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What I believe about leadership and education : a reflective essay

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What I believe about leadership and education : a reflective essay

Abstract

What I believe about leadership and education can be partly explained in the following words. Among the strongest of critical elements included in exemplary leadership in education are building relationships, hiring great teachers and developing the ones you have, maintaining high expectations, and creating a positive climate and culture.

WHAT I BELIEVE ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

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What I believe about leadership and education can be partly explained in the following words. Among the strongest of critical elements included in exemplary leadership in education are building relationships, hiring great teachers and developing the ones you have, maintaining high expectations, and creating a positive climate and culture.

Philosophy of Education

There are a multitude of reasons I became an educator. Early in my life, like most people, I had some positive and not so positive times at school. I spent my kindergarten and first grade in Decorah, Iowa. Those first two years were very typical and non-eventful as I was just getting used to school. During 2nd grade our family made a change that would affect the rest of my life. Our family moved to Sao Paulo, Brazil. Making a change of that magnitude was very difficult because the curriculum was different and so were the people. Trying to fit in with a new crowd and adjust to a completely different curriculum was very difficult and challenging. Within two years, we were headed back to the United States and the adjusting process started all over again. This time, making friends was much more difficult, and the curriculum was even more unfamiliar. As a result, I began to dislike school and began to rebel at every opportune moment. This life style continued until I was twenty years old, when my priorities changed. I changed from a person who didn't try and didn't care, to one that wanted success and would do whatever it took to achieve it. I believe I may have finally grown up at

that time and was able to think outside myself. It was at this time that I realized that I wanted to be part of an organization that helped kids to reach their potential, to try their best, and not go through life without a purpose. This place was education.

A profound statement that has made a huge impact on me is “Students will rise to the level of your expectations.” I use this theory when dealing with students and expect the same from myself. I expect that my lessons reach learners of all abilities. Lessons have to be interesting and relevant to students. Without this, the students will not value or respond to instruction. A competent teacher will try to reach students of all different learning styles and in a way that has meaning to them. I have found through my experience, if you have students teach each other and remain actively engaged, greater retention is attained. I have also found that teaching is not an 8:00 – 4:00 job with summers off. A successful teacher puts in the times necessary to accomplish his/her goals. Summers become a time of preparation and reflection for the coming year.

Having high expectations is not easy. Often, there is a temptation to let things slide. This can make teachers popular and make their lives easier, but it’s not worth the price of lower achievement.

When having high expectations, a teacher initiates a goal for the students. Research shows that a funny thing happens when people set goals, they tend to achieve them. I once had a student belittle himself when I suggested he try harder

so he could go to college. It was apparent to me that no one had ever believed in him to that degree, and despite his resistance to working harder, the seed of confidence was instilled in him. I believe that this student achieved more that year because he thought he was capable.

I've always felt that I'd like to have a meaningful purpose in life. My first step was becoming a teacher. The second step for me is educational leadership. I have enjoyed being active in the school community by being a part of several committees and organizations. Entering the Educational Leadership program is an extension of this desire to make a difference in the lives of many. For me, self actualizing is being a leader, and for now, reaching the leadership role as a principal is my goal. Many people have supported my contemplation of educational leadership. Most importantly, my wife has suggested I go in that direction. Secondly, my peers, administrators, and close friends taught me, like I taught the young man I mentioned earlier, to see the abilities that qualify me for the honor of leading others.

These skills will help me to be the leader I want to be. I think about my interview with the superintendent and principal about the roles of the principal. According to them, and I agree, a principal must be willing to be involved with the school and surrounding community. This is important because, as Hillary Clinton proclaimed, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." The more involved the principal is with the community, the more people can help raise the child.

In addition to being involved, a principal must be empathetic, not only with students, but with staff as well. Being realistic and caring for others will help build a more cohesive team that will ultimately help all children.

I believe a principal should live by the five P's, which means proper planning prevents poor performance. I learned this from a friend who was a principal and has recently become a superintendent. Principals have to be prepared and have a vision for where they want their school community to be. Without this vision and commitment, a school will not have an expectation to rise to, and therefore, will not achieve as much as possible.

As a leader I plan on following the 5 P's in all my affairs. For one, being prepared will set a good example to my staff and the students. It will ensure that the entire staff and community will put faith in my ability to lead, and therefore, be more willing to buy into and promote the school's vision. Getting involved in various committees will be an essential part of my role as a principal. This will help build rapport and support from the community as a whole. Finally, I will keep the expectations I have for myself, staff, and students high enough to create greatness, but with an empathetic touch that will promote a positive and cohesive learning community. Whenever you're dealing with any group of people it is vitally important to build and maintain positive relationships.

Building Relationships

I believe that building relationships with students, teachers, support staff, other administrators, community members and parents is a critical element essential for being an exemplary leader. My past experience as an employee in several sales positions and operating a small business of my own it is clearly a huge benefit to have a strong relationship with who ever you work with. When your paycheck depends on how you interact with people there is a sense of urgency to make that relationship positive so that repeat sales will be more likely to happen. Without this positive relationship many of the resources that are available to you will be decreased and your performance will be hindered by that lack of available collaboration.

Principals I have experienced in the past have shown me the two sides of this issue. My first principal was a very top-down type of authoritative principal who instilled fear in his staff members. This was effective when he was present in the building, but when his responsibilities changed and he had two buildings to run, his absence proved to be a time when everyone let their hair down and looked at that time as being a time of doing what they wanted more than what he expected. This lack of a strong relationship with his staff very shortly became a cause of his early retirement. As a building leader this principal was showing the behavior that would trickle down to teachers and eventually to the students. The long term affects this would have on students is reflected in the book *Nobody Left*

to Hate (Aronson, 2001). This book talks about the Columbine incident when two high school boys set out and completed shooting and killing several students at their school. These boys were ostracized and treated cruelly by others and they made an incorrect decision to retaliate and kill the students who mistreated them. If a leader of a school allows this ill-treatment or as the principal mentioned above was a part of it, the effects could be devastating. Cooperative grouping and jigsawing methods were suggested to increase empathy of people for each other enabling better relationships and behaviors toward one another.

On the other hand, I've had the luxury of having a principal who based most of her actions on building relationships. She often asked the opinions of others and believed in shared decision-making. She took a building with little cohesiveness and brought teachers and staff together, creating a positive behavior management plan that culminated the thoughts and ideas from every staff member into a document that encompassed the desired state of behaviors on which all could agree.

In the book *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*, (Lambert, 1998) Linda Lambert states that an essential action for building leadership capacity in a school and district is to get to know one another. Having an authentic relationship is fostered by personal conversations, frequent dialogue, shared work, and shared responsibilities. Many times within a school system boundaries are created among grade levels, expertise, authority, position, race, and gender. Helping create

positive relationships can help break down the boundaries very much like the way students at Columbine learn an appreciation for each other by acquiring empathy for others by working together and getting to know each other as a person rather than someone on another team or group. When you increase the relationships the trust level goes up and with that raises communication among all staff members. This improved feeling toward others will increase the success of shared decision making activities which will then make the overall climate in the building more conducive to collaborative plans to increase student achievement.

Karen Mapp is a leader in the study and promotion of school involvement with the community in order to increase student achievement. Dr. Mapp has recently been added to the teaching staff at Harvard University and has authored the book, *Including Every Parent*. (Mapp, n.d.). She did fifty-one studies covering early childhood through high school from all regions of the country using qualitative and quantitative methods. Her findings include that there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and student learning. She found that by building the relationship between schools and the community students earn higher grades and test scores, adapt well to school and attend regularly, have better social skills and behavior, and have a higher rate of graduation and participation in higher education.

While attending one of her workshops in Cedar Falls in the summer of 2004 I came away with a deeper appreciation for the importance of the community in children's education, especially the parents.

Infusing and incorporating this critical element as principal will be done by first getting to know the teachers and staff at my school. It will be important for me to create some fun meetings more on the social level before the school year, such as a house warming party and invite everyone. As stated in the book *Nobody Left to Hate* (Aronson, 2001), I will use jigsawing methods during collaboration time so that people can get to know everyone at our school and not just their clique. I will behave in a manner that exemplifies professionalism, enthusiasm for our profession, and a climate of the "Golden Rule." When collaborating on issues I will do my best at creating an atmosphere of shared-decision-making. I've seen the result of top-down leadership and that does not fit my leadership style.

In order to advance the community partnerships, I will join the city's governance and social committees in order to form alliances with them and to see how we can benefit each other. To relate to parents more collaboratively I will request their membership on school related committees so that their voice may be heard and may affect decisions. Communication is an enormous key to building this community relationship. I will make sure I am a visible member of our school and community by visiting local celebrations and classes on a regular basis. I will

communicate with parents with a newsletter, hopefully on a weekly or monthly schedule, and make sure to introduce myself during conferences to parents as they enter or leave the building.

This critical element paper aligns with standard 1; a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community. I believe this to be true because by creating and organizing committees developing through shared decision-making and developing relationships in and out of the school community, students will benefit with higher achievement. I also believe that this critical element of relationships connects with standard 2; a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth because by building relationships the culture of the school will be more conducive to student learning. The teachers will find areas for professional growth while trying to build relationships themselves with administration, other teachers and most importantly, the students. In addition to standards 1 and 2, standard 3 is a school administrator who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. This is true because the development of a culture that invites

community involvement will require wise use of resources and will make the school a safer place to be, more efficient, and a more effective learning environment. Standard 4 relates to being an administrator who collaborates with the community, responds to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. By building positive relationships principals will inflate their resource base and collaborating with community members will involve and build buy-in from those groups. Standard 5 is a school administrator who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. When you build relationships you better be fair. In order to be fair you need input from all stakeholders. When you build relationships you are forced to act with integrity and in an ethical way or else you won't last long in your position. Standard 6 includes 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. As I join local and state committees I will be able to influence their ideas. When I join in local groups and committees I will get a sense of their needs and their culture. Hopefully, I will be able to influence the greater community by educating myself and others in order to understand and make better decisions. One of the most important decisions any principal can make that will have the greatest impact on student achievement is choosing the teachers and staff who will work in their school.

Hiring Great Teachers

Hiring great teachers and developing the staff you have is a critical element that is essential for exemplary educational leadership. When entering your first position as a principal you can't change who is working for you at that time. However, you can respond and develop the teachers and staff you have and you can decide who you hire for new positions. I think it is extremely important to work with teachers and provide meaningful staff development opportunities for them. One of the things my principal and/or school district does is provide the most up-to-date researched based workshops to help us get better. It is very important that a principal provides this kind of leadership because being a teacher is in itself enough to keep a person more than busy.

When hiring new teachers I will make it my priority to fully investigate each candidate seriously being considered. A friend of mine, who is now a superintendent for a local school district, would research candidates to the point of going hundreds of miles just to talk to them or see them teach. He would deliberately show up after contract hours to see if they were there. I would not do this because you never know what reason the teacher might have for not being there. They may be at a meeting, a class, collaborating with a peer, or attending a funeral. I do think setting up a time to observe the teacher in action would be beneficial.

In the book *What Great Principals Do Differently* (Whitaker, 2003), a whole chapter is used to describe two ways to improve our schools. These two ways include 1) getting better teachers, and 2) developing the teachers you have. This chapter explains how people can spend much time and money looking for key programs to help improve student achievement. Todd Whitaker states in his book that it's about the people, not the programs that determine the quality of our schools. This book describes how open classrooms became the answer to all of schools' problems. Open classrooms, according to Whitaker's prediction, were created when a school had an unusually large enrollment and the principal asked for volunteers to use the gym as their classroom. Of course, the highest skilled teacher volunteered for that position and created a wonderful environment for learning. Whitaker claims that it wasn't the open classrooms that were the change that improved instruction, but it was the expertise of the teacher that took this space and turned it into an environment inclined to improve learning. As leaders we must realize that programs aren't the solutions, but the people using them are.

What Works in Schools is a book written by Robert J. Marzano (2003) and one of the necessary attributes of a school that works is one that has collegiality and professionalism. One of the ways to improve this collegiality and professionalism is to provide meaningful professional development. In Marzano's book he quotes Judith Little and in summary states that professional development

needs to be meaningful, interactive, and discussed. At present many professional developments are done without discussion and that needs to change.

Whitaker also devotes an entire chapter to hiring great teachers. He states that many principals settle for just good teachers who fit in with the school as it is, but a great principal looks for the best teachers with the most technical teaching skills and who will have an influence on others within the school. The characteristics of a person who has great talent is not necessarily the most intelligent, but one who possesses the total package: love of students, bright mind, positive attitude, congenial personality, great work ethic, leadership skills, and charisma.

Whitaker gives some advice on hiring by saying that once you've found a prospective candidate start the inductive process. If they would be working next to a teacher who gripes a lot and comes in barely on time and leaves right on time; ask them how they would handle this situation if they were hired. By asking this question you get a sense for what the teacher is made of and you get a verbal commitment from them that they will perform as they have stated.

In an article titled *Hiring Good Teachers: The Interview Process* (Tooms, 2004) it is mentioned that a school needs to sell their school as a great place to work. If you don't show each desirable candidate what great possibilities lie ahead for them, they may choose to work for a different school. A principal needs

to be prepared for each interview and have a welcoming environment for the candidates when they come. This article also expresses how important it is to ask the right questions that will give you the information about the candidate that will help you make good assumptions about them. Listening to and focusing on the interviewee's responses is also suggested to recognize nuances to their answers that may give you clues as to their potential. After the interview a tour of the school should be given. This will allow a more informal observation of the candidate in a different setting which will help the interview team make final choices.

When I become principal I will find out what staff development topics have been recently completed with the staff. I would find out by having individual discussions during the developing relationships stage what professional development may be needed. I would also look at the professional growth plans and ask the teachers what they would like to learn through staff development. The Department of Education provides links and resources about research based staff development opportunities that I will use. Being a member of the School Administrators of Iowa will help me to be informed on meaningful workshops. Hiring great teachers when openings arise will be a major focus of my Principalship. I will make sure I check teacher's credentials and references of possible candidates in a thorough manner. Creating a warm welcoming

environment in addition to a school tour will be ways I will help candidates feel comfortable.

I believe this critical element of hiring great teachers and developing the staff connects to standards 1, 2, and 3. In standard 1 the vision of the school is mentioned and hiring great teachers and developing the one's you have should be a huge part of that vision. Standard 2 deals with nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth, and hiring great teachers definitely affects student learning and developing the staff is done through staff professional growth. Having an effective learning environment is part of standard 3 and by having greatly skilled and well developed teachers will help achieve that standard. As stated in my philosophy of education, students, teachers, community, and myself will rise to the level of my expectations. It is for this reason that maintaining a high level of expectations, especially for me, is a critical element for educational leadership.

Having High Expectations

Having high expectations of teachers, other staff members, and students is a critical element that I consider to be essential for exemplary educational leadership. During my undergraduate work a common theme misted itself across all the classes I took, and that was that students will rise to the level of your expectations. An analogy I relate this to is a high jumper. If you keep the bar in the same position when the jumper can easily jump it, he/she will become

compliant and possibly not be able to jump it in the future. If you have confidence in them, give them the tools to know how to jump higher, and challenge them to do so, even if they don't reach your bar, they will jump higher than ever before. We cannot put limits on students' ability to achieve because we do not know exactly the level of success each student is capable of performing. This theme of high expectations has radiated throughout my graduate work as well. In her book, *Motivation to Learn*, Deborah Stipek (2002), points out that her studies have determined that teachers' expectations for student learning are strongly associated with the amount students actually learn. Even though effective teachers have high expectations they don't expect each child to learn at the same rate. However, they do expect each child to master the basic curriculum. Expectations, according to Stipek, can also hinder a child's learning if a teacher does not change the expectations throughout the year. An example of this is when a first grade teacher who had a student that was exposed to drugs prenatally assumed that the child could not learn to read. The child showed no growth for 6 months. The school psychologist intervened in the matter and found a sixth grade tutor to help the child. As a result, the first grader was able to read after 2 months. Had the psychologist not intervened with a higher expectation, the child would not have made the progress that she did. To me, this is an argument for not looking at a child's previous performance in school. I tend to not look at previous performance, and in fact tell students that they all are considered top students and

only they can change that opinion. I've had several students over the years that have succeeded in my classroom, when years before they had not.

Along with high expectations a principal, teacher, or student must have a high self-efficacy. To me, this is a belief in one's ability to accomplish a task. If we have low expectations of people they will doubt their own self-efficacy and therefore will perform at a lower level. Ways that teachers start to form incorrect expectations include the following:

- **SEX.** Lower expectations are often held for older girls--particularly in scientific and technical areas-- because of sex-role stereotyping.
- **SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.** Teachers sometimes hold lower expectations of students from lower SES backgrounds.
- **RACE/ETHNICITY.** Students from minority races or ethnic groups are sometimes viewed as less capable than Anglo students.
- **TYPE OF SCHOOL.** Students from either inner city schools or rural schools are sometimes presumed to be less capable than students from suburban schools.
- **APPEARANCE.** The expense or style of students' clothes and students' grooming habits can influence teachers' expectations.
- **ORAL LANGUAGE PATTERNS.** The presence of any nonstandard English speaking pattern can sometimes lead teachers to hold lower expectations.
- **MESSINESS/DISORGANIZATION.** Students whose work areas or assignments are messy are sometimes perceived as having lower ability.
- **READINESS.** Immaturity or lack of experience may be confused with learning ability, leading to inappropriately low expectations.
- **HALO EFFECT.** Some teachers generalize from one characteristic a student may have, thereby making unfounded assumptions about the student's overall ability or behavior.
- **SEATING POSITION.** If students seat themselves at the sides or back of the classroom, some teachers perceive this as a sign of lower learning motivation and/or ability and treat students accordingly.

- **NEGATIVE COMMENTS ABOUT STUDENTS.** Teachers' expectations are sometimes influenced by the negative comments of other staff members.
- **OUTDATED THEORIES.** Educational theories which stress the limitations of learners can lead to lowered expectations.
- **TRACKING OR LONG-TERM ABILITY GROUPS.** Placement in "low" tracks or groups can cause students to be viewed as having less learning potential than they actually have. (Lumsden, n.d.)

To research this very idea of expectations verses performance, a study was done called the Pygmalion Study. The original Pygmalion study involved giving teachers false information about the learning potential of certain students in grades one through six in a San Francisco elementary school. Teachers were told that these students had been tested and found to be on the brink of a period of rapid intellectual growth; in reality, the students had been selected at random. At the end of the experimental period, some of the targeted students exhibited performance on IQ tests superior to the scores of other students of similar ability. These results led the researchers to claim that the inflated expectations teachers held for the target students and, the teacher behaviors that accompanied those high expectations actually caused the students to experience accelerated intellectual growth.

Finally, our school building is reading a book called *The 90% Reading Goal*. (Fielding and Rosier, 2003). The emphasis of this book is on getting 90% of all students in third grade reading on level. One of the strategies mentioned in this book is having high expectations, regardless of any reason. On page 131 it states,

Expectations for Student Performance: We get what we expect. If we don't expect good things from our students, teachers, and school districts, it won't happen.

As principal of a school building, I will first have high expectations of myself. This will be the first in a chain of events that will lead to that climate. As a school we will look at the data including our school's previous performance. From there we will set our goals and set them high. I will start out the school year setting the scene for what my expectations are and brainstorm the expectations of the teachers. While setting these high expectations I will not make them in a threatening manner.

Our district has a vision of learning that includes high expectations. Standard 1 therefore, is aligned with this critical element. Standard 2 deals with an administrator that is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. Having high expectations for behavior and performance creates and maintains that culture that values high achievement. Standard 3 requires management of the organization to make an effective learning environment. Allocating funds and providing time for professional development related to high expectations is a piece of the management puzzle necessary for high levels of student achievement. In addition to having high expectations a principal must

walk a narrow line between having these high expectations while creating and maintaining a positive climate and culture.

Creating a Positive Climate and Culture

Creating a positive climate and culture is a critical element essential for exemplary educational leadership. In my opinion one of the principal's most important jobs is to create and maintain a climate and culture that is conducive to learning. In order for this to happen, a principal must develop a discipline plan that serves the needs of the students, empower teachers to make decisions and give input, and foster a sense of belonging for everyone by treating everyone with respect, every day, all the time.

During the last 5 years I have taught 5th grade at my school and have noticed many changes. A new principal started to lead our school during my second year. A good word to describe the school's climate at that time was explosive. Students were often out of control and showing very little respect for each other or teachers. Not only were the students unruly, but so were teachers at different times. Some interactions between teachers were not professional causing conflict to run wild. What our principal did to improve the culture and climate at our school was to first identify the problems that existed. After looking at some hard data the principal decided to start rebuilding the behavior management plan

into one that was more positive rather than punitive. We adopted the Tricia Wells' (2001) Discipline Puzzle from her book *Solving the Discipline Puzzle* as the instrument for managing behaviors. In the process of working this program, teachers were able to take a look at their actions toward students and fellow teachers. This allowed teachers to see how their actions may, at times, cause problems. As our school worked on creating common area expectations a sense of continuity came over most of the teachers and the climate began to improve. With the demands placed on educators at this time in history, creating and maintaining a positive culture and climate is essential.

According to Todd Whitaker (2003) in his book *What Great Principals Do Differently* one of the fifteen things that matter most is treating everyone with respect, every day, all the time. Whitaker says good principals do treat everyone with respect and that is where it should start; with the principal. The reason this is so important is because of people's memory. They won't remember most of the times the principal was kind to them, but they will remember that one time when you were sarcastic or belittling to them. An example of this for me is when I was taking Educational Research with Dr. Hewitt. Cell phones interrupted his lecture several times, but he said nothing about them. However, when I was opening a small sack of snacks he chastised me for making too much noise in the class. I remember how I felt as an *adult*, so I want to make sure none of my teachers or students feels that way.

Another way to improve the culture and climate at a school is to model enthusiasm. If the principal is not excited about what is happening at school neither will the teachers or students. Deborah Stipek (2002) mentions modeling enthusiasm in her book *Motivation to Learn*. She states that students take cues from their teacher. If they seem bored the students will seem bored. Since the principal is the leader of the school it is his/her job to start the domino effect right away with an upbeat, positive attitude.

One characteristic of a positive climate and culture is trust. In order for students, teachers, other staff members, and the community to feel free to try new things and be creative there must be trust. This trust is not only based on the respect that is shown to people but also the trust in people to make the right decisions. In order for a principal to use shared decision making he/she must have trust that their teachers and involved members have the ability to make good decisions. This form of delegation of decision making is not for every decision, but as the trust increases so does the degree of importance of the decisions that are being made. The principal is the key to this process according to Short and Greer (2002) in *Leadership in Empowered Schools*.

If the principal presents themselves as the authority in the school, then a trusting environment is not possible. As the stakes get higher, via No Child Left Behind, giving teachers autonomy will be as difficult as ever, especially if the buck ends at the principal's desk, which it does.

Having a positive behavior management plan is another key to a positive climate. If students know they will be treated with respect in all matters, whether with discipline or in day-to-day conversations, their perception of their school will be positive. All principals will have to deal with discipline and all eyes will be on them as they develop a system for managing behaviors and how they treat their students and teachers.

When I get an opportunity to lead a school I want the climate to be very positive. If I see teachers who use punitive measures to discipline students I will try to educate them as to the effect they are having on the culture of our school. This can be done by adopting some sort of positive behavior management plan such as The Discipline Puzzle created by Tricia Wells. Another way I will create and maintain a positive culture is to request all stakeholders in different issues be participants in meetings when decisions are being made. Giving more autonomy to teachers and community members will enhance the trust and climate at my school.

When dealing with parents, students, teachers, and community members I will act professionally and with limited emotion. This will be a difficult task because I can wear my emotions on my sleeve. Finally, I will try to engage all staff in self-reflection and provide multiple opportunities for them to work together. The more familiar people are with each other the more trust and productive they can be.

Conclusion

The incredibly intense position of principal leadership has more facets than can be stated in under 10,000 written pages, but because that performance level is of such impracticality; my education in educational leadership has helped me narrow down my focus to these four critical elements in order to lead most efficiently, they include: building relationships, hiring great teachers, having high expectations, and creating a positive climate and culture.

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