A preferred vision for administering elementary schools: a reflective essay

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A preferred vision for administering elementary schools: a reflective essay

Abstract
In a clearing in the woods, I see a bricked schoolhouse with kids of all ages outside laughing and playing. The sun is splashing down on the landscape like a blanket covering a canopy bed. The teachers are lingering around the playground communicating with each other about the day’s events and the principal grinning from ear to ear thinking about everything around him that makes up this school.

This is a vision I have in my mind of the perfect school and the perfect administrative position. I also have to think about all of the people who came before me that paved the way for me to make this vision of mine a possibility. I truly respect the hard work in planning and drawing up ideas that they thought this new nation needed to become a respected country for all to see. This educational vision started many years ago with the introduction of the United States to the world; and since then, improvements have constantly sprouted to form the new way of education.
A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper
Presented to
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

by
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In a clearing in the woods, I see a bricked schoolhouse with kids of all ages outside laughing and playing. The sun is splashing down on the landscape like a blanket covering a canopy bed. The teachers are lingering around the playground communicating with each other about the day's events and the principal grinning from ear to ear thinking about everything around him that makes up this school. This is a vision I have in my mind of the perfect school and the perfect administrative position. I also have to think about all of the people who came before me that paved the way for me to make this vision of mine a possibility. I truly respect the hard work in planning and drawing up ideas that they thought this new nation needed to become a respected country for all to see. This educational vision started many years ago with the introduction of the United States to the world and since then, improvements constantly sprouted to form the new way of education.

A main idea had been tossed around with the early leaders of the United States concerning the need for a new school system. After the American Revolution, leaders wanted to "produce" Americans out of the same mold and have them all possess the same values needed to make a respectable country. Once these values had been established, it took many years and a mixture of educational methods to form the "common schools".

Public Schools and Their Purpose

Early leaders' ideas rested on this one truth, that "Americans developed public schools to unify our nation and to provide for the common good" (Phi Delta Kappa, 1996, p. 22). I think many people have veered away from this idea and are striving for the good of themselves and not keeping the nation as a whole in sight. We need to express our ideas not just to the students but the parents alike. I believe that there are many purposes of schooling and different techniques of getting that purpose across
to the youth today. Later I will talk more on techniques of the 4Mat System (McCarthy, 1980) and various other resources teachers can use.

As educators, we see the everyday importance of a well rounded individual who we will send out into society to survive on their own. All kids are at-risk in some area in their lives and the broad backgrounds students bring with them to the classroom calls for a wider instructional basis of all teachers.

An overall belief I have in education is doing our best in preparing people to become responsible citizens. What is a responsible citizen? Gaining basic knowledge of our governmental affairs and their rights as citizens, and being involved in the political life knowing that they are making decisions that may affect them or the ones they love directly. Having strong character and good morals is one of the most important pieces to this puzzle. If you believe in yourself and the things that you do, you can accomplish almost anything out before you.

Another idea or goal, is to help people become self-sufficient. A big concern I have is that we have entirely too many people getting welfare or unemployment benefits that need to be able to find a job. As educators, I think we are becoming more aware of this situation with the number of high school drop outs and even high school graduates that do not posses the interview skills needed or even the communication skills needed to talk with an interviewer. The entry level jobs of today require more schooling, a broad foundation of knowledge, and good communication skills. We must educate and demand more out of our students if the world around us is demanding more from them.

Knowing Your Students' Rights to a Free Public Education

School administration today is becoming an occupation in which the knowledge base of an individual must be vast in order to keep up with the changing practices each year. Knowing the students' rights in an educational
system could mean the difference between going to court with a lofty lawsuit, or advising the teachers of certain rules and regulations put into place by the local, state, and federal government. Each year administrators and teachers alike need to attend some type of informational meeting on the rights of the students. It is important to point out some of the more significant ideas and cases that need to be addressed in many schools each year around the country.

The battle for free public education had started early with the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony expressing their concern with establishing a uniform code of education. To this day, the importance of education has been a continuing emphasis in the American society. The extent of the term “free” and who receives the free education will be discussed and citations will be given to prove the grueling effort put forth to ensure this hallmark in society.

Thomas Jefferson was a strong supporter of government’s responsibility to encourage education as the basis of a responsible citizen and an essential of democratic government. He states that:

> Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree....An amendment of our [Virginia] constitution must here come in aid of the public education. (Beyer, 1983, p.363)

This sounded like a super idea and it was meant in good faith, but like so many good intentions that have come before, it was bogged down for many years. For all to implement the idea of free education, it would take a lot of discussion and persuasion on the part of those in favor. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was considered one of the main cases to help right a long lived wrong dealing with free education to everyone. Although the *Brown v. Board of Education* case specifically addressed the rights of black children not to be segregated from white children in the educational
process, the Court's decision could be heard by the millions of children with disabilities or handicaps who did not get a fair shake at education until legislation such as 94-142, IDEA 1 and IDEA 2. Their segregation from society seemed, at times, as bad as the black and white issue.

Each and all state constitutions make provisions for a system of free public schools. These provisions may range from "very specific educational provisions to broad mandates that the legislature of the state shall provide funds for the support of a public school system" (Alexander & Alexander, 1992, p.2). The constitution is basic because the power to create public education systems is assumed by the state constitutions, and provisions of the constitution serve as restraints to protect people from denial of their basic constitutional freedoms and rights. As educators, we need to have a solid understanding of the basic constitutional rights of the students, staff, and community to be able to communicate effectively when situations arise that require a knowledge base in law.

In conducting research in the subject of student rights to a free appropriate public education, a common thread was found throughout. State by state, each constitution has been written by different governing bodies with different views about student education. The interpretation of these words and reviewing previous cases on record makes each state its own legal guardian considering free education.

School officials must still act within the "scope of reasonable regulations" and are not free to conduct business as if they were operating in their own little world. The courts have continually given school boards wide discretion in interpreting the regulations in which they govern student conduct. A prime example is the case of Wood v. Strickland (1975). The Supreme Court stated that a lower court erred "in substituting its own notions for a school board's definition of its rules" (Alexander & Alexander, 1992, p.279).
The Iowa Code has specific rules and regulations describing what can and cannot be legally charged as fees. The IASB Policy Reference Manual also has its interpretation of the rules and regulations of laws specifically designed for Iowa. If you are considering education in another state, research on the specific laws in that state is essential before issuing any policy or rule in your district.

Research is the key for any administrative candidate who wants to succeed in any state or district. Consulting your legal school council and attorneys at law may be to your best interest when dealing with a complex situation.

Leadership in the School System

Leadership as defined by Scott, Foresman, Advanced Dictionary is “Condition of being a leader, ability to lead, guidance or direction” (Thorndike and Barnhart, 1988, p. 635). I believe that leadership is many components tied together to mean one who shows direction while influencing others to strive toward a set of objectives and goals set forth by all who are encouraged to follow. Management is also a key word that needs to be inserted into the leadership formula. Management is defined “as the process of implementing strategies and controlling resources in an effort to achieve organizational objectives” (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993, p.5). Personally, I think these objectives are met by serving teachers, students, parents, and all others who work to make objectives and goals real.

All of the previous mentioned people have different expectations of leaders. As an administrator, I must be able to identify the needs of all and be sensitive to every view. As a leader I feel I need to build trust, show compassion, and model values set forth by me and the people around me. I have to show my commitment to team work and ambition to work toward goals and objectives of my organization.
I believe in participative decision making. I am a democratic and directive leader who will solicit employee input, but allow little discretion in executing that decision. I have to be task-oriented and a people-oriented leader knowing that sometimes I will have to sacrifice one at the expense of the other.

When decisions alone cannot correct the complexity of a situation or when decisions are not congruent to all individual needs, I must be able to show compassion and encouragement to those individuals who have other ideas or doubts in their mind. This task is not easy to do when confronted with various ideas that all staff cannot agree upon without sabotaging. Various techniques can be used to overcome this problem and make the situation agreeable with all involved. “Facilitating the process” (Gibbs, 1995, p. 114) is a technique I believe all administrators need to have to be successful in collaboration with staff and getting all to agree upon a cure for the situation.

Communication is a must in leadership. I have to be able to communicate my ideas to the respective parties while realizing that others who have the knowledge on certain subjects may communicate the idea in a better manner. “The key is to establish expectations which open opportunities for communication and participation to others” (Pajak, 1993, p. 69). Letting a teacher inform a parent on the progress of their child or the technology coordinator explaining the benefits of networking the district to provide a common link to all buildings in the area would be examples of allowing experts in those areas to do the communicating.

The biggest challenge of all may be managing time as an administrator. How will I accomplish the tasks I have in front of me along with the unexpected circumstances that may arise during the course of a week or a day? If I see an unexpected problem in my present teaching situations, I am the type of person who needs to find the quickest rational solution because of
the other planned activities I have going on around me already. For example, my lesson plans are made so I may accomplish a set of objectives in a particular week. If my class needs extra instruction on division of fractions, or a tornado drill puts our school in a basement for an hour, I must be able to change my plans and accomplish my most important tasks first. I realize in education and administration, change is a process that takes time if it is to be implemented correctly. Patience 101 is a class I need to take to understand all good things come with time. Each day in the classroom I am also learning flexibility with the kids and the system is a major component we can not live without.

A book that I found to reveal profound truths about change is one by Johnson (1995) entitled *Who Moved My Cheese?* In this compact book there are lessons in change which we all should take notes on at various times in our lives. It is about what to do when a change comes your way and somebody moves your cheese. Do we continue to “do the same things over and over again and wonder why things do not get better” or are you going to “take control, rather than simply letting things happen” (Johnson, 1998, p.42). This book is full of catchy phrases and encouragement to “go after that cheese” and not let the process of change keep you wondering if you should move with it. I would like to give this book to people on my first staff. I want to know who they are and what they are all about. A change is coming their way and that change is me. Some will be accepting of my presence and some will wish things would stay the same. I really want them to know what I am about, and this book that I share will show them I am not content to just sit after somebody has “moved my cheese”. By example, I hope I can get some fires lit that may have been doused by years of endless routine, feelings of dead end hopelessness, or failure to change due to lack of interest.
As I have experienced so far in my short term of teaching, there are many difficult and frustrating portions that need to be dealt with everyday, but along with that are the rewards and satisfaction I receive from giving service to a group of kids who grow everyday because of what I do. That is what keeps the light burning in my eye and I am constantly working to make that light brighter every single minute of my day. I know that teaching is also not an occupation in which you should expect gratification immediately. If you are looking for instant thank-yous, you had better be looking for work elsewhere. I can count on one hand the kids who have really come up to me and thanked me for what I meant to them in sixth grade. Any teacher knows why they have spent the years in education when that old student comes up and shows gratitude for enlightening them in a special way many years ago. That is what keeps me going. That is why I want to move into administration so I can affect even more kids than just the twenty-five I have in class each year. It is not to have a better possibility at an “ego booster”, but it is because I can positively affect a higher number of kids through administration. The administration field also allows me to help adults as well. Whether it is assisting them in improving their teaching style, or helping them through a crisis in their lives, I will be they type of administrator people can come to at anytime in their teaching career for any reason.

What really is our role as educators? What is the reason for children being sent to a building with educated adults, curriculum to be followed, and information to be learned? Education today is a complex system. We cannot as educators come to our schools and just be concerned with how we are going to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. Look at the variety of situations and problems kids bring to school each day. From divorce and drugs in the home to pets dying and a sister going off to college. We are counselors, police officers, guardians, babysitters, human anatomy instructors, and play many other roles as educators. Each day society is putting more of
the responsibility of raising kids on the teachers and directing it away from the parents. While doing this, we are losing time for core academic curriculum time as stated in our standards and benchmarks for each district.

As an administrator, I would strive for educating teachers. Not just to get credit and move over on the pay scale, but staff development that can help with some of those situations kids bring to school or how we can better assess the students achievements in the classrooms. We as teachers try to show the students how each class relates to the "real world" and the importance of coming to school. We need to take this approach with staff development and give them some vital information that they can use to improve the quality of education in their classrooms.

Effective Teaching

My vision of effective teaching is a list of a variety of behaviors, instructional skills, and planning needed to get the most out of students and teachers alike. In the six years I have taught, I have never taught a class the same as the year before. I believe you should teach according to the students' learning, performance and achievement possibilities, each student and class can and should be taught differently. I have to get to know my class at the beginning of the year and let them get a feeling of how I teach and expectations I have for them. The students start to loosen up and feel more comfortable with the right classroom conduct and motivation levels. This in turn increases the teacher/student interaction and in the long run, and allows the students to adjust to my expectations for an overall comfort level in the classroom. If the kids cannot get comfortable in a classroom setting, it will be very difficult for them to perform up to their full potential academically.

The effective teaching list (R.Decker, personal communication, February 22, 1998) points out the five characteristics of effective teaching that I strongly agree with. When we were asked to write down a list of characteristics we thought an effective teacher should have, I listed four of the
five on the list before even glancing at it. It caught me a little by surprise, but common sense tells me that an effective teacher must possess these skills. The following is a list of characteristics from in the handbook and along with those I will also provide my own interpretation of each:

1. Strong instructional leadership is the first characteristic on the list. If you are at all lacking in this area, kids can sense it and a poor classroom management system seems to follow along. If a teacher demonstrates this skill appropriately, he or she may be used as a model teacher for others who may be needing assistance.

2. Effective teachers also have high expectations for their kids. This point is made in many references. If you expect the kids to perform to a higher level, most will. As teachers, we need to make sure we are setting expectations high enough.

3. An orderly/positive climate goes along with the first characteristic in that a teacher cannot get the full potential out of all students if the room atmosphere is a constant distraction. An orderly and positive climate promotes efficiency in learning. Kids want to attend a classroom that is fun to be in and enjoyable to participate. I can still remember my peer relations class in high school and the great times we had learning. The teacher made the subject of peer relations an interesting, communication, confidence building course all in one. I still talk to him today and still think he is the best teacher there is.

4. A carefully developed curriculum that is related to the needs of students is a must. What good is it to teach students things they are not ready for or have already learned? This section is, by the most part, put in place by the district. As I look through the newspaper, I see the increasing advertisements of districts in need of a curriculum coordinator. This would be the person who puts together a plan and makes sure that plan is implemented. I hear of too many districts just having the plan in their files but
never really carrying it out to its true intentions. We as teachers, need to shape and mold the curriculum to fit the needs of our children each year. Too many of us sit back and let others decide what should be taught to our kids in our classrooms and never question the relativity. In a large district where there may be multiple schools, communication is so important. The district must make sure that across the district kids are being taught the same subjects in the same grades. As a principal, I am putting this on top of my priority list.

As I have been participating in many graduate courses, one common goal I have heard over and over is that of staff time and the availability to communicate with each other. Principals and superintendents must give that time to ensure the consistency in grade level curriculum across the district.

5. In order to correctly assess the students progress, we must monitor the student progress regularly. If I came into a classroom as an administrator, I want to be able to see on paper what evidence there is this class is progressing and not just standing still. As Tom Peters points out, “What get’s measured gets done” (Peters, 1987, p. 35). Everyone knows if we are given the questions to a test, we will study those questions. If we are accountable for the assessment of our students, we as teachers will put forth the effort in that area. As a result, I should be able to produce charts or graphs on what the data says about progress in my sixth grade classroom if we have the software and training to help us. Iowa Test of Basic Skills are one tool to use for that purpose, but they are never class specific enough to see a definite pattern in the year. I would come up with on my own, or find a well researched computer program to monitor my building’s progress, work on areas of improvement, and award positive efforts.

In the Benton Community School District, I had the opportunity to be involved in a workshop put on by the Grantwood AEA 10. The class was called Contemporary School Leadership Program/Goals 2000 Workshop.
We met once a month for a full day and a variety of leaders came and discussed what type of skills they thought were needed to be a successful leader of the future.

Out of all of the facilitators that we had the privilege to listen to, Susan Leddick had some of the most interesting ideas on leadership challenges of systems thinking, principles of continuous improvement, and planned change. This is the class in which I found the book *Who Moved My Cheese?* I talked about earlier.

I really liked her ideas on the plan, do, study, and act cycle in the knowledge principle (Leddick, 1998). She points out that "learning should be personal, purposeful, and generative. By learning I mean a physiological process of making meaning and increasing one’s capacity to act" (p.11). She also suggests following a plan for introducing each and every new activity you bring to your classroom. It seems so logical to plan ideas out first and follow through with summarizing results to see if it actually works. Then we as teachers and administrators can implement it to improve on what we already have. Too many times we jump into a plan with both feet and realize later that it is not working. Most of the time we do not even ask what is causing this not to work. We just throw it out the window and complain how another big city idea has wasted so much of our time. That is a downfall I see with our district. We are very close to the big Cedar Rapids Schools and what they do seems to float on the wind in our direction. Once we grab it, we do not let go until we have proven it does not work. Usually that is years later and precious time has been lost.

Kids in education are delicate subjects. Each child needs to be reached in a different way in order for them to reach their full potential in and out of the classroom. Education should be a fun experience. Too many view it as boring and convey the message of when will they use high tech trigonometry in their job as a farmer? Or why do they need to know verbs
and all of their tenses at work in a business firm? Making these connections with the students at-risk seems to be the hardest task of all. Trying to reach those kids that people have given up on and allow them to make the connections between life and school. What a joy to be a part of the process when a student sees math and science come together for the first time to be relevant in his/her life.

“Human beings perceive experience and information in different ways” (McCarthy, 1980, p.17). There are four main learning styles that different students posses in our classrooms every year. All are equally valuable and need to be taught as such. Students need to be comfortable about their own styles and in their own classroom before maximum learning can take place.

Not just to focus on the students, teachers also have their own styles of teaching. The key here is to get a variety of styles out of the teachers so all of the students can achieve according to their learning styles. I don’t think it would be asking too much to give students and staff a 4Mat System Inventory (McCarthy, 1980) and see where everyone is. This, as an administrator, I would see helping in the placement of students in certain classrooms where learning and teaching styles mesh a little tighter. This can also help in the evaluation process as I, the administrator, look for teaching styles identified by the 4Mat system as being a strength or what areas in teaching need improvement. Is he or she accomplishing their goal to incorporate other teaching styles into their classroom for all students learning styles? If not, I have a topic to discuss in my post conference evaluation meeting.

There are so many reasons to look into teaching the four learning modes and both right and left brain processing techniques. It is all really simple if you have the time and staff willing to put forth the effort. I think it really comes down to the question of who are we in this business for? It is not for
us as teachers or for the money. It is the kids. We need to, as administrators, make sure that we have the right teachers with the right attitudes with the right kids. If not, we are not giving a fair education to the ones who are entitled to it.

I believe education should teach right and wrong, manners, and how to respect your elders. I do not think these qualities have really been taught to the extent needed for the youth of today. In talking with my grandfather, he spoke of how the respect he had for his parents carried over to the schoolhouse, to the church, and to social functions. He knew if he “goofed around” at school he would be scolded by the teacher, but received ten times the punishment when he arrived home. I love listening to the stories at Christmas time or when all of the families get together for a special occasion and talk about our parents report cards, or the trouble the aunts and uncles were involved in when they lived down on the farm and attended the country school. As kids and grand kids, we would roll around laughing and grandma and grandpa would just shake their heads and throw in a comment or two when the truth seemed to stretch a little too far. There always seems to be one part of the story that we missed. As we slipped on our coats and said our goodbyes, we knew that the tale would continue the next time we met and get, as Paul Harvey would say, “The rest of the story” (Harvey, 1996).

Professional Growth For All

I have talked extensively on the student being taught in a variety of situations and the various activities teachers need to be involved in their districts to keep up with educational advancements. In this section, I am going to focus on the professional growth of teachers and how I can promote a positive experience, as an administrator, on their professional lives by promoting advancement in educational growth throughout their careers.

I have decided on a model of professional growth that will best suit me and make most who are involved comfortable with the situation of improvement in education. As an administrator, I have to be realistic and
realize that this model will not fit everyone. As Pajak (1993) states “No single model may suit an individual or a situation perfectly, but certain elements from several of the models may seem appealing” (pp.314-315). I have strived to put forth a model that is a mix of several models discussed by Dr. Robert Decker’s class Facilitating Professional Growth. (R.Decker, personal communication, February 15, 1999)

First, a rationale must be in place as to why I would be evaluating a staff or a situation. The two purposes I concluded were to enhance excellence in instruction and facilitate professional growth.

The process will include three cycles for all employees: Orientation, professional growth, and two assistive cycles. One for the beginning teachers and one for the professional teachers. Professional is defined as teachers who are tenured into a district. This process must be an on-going growth program that assists individuals in establishing his or her own goals and focus on self-improvement. This system will also build on employee strengths and encourage an individual’s self-assessment of achievement.

I would start out the cycle by introducing all new district teachers to a mentor. This mentor could be a principal or an experienced teacher to help devise a plan of action and overall show the novice teacher the ins and outs of the building, procedures, and general feeling of a staff member in the district.

A minimum of two two observation sessions will be needed and I will follow Robert Goldhammer’s five stages of clinical supervision. “Preobservation conference, observation, analysis and strategy, supervision conference, and the post-conference analysis” (Pajak, 1993, p. 28).

If a novice teacher meets the basic competencies of being a reflective continuous learner, effective classroom manager, effective planner and assessor of current curriculum, cooperates with peers, promotes high standards, and accepts responsibility for student outcomes, then they will
move onto the professional growth stage. If the individual is not successful in the first stages, we would place them on an assistive track.

The assistive track is used to specifically help individuals who need the extra push to acquire the basic philosophies. I, being the principal, would now be the mentor and at any time during this assistive cycle I do not see improvement, the termination process can be started. The teacher needs to be able to show self-improvement and gain a knowledge base of self-assessment in achievement to be able to move into the professional growth cycle.

Next, the professional growth cycle starts with a support team and me, the principal, collaborating on target goals for the upcoming year. A periodic assessment will be administered to see if the goals are being reached and if so, a new goal is produced and the cycle continues throughout the professional career.

If the professional growth goals are not being met, an assistive cycle is put into action with a one year plan directly with me, the principal. A support team can be used here also, but I must remember that down the road, I am ultimately responsible for the termination of this teacher if it would go the distance. Again, there will be two formal observations using the Goldhammer steps mentioned earlier. A summative evaluation (R. Decker, personal communication, February 22, 1998) will come at the end of the year to see if the basic competencies are met. If they are, the next goal is collaborated on, and finally the cycle continues. If the basic competencies are not met, an assistive program can be repeated or the termination process can be started.

Termination should come to no one as a surprise. As an effective principal, I need to be in contact constantly with a teacher who is having difficulties in the system. I will be with them every step, assisting in any way I can. If it comes down to termination, I must stand up to the decisions made and assure my staff and myself where I stand. Termination is not easy in
anyone's eyes. They maybe a great person, but the classroom management issue you find in the evaluations is just to much that a little patch will not take care of.

Overall, we are looking for a teacher to continually grow throughout their professional life. There seems to be an obvious benefit to the educational system as a whole. If we continuously have the best teachers improving their skills and passing those skills onto their peers in the organization, the outcome of our students will increase respectively. Technology is an ever improving field each day because society demands it. Should we expect any less from the teachers and students we are assisting through schools today? I think not.

Areas of Improvement

During my practicum experiences through the University of Northern Iowa, I have observed many administrators and the multiple jobs in which they are responsible for. They are administrators by title, but various occupations come with the job description. Those jobs may include guardian, doctor, disciplinarian, referee, friend, and leader just to name a few. After seeing different organizations perform, I noticed which leaders had empowered subordinate leaders and how much one system can vary because of it.

Gifford Pinchot is an author, speaker, and consultant on innovation management. He states that:

In a hierarchy, delegation is the primary tool for creating opportunity for more leaders. The subordinate leaders accept the scope of their command and use leadership to accomplish the tasks given to them. If delegation is the norm, each leader can create subordinate leaders. (The Drucker Foundation, 1996, p. 26)

I see myself as having a hard time delegating power not only to a staff, but a secretary as well. Right now, I feel as if I need to do everything myself for it to be completed correctly. I see everything that goes on in a
building being the responsibility of the principal. I even see myself being bogged down today with the added responsibilities I am taking on and not having the mind-set to think it is all right to let others help when I need it. As Dr. David Else had stated in a class, “Make sure you have a good secretary when you get in a school system.” (D. Else, personal communication, February 23, 1998) That statement was well introduced in the first building I walked into during my practicum. The secretary knew all that was going on and was very confident in her decision making around the building. The teachers also knew this and respected her greatly. I definitely see myself striving toward that type of environment in a school building.

Past to Present

Concluding Section

It is eye-opening to see the advancements that education has made since the one room schoolhouse. Being able to go to school was a privilege. As time went by and technology grew, graduation from the eighth grade was considered a high honor. Then high schools were the next step on the educational ladder. Next, the four year colleges seemed to be the right choice. Finally, two year specialized training tends to fit into the hurry-up schedules of many today. The advancement of what we now think is an adequate education has greatly changed.

Let’s compare now and then. Our high school education now is like an eighth grade education way back when. Some think it is all right if they are going to work on their fathers farm, but even farming today is becoming such a technology based occupation they need some kind of further education to keep up with the latest developments. College is like high school and in order to get a “good paying” or “respectable” job people are expected to attend. Where will it all end?

Education today needs to continue a steady growth in the amount we teach our youth. If kids are expected to have a greater knowledge base
when they leave high school, education and educators should be expected to carry a larger load to be able to put out top quality students. Along with that comes money issues. We should receive more money if the society really looks at the services we provide as stated earlier in this paper.

If we expect students to produce at a higher level we need to demand that our principals, teachers, superintendents, and all who are associated with education to pick up the pace also. Let’s not let the older, “ready to retire” teachers or the ever increasing lazy teachers slide by with their lacking instructional techniques and hope the younger or more enthusiastic teachers pick up the pace for all.

I have always been a inspirational quotation lover. I use them in teaching, sports, and in my personal life. I have read many books that include quotes about situations and how to overcome obstacles. My favorite book that discusses seven little habits of life is Stephen Covey’s (1989) The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. This book has helped me develop a lot of the ideas learned in the many graduate classes I have taken in the past five years. I am also very excited to use these “habits” and lessons with my staff as an administrator. All of these lessons can be used by anyone and the variety of situations they can be used with is endless. Covey lists seven lessons and gives a detailed description of each in the book:

1. Be Proactive
2. Being with the End in Mind
3. Put First Things First
4. Think Win/Win
5. Seek First to Understand...Then to be Understood
6. Synergize
7. Sharpen the Saw (Covey, 1989, p. 53)
All of these habits would be a great in-service activity for a staff or a district to study and learn. Not only for the school's sake, but the personal lives of all employees in the school system.

I am proud to be an educator and love the challenges that go along with it everyday! The satisfaction of seeing kids understanding a topic after many days of teaching, not knowing if they would ever get it, is so heart warming. I see the administrative field much in the same way, challenges and hard times followed by satisfaction gained by achieving a goal. Education is where I want to be for kids, for parents, for life.
References


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