A preferred vision for leading schools: a reflective essay

DeAnne E.H. Lewis
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©2005 DeAnne E.H. Lewis
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons, and the Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1082

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
A preferred vision for leading schools: a reflective essay

Abstract

"A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (Wilmore, 2002, p. 52). All children should be given equal opportunity for advancement and growth. What is challenging for one child may be boring and repetitive for another. Placing students in appropriate settings that will allow the appropriate level of challenge and pace of learning for each child is the goal for the creation of the differentiating classroom.
A PREFERRED VISION FOR LEADING SCHOOLS

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary Education

The University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

by

DeAnne E. H. Lewis

May 2005

Dr. David Else
This Research Paper by DeAnne E. H. Lewis

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Has been approved as meeting paper requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

Dave Else

3-7-2005
Date Approved

Advisor/Director of Research Paper

Victoria L. Robinson

3-7-2005
Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper

John K. Smith

3/8/05
Date Received

Head, Department of Educational Leadership Counseling, and Postsecondary Education.
I believe that leadership and education are based on ethics, discipline, relationships, student achievement and curriculum. These qualities have grown and changed with each of my life experiences. These qualities also play a role in the choices I make.

I get my beliefs about leadership and education from growing up in a mid-west family during the nineteen sixties and seventies. I was taught the difference between right and wrong. I have learned the choices I make result in consequences. Values and beliefs were always a top priority. My parents encouraged me to set goals, plan, execute and evaluate both the small day to day activities and also my long term dreams.

Each individual has his or her own ethics and beliefs. Realizing this has helped me to do two things. First, I seek the facts. Second, I try to understand the person’s point of reference. As a principal, I feel it will be necessary to always look at the facts keeping in mind how different beliefs may have caused the problem or misconception.

My ethics and beliefs must be evident in the decisions I make. They must also be evident in my behavior. As a professional and a leader, I must be the one to set the example for my colleagues, the staff and students to follow. Having good ethics and strong beliefs have enabled me to develop discipline skills in two areas. It takes personal discipline to be a successful manager. It takes skill to discipline those who make poor decisions or exhibit inappropriate behavior.
Personal discipline means more than just setting goals. It means the ability to set goals and to follow through until their completion. My strengths in completing goals include my ability to organize, delegate, motivate, and have fair expectations.

Being a teacher of behaviorally disordered students has given me the tools to discipline inappropriate behavior. Anger issues and conflict are not to be shied away from, but they should be viewed as learning experiences. I have learned to mediate and to listen without being judgmental, as I search for underlying causes. In addition, I have learned to give consequences that are fair and just. I strongly believe that I have an innate ability to read and understand people. This has helped me to mediate and discipline in a more respectful way.

Understanding and reading people are integral parts of a positive relationship. Positive relationship building skills can be developed and must continually be refined. With our constantly changing society, diversity is now the norm. One must strive to understand another person’s background and point of view.

I believe that positive relationships are built on honesty and trust. Developing mutual respect is also important. As a leader in an educational institution, I am responsible for modeling positive relationships and positive relationship building skills.

I believe that it is the duty of the principal to develop positive relationships within and among every subgroup of the school’s society. This will enhance a safe learning environment. In addition, it is the responsibility of the
principal to develop positive relationships with family and other community members. A positive school culture leads to student success and achievement.

I support the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standard number five which states: “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” (Wilmore, 2002, p. 80). I believe I have the qualities of integrity and fairness. I am an ethical person. I believe that a principal also has the opportunity to promote high expectations, strategies, techniques, methods, and provide positive reinforcement to enhance student success and achievement.

A well planned and written curriculum is a must to enhance student success and achievement. A well planned and written curriculum is the result of cooperation between district leaders, principals and teachers. As a part of the team planning and writing of curriculum, the principal should take the leadership role to promote, implement, and evaluate the curriculum.

I believe the curriculum should be based on the national and state standards and benchmarks. These standards and benchmarks provide a framework that will affect the classroom activities of teaching and learning. These standards and benchmarks will help our schools to focus on identifying effective programs and practices gaining perspective on increasing student learning.

I have strong beliefs about leadership and education. Ethics, discipline, positive relationships, student success, and a well written curriculum are some of the areas I feel passionate about. As a school leader, it is my responsibility to model, promote, reinforce, and achieve these elements.
Ethics Education

“A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” (Wilmore, 2002 p. 80). I believe that schools are by nature ethical institutions. In our endeavor to educate students to be self-supporting citizens, we teach ethics; the difference between right and wrong. It is the combined effort of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and community to shape our future leaders. We do this by setting a good example, sharing history, teaching decision making, and providing opportunities for students to practice these skills. We create an ethical culture.

An ethical school is characterized by an ethical culture. This means that the ethical nature of the school is its devotion to the well being of young people. This remains at the forefront of all actions and decisions. Ethical concerns are embedded in a school’s everyday activities. They are defined in black and white as rules and policies. They are modeled, taught and acknowledged in a school’s day-to-day atmosphere.

Creating an ethical culture in a school is the responsibility of the administrators, teachers, and staff. These school leaders are responsible for their personal and professional ethics. Administrators, teachers, and staff are responsible to model not only their ethics but how to respond to those who have made poor choices.

Ethics is defined as a “motivation between right and wrong; essential as a code of conduct” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1990, p. 325). A code of ethics ensures a
long term commitment to the most important values of life. It calls for people to take responsibility for their decisions, to exercise judgment, and to live with those decisions.

The code of ethics is the core of educational leadership. As an administrator, I must have an awareness of what lies behind ethical choices. Ethical conduct requires decision-making and good judgment. It is especially difficult in situations where it seems to be a matter of choosing between competing or conflicting values. For example, an administrator must lead a team in deciding the placement of a child with a disability. Is the regular classroom or the special education classroom the best placement? There is conflict between the views that students should remain in a regular classroom with their peers and the view that students benefit more from an individualized program of study. We do this by setting a good example, sharing history, teaching decision making, and providing opportunities for students to practice these skills. We create an ethical culture.

An administrator must be aware of general principles such as justice, human rights and respect for the choices of others. The rights-based approach requires an assessment of actions and state of affairs in terms of the identification of conflicting rights, the potential for rights violations, and the protection of each individual’s rights.

As an administrator, I must take into consideration background, rights, legalities and possible outcomes before I make a decision. I must consider the greatest good for the greatest number of people while I protect the individual’s
rights. I must not only do this for the children I am to protect and lead but also for the teachers, staff, parents and community members.

The administrator guides the school’s ethical culture, but it is the culmination of the ethical backgrounds of all the leaders within the school that achieve the desired outcome. As an administrator guides this team in making ethical decisions, Elaine L. Wilmore’s (2002) suggestion to borrow the Rotary Club International’s Four Way Test may prove beneficial.

The Rotary Club International has something they call the Four Way Test, comprising four questions Rotarians should ask themselves when confronting any issue. They are as follows:

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?

If you think about it, the Rotarians are on to a good thing. What if with the permission of the Rotarians, we kept questions 1, 2, and 4, but modified the third one: Will it build goodwill and facilitate greater student learning and success? Wow! Those four simple questions would then comprise as good a set of educators’ ethical benchmarks as I’ve seen anywhere. Why not put them to work? (p. 83)

These questions will also promote the team of professionals to grow and shape an ethical school culture.
School policies are also a framework on which to base decisions. Policies do not and cannot cover every issue. There will occasionally be special circumstances that require an individual on the spot to make choices between the greatest good for the greatest number or the primacy of individual rights. Precise regulations create a climate in which people feel able to abandon any sense of personal responsibility once they have done what is required of them. An example of this would be when a teacher thinks because he or she has notified the school principal of concerns, he or she need take no further interest in the matter. Precise regulations can reinforce a culture of compliance in which doing the right thing comes to be equated with following instructions, regardless of their content and regardless of the gaps or flaws they contain.

If no attempt is made to help teachers explicitly reflect upon, internalize and grow in an ethical manner, the culture of the school is not being nurtured, and an ethical school is not being achieved. Ethical growth includes an understanding of the purpose of regulations and the commitment to the said purpose. An absence of such growth may cause teacher behavior to be reduced to legalistic rule-following or minimalist compliance, where the letter of the law is sometimes blindly observed. It is the administrator’s responsibility to create an ethical culture based on the law in such a way as to promote respect, trust, and fairness.

The emphasis on rights is not the only approach when creating an ethical culture in a school. One may also incorporate a utilitarian moral approach or a communitarian’s approach.
According to the utilitarian moral approach, it is the outcome or consequences of actions or policies that denote whether or not an action or policy is ethically acceptable. It is the determination of the value of an act by referring to its moral consequences. Actions or policies that promote positive outcomes, that are understood in terms of improving welfare and increasing happiness, or the satisfaction of preferences are ethically acceptable. Those that are likely to lead to negative consequences, understood in terms of causing harm and increasing suffering or frustrating preferences, are not. Utilitarians try, from experience and careful reasoning, to set up a series of rules that, when followed, will yield the greatest good for all humanity (Beckner, 2004). The utilitarian approach focus is on the greatest good for the greatest number. It does not recognize individual rights as the primary ethical concern.

There are those who believe in the virtue-based or communitarian’s ethics platform. This platform focuses on the development and exercise of sound moral character. Sound moral character traits such as generosity, goodness, kindness, sympathy and loving care for others are valued and practiced. These moral characteristics shape decision-making (Beckner, 2004).

An administrator making decisions should have a combination of approaches including those based on rights, utilitarianism, and communitarianism. Helping teachers and staff base decisions with a combined approach will lead to an ethical education culture. As an administrator, I would like to structure, nurture and cultivate an ethical school. To do this I would work with teachers, staff, parents and community members to promote the well being of the students. In
the culture of the school, ethics needs to be seen as something positive and promoted rather than something being held over the school community. Each individual’s well-being should be considered worthy of respect and consideration. It should not be considered as abstract or impersonal but as something that can be built upon to help others become aware of how each person is unique and special.

There is much for an administrator to consider in making the school community a better place in which to work and learn.

Consistency and justice are considered essential in forming an ethical school community. It should be a goal to pursue a value for each person’s individual rights. Another goal should be the practice of holding each individual personally accountable.

Administrators, teachers, staff, and students should strive for personal accountability. Teaching all of these individuals to question themselves and to take responsibility for their decisions and actions will enhance life in an ethical culture. John G. Miller (2001) tells us people have more fun. “Life is simply more satisfying and enjoyable for those who choose the way of personal accountability” (p. 4). Students taught to be personally accountable will not only be taught to treat everyone else respectfully, but they should also expect to be treated in a similar fashion. They will learn by example as well as by being guided to learn that every person is valued and will be helped to contribute to the well being of the whole school community. It is evident that the promotion of an
An ethical school as envisaged here will require that priority be given to the quality of the human relationships within the school community.

Much can be said about the educational process involved in promoting an ethical school community (Longstaff, 1994). It is evident that administrators, teachers and support staff are of fundamental importance to this endeavor. Top-down ethical culture is not sufficient to equip or stay true to the vision or growth of a school. Everyone needs to have ethics education. If the team is to be enabled to make the contributions which only they can towards having an ethical school, they need to play a much more active role in the education of ethics. Schools should go through the process of developing their own codes rather than using a code already developed by another school or team. The process itself is extremely important for the school as it helps everyone on the team to learn what is important to the members of the team in the way of ethical performance.

How can I, as an administrator, meet this challenge? I would lead by example, as my relationships should be built with respect, trust, and consideration. In addition to providing an example, I feel that as an administrator, I have a more formal leadership role. I should encourage ethical harmony within the staff room by encouraging the discussion of ethical questions by staff members. I would help the team develop a school-based code of ethics through scrutinizing the school policies and practices with the regular process of whole school self-evaluation. I would work collaboratively in the process toward making decision-making part of an ethical structure.
Discipline Education

Student misbehavior is a problem affecting schools across the nation. Student conduct problems in the classroom interfere with teaching and learning and are thought to be a precursor to later school dropouts and similar negative social outcomes. Student behavior problems are also thought to be a leading contributor to teacher stress.

Student misbehavior is any activity that interferes with teaching and learning. Students' misbehavior can be classified as anything such as not being prepared for class, talking in class, fighting, or tardiness. These all disrupt the process of teaching and learning. Behavior problems are appearing each year in younger and younger students. What used to be most prevalent in the high school years is now appearing in the early elementary years. Largely for this reason, school discipline has become a focus of many schools today.

One must ask many questions about student misbehavior. Why are they starting so much younger? What can we do to stop or help the next generation become better tax payers and citizens? Where are these behaviors coming from? As a school administrator, I need to be an educational leader who promotes appropriate behavior and the success of all students. I must ensure the management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. Standard number three states "As a school administrator, I need to be an educational leader who promotes the success of all students ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (Wilmore, 2002, p. 52).
I believe that providing the management that leads to a safe, efficient and effective learning environment will enhance appropriate student behavior.

Management can be defined as "giving a direction" (Webster's Dictionary, 1990, p. 605). As an administrator or leader, it is my job to give direction to teachers, staff, parents, and students. I am not here only to discipline but to set up the framework to provide alternatives to misbehavior. Preventative planning and action will alleviate much of the need to discipline. As part of this preventative action, we must understand a student's background.

Most of today's behavior problems come from children who have been led to believe they are poor human beings and poor students. These students feel that they have something to prove to society, their families, and their peers. These students would rather fail on their own terms by becoming a behavior problem than to try and risk failing in front of their peers, parents, and teachers. As a school leader, I need to realize this and help students overcome these attitudes.

A school needs discipline programs and policies to help students learn self-control and restructuring of behaviors. School administrators need to help teachers with classroom management skills so that teachers may teach instead of spending time disciplining. To do this, strategies must be taught to teachers and students. Such strategies include proper conflict resolution and peer mediation strategies. These strategies have helped students and teachers build a safe, effective learning environment. When these strategies are put into the school curriculum, it has been proven to have a strong and eloquent argument for teaching
behavior core values. Effective teachers are preventing behavior problems (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2003).

Thomas Lickona (1993) articulated teaching core values when he wrote: Such values affirm our human dignity, promote the good of the individual and the common good, and protect our human rights. They meet the classic ethical tests of reversibility (Would you want to be treated this way?), and universalizability (Would you want to be treated this way in a similar situation?). They define our responsibilities in a democracy, and they are recognized by all civilized people and taught by all enlightened creeds. Not to teach children these core ethical values is a grave moral failure. (p. 8)

One may question teaching values in the school setting. As educators, we are obligated to keep the separation of church and state.

Values which once were embedded in typical family and academic structured programs are becoming less and less visible as our family structures become altered. At one time students’ positive behaviors were reinforced both directly and indirectly at home and school. In today’s society, this is not the normal case. Schools are now having to spend more time teaching right from wrong with less and less support from the parents and community.

Whether the increase in inappropriate student behaviors is caused by a student’s poor self concept or the lack of parental and community providing moral upbringing, is really not important. What is important is that we provide a
safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. As an administrator, I must strive to do just that by providing the tools and framework to promote positive behavior. Providing routines to follow, setting a good example, and showing students and staff how to accentuate the positive are just a few ways I plan to do this.

Culture And Climate In An Educational Setting

The relationships within a school determine its culture and climate. In each school, I believe that the principal sets these critical elements. Students shape their culture from the lessons they learn, from the books they read, and from the world that surrounds them. Whereas climate has been described as the way things feel within the organization, culture—a term originally used by archeologists—refers to the way things are done within the society (Thomson, 1993).

Climate can be operational, immediate, and personal. It is what make people happy or unhappy on a daily basis. Climate can change quickly and radically, and in fact often changes with new leadership or change with certain personnel. If the climate is negative, as a new principal that would be one of the first issues needing to be addressed. Climate must be in the day-to-day operational culture. Climate to me is defined in matters of comfort and consideration, leader-subordinate relations, how staff interact and approach their work, and the overall atmosphere in the school workplace. Climate can be determined by what the leadership style of a principal is, how repressive the student disciplinary system is, how mutually supportive teachers are, how inflexible people are, as well as the
quality of staff development. The climate of a school is one of the building blocks
towards giving children character.

On the other hand, the culture of school relies on traditions and how things are
done to meet goals of the school, community, state, and federal government.
Remember that a culture of change consists of great rapidity and nonlinearity on
the one hand and equally great potential for creative breakthroughs on the other.
The paradox is that transformation would not be possible without accompanying
messiness (Fullan, 2001).

I strongly believe that the character of our children must be the
responsibility of everyone: administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and
community. How would I do this? First, I would get to know the students in the
school by doing things such as punching their lunch cards. I would go down to the
lunch room every day until I have learned each child’s name. I would practice by
greeting the students as they come into the building. I would show the teachers,
support staff, parents, and community that to build relationships I need to invest
myself in that climate nurturing process. It is essential for long-term success.
Together we can all develop and implement a better learning environment with a
positive attitude.

Schools are an excellent place in which to promote good culture.
Unfortunately, it used to be that families spent a great deal of time with each
other. However, in today’s society, the old fashion family is a thing of the past.
Families used to be the primary source of support for a child, but as time goes on
the school is having more and more influence in what a consistent culture should
be. The increased stress and fracturing of today’s life styles make it imperative that schools work with parents.

A school culture needs to foster a sense of belonging. Children come to school each day with more than their backpacks with them. They also bring a myriad of factors that shape their learning and development. These factors include family issues, health, different ethnic cultures, learning styles, and abilities. These factors are influenced by the behaviors found acceptable at home which may not be acceptable in the school setting.

“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 staff professional growth” (Wilmore, 2002, p. 32). As an administrator, I want to be that educational leader who promotes the success of all students. I understand that it will not be easy, but I also understand that nothing good in life is easy or free. I will work hard to create a learning environment in which principles and values are lived and modeled, because children are always watching.

Children take their leads from our actions, whether we want them to or not. They have a remarkable ability to see double standards, to be suspicious of sugary words, and to find gaps between what we say and what we do. But I also realize that being human, we often fail and it hurts every time. Yet, as humans we continue to try even though we continue tripping, falling, and regrouping. We try not to make the same mistake twice, knowing there are pitfalls everywhere, hoping for the strength to live our beliefs even in our most weary and impatient
moments. But it can't just be one person who is creating this culture. It must be a combined effort of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and community that continue to try. I believe to be successful I need to collaborate with the teachers, support staff, parents, and community to create a nurturing and caring culture.

Children spend a significant amount of time at school. As trained and caring adults, administrators, teachers, and support staff, we have the opportunity to observe and address needs that sometime parents see but do not know what to do or who to go to for help. That is where I will involve the community. How many times have you heard only the negatives concerning a professional or in-service day? It does not come just from the community side; teachers and support staff also want these days to be worthwhile as well. That is why I would like to see every staff member in the district joined with representatives from the community for a training time. This training time would be a time where everyone would be encouraged to effectively implement relationships between the school and the community and to promote and participate in and fully support this process of building relationships and communication as a team. The purpose of this would be to develop a team with shared values and common goals of being socially responsible and caring individuals. The goal of this team would be to provide learning opportunities, communication skills, and role models with all administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and community that will help to shape and build a culture.
Training time would start at the beginning of the year to set the tone of letting everyone know that by being visible around the school and school activities sends a powerful message of caring and concern. I would communicate with parents who do not usually come to the activities because their children are not involved in band or athletics. These parents need to know that they are just as much a part of our school. Their presence will reinforce the community context within which the school exists and have a positive impact on the behaviors of not only their child but all students. I would address such topics as caring and respect, how to deal effectively with disagreement and conflict, how to share responsibility when it comes to discipline, and how to build bridges with tutoring of both academics and social skills. This would over time result in fortifying and strengthening our school culture with loyalties, traditions and hope. As each child prepares for his or her future, he or she is preparing not only themselves but for future generations. Everyone will realize that they are getting what they have come to expect, and even more will continue to support this school culture and build on it.

Diverse Education

Every child is unique. Although we may revel in this fact, it poses a problem for the educational system. When students are diverse, teachers can either teach to the middle and hope for the best, or they can face the challenge of diversifying their instruction.

In today's educational world more and more teachers are choosing to face the challenge of diverse learners by reaching out to all of their students, but
they still struggle as they try to tailor their instruction to each of their individual student's needs. An effective teacher needs to reach the gifted students, those with disabilities, the behaviorally challenged students, and everyone in between. They have to work at delivering instruction to meet the needs of the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners. In short, these teachers are differentiating instruction.

Differentiating instruction is a teaching philosophy based on the premise that teachers should adapt instruction to meet students' differences (Willis & Mann, 2000). This is different than the instruction that marches students through the curriculum chapter by chapter, book by book. Administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and members of the community have for years been recognizing that no two children are alike. If a curriculum is a one size fits all, the child that varies from the norm will suffer.

Differentiated instruction is not a new concept, experts say. Carol Ann Tomlinson, an associate professor at the University of Virginia, tells us that back in the days of the one-room schoolhouse, when students ages 6 to 16 learned together, differentiated instruction was how they did school (as cited in Willis & Mann, 2000).

Differentiated learning is an integral part of my daily life as a special education instructor. For each student, I must plan a specific curriculum designed to meet the needs and learning style of that student. This plan is outlined as a set of goals, strategies, and accommodations of the student's Individual Education plan (IEP). Each class period finds me
teaching students at different levels and with different learning styles. It is the epitome of differentiated learning.

I realize that asking teachers to differentiate instruction raises many issues including classroom management, time, and grading. However, as an administrator, I would encourage and support this teaching philosophy. I could share what I've learned and experienced as a special education teacher. Teachers need to be able to use a variety of resources and not just rely on one textbook. Teachers also need to be aware of the different learning styles of their students and make modifications to empower each child to learn successfully.

As an administrator, it would be my responsibility to see that a variety of resources be purchased to meet every child's learning needs. In addition to a variety of resources another critical factor in promoting differentiation is staff development that is effective and efficient. I would guide the effort to align staff development, curriculum, material selection, and methodology. It is a large task, but I believe it would be worth it to have the best education for each student.

There are those that think that differentiated learning is a form of tracking. It is not. Tomlinson states it is "...intended to be the exact opposite." She says that "teachers must give every child access to the curriculum and ensure that every child makes progress" (as cited in Willis & Mann, 2000, p. 47). As an administrator, I believe that the attitude that I bring to differentiated learning is critical. If I have a positive attitude toward differentiated learning, others will be more likely to accept it. Teachers need to be lifelong learners. If they see the value
in differentiated learning, they will make the effort to learn this philosophy and practice it in their classroom.

Differentiating instruction is not easy, and no one claims that it is. Patricia Wooden-Weaver, an education consultant and counseling psychologist from East Hanover, N.J., who co-facilitates ASCD's network on differentiated instruction, notes, "There's not one miracle thing that works for every child," (as cited in Willis & Mann, 2000, p. 15). She states that, "You need a range of strategies" (p. 15). Teachers have used strategies such as cooperative learning, multi-age grouping, and addressing multiple intelligence. I believe that when a child is not where they can learn, they let everyone know that loudly and clearly. Students are more engaged and make rapid progress if instruction is at their level and at their pace.

It is the goal of teachers to have students master their curriculum. Glatthorn (2000) tells us “teachers need to develop their expertise with two kinds of remediation: on-the-spot remediation and systematic remediation to help students achieve mastery” (p. 128).

On-the-spot remediation is the response a teacher makes in every lesson when it becomes apparent that students are not mastering the content. A teacher must constantly monitor the class to gauge understanding. When monitoring suggests lack of understanding, a teacher may make adjustments or on-the-spot remediations. These include using a simpler vocabulary to explain key concepts, giving more examples, using visual aids, taking additional time to
explain, providing students with concrete experiences, and using students who have mastered the concept to explain it in their words (Glatthorn, 2002).

Systematic remediation is a structured program designed to increase student success. Glatthorn (2000) suggests the following strategies:

1. Providing additional time after school,
2. Using volunteers as after school tutors,
3. Using materials that provide an alternative route to learning,
4. Working with parents to develop a supportive home environment,
5. Providing staff development for all teachers on making the curriculum more meaningful and using more effective teaching strategies (p. 130-131).

As an administrator, I would be a part of the problem solving team to develop strategies such as Glatthorn suggests.

“A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment” (Wilmore, 2002, p. 52). All children should be given equal opportunity for advancement and growth. What is challenging for one child may be boring and repetitive for another. Placing students in appropriate settings that will allow the appropriate level of challenge and pace of learning for each child is the goal for the creation of the differentiating classroom.
References


