for the faculty. Also, many policies at Cedar Falls High School such as tardiness; dress code; pop, gum, and candy; student entrance and exit; and some
parts of the attendance codes are decided at the building level by the entire staff.
By allowing the entire staff ownership in these policies, unity and a positive
environment are built. It is my belief that this type of system works and it will be
incorporated in my career as an educational leader.

The parents and community also are an essential component of the SBM
process. They are partners in making the process work for the betterment of the
students’ instructional program. Parents of students and community members,
including business leaders, have a tremendous amount to offer education
(Canddoli, 1995). The parents and community should be involved in SBM.
Advantages community members bring to the table are many. Parent volunteers
can assist teachers in classroom settings so students may have more
individualized help. Their experience and expertise will enhance student
achievement. Business leaders also bring many advantages to the classroom.
Their hands on experience will lend reality to a lesson plan that students will
recognize. People from the business world can be used as guest speakers and also
assist teachers in specific activities designed by the teacher.

“Ultimately, true SBM goes beyond just having community members
helping in classrooms. SBM should involve community members participating in
the planning process and developing the school’s direction in pursuit of
improving student performance” (Canddoli, 1995 p. 20). This type of
involvement will strengthen community and school relations and will enhance student achievement. It will be part of my blue print for successful leadership.

One of the largest barriers to the implementation of SBM is time. Administrators and faculty already have a limited amount of time to perform their normal duties. How then is time found for SBM? Smith and Van Hemert, (1994) suggest strategies for providing time and compensating teachers: "(a) pay teachers for time away from the students and non-contracted time; (b) examine organized abandonment of existing activities; (c) hire permanent building substitutes so faculty members will have time to work on school decisions; and (d) use technology to accomplish task more efficiently" (p. 151). These strategies have merit but would require refinement in individual school districts.

Smith and Van Hemert, (1994) also provide non-traditional approaches to the utilization and creation of more time. These consist of, (a) instituting a four-day student week with the fifth day being available for staff development; (b) lengthening the school day by ten minutes to create one day a month that can be used for development; (c) examining year round school; (d) lengthening the school year; (e) providing grade/department planning time and; (f) obtaining waivers from the Department of Education for non-traditional calendars. Some of these strategies seem drastic and will have some opposition. However, if a school district is serious about having school-based management, the time and efforts of people involved must be provided for and compensated.
Staff Development in Technology

Staff development in the area of technology is another area that will be targeted as an administrator to build a cutting edge learning environment. During the summer of 1998, in taking a technology class with Dr. Robert Decker that opened my eyes to many of the shortcomings in this area. Factors such as insufficient access to computers, inadequate supplies of quality software, and limited technology budgets all contribute to limiting schools' potential to use technology effectively. However, the most significant factor lies in the fact that the vast majority of teachers have had little or no training in the use of the new technologies (Scrogan, 1989). Many times as a teacher, I have witnessed this happen at the building level. Hardware is bought for classrooms, but limited or no instruction is given to instructors on how to use it. The result of this oversight is tragic. The hardware sits idle, not being used by teachers or students. Leaders become frustrated because they have delegated money for the purchase of the hardware and see no positive results for the effort. Students are discontent because they see good hardware going to waste and they are not prepared for the challenges of today's society. And when community members become aware of the situation, they are angered at the apparent waste of tax dollars.

Scrogan, (1989) lists five summary findings on teachers, technology, and training: (a) technology's potential is largely unexploited; (b) interactive
technologies offer enormous potential for learning and teaching, yet few teachers have adopted them for their own classroom; (c) the role of the classroom teacher is a critical factor needed to enhance development and use of technology in the schools; (d) most teachers want to learn current technology, what is often lacking is the time to learn and explore computers with support or assistance and; (e) adopting technology is complex interactive technologies take more time and effort to learn and apply than many other curricular innovations. Technology makes teaching more challenging before it makes it easier. These challenges will include technical set up, planning, scheduling, and a steep learning curve for software use. The investment will pay off for teachers, but only after some hard work and time commitment.

These summary findings really hit home in my opinion. When reflecting on my own technology training, I fully agree that the surface has barely been scratched. Training sessions that are provided are many times after school hours or in the summer. However, between teaching, coaching, night classes, summer school, and being a family person, finding any time at all for such training has been next to impossible. Most teachers want to learn the new technologies but time is the discouraging factor. As an administrator and educational leader, it is critical for teachers to be given the time and resources they need to learn the technologies of today's rapidly changing world. A priority of mine will be to use inservice time to develop technology skills of staff members.
Finding qualified people to lead the instruction may sometimes be a challenge but one that will have tremendous dividends. People within the district or even building level may be able to provide some levels of instruction. It is my recommendation that technology training should be split into three different levels: beginning, intermediate and advanced so that persons at all levels of proficiency can walk away with enhancement. Encouragement will also be given for teachers to attend technology workshops. It would be my hope that by attending other workshops faculty would bring back new ideas and strategies not covered at the building in-service.

Having adequate technicians in the district for troubleshooting is equally as important as adequate training for the faculty. One technician for every building would be ideal. This person would be responsible for training, troubleshooting and future technology development at the respected building or district level. The faculty needs the confidence of knowing someone will be there to help in times when things go wrong. To often, that responsibility is given to the media specialist who can become overwhelmed by this responsibility. If staff members have the confidence that someone is there to give assistance when needed, they will not be reluctant to try new methods of presentations and activities. These ideas will cost money and take time; the dividends that will come from this effort are countless.
Maintaining Safety in the School

Providing a safe school environment for all students must be an absolute priority of all educational leaders. Recent events in our society such as the Columbine tragedy have brought that fact into the public’s eye. One of the most difficult tasks, in my opinion, will be finding a balance between maintaining a safe school and over reacting to recent situations. As an educational leader, it will be my task to provide safety as well as maintaining a positive, inspiring school climate and culture. The public does have a legitimate reason to be suspect of the safety in our schools. “A survey conducted by a leading life insurance company in 1993 found that 1 out of 4 students and 1 out of 10 teachers had been victims of violence on or near school property nationwide” (Decker, 1997, p. 59). In the same survey, school officials cited the presence of guns and knives as the greatest threat to students and staff. A conservative estimate, in that study, stated that 100,000 students bring guns to school in the United States daily.

To say the public is over reacting to the situation may be inaccurate. However, what type of security is needed and to what extent should it be enforced? Students will not learn or come to school if they don’t feel safe. However, students should not be subjected to daily searches, wait in long metal detector lines, or have dogs patrolling the halls on a daily basis. Somewhere common sense and practical strategies have to be implemented to address the safety issue. Decker, (1997), suggests several common sense approaches for the
prevention of school violence. One such strategy is providing a toll free anonymous tip line. He speaks of one urban school district that implemented this strategy and in one month had over two hundred calls. To me, this seems very practical, inexpensive, and makes common sense.

Over my sixteen years as a public school teacher there have been numerous occasions when students have provided information to me about specific problems in the school. As a result of that information, many times I was able to intervene before the situation escalated. I can't help but wonder how many more problems may have been avoided if students knew there was a place where they could inform anonymously. The cost of such a tip line is minimal compared to other ideas such as metal detectors and scanners. Also, the tip line could be used over the weekends so situations could be dealt with proactively before weekend events present themselves at school Monday morning.

Another preventative strategy Decker (1997) suggests, is allowing only book bags that can be seen through. Being able to see into the book bags at all times would minimize the amount of weapons being brought into the schools. Again, this would be a simple, inexpensive strategy that would decrease the amount of weapons and other types of contraband being brought into the schools. If parents were notified of this policy at the end of the school year, there would be little problem with implementation for the following school year. In my opinion, this strategy will only work if the faculty takes ownership in the idea and
consciously looks over bags as students enter the building and pass through the halls. An effort must be made by all faculty members to be effective.

The San Diego School system in 1982 took bold steps to resolve the problem of weapons and drugs in the schools. They bought two sets of instructional books, one for the students to take home and keep for the school year, and the second for classroom use only. They then eliminated all lockers from the school. It was their belief that lockers were being used as the sanctuary for weapons and illegal contraband. Therefore, they believed, with out the lockers, students would have a more difficult time concealing these items (Decker, 1997). Unfortunately no information was provided to show the success or failure of this strategy. This would be an expensive and drastic measure to take. It is my opinion that students' lockers serve as more than just a place to store books. They are also a place that students can call “home base” away from home. Students I observe treat the inside of their locker like their room at home. Some sloppy, some neat, but more importantly, it is their personal place in a sometimes very impersonal school. As a school leader, this would not be a strategy pursued immediately. However, removing all lockers could be used as a last resort.

Cultrona and Guerin (1994) also suggest some very useful strategies for violence prevention that are available for implementation in schools. They offer programs such as peer mediation, conflict resolution, anger control, prejudice
reduction, interpersonal problem solving and behavioral skill training. These programs would be offered at the school and many would be led by students. As a teacher, I have seen first hand the effectiveness of programs similar to these. The key is prevention, addressing the situation before it becomes a problem. When students have an opportunity to express their problems and concerns, many times solutions can be offered before the problems escalate. It is my belief that when students feel there is no one to listen to their concerns, they are backed into a corner and the only way out is through violent acts. All of these strategies offer open lines of communication that will help defuse student hostilities that lead to violence. While many of these programs are student based, professional supervision is still needed. Students at risk need to recognize that faculty members are receptive to their needs. As a school leader, I will utilize our counseling department to organize and mediate these special groups. Also a priority of mine would be to participate in some of the meetings.

Miller (1994) offers these guidelines for successful peer mediation programs that will be helpful for violence prevention.

1. Mediation should be just one aspect of a comprehensive, school wide philosophy on non-violence. 2. Parents and community members should be part of your programs. 3. Mediators should be chosen from all racial, ethnical, and social groups in school. 4. High-risk students should be trained as mediators. 5. Adult mediators should not intervene unless invited. 5. Teachers should be willing to adapt their schedules to accommodate mediation sessions. 6. Mediation should not be used as discipline. 7. Mediation should be voluntary. (p. 8)
These guidelines in my opinion are very sound and should be considered when setting up programs of violence prevention. As an educational leader incorporation of these strategies will be part of my blueprint for maintaining safety in the schools. Students who are at risk of becoming violent need to talk with their peers, not other students who have never been at risk. Through this type of dialogue conflicts may be resolved before they escalate to violence, thus creating a safer school.

Research has shown repeatedly that parental involvement improves school behavior and academic performance of students (Epstein, 1991). A crucial part of making schools a safe place to be must include parents being involved with student activities and academics. I postulate the first step to parental involvement is communication. If parents are aware of school events that affect the achievement and safety of their children most will become involved. Weekly newsletters, newspaper ads of special events, parent teacher conferences, back to school night, and even e-mail have been useful forms of communication I have been involved with and will continue to use as a school leader. Once the communication connection has been established and the positive benefits of parental involvement are seen, it is my belief that parents will continue to be involved creating a stronger, safer school for all. Working together, parents, community and the school can and must make a difference.
The problem of school violence is one that must be dealt with proactively. By implementation of the strategies discussed, many potential violent situations will be prevented. These strategies are only as good as the people who administer and follow through with them. If they are written down on paper and filed away they will be of no value to anyone. These strategies and ideas must be visible to the student population and community so they are not forgotten. The safety of our students depends on our constant efforts

Developing and Maintaining a Positive School Climate and Culture.

It is my belief that all students should have a feeling that they are wanted and welcome when they walk through the school doors. Owens (1998) defines the climate of a school “as the characteristics of the total environment in a school building” (p. 162). He further describes the organizational climate as being composed of four dimensions. The ecology refers to the physical and material factors in an organization. Examples include school size, age, condition of the building, and also technology used by the people in an organization. Milieu refers to the social dimensions of the organization. This includes everything relating to the people in the organization including race and ethnicity, salary of the staff, socioeconomic levels of students, education level of teachers, and job satisfaction of people who work for the organization. Social system refers to the organizational and administrative structure of the organization. This includes how the school is organized, the way in which decisions are made and who is
involved in making them. The culture refers to the values, belief systems, norms and ways of thinking that are characteristic of the people in the organization. Culture is in fact the way things are done at a building, in specific or a school system in general. The definitions of climate and culture Owens (1998) provides are very clear and concise. They define the attributes that make up a school’s climate and culture. They also, in my opinion, provide a framework to build school climate and culture upon. I intend to use these strategies as an educational leader.

As stated at the very beginning of this paper, most administrators that I have worked with have promoted a positive school climate which in my opinion, has helped build a strong school culture. However, some administrators I have worked with, through their bureaucratic leadership style, lack of vision, emphasis on managerial matters, and inconsistency in administration of policies have been major contributors to a negative school climate and have weakened the school culture. I believe the educational leader of the school needs to set the tone of a positive climate, which will help build a strong culture. Brainerd, Howard, and Howell (1987) identify eight specific factors that should be used for creating a positive climate. Incorporation of these factors will also affect the culture positively.

1. Maintain continuous academic and social growth for student and faculty. 2. Promote mutual respect between students and staff. 3. Trust each other and know that people can be counted on. 4. Establish high
moral so staff and students feel good about being at school. 5. Build cohesiveness throughout the school so that all have a sense of belonging. 6. Provide opportunities for input and shared decision making. 7. Be open-minded in the area of renewal, change, and improvement. 8. Incorporate a caring feeling throughout the school. (p. 112)

These ideas should be shared with students and faculty at the beginning of each school year so that everyone knows what is expected from each other. Then for duration of the year, reminders need to be mentioned in some form so these ideas are not forgotten or deemed unimportant. It would be beneficial to have Brainerd’s, et al. (1987) factors, or some version, posted in the main hall so students could see them as a daily reminder of what type climate the school is promoting. By having visual daily reminders of the type of climate expected, it is my belief positive cultural growth will happen.

Our student population in the United States is becoming more diverse. In 1997 approximately 70 percent of all public school students were White, 16 percent were Black, and 10 percent were Hispanic. Every year the number of minority students is growing (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). With this growing diversity as an educational leader, great efforts need to be put forth towards recruiting diverse faculty members to accommodate our student population and enrich the faculty. In an effort to create a climate and culture comfortable for all students, I am convinced faculty members are needed that represent the entire student population. In an educational system designed to celebrate diversity and inculcate democratic values, both minority and majority
children need minority role models (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996). As an educational leader preparing to hire new staff, special emphasis will be put on finding qualified, competent minority staff.

Minority students will feel more comfortable if they recognize the school's efforts to create a diverse faculty population. My vision is to create an atmosphere where no groups of people feel they are alone. By having as many diverse faculty as possible I hope to create this atmosphere. It is my hope that students will see there is someone in the building of their own race or ethnic background they can relate to even if they don't have classes with them. This does not mean that minority students can't relate to non-minority faculty, rather it is an effort to balance student diversity with diverse instruction.

It is also my belief that the school structure itself should express diversity. This can be accomplished by having students display work done that celebrates diversity. These can be posters, banners, pictures of minority leaders, special holidays celebrated, and many more. Again I reflect on some of the different teaching positions I have been in. The schools that seemed the most friendly and comfortable to me, and in my opinion the students, were those who's walls were covered with student work, pictures of different school activities, and posters of great leaders of many different cultures. As an educational leader, I will promote, encourage, and participate in the making of such a school. Public schools are for
everyone, not just a select few. By taking these steps, it is certain students will feel more comfortable about coming to school.

Another way to establish a positive climate and culture is through staff development of student diversity. This can be achieved in a number of different ways. Certainly there are many good workshops individuals or groups of teachers can attend. Also, by having diverse faculty, other staff members will grow and learn by their association with them. Also having guest minority leader speakers at our teacher in-services will be valuable. The advantage of having these leaders in our building is the entire staff can hear the same message and ask questions. Through this staff development all faculty members will have a better understanding of the different cultures our students come from and will be more prepared to meet their needs. By using these strategies it is my vision the school I lead will have a climate and culture that welcomes all students so that they achieve their fullest potential.

Summary

The title of this paper is a blue print for educational leadership and that's exactly what it is, a blue print. And like any other blue print it is subject to changes, revisions, and additions. The areas discussed are in my opinion, important for the enhancement of both students and faculty. It is my strong belief that as an effective leader, it is my responsibility to see that both of these groups of people grow and achieve their greatest potential. As learned through my years
of training in at the University of Northern Iowa, leadership is an influence relationship between leader and followers striving to achieve a common goal. People follow leaders they feel can take the organization to a higher level. The skills needed by leader are many; they need to be transformational, they must have integrity, they need to be able to work with others, they need to be able to delegate power and have faith in their followers, and they must be able to work collaboratively to attain goals. These identify just a few of the attributes needed by an effective leader. Above all others talents, in my opinion, leaders must be visionaries. My graduate work at the University of Northern Iowa has taught me that a leader needs to have the vision to know where it is he/she wants the school to go, and have a knowledge base of how to get there.

In reflection on my undergraduate training, I remember the feeling of being somewhat unprepared for my first position; I just didn’t know what to expect. However, after the practicum experiences, formal training, and close relationships gained with professors and other cohorts, the feeling is more of excitement than apprehensiveness in looking forward to my first educational leadership experience.
References


