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An effective leader : a reflective essay

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An effective leader: a reflective essay

Abstract
Leadership can be accomplished in multiple ways: vocally, by example, or by a combination of the two. Any choice is acceptable, but in order to be an effective leader you need to choose a method and believe in it. Personally, I lead by example. I work to be a vocal leader by praising in public. It is important to let students see it is all right to tell someone they did a very good job.

Setting good examples for students is key to leadership. Many times this is done by responses to situations. Reaction is quite often done without thought and this may lead to an undesirable outcome. Stepping back from the situation and learning all of the information may be a way to respond to a situation. Analyzing a problem will allow people to make sound ethical decisions.
An Effective Leader
A Reflective Essay

A Research Paper

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A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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Next step: Principal. I have been taught, since I was young, to always work to better myself. I feel this can be done in many ways, but in order to complete the task an education is vital. Education is the most important thing a person can have. No one can ever take it away. I was lucky enough to come from a family that was very supportive. I also was very lucky to have teachers that cared about their students and what they were learning. That support and background directed me into education.

I chose education because I want to make that same difference in a child's life. As a high school student I was involved in the summer recreation program in my hometown. It was fun to see the look on a kid's face when he was able to do something he was not able to do at the beginning of the summer. I had fun working with the kids, and I was making a difference at the same time.

At times, it becomes evident not all students enjoy the support I was lucky enough to receive. The lack of support reached its peak as I visited a classroom for the first time as an observer. I could see some kids were doing things because it was what they knew. How can a teacher fault a student for doing something he or she sees 24/7? As a teacher, I have a unique opportunity. I can show students there are other ways to do things. If children can see someone making good decisions in the face of adversity, it will be much easier for them to make the same decisions. It will give them options.

Modeling can have a huge influence on young kids. Students need to see positive and constructive influences. If people are willing to put themselves in a position to influence young people, then I believe they need to portray positive characteristics. I have enjoyed working with students in the classroom during my years as a teacher, but now I am ready move into administration and a leadership role in education. I want to
take this next step for many reasons. First, being an administrator will allow me to affect change for all students. In this role, I will become an advocate for best practices in education. I will also be helping teachers utilize new methods in their classrooms. Through this process I will become an educational advocate and leader.

Now, what is leadership? Webster's Dictionary (1990) defines leadership as “the quality displayed by a leader” (p. 226). To lead means to show someone the way, cause to follow one's example, or to cause to believe in something. This is important to understand because as an educational leader it will be important to lead in a positive manner, but just how does one lead?

Leadership can be accomplished in multiple ways: vocally, by example, or by a combination of the two. Any choice is acceptable, but in order to be an effective leader you need to choose a method and believe in it. Personally, I lead by example. I work to be a vocal leader by praising in public. It is important to let students see it is all right to tell someone they did a very good job. At different times, it is just expected to be done right. That is fine. Even though a person is expected to complete a task or solve a problem, it is still all right to tell them they did a nice job. Setting good examples for students is a second key to leadership. Many times this is done by responses to situations. Reaction is quite often done without thought and this may lead to an undesirable outcome. Stepping back from the situation and learning all of the information may be a way to respond to a situation. Analyzing a problem will allow people to make sound ethical decisions.

I can demonstrate my ethical leadership style daily by modeling positive behaviors in the classroom. Everyday I show students the importance of treating people
with respect. This is accomplished by having positive interactions with students, staff, and parents.

Ethics goes beyond respect though. Ethics are also built upon fairness. It is important to treat others fairly. This can also be done in the classroom, although at times fairness may not always seem fair. This perception may occur because it is important to give students what they need to be successful. In some cases one student may receive more accommodations than another. It is important to demonstrate these ideals in your class because kids are the best judges of character. They will be able to see if you are acting in accordance with what you say. If students see behaviors contradicting what you say you will lose credibility.

Therefore it is important to be true to what you believe. A leader needs to identify who and what is important in all decision-making situations. Identifying these two elements will aid you in the decision-making process. Breedan (2001) states, “An ethical person makes every decision based not just on his or her best interest, but what is in the best interest of the group as a whole” (¶ 2). It is important to remember this, because at times you may have to justify the decisions made.

Truthfulness and communication are also traits necessary for effective leadership. These two work together. Truthfulness will do two things for any leader. First, team members will have a consistent understanding of views on all topics. This consistency will create an open and comfortable working environment. Secondly truthfulness will allow for relationships to form within the work place. These relationships will allow for collegiality and synergy to develop.
In any workplace there are two types of communication. The first is social conversation. This allows teachers to become more comfortable with their co-workers. This type of communication will allow people to begin to build relationships. Although this is important it is not the most important type of communication needed to improve schools.

School improvement will only occur if teachers are willing to talk about what is going on in their classrooms. The conversations between colleagues will allow districts to improve. These conversations may not continue because many times they expose differences in beliefs. Berth (2001) states, “Differences can lead to friction and conflict” (p. 72). He understands such conversations may cause people to disagree once in a while, but in order to move forward some differences may need to be exposed. In this instance colleagues need overlook disagreements to ensure worthwhile conversation on best practice for students.

Communication needs to be face-to-face. Face-to-face communication will work to improve the climate of the workplace because it will allow for immediate explanations if a misunderstanding occurs. E-mails and memos, on the other hand, are not as forgiving. The written communications if interpreted incorrectly further damage relationships within the system. Therefore I believe it is important to communicate as much as possible in person. If people increase communications not only will relationships be built, but colleagues will also start to share ideas. If collegiality occurs, consistency and best practices will begin to improve school performance.

Vision is another key aspect to leadership. In Oren Harari’s (2000) book, Colin Powell describes vision as the reason for existence. A clear vision will allow the
organization the chance to develop a set of beliefs, which will encourage best practice within a school. Unfortunately, a set of beliefs is not enough. As Harari (2002) states, “Execution matters. A plan is only as powerful as the zeal that lies behind it,” (p. 109).

Therefore, I believe, it is important to develop a vision in which you are determined to act upon until the vision is realized.

Visions can do many things for a school. The expectation of a vision will give staff members a common ground from which to start. Shared ideas will provide a shared language, and a common language will create effective communications. Conversations will in turn allow teachers to better understand the opposing viewpoints and alleviate many misunderstandings. Shared vision allows others to develop ownership of the school also. This vision will give teachers a sense of empowerment. Empowerment will develop an increased sense of pride for the community. Finally a vision will allow teachers to work towards a goal. In order to reach the goal all teachers will need to emphasize a strong commitment to use best practice in their classrooms.

The prior characteristics will be effective only if the last component is present. In the end in order to be successful it is important to have a positive climate. The climate of a school will determine the effectiveness of ethical decision-making, communication, and visionary leadership. As Bamburg (1994) states,

It would be both shortsighted and foolhardy to undertake efforts to identify a school’s current reality, introduce the new knowledge that educators need, or rethink the role of leadership unless conditions such as a productive, positive school climate are present or emerging. (p. 13)
The school climate will allow teachers to begin to talk to each other in a productive manner. Only when the climate is transformed in a positive way will a school vision be allowed to change or develop.

I would be very happy if I could create the type of atmosphere where teachers would be able to relax and do what they do best. Now, I know at times changes may need to be made, but if I am honest and communicate effectively everyone should know that we are working for the students. I also want teachers to be good role models for the students they teach. I can foster that by making good decisions myself. I will need to advocate for all students in as many ways as possible.

Making Ethical Decisions

Ethics is a small two-syllable word, which is very easy to spell and pronounce. Unfortunately the simplicity of the word ends there. The definition is much more complex. According to Webster’s Dictionary, ethics is defined as, “moral principles” (p.133). The question then becomes, what is ethics and how do I behave in an ethical manner?

Before we can specifically define what is ethical or moral, let’s explore some traits that may be immoral. Examples of immoral traits are: lying, favoritism, stealing, greed, being rude, bullying, hypocrisy, and abuse. All of these traits are designed to enhance ones self. Examination would tend to say traits promoting ones self would not be ethical in nature. Now this certainly does not encompass all ideas or feeling towards ones self, but from this perspective ethics focuses on actions towards. Unfortunately these traits are present in everyone to some extent.
Luckily, everyone also has traits that are ethical. Ethical traits include: honesty, accountability, openness, fairness, loyalty, and morality. Examination of these traits seems to lead us to the feelings of others. It is important to focus on these traits.

Morality is defined as, “concerned with right and wrong and the distinctions between them” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1990, p. 261). With that in mind it would be easy to agree with Breedan’s (2001) definition, “Ethics are a system of principles we use to determine right and wrong behavior,” (¶ 2). Basically both definitions tell us in order to live ethically we need to understand the difference between right and wrong. Is that enough?

Unfortunately, knowledge of right and wrong alone will not help us change as individuals, a community or society. Breedan also states, “An ethical person makes every decision based not just on his or her best interest, but what is in the best interest of the group as a whole” (¶ 2, 2001). So it appears there is one more important aspect to ethics: behavior. All of the knowledge in the world is of little value if not placed into practice.

If we choose to make good (valid) decisions the surrounding environment will be more hospitable for others. Paul and Elder (2003) state, “the ultimate basis for ethics is clear: Human behavior has consequences for the welfare of others. We are capable of acting towards others in such a way as to increase or decrease the quality of their lives” (p. 2). Our decisions will affect the people around us, so it is important our decisions will have a positive effect.

In order to make well-rounded decisions everyone should have a strong set of beliefs or values. Along with determining values comes a strong understanding of ones
self. Once values have been identified a person will have a strong base from which to make well-rounded decisions. When making a decision it is important to know what you stand for. Without a strong sense of self, ethical questions will be difficult to respond to. Without a strong understanding of values and beliefs it will be easy to allow emotions to enter into the decision making process. Emotional decisions may cause you to doubt the decision you make. Ambiguity in answers will allow people to challenge the decisions. Challenges may cause self-doubt to enter the decision-making equation and will allow for more emotional decisions. Thus, you must know what you stand for when making decisions.

A person who has separated him or herself may be more willing to objectively listen. When a person acts as a mediator sound ethical decisions will be able to be made, because the decision will be based on the facts. Therefore, a decision making process is beneficial. A process serves as a guide through the tough ethical decisions. The Rotary Club International has developed a 4-question process (Wilmore, 2002) to aid them. The questions are:

1. Is it the truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned? (p. 82)

I believe these four questions are a good place to begin when making ethical decisions. One thing for sure, the questions focus on everyone and in order to make ethical decisions the focus should be on all involved not just one specific event.
Question number four is very interesting, because we do not know who all is included. Is “all”, the people (students) currently affected by the situation, or does all also include students who may be affected in the future? This creates a problem because the short-term decision may not be the popular decision to make, because of the emotions tied to the situation. Repercussions may arise with the unpopular decision. However once the emotions settle, the long-term results may benefit the entire student body. The decision may start to create a new positive culture within the district. In this scenario, I believe, it would be important to make the decision that would benefit students far into the future.

Unfortunately, the right decision may be very difficult to make. There may be a lot of outside pressure to give the easy result. The short-term decision may allow the problem to go away, but the problem will still remain. In this case the problem has now become a precedent and will have to be dealt with again. So in order to stay attached the decision needs to be based on your values and how you live your life along with the shared values of the school community.

Ethics are a necessity in a person’s personal life. Leading ethically will allow you to make certain tough decisions because you are living according to the values you have established for yourself while not violating the rights of others. You also will be confident with each decision because you have not violated your own values. If a decision based on values is made your values will be reinforced and you will become consistent in your decision-making.

A leader needs to demonstrate his/her values daily. As an administrator, I intend to do just that by remembering one key point, “The job of an administrator is not about
me, it is about the teachers and the students.” I feel my role is to help the students and teachers get better at what they do. So as I go through my day I need to let all stakeholders see that I care. I need to demonstrate fairness, honesty, sincerity, and concern with right and wrong. I also need to make good well-developed decisions. I can accomplish this by researching all topics and not jumping to a quick decision. One thing that will allow me to complete this great task is a great sense of ethics.

A strong set of ethics or values is the most important character trait a principal can have. This character trait will be tested daily in the administrative role. Therefore, it is very important leaders are consistent and fair with each and every decision. As I study the seven standards for Principal Leadership, (Wilmore, 2002). I can see ethics entwined in all aspects of leadership. However, I believe ethics fit best in standard five.

Standard five deals with integrity, fairness, and ethical manner. Those three items together will determine how a person is perceived in a society. Those three items will also determine the amount of trust a leader receives from his or her stakeholders. One way I intend to gain that trust is by being consistent and fair in all situations. When I make decisions based on the best interest of the whole, hopefully others will begin to follow my lead.

Overall it is important to remember that a person is viewed by his or her actions. So, it is very important to have a strong sense of values and live them out, because in the end, perceptions will be based on the actions we take.
Communicating Effectively

Communication should be the foundation of any successful organization. Every person within an organization should be able to communicate ideas openly and freely. These ideas should be listened to and examined. Communication will also ensure that everyone is working in the same direction.

In order to understand what communication is, it first needs to be defined. “Communication is the giving or exchanging of news by speaking and writing” (Thorndike & Barnhart, 1979, p. 183). Communication can also be defined as the sharing of an idea or concept (Burgess, 1990). The thought of communication seems easy. Everyone communicates on a daily basis through words (both written and oral), sign language, and body language. Communication is easy, but successful communication can be hard. As Burgess (1990) states, “In order for successful communication to take place, there must be a SENDER and a RECEIVER who understand a MESSAGE in the same way” (¶8). In order to accomplish successful communication several components must be present.

First and foremost communication needs to be explicit. Each piece of information needs to be clearly stated. If I, as a sender, leave anything to the imagination my communication may be misinterpreted. If there is a misunderstanding it will cause more work in the end.

Being concise is the next key to successful communication. It is important to keep the message short. Clear, concise, communication leaves little room for interpretation. This would damage the idea of being explicit. Being concise also allows me to provide more relevant information in a given amount of time.
Understanding is the next key to successful communication. In order to do this the communicator needs to write or speak to the audience clearly. Words need to be chosen carefully. If I were to write or give directions in a vocabulary that is too high for the audience I can be assured the message will be interpreted incorrectly. How can this be avoided? There is one simple answer, know your audience. If you know whom you are speaking to you can structure your message accordingly. If you don’t have that understanding successful communication will be harder to achieve.

Understanding is not something that can be assumed either. As a presenter you need to make sure the ideas have reached the listener. Asking someone to summarize what you are saying may determine his or her level of understanding. If the audience can synthesize the information, the more likely the message will be understood. It is important to always check for understanding.

Relevancy is another key to successful communication. If information is relevant to the listener, he or she will be more receptive to the information. As I was growing up I always wanted to know how and when the information would be used. If the use could not be explained, I was not interested in hearing it.

If you are hesitant, ambiguous, and uncertain in your answer the person asking the question will certainly have the same feelings. For example, if someone were to ask for directions, would you say go west a few blocks and take a left? No. You would be specific in your directions. This clarity would give the person confidence in you and he or she would accept your directions. Credibility would be developed. If leaders are not clear people will go else where for information. The same idea applies when discussing the vision for a school. It is important to give clarity in all situations. If leaders are not
communicating ideas clearly, someone else may be. In this case credibility will be lost and the staff may begin to follow the directions they feel are correct. The opposing directions will be counter-productive.

Being an effective communicator will pay great dividends in the long run. The first dividend is having your ideas clearly understood. After your ideas are circulating people can then make solid decisions based on explicit and concise information. The next result is people experience a sense of unity of direction. They are able to see there is an end to the process. If that end is not apparent, it does not matter how you spin it. The people will not follow.

Communicating all information is very important. Equally important is communicating a clear goal. As Shaw (2001) points out, “All too often organizations communicate what they want people to do, but they don’t paint the big picture of where the organization is heading and, therefore, why should people do things” (p.65). Just as the student sitting in a classroom wants to know when he/she will ever use the information, the professional also wants to see the relevance.

Even more importantly is giving them the time, education, and resources to do the tasks expected. We would not ask someone to complete a task they were not prepared to accomplish. As an administrator it will be important to give them the necessary tools. If these items are given along with the reason for the outcome, the best results can be expected.

There is more to being an effective communicator than just communicating your ideas and strategies. Communicators also have to be good listeners. People you come in
contact with have to feel they are valued. One way you can make others feel important or valued is by listening to team members' ideas.

Listening and engaging people in conversation will make them feel important. People will feel as if they have more ownership over the direction of the group. Empowerment will increase the quality of each team member. Hopefully throughout the process our entire team will become engaged and communicate goals with each other. In the end our team will succeed because the team will truly be working together.

I believe communication is a very important aspect when it comes to leadership skills. Being explicit, concise, and keeping the information relevant will keep people engaged in what you are saying. It will promote conversation, which will lead to understanding. The leaders who deliver (results) look good on paper, but also respect, listen to, and include people (Boone, 2002). It is important to be a good communicator in order to have your organization be successful.

In my opinion, the skill of communication fits directly with Standard One. It is the backbone of the standard. Without good communication skills it will be very hard to build a free working environment. Any workplace needs to have open lines of communication. This can only be accomplished if the leader himself/herself can effectively communicate.

Communication also ties in directly with Standard Six because in order to work collaboratively you need to communicate with each other. In this case communication is the foundation for the cooperative relationship within a building. As team members discuss best practice in education we will be better able to serve our students.
As a building leader it will be my responsibility to foster a community of communicators and I will work very hard to develop effective communication in the building I lead. In order to develop this communication I will stop by classrooms every day. During my visits I will ask the teachers if there is anything they need from me. I want them to know that I am there to help them. I will also have an open door policy. This way if any staff member or student wants to talk all they have to do is come in.

There should not be any barriers in the way of communication. The last step I will take to open lines of communication is to ensure confidentiality. If members of the staff are coming to me I want them to be assured that I will keep our conversations confidential. If I can accomplish these three tasks I feel the model for communication will be in place.

An open line of communication is the cornerstone to having a successful building. In order to have a staff be successful, these basic strategies need to be in place. Communication will allow everyone the same information, and everyone will be moving in the same direction.

Developing a Shared Vision

In the past organizations have been goal oriented. Groups developed statements, which laid out the framework for success. Many times success was individual in nature. Today schools have started to develop outcomes for the success of all students. These intended outcomes are known as vision statements.

What is vision?

Vision can be and has been defined in many ways. Wilmore (2002), describes vision as “the place the school wants to become” (p. 21). In Oren Harari’s (2000) book, Colin Powell sees vision as the reason for existence. In either case the idea is the same.
A vision is the foundation from which organizations will function. According to Glatthorn (2000), the vision will provide a clear sense of direction, a basis for evaluation of curriculum, and also an opportunity for professional dialogue. All three will greatly impact the environment of a school.

Visions or goals will provide measurable outcomes within schools. Identified goals allow teachers to develop plans and meet the stated objectives. Therefore teachers will now be working in a sequential manner. This sequence will promote a more focused curriculum. Without goals team members may become content and may not work to improve. Goals allow us to identify skills a student should obtain. Therefore, the goals will allow us to evaluate how well we meet our objectives.

Finally, vision fosters an opportunity for professional dialogue by providing a common language within the district. A common ground will allow team members to discuss best practices openly with a co-worker. Conversations may even lead to discussions of individual beliefs.

A common ground will cut down on misunderstandings as well. Many times conversations may be ended or not even started because two people have differing views. A common language may work to find a middle ground for teachers to agree on. Open lines of communication should allow for best practices to grow.

**Involvement of Staff**

Involvement of staff will be needed to promote development of the new vision.

As a leader it is important to remember that everyone will be working towards achieving the vision. So, everyone should be represented in developing the vision. Representation will also work to foster the empowerment a leader wants to achieve.
Wilmore (2002) states, “It’s imperative that everyone sits down, talks about it, and decides together where it is you’ll all be going” (p. 20). Involving different personnel will lead to great conversation because of the different viewpoints. The views will allow for a better end than if one or two people develop the vision and goals. The communication will foster a sense of worth within the staff. Everyone will feel confident his or her voice was heard. As the process continues the players in development will feel more attached to the product.

Attachment will lead to a sense of ownership within the staff. The sense of ownership will also create a “buy in” by the staff. Everyone will feel as if it is truly his or her vision. Although the process may take longer to develop, I believe transition will be easier. In the end members will work harder to make sure the vision is successful.

Words or Actions

A shared vision statement is written on paper. Many times the statement is hung on the wall and at times recited during the morning announcements. Unfortunately many visions stop there. In a case such as this, is the vision really what is written on the paper?

A vision without conviction is simply a statement. Once the vision is formed it is vital that actions follow. As a leader, I will need to develop opportunities for teachers to work toward the vision. The opportunities should reinforce the fact that I truly believe in what we are trying to accomplish.

Opportunities can come in many forms. Earlier is stated the importance of conversation. Training is another area. Team members need to find strategies to help our school grow. I see it as my responsibility to help teachers find those opportunities because they may not have the time. In-services will also play a huge role in
Implementation. It will be important for me to bring worthwhile topics to all members. As Harari (2002) states, "Execution matters. A plan is only as powerful as the zeal that lies behind it" (p. 109). A strong conviction by the leader will go along way towards fostering the shared vision. On the other hand, a lack of conviction, on my behalf, will lead to failure of the vision. A lack of commitment will also lead to a diminished capacity to lead.

After the vision has been written and implemented it will be important to review it regularly. Glatthorn (2000) states, "Vision building is an interactive, ongoing process, not a one-time event" (p.49). With that in mind, we should continually be working to improve upon our work. Eventually the vision of the school district should become routine.

Standard Connections

Wilmore (2002) states, "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by..." (p. 19).

Promoting vision for a school district is one of the leaders most important jobs. Vision building allows team members to "begin with an end in mind" (Covey, 1990, p. 304). This direction will allow team members to discuss various ways to reach their goals. In fact Covey states, "This new common vision liberates teachers, allowing their creative energies to be maximized, alleviating the burden of constant pressure to perform" (p. 304). Therefore, the vision of a school or district will promote the best practices in education.
Implementation is very important aspect of vision. If we do not follow through with the plan then we simply went through the actions. A plan is only as strong as the actions completed to ensure success.

Without a strong commitment by the leader the vision will fade. Therefore it is important demonstrate strong stewardship when developing a vision. Wilmore (2002) states Standard One, “Stewardship calls for sustaining momentum once it has been generated” (p. 23). It is important to keep the vision in the forefront of our thinking. Therefore it is vital we continue discussion, and that our vision becomes routine. A vision without action is worth only the paper upon which it is written. If a school district doesn’t work to follow through it will never see the intended success. Therefore it is vital leaders continually promote the vision and act upon it in order to obtain success.

Modeling for Success

“Do as I say and not as I do” is a common phrase within the American culture. Unfortunately this is easier said than done, because repeated actions speak louder than words. Many times behaviors will be learned quickly through a process called modeling. Modeling allows people to view actions and responses. Albert Bandura, (1977), describes modeling as a social learning theory. He believed people watch and study others in daily situations and learned from their actions.

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new
behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for actions. (p. 22)

In fact Kareen Smith (2003) agrees with Bandura's findings and says, "modeling has taken place when a person imitates the behavior of another," (¶1). Therefore it is important to realize the influence a person's actions can have over a child's behavior.

Who are effective role models? Smith (2003) believes, "The two most important factors which contribute to model effectiveness are the importance or prestige of the model and the model's similarity to the student" (¶4). This definition allows for many different models for a person. In fact role models could range from family members to peers to teachers to movie stars or athletes. It is important for members of each of group to embrace the opportunity and not neglect the responsibility. Unfortunately some do.

A few years back in a 1993 Nike television spot, Charles Barkley solemnly warned the audience, "I am not a role model . . . parents should be role models." As brash as that sounds Mr. Barkley is partially correct. Parents should be role models for their children. They should demonstrate positive behaviors for their children, because in many cases children grow up wanting to be like their mom or dad. Unfortunately Mr. Barkley was incorrect in his first assumption because many people also want to be like professional athletes. Even though athletes may have limited similarities and contact with many individuals they have the prestige to meet the requirement. Therefore a star athlete is a role model because his/her actions will influence the lives of others.

Educators also fit into the role model category. We fit because we are important to children. We are in the class to give students strategies from which they can build and develop character. Teachers can promote many behaviors through their actions.
For instance, my classroom is organized. I can find everything I need quickly. As my rapport increases with students so does the organization of some students. They have made a connection. The same thing can be said with the language used. If I use proper language then over time it will carry over to the students around me. In my classroom I have a great opportunity to model social behaviors.

Models are not limited to social interactions within a classroom. Models can be given in content areas as well. Worthy (2001) states, “Modeling by reading aloud helps students understand what fluency sounds like and is essential to its development” (¶13). In this case the model is the teacher reading aloud to the students. The model will satisfy many needs of the students. First students will hear what fluency is. Listening to fluent readers will help to eliminate distractions and promote fluent reading. Oral reading will also allow fluent readers to jazz up passages by reading with expression. Expression within the passage will allow students to hear how they should read when they encounter the punctuation in their own passages. In this case the models are allowing students to become familiar with the expectations being placed on them. In fact modeling can provide a faster, more efficient means for teaching new behavior (Rutledge, 2000). In the end the familiarity will allow students to easily become comfortable with the content matter or strategies.

Modeling is an important aspect to learning because it will encourage, weaken, or maintain demonstrated behaviors. If behaviors are ignored we are telling our youth the behavior is acceptable. As time moves on the frequency of the behavior will increase. On the other hand if role models consistently portray positive characteristics, students may begin to practice the same virtues. It is equally important to praise the positive
behaviors of others. The praise will allow students to take pride in what they are doing and will encourage them to continue the practice.

Reinforcement can also be classified as modeling. Reinforcing actions either positively or with consequence show others how to or how not to act. In many cases a student may not be the recipient of the reinforcement but will benefit just the same because an expectation of behavior has been established. Others will begin to recognize what is acceptable and what is not. In many ways they will be learning from the successes or failures of others.

I believe it is very important to demonstrate positive behaviors for our youth. People can learn a great deal by watching and listening to others. If they see positive examples, they will be more likely to adopt them into their lives than if they are bombarded with negative influences. Therefore it is important to demonstrate appropriate behaviors.

As an administrator it is important to continually demonstrate positive traits. This need not only be done for the students but also the staff in which I will be working closely. Modeling behaviors fit nicely with Standard Five because it is important that I continually demonstrate fairness, integrity, and ethical leadership daily. Everyday I need to show students and colleagues the importance of treating people with respect because if I act in a manner that contradicts my speech, I will lose all credibility. As a role model it is important I ask students and co-workers to “Do as I do.”

Conclusion

In order to be an effective leader it is important to keep the prior critical elements in mind. I truly believe that these elements will greatly improve schools. The improvement will be multi-faceted. First, shared vision will allow for new ideas and
methods to enter the environment. Ultimately, change will improve the educational process for the school or district and myself. Increased communication will show, staff, I am committed to involving them in the process. If I am communicating at an optimal level then everyone involved with the school will be aware of the decisions I have made and the reasons for them. Comfort will come from my demonstration of analyzing the situation and making a consistent decision based on the best interest of the school. Modeling will definitely allow me to demonstrate my core beliefs in education. As I consistently model my core beliefs my credibility with the staff will grow. Credibility will foster a confidence from co-workers. The confidence will allow teachers to do what they know best and that is to teach. They will not have to be concerned about effects of the decisions being made. My prior actions will allow them to know that I am doing what is in the best interest of all.

In the end, I believe these traits will help build a positive school climate. This type of climate will allow all teachers to concentrate on improving student achievement. Education is about the success of the students. It is our duty to see that they succeed.
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