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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 this paper I will discuss my educational beliefs, and how the current literature supports my vision for the future of education. Through my discourse I plan to affirm my mission for student achievement. As I proceed, it is my intent to convey what I believe to be essential for me as a leader of learning for the campus community. I will also express my views of the principal as change agent, along with my beliefs about service learning. As I culminate my educational beliefs, I will focus on how the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL) apply to the overall success of student learning.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR LEADING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Master of Arts in Education

By

Leona M. McCall

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A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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My decision to become an administrator arose from my desire to make a significant difference in the lives of students and fellow educators. I care about others in general and have a tremendous concern for the future of education. I see myself as a leader and have resolved to meet the challenge that lies ahead. I accept the leadership challenge as I move forward to serve and support the learning community. While moving forward in my leadership development, I will strive to develop distinct practices that exhibit good leadership behaviors. I vow to work to become all I can be.

I decided to become an educator when my children were in elementary school and I saw the need for more quality caring teachers. I believed I could make a positive impact on the educational lives of children. I remember when I was in elementary school; teachers believed in us and encouraged us to do our best. Teachers held high expectations for all the students. With their guidance, self determination and support from my family, I went on to graduate from East Saint Louis Senior High, which is considered to be one of America's worst educational environments as described by Jonathan Kozol, in his book *Salvage Inequalities*.

This gives me a different view of learning communities and a unique position on student expectation. Not only do I believe all children can learn I *expect* them to learn. My experiences have certainly shaped my views of education as well as life. I am aware that we live in a world that is constantly changing and therefore the way we educate children must also change. My desire is to be a part of that change as a visionary leader.

What I Believe about Leadership and Education

Working in the field of education, I believe that I can give back a little of what I received from educators who inspired me to believe in myself, despite the environment around me. I have always believed education to be the foundation from which strong character is built within individuals. In my current position, I have an opportunity to work with parents on developing goals for their children as well as setting personal goals for themselves. The reward in working with families comes with the celebrations of their attainment of goals regardless of the size. It's the little things that ultimately make the work I do worth while. The experiences that children have and with who they have them impact their lives forever. Education offers all students infinite learning possibilities which can propel them to heights unimaginable. Students may not always see or appreciate what is done for them by educators, but the real payoff lies in the common good for our society. It is my objective to empower students and others to become lifelong learners.

In this paper I will discuss my educational beliefs and how the current literature supports my vision for the future of education. Through my discourse I plan to affirm my mission for student achievement. As I proceed it is my intent to convey what I believe to be essential for me as a leader of learning for the campus community. I will also express my views of the principal as change agent along with my beliefs about service learning. As I culminate my educational beliefs I will focus on how the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL) apply to the overall success for student learning.

As principals, I believe we are responsible for the success of all students and should be committed to developing relationships with all stakeholders to support student

success. Developing supportive relationships builds collaboration and allows everyone in the learning community an opportunity to take ownership in the educational achievement of students. Whitaker (2003) states that, “effective principals viewed themselves as responsible for all aspects of their school” (p. 15). As leaders, we must develop a teamwork approach to meeting the challenging needs of students and connecting the learning community to the development of the goals and the vision for the school community. I believe that building small connections is a way to develop bigger connections. Enthusiasm over time can become contagious.

Creating an environment based on integrity, fairness and ethics is essential and builds the climate of the school. I believe the climate of the school is important to the achievement of students. Wilmore (2002) implies that ISSL # 5 promoting success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner is the most important standard of all and sums up all the other standards (p. 80). I agree that ISSL #5 is very important, and school leaders must model ethical leadership. It is also essential for school leaders to provide opportunities for staff members to be exposed to the underlying concepts that will enforce the desired moral character within the school community. The idea Wilmore suggested of providing scenarios and solutions which address ethical dilemmas is a great one and something I would definitely use as a school leader.

In a world of constant chaos and change, schools continue to be a place where student achievement and character education benefits our society. The promotion of morals in mainstream society today, seems to be on the decline. Children are overly exposed to all sorts of violence, sexuality, and drugs at an early age through various forms of media. There is a lack of prosocial skills exhibited by students across the nation

in all kinds of schools. Given these challenges, educators are faced with the dilemma of addressing social and emotional competencies of our young people (Patti & Tobin, 2003, p.2). I believe it is necessary to model and have staff model the expected behaviors we expect from students. Principals must also communicate the purpose of the methods being taught to parents and community members on a regular basis. Building good character in kids involves the students having opportunities to live the values being taught (p. 69).

Patti & Tobin (2003) proclaim that it is through intrinsic motivation that we get the most long lasting performance results and refers to the school leader as the person primarily responsible for motivating the adults in the organization (p. 100). Therefore, as a principal, I must be able to motivate the adults in the school community in order to reach the campus vision. Leaders are constantly on the look out for ways to spread the psychological benefits of making people feel like winners, because winners contribute in important ways to the success of projects (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 281)

I believe that as a visionary leader I can learn from other leaders in conversations and broaden my knowledge from books, which offer stimulation and inspiration as I strive to hold on to the dream and my vision for the future. One of the hardest thing to do as a visionary leader is to go forth while standing alone. This is where motivation and determination kicks in and I will work to build alliances with others to promote understanding and support. I know that there are many obstacles that I will face as a visionary leader, but I also realize the importance of developing connections with other leaders who share my same passion. As a visionary leader, I must first understand that no one can do it alone; that everyone makes mistakes, and that I must know my limitations.

In this way, an effective leader is capable of following while inspiring others along by offering guidance and support.

The overall responsibility of a principal is a daunting undertaking. However, as I embark on this great journey, I will always remember the reason for the journey is always the students. To be able to touch the lives of children and families is a privilege and deserves diligence and commitment. As I address the educational concerns in the day-to-day business of the learning community, I will focus on building partnerships that sustain enthusiasm for learning and student achievement. As the leader of learning I promise to stand for students and lead the way to lifelong learning. Kouzes & Posner (1995) affirm that effective leaders are constantly learning (p. 323).

As a future school leader, I am compelled by current literature to develop the necessary self-awareness skills to successfully facilitate learning among my staff, in my quest to promote a Professional Learning Community. It is important to me as a leader to provide opportunities for children that develop their ability to become active participants in their future. To accomplish these goals, current literature points out the necessity for the leader to be a continual learner to increase their abilities and talents.

I understand the importance of taking care of self. You know they say "All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy." This goes for Leona as well. Dealing with the day-to-day business of running a school can be consuming, and leaders can easily become engrossed in work and service to others that personal time becomes neglected. I believe leaders must be proactive about creating personal down time to maintain the momentum for what must be done. It is important to schedule time for personal renewal at home and at work. There needs to be a balance between personal and professional development.

Leader of Learning

Current literature on being a reflective practitioner and leader of learning concludes that emotional intelligence is the foundation for life successes and a critical component of how we act, who we are, who we can become, and how others respond to us. Patti and Tobin argue that the best schools are moral communities where core values and educational practices are in alignment (p. 16). Leaders must recognize that they are the models; that their behaviors influence the culture and climate of the organizations they lead. According to Hall and Hord (2006), the role of administrators in creating collaborative school cultures is to shape the norms, values, and beliefs of the staff (p. 33). Edgar Schein (1992) defines culture as a set of shared assumptions which influence a school's day-to-day operation (as cited in Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 19).

In order to successfully facilitate school culture, the administrator must focus on developing the emotional competencies of the staff within the learning community. Patti and Tobin (2003) define competency as any measurable characteristic of a person that differentiates levels of performance in a given job, role, organization or culture (p. 3). When adults develop these learned capabilities based on emotional intelligence the result is outstanding performance at work (Patti and Tobin 2003, p.3).

Self-awareness largely determines a leader's effectiveness and is the foundation of all socioemotional skills. Patti & Tobin (2003) state that, "self-awareness consists of emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence" (p. 13). Self-awareness includes the understanding of our emotions and what triggers those emotions (p.19). Patti and Tobin describe the brain as a life-long connection-making system that takes in and processes information from the external and internal environments including

different regions of the brain itself (p. 13). New connections are continually developing, while old connections are strengthened or weakened as life goes on (p. 13).

In our everyday lives, emotions serve as signals that focus our attention, help in the process of storing memories, and act as an essential ingredient in motivation (p.13). Motivation is essential for leaders. For me to be an effective leader of learning it is imperative that I understand how I learn and my own barriers to learning. As I continue to develop my leadership skills I will prepare myself to respond to the rapid changes in the learning community by increasing my repertoire of self-regulating strategies. As a result of my self-awareness skills I believe that I will be able to guide others in developing their individual self-awareness skills.

The task of leading a school community is an enormous undertaking. When one considers the different personalities that make up the campus community, feeling a bit intimidated should be no surprise. In order to effectively lead and develop a Professional Learning Community, a principal needs to be aware of the diversity in the community as well as the diversity within the school itself. This is a daunting task that requires planning, knowledge of theory, self, and others, and above all else, commitment.

As I reflect on my aspirations to become a leader of learning in a school community, I understand the significance my own learning has on the school community. If the goal is for students to become lifelong learners, as the principal I must be the model. Research has identified the role of the leader as a continual learner for school improvement. Learning to lead with emotional intelligence is the desired model for improving social and emotional competencies. As I continue to develop the necessary strategies to become the leader of learning in the school community, my goal is to

increase my abilities as an emotionally intelligent leader. It is apparent to me that awareness of my own learning can and will impact my ability to inspire and motivate others. Current literature has indicated that the motivation of the campus community is the sole responsibility of the administrator.

Balance is a critical element in the administrator's ability to manage the campus community and to facilitate the vision for the learning community. By developing the necessary strategies that inspire and motivate staff, I will positively impact my success as a leader. High-level communication skills will assist me in articulating the vision for the campus community and advocate needs for change. Skills in problem solving will enhance how I respond and deal with conflict. Learning to recognize the needs of the campus community and establish common grounds from which to build the vision will promote collaboration among staff in an effort to develop the desired Professional Learning Community.

These ideas align with the ISSL #1, which describes an educational leader as one who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community. ISSL #2 connects to this research as the leader promotes success by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. ISSL #4 addresses how the effort of an administrator supports learning by collaborating with families, community members, and responding to diverse community interests and needs.

Preparation is the critical element in the development of an effective framework from which an administrator operates on a day-to-day basis. As I continue my work

towards improving my social and emotional competencies, it is important for me to develop the necessary strategies to bring the theory and practice of emotional intelligence into the campus community. Effective leadership takes place in and out of school. In order for me to successfully facilitate the growth of a Professional Learning Community, I must be aware of my own core values and continually work towards building my values and belief systems.

It is my goal to become a facilitative leader who leads the campus community through a collaborative team effort. Facilitative leadership is defined as behaviors that enhance the collective ability of a school to adapt, solve problems, and improve performance (Patti and Tobin, p. 134). The development of a Professional Learning Community is the desired outcome for successful schools. The motivational responsibilities are solely those of the administrator and at the heart of the successful development of a Professional Learning Community. It is imperative that the administrator understands the implications a change initiative has on students and professional staff. It is apparent to me that the relationship aspect of leadership plays a major roll in successful learning communities. Ultimately I envision becoming a model for the change I desire to see in the campus community.

Leader of Learners

Ultimately the responsibility of the principal is to move the faculty forward toward the ultimate goal of students learning. Each of the ISSL Standards focuses on creating powerful learning environments where the successes of all students are promoted. This responsibility is substantiated through current literature regarding educational leadership. "Research emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the principal

to weave and promote an image of the school that demonstrates and supports effective teaching and learning, promotes positive employee and student attitudes, and motivation by modeling leadership behavior that moves the school toward its goal” (Dunklee, 2000, p. 66). Effective principals view themselves as the leader of learners, understand the individual needs of the campus community and strive to cultivate an environment where excellence is the expectation. “It is people, not programs that, determine the quality of a school,” (Whitaker, 2003, p. 8). As a leader, it is my responsibility to know, understand, and discern current research and adhere to the best practices for students and the school community.

As a leader of learners, the principal’s role is to encourage and support individual staff development. My goal as a leader of learners is to incorporate avenues for staff members to develop and attain professional and personal goals through encouragement, modeling, and by sharing my own goals and progress in their attainment. Whitaker (2003) states that regardless of the need for a commitment to whole-school growth, promotion of individual staff effectiveness is a way to ultimately improve the school (p. 12). “As leaders, we must help all our teachers take responsibility for their performance in the classroom” (p. 19). Teacher empowerment leads to increased self-efficacy and is eventually passed on to students (p. 19).

“Standard Three relates to the management; and internal mechanisms that facilitates the efficient running of the school organization and the enhancement of student learning” (Wilmore, p. 52). As a leader, my goal is to ascertain the necessary background knowledge to effectively meet the individual needs of a diverse population of learners. As the leader of learners, it is my objective to utilize the knowledge acquired

during my research to facilitate a collaborative campus community which promotes learning for all in a caring environment.

Student learning is greatly affected by the classroom teacher. As the principal, a leader of learners, it is imperative to help teachers develop an understanding of the impact they have on students and student learning. Teachers are genuinely caring individuals who strive to do their best for students. The role of the principal is to increase positive interactions between adults and students by modeling effective interactions with students and all stakeholders. Effective principals make time to visit classrooms, to focus on instruction, and to help teachers build skills. Whitaker (2003) claims, that a principal's single most precious commodity is an opening in the teaching staff (p. 43). "The quickest way to improve your school is to hire great teachers at every opportunity," (Whitaker, p. 43). In an effort to support student learning and increase student achievement, it is imperative for me to provide students with a safe school climate that supports learning and achievement.

When principals accept the responsibility for leading a learning community it is vital to continually assess the environment, the vision, and student achievement. The key to success is to understand that everything done as a principal should be focused on ensuring the learning of both students and adults. As the facilitator of the campus vision, my goal is to collaboratively develop a vision for the campus community. To ensure the implementation of the vision and maintain the focus, I will effectively and contentiously communicate the goals of the vision to make it a reality by keeping the main focus on students and learning. Through empowering others, the vision can be kept alive and thrive through the collective action of all stakeholders. In an effort to create a learning

community where students are first, I will continuously strive to consistently recognize and value all individuals for doing what's best for all students.

Overall, the role of the leader of learners requires a combination of skills and abilities from which they can draw upon to meet the diverse needs of the campus community. To meet all the requirements of the school community in today's society, one must develop an awareness of current research and infuse the best practices for students, faculty, and parents to support the development of a learning community. In my quest to guide the campus community towards a vision of learning for all students and adults, it is essential that I utilize the ISSL Standards as a guide for attaining excellence, which my research supports.

Leader of Change

Current literature defines the role of a leader for educational change as a facilitative, collaborative, and supportive change agent in tune to the organizational climate and culture. Leadership means creating conditions rather than giving directions and includes the freedom to make mistakes (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 32). Change is valued and sought as a means of achieving improved effectiveness (p. 24). To implement change a principal must first develop a plan of action. Hall and Hord suggest utilizing the six functions of intervention as a practical framework for supporting and guiding change (p. 194). These interventions have been widely used as a framework for developing the knowledge and skills that facilitators need to plan for change, monitor its progress, and evaluate its outcomes in terms of degree of classroom implementation (p. 195). The six functions are as follows:

1. Developing, Articulating, and Communicating a Shared Vision of the Intended Change.
2. Planning and Providing Resources.
3. Investing in Professional Learning.
4. Checking on Progress.
5. Providing Continuous Assistance.
6. Creating a Context Supportive of Change.

If an innovation is to continue indefinitely, the principal must do things on a day-to-day basis that are supportive and secure the necessary infrastructure changes and long-term resource supports to sustain the innovation (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 11). In order for the principal to facilitate the desired innovation, their content knowledge and understanding of its essential components must be deep (p. 170).

Hall and Hord (2006) argue that creating an organizational climate and culture that reflects a shared vision requires principals to develop strategies and tactics that promote and develop collaboration. Effective leaders understand that each of their individual behaviors are important in and of itself, as well as a sign of their overall style (Hall & Hord, p. 212). It is imperative for leaders of change efforts to be conscious of their organizations' cultures, to recognize dysfunctional elements, and to attempt to guide cultural evolution (Hall & Hord, p. 19). Hall and Hord also note that principal's individual leadership styles can influence implementation.

Based on current literature, Change Facilitator Style is a big indicator of successful implementation of change initiatives. Three styles have been identified: the Initiator, the Manager, and the Responder. It has been clearly determined that the

Initiator is the desired style for greater change implementation success. General findings show that leaders with initiator styles have the highest level of implementation success (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 219). Initiator principals consciously question and analyze what they and others do (p. 214). The focus of The Initiators is on doing what will be best in the long term for students and the school, rather than primarily on making people happy in the short term (p. 212). The thing to remember is that the quality leaders will also possess managerial and responder qualities to meet all the demands of an effective Change Facilitator. I perceive myself as an initiator, one who seeks to move others in the direction of the campus vision always focusing on what will be best for students and the school with a long term perspective. I am a very passionate person when it comes to my personal beliefs. My beliefs about education are no different. I believe that in order for me to attain my vision for student achievement and accountability I must stand firm in what I believe to be best for students. This is not always the popular thing to do but it is definitely the right thing to do. While I consider myself to be a great listener and seeker of information, I always keep my eyes on the big picture. Since I believe in articulating the possibilities and motivating others to see beyond the horizon along with my strong passion and educational beliefs, it is reasonable to identify my facilitator style as initiator.

The development of my vision as a principal can be attained by utilizing the six functions of interventions as a framework for change. Communication is only one aspect of the change process but it is absolutely the most important one and will determine the success or failure of any change initiative. Hall and Hord (2006) have identified strategies and planning tools for principals that effectively assist in the implementation of change (p. 116). By utilizing planning tools such as an innovation configuration map to

guide a change initiative I can minimize some of the stress associated with a change process for teachers. The innovation configuration map provides a picture of what the initiative looks like at various stages of implementation. As a leader, I must be in tuned to the needs of the staff and continually assess the progress of the change initiative. I can accomplish this by utilizing The Levels of Use concept or Stages of Concerns to assess the change process. Levels of Use concept provide information based on behaviors exhibited by individuals as it relates to a change initiative. It allows the facilitator to examine who is participating in the change initiative and to what degree. When individuals are confronted with change there are feelings and perceptions present throughout the change process. Stages of concern allow the facilitator to assess concerns about the change for individuals and provide interventions to increase implementation of the change initiative. Implementing these approaches will allow me to address staff needs with appropriate interventions and increase the use of an innovation within the learning community.

As principal I will work hard to be in tune with the needs of the campus community and address their concerns and fears as they arise. To accomplish this I will continually view things within the learning environment through the eyes of the students and teachers. I believe that developing interpersonal relationships will increase my ability to be in tune to the need of the learning community.

The ISSL focuses on the school administrator as an educational leader who promotes the success of all students through various identified skills and learning experiences. The utilization of an innovation configuration map aligns with ISSL #1 by addressing strategic planning skills, collaborative decision making and effective

communication. ISSL #2 connects with my research in its design to sustain the school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. My goal to become a facilitative leader is at the core of what educational leadership is all about. The ISSL authenticates the observable qualities of an educational leader. As I continue my work, I will continue to develop my skills as a leader of change and transformation to increase my leadership abilities for the sustainability of change within the campus community.

Leader of Service

Service begins with understanding the needs of the stakeholders and supporting the development of a collaborative vision that meets those needs. Harris (2004) states that, "a supportive principal becomes a servant of the school", instead of just working at the school they work at building people (p. 28). The stakeholders include, students, parents, and the greater community, including businesses, emergency service personnel, social services, senior citizens, politicians, and the media. As the leader of service the principal is responsible for building a shared vision for the campus community. Robbins and Alvy (2003) state that, "the principal should play a major role in transforming the values and beliefs of the school into a vision" (p. 84). Developing strong relationships with the greater community allows the principal, as a leader of service, to create outside support for the campus community.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) state that principals who create a climate where people are involved and feel important use their power in service of others (p. 182). To do this principals develop a plan for shared leadership and implement that plan. Principals show that they care by building relationships with actions that value others (Harris, p. 15). As

the leader of service the principal must understand that meeting the needs of others is based on individual needs not treating everyone the same (Harris, p. 33). Above all else, in the area of service, the principal must be a builder of relationships. I will strive to attain this feat in my role as principal the leader of service.

As a leader of service, the principal is a catalyst for growth and support. It is imperative for the principal to understand their moral role and be proactive in advocating for the needs of all children, stakeholders, faculty and the greater community. The communication process is essential in building commitment and trust within the campus community. It is essential that the principal know academic content and pedagogical techniques in order to increase their ability to communicate across the educational continuum. In the day –to –day school operations service is the underlying element that creates healthy schools and communities. The stakeholders of the school campus rely on communication to ensure their needs and interests are being met. This is where the principal, as a leader of service, must shine in presenting the vision and goals established for the school campus. As the school leader the principal must take the lead on the issue of service. As a leader of service I fully accept the responsibility for interrelating with people at all levels and developing actions that value others. Action is the key to successful leadership.

The principal is directly responsible for ensuring student needs are met within the school community. Many students have needs outside the academic focus of schools. Sometimes help from outside agencies and outside resources will be required to support student success. As a leader of service, the principal must be in tune to those needs of the campus community and aware of available resources in the community. As a leader of

service, the principal must always consider how decisions will affect everyone with an interest in the campus community.

My goal is to gain knowledge about available resources and develop partnerships which can support the needs of students, families and faculty. Ensuring that faculty concerns and needs are attended to is vital in the development of a cohesive campus community and ensuring that academic goals are achieved. When principals support partnerships for teachers and students that positively affect the learning environment, their ability to motivate, encourage growth, and improve success increases. I believe that supportive partnerships can have an enormous impact on the learning environment. When parents and community members are visible in the classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, and even on the playground, I believe the potential for learning and instruction increases.

It is evident that school leadership is changing, and requires the principal to build a collaborative process within the campus community. This requires the principal to relinquish some of her authority and to allow teachers to share in the decision making concerning the campus community. Once teachers develop a relationship of trust with the principal they can take ownership of the problems facing the campus community.

Vodicka (2006) proclaims the level of teachers' trust for the principal appears to be predictive of the other relationships in the school environment (p. 30). As both teachers and administrators learn to share the responsibility for the successes as well as the failures the campus can continue to move forward towards the vision. In my quest to support the development of a cohesive, productive learning community, I pledge to strive daily to communicate my appreciation of the support and dedication of all stakeholders to the learning community. We are definitely in this together, it is important to continue to

develop partnerships, especially with families and the larger community as we press on toward the vision attainment for the campus community.

As the principal, it becomes my responsibility to provide leadership, organization and management to enable all staff members to function at their best level. "School leaders are servant leaders, through their actions; they create a desire to serve in others" (Patti & Tobin, 2003, p.171). As principal I will be responsible for fostering supportive and caring relationships with all stakeholders, especially teachers and students as I strive to meet the challenges of servant leadership. As I focus on building quality relationships I will strive to become an intuitive principal. Dryer and Carothers (2000) describe the intuitive leader as one who accesses previously compartmentalized, relevant, and important thoughts that have been stored in their mental filing system through environmental readings, files from the past, or a combination thereof (p. 2).

I believe that the principal, as the leader of service, must develop a primary focus on lifting others to new levels of possibilities and establishing a cooperative spirit of teamwork. It has been proven over and over that more can be accomplished when working as a team than working alone. This is where shared vision becomes important and successful schools depend on a principal who can support an environment where shared vision permeates the campus community.

This concept was reinforced in the book *High Five*, in which the authors, Blanchard, Bowles, Carew, and Parisi-Carew developed an acronym for the word "perform" The purpose of this acronym was to develop like-mindedness among team players that result in high performance and creates high morale. This concept inspires me

principal, as leader of service, as a duty to empower and communicate in the development of a winning team for the success of the campus community.

In my pursuit as an instructional leader, it has become apparent to me that our world is changing. Therefore, my role as a leader of change must also evolve as I continue my journey to promote success for all students. As a leader it is important to be able to anticipate, adapt to, monitor, and enjoy change.

These concepts were reinforced for me personally as I read Johnson's "*Who Moved My Cheese?*" Johnson states that new beliefs encourage new behaviors. As I embark on my leadership career, change will become a factor in achieving goals and recognizing when it is time to move on. Being ready to change will be essential in personal growth for me. Dunklee (2000) describes leadership as a process which begins with an understanding of the social order and the nature of human behavior in the overall education hierarchy (p. 4).

Leading and the Standards

Understanding the ISSL standards will allow me to develop a framework from which I can establish a commonality among leaders in my quest for excellence. Successful learning communities require collaboration between schools and communities in order to meet the expectations of student achievement and accountability. Leaders for the 21st century must view leadership through the lens of its effect on actions of staff members that subsequently affect student achievement (Dryer & Carothers, 2000, p.16). Applying each standard is where my journey begins.

When vision is the focus, the framework of ISSL #1, as stated by Wilmore (2000) requires four steps: development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of the

vision (p. 20). In my development as a leader I will focus on building a shared vision among the stakeholders to increase success for all students. This will require some elimination of old barriers and open discussions with stakeholders to address the challenges facing the campus community. In the development of a school vision it will be important for me to involve as many stakeholders as possible. Dryer & Carothers (2000) state that competent and confident leaders assume responsibility for constantly promoting the actualization of a vision of academic success for all students even when all constituents do not immediately buy into that vision. (p. 17)

ISSL #2 addresses appropriate and effective use of school resources in general. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining are the three words provided by Wilmore, (2002) as key to creating positive school culture and climate (p. 33), which are evidenced in ISSL #2. My goal is to increase my knowledge and skills in the development and implementation of instructional programs, student learning and professional growth for myself and others.

The campus organization, operations and resources are guided by ISSL #3. This is where the leader needs to incorporate their management skills to ensure a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, where student achievement can occur. According to Wilmore (2002) this is primarily the principal's responsibility. I have come to understand how essential this standard is for maintaining the school as a successful thriving organization where students and adults learn. In education current literature on leadership style compares the manager to the leader. The conclusion is that as an effective principal you need to be able to balance both styles of leadership in the learning community.

Collaborative partnerships are the bases of ISSL #4. Schools are representative of their local communities and our society. Therefore diversity must be reflected within our schools and integrated throughout the curriculum. The idea is to create a common bond of understanding in which everything we say or do is aimed at enhancing teaching and learning (Wilmore, 2002, p.78). To enhance the empowerment of others, I will strive to develop shared leadership within the learning community. Harris (2004) states that empowerment can only occur in an atmosphere where mutual trust is established (p. 6). I believe that motivation is essential for creating shared leadership. To develop trust among the students, and faculty I will not only talk with them, but be sure to listen and act appropriately to situation that require action or intervention.

ISSL #5 provides the moral and ethical framework from which leaders operate. The principal's character is determined by her response to situations and interactions with others. Integrity, fairness, and ethics should be the core values for leaders. As a leader I expect everyone to be treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, I will be the example for appropriate behavior. Whitaker (2003) declares that the principal who sets a positive tone can influence the interactions of everyone in the school. It is important to remember that one's perception is their reality. The principal needs to be the filter for the learning community. Whitaker emphasizes that by consistently filtering out the negatives that don't matter and sharing a positive attitude, we can create a much more successful learning environment (p. 33).

Principals' efforts related to political, social economic, legal, and cultural issues are guided by ISSL #6. The principal must consider the effects of these issues in meeting their obligation to educate every child. As the leader I must evaluate the needs of

students and the learning community to effectively communicate with the various community agencies. Dunklee (2000) contends that to be an effective principal, you'll need to quickly adapt to and respond to multiple constituencies (p. 54).

Each of the ISSL standards require effective communication, therefore this skill becomes the most important skill for a principal leader of the campus community. Wilmore (2002) affirms that communication inside and outside the school is imperative to the accomplishment of the school's goals as well as public image and perception of the school (p. 56). As a leader I will provide effective communication and continue to build this important skill as I proceed in my leadership endeavors. Not only will I continue to build my skills but I will focus on developing strategies that motivate others to build their skills as well.

Conclusion

It is evident that educational leadership is changing and effective leaders will heed the call for change. Leading schools into the 21st century will require me as principal to develop supportive environments that enhance student's social, emotional, ethical, and academic development in an effort to increase achievement. It is vital for me as a leader to be aware of what's going on around me and to always seek to address the needs of the campus community. As I continue in my pursuit as principal, I will remember that change is a process and not an event. It will continually be my goal to walk the talk by modeling my expectations of others.

As an educational leader, I see myself as a resource, a facilitator, a supporter, and a builder of people. This means that I will work diligently to understand and meet the needs of the campus community. My role as leader is to chart a course and provide

direction to those I lead. By articulating a strong sense of purpose I will be able to move the campus community towards fulfilling the vision for the learning community. I firmly believe that relationships and integrity are vital to the success of the campus community. As an educational leader I vow to be immersed in the campus community as I foster a supportive learning environment.

The future success of our society lies in the success of our educational system. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders. Quality education for all children is essential and requires us to be resolute about expectations, student achievement, and accountability measures. In my quest as an educational leader I vow to always remember that people are the most important resources and education is about what is best for all students.

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