The album-like vision for administering elementary schools: a reflective essay

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The album-like vision for administering elementary schools: a reflective essay

Abstract
Have you ever put together a photo album? One photograph tells a piece of the story, the photo album tells the whole story. The principal's role is much like that of a photo album creator. Principals need to focus on all aspects of the school. In effect they take snapshots of the school, collect them, and analyze them to ensure the realization of their school's vision.
THE ALBUM-LIKE VISION FOR ADMINISTERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

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The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

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by

Kimberly R. Miers

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Have you ever put together a photo album? One photograph tells a piece of the story, the photo album tells the whole story. The principal’s role is much like that of a photo album creator. Principals need to focus on all aspects of the school. In effect they take snapshots of the school, collect them, and analyze them to ensure the realization of their school’s vision.

Every profession has its own intricacies. I have enjoyed studying the complexities of administrative positions. My knowledge was acquired by reading professional journals, by attending classes, and by having first-hand practicum experiences. Leading a study group for colleagues, observing and assisting my mentor, reading journal articles related to the Iowa Standards, and attending graduate classes are examples of experiences in which I have gained knowledge of the administrative profession.

My eyes and brain have digested many readings from educational journals, text books, and books. I have woven the information gained from these sources throughout this reflective research paper. This paper will first focus upon the values and beliefs I hold and find necessary to employ as an administrator. The focus will then shift to look at the six Iowa standards for administrators and how they relate to my new knowledge, skills, and experiences. My personal and professional vision for administrative practice will follow. Consider each section a snapshot of me as an administrator. The final snapshot in my paper is recognized as the conclusion. It completes the mural of who I am as a person and
as an administrator by providing the reader with a summary of my thoughts and abilities.

Personal Characteristics

Values

Smart, round, slow, gruff, thin, sweet, whatever people’s characteristics, I value them. As an administrator I want to be sure all voices are heard to the extent that people are comfortable sharing them. A sense of community will need to be built in our building by establishing common bonds among people, by caring for people’s personal and professional lives, and by supporting their efforts at work. We will all be working for the common goal of providing our students with the best possible education. When I interact with people I give my personal best and I am truthful and trustworthy. Based on my interactions with others thus far in my life, I know that not everyone will treat me with the same respect I grant them. I value people’s creativity, humor and leadership. I understand that people, teachers and students, learn in a variety of ways. I will provide an environment in which a variety of learning styles are valued and addressed. Being a lifelong learner, being perseverant, enjoying humor, displaying dedication, holding visions, and having a passion for education are key to my success as an administrator. I look for those qualities in others, knowing we can all help each other grow.
Beliefs

We are all humans, prone to stress, joy, fear, hope, forgetfulness, love, and most importantly, growth. I truly believe that all children can learn and as adults we can learn along with them. There will be barriers such as lacking the desire to learn, along with physical and mental conditions. The growth rates will vary from person to person, but nevertheless, there can and should be growth occurring in all people. "Learning is intellectual and mental, but it is also emotional and physical in terms of the way a person learns" (Lyman, 2000, p. 117). In order for growth to occur learners need to be in a safe, non-threatening environment. They need to be motivated intrinsically to promote their own growth. As a principal it will be my job to encourage this in my students as well as in my colleagues who are teaching. They need to see me as a learner and as a model for their behaviors. I believe there are five things a leader must do in order to be effective. "To work smarter, a leader 1) faces criticism..., 2) welcomes self-examination..., 3) sets achievable goals..., 4) nurtures new efforts..., and 5) monitors and celebrates" (Donaldson, Jr., October 1993, pp. 5-6). By continually following through on those five items I will be demonstrating my beliefs to my staff.

People have a right to be treated fairly and with respect. Everyone has a talent, skill, idea, or question to contribute to any organization or group. As a leader I help people find avenues through which to express themselves. Individuality is just as important as is being part of a group. I will be successful
when I balance my "people-time" with my paperwork. People will always come first. It is with these beliefs that I guide myself in life, at home, and at work. They are tried and true from my past experiences. I am confident in my current abilities to be an effective leader. I believe I am ready for an administrative position.

Knowledge, Skills, Experiences

The job of an administrator is not one to be taken lightly. "School leaders realize that they live at center stage; being in the spotlight both gives them a platform to lead and to be vulnerable" (Maslin-Ostrowski, P. & Ackerman, R. A., 2000, p. 216). There is a fine balance between being a leader and being vulnerable. I will demonstrate that I am a lifelong learner and that I am a strong leader who can grow from my successes as well as from my mistakes. There are six areas, as defined by the Iowa Standards that have guided my learning, reading, and practicum experiences during the past two years in preparation for obtaining an administrative position. The Iowa Standards are helpful in bringing a focus to all of the responsibilities of a principal. Each of the six areas needs to be viewed individually and in relation to each other. Many ideas contained in this paper can be interwoven with more than one area. Once administrators can balance these indicators within the position, they will be well on their way to reaching this administrative vision.
The first area of focus is visionary leadership. School climate, an administrator’s responsibilities to the school, and the school’s vision plan comprise this initial look at administration. The second area of focus is instructional leadership. An administrator is responsible for the curriculum, staff development, and for creating an environment in which every student can learn.

The third area of focus is organizational leadership. This aspect of leadership is especially crucial in my view. An administrator must have an understanding of the functions of many projects and groups of people. Maintaining organization of so many things is complicated.

The fourth area of focus is that of collaborative leadership. An administrator needs to be able to bring unity into the school family. The school family is made of a group of diverse people: students, teachers, cooks, custodians, secretaries, associates, parents, and community members. When these groups of stakeholders work together, the vision is more easily attained.

The fifth area of focus is that of ethical leadership. An administrator needs to know the laws and serve as a role model in following them.

The sixth area of focus is that of political leadership. Knowing current political situations and sharing educational needs with the community are keys to succeeding in this area. Turn your attention now to my knowledge of and experience with each of these key standards.
Visionary Leadership

A vision must be realistically attainable through the cooperative efforts of the school’s stakeholders. I will include input from the students, the staff, the parents, and the community members when creating our school’s visionary plan. We will each be accountable to one another. We are on a mission for our students. In order for it to succeed it must be a “we” not an “I” school vision.

As I have been reading professional journals and observing my mentor I find continuous opportunities for assistance in attaining my vision. J. R. Hoyle wrote an article about being a “triumphant superintendent.” He appears to have a firm understanding of the Iowa Standards. He is aware of all stakeholders in developing a vision as well as ensuring that the vision is implemented effectively. I appreciated his insights into administration. He made it clear that a principalship position is not one to be done alone, nor is it a job that can be run by several people. An administrator must find the fine line between the two extremes. Hoyle also maintained an even balance between leading toward the vision and seeking outside assistance. “Visionaries and their visions, says futurist Joel Barker, have inspired the creation of magnificent monuments that have withstood the ravages of time” (Hoyle, 1999, p. 6). After reading this I realized that visions would outlast their inventor and have a profound impact on the future. We often become so intertwined in the immediacy of a vision that we forget to stop and see the whole picture, the album instead of a snapshot.
As Howard Gardner noted, “We need to train children in the personal intelligences in school,” (cited in Aronson, 2000, p. 93). Aronson, the author of Nobody Left to Hate: Teaching Compassion After Columbine, noted that, “Our schools can and should play a vital role in helping students develop emotional mastery as well as academic mastery” (Aronson, 2000, p. 91). This will be an important part of our vision. There are many programs in existence to assist educators in helping students to develop emotional mastery. Such programs include Boy’s Town and Tribes. The first focuses on students’ appropriate responses to adults and other students and how to handle one’s self in difficult social situations. The latter focuses on creating a sense of community and working together in a supportive group where encouraging others is high on the list. I see myself as principal in a building where this is a way of living and interacting on a daily basis. As educators we say our love for teaching comes from working with our students. Each day we guide, instruct, challenge, and question our students to help facilitate their learning. We must be careful, however, Elizabeth Firm reminds us that, “There is a difference... between people who want to make children into something and people who want to help children determine for themselves what they want to be” (cited in Thomas, Walker-Fitzhugh, & Jefferies, 2000, p. 33). Our ears and eyes must be focused constantly as we interact with each student. We need to clarify students’
preferences and strengths so that, as educators, we can enable students to attain their goals.

There are many factors that come into play in developing such a caring, harmonious environment. As I read Fighting to Save Our Schools: Lessons from Houston, D. R. McAdams' words spoke to me. I have been keeping track of all of the different pieces that an administrator must control to meet or exceed the expected standards of an urban school. McAdams captured many of these pieces, "...neighborhood rivalries, board politics, teaching and learning issues, school and district management issues, resource issues, the challenges of school partnerships, parents struggling to find what is best for their children, and issues of race and class," and put them in one place (McAdams, 2000, p. 53). Now I can focus on those pieces and add my own as I become more experienced, making sure my skills are adequate in each area. When I implement my vision I will be sure to involve all stakeholders. Our plan will take into consideration our school's clientele, possible barriers, and resources available for our use. Regular monitoring and evaluation will keep us focused on our vision.

Instructional Leadership

Students come to school to learn academic and social skills. In order to accomplish these two goals students need teachers who are knowledgeable in facilitating such learning. An environment conducive to learning, along with appropriate curriculum, technology, and assessment tools are the four areas to
which an administrator and his/her colleagues need to effectively attend. The environment created must be conducive to learning. This includes directing attention to everything from the cleanliness of the building, to interactions between individuals, to the curriculum, and to parent involvement. Students need to be cared for and shown models of how to interact with others. The curriculum must be designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined as teachers facilitate learning. The administrator needs to monitor the implementation of teacher-selected and district-selected curriculum. The principal and staff should attend professional development sessions in order to enhance the learning.

Technology should be integrated throughout a student’s learning day. Digital and video cameras, scanners, interactive learning games, research on the Web, an automated library, word processing programs, and a variety of other technologies help prepare students to work in the technology-driven workplaces of today. Teachers should use these technologies to enhance their instruction efforts, for communication to stakeholders, and for hands-on experience for students. Administrators need to have a strong understanding of how such technologies work in order to determine their proper uses and effectiveness in the educational setting. In order to remain abreast of new technological developments the principal should attend staff development classes and encourage his/her staff to do the same. Who knows, maybe our school’s photo album will be presented via a CD of pictures.
In addition to creating an enriching environment and providing relevant curriculum and technology opportunities, assessment styles are also crucial to the success of everyone in the school. I will encourage the use of portfolios, student-to-student and teacher-student-parents conferences, and grade level assessments. Students need to see their growth. By seeing where they started, compared to their current position, their self-confidence and motivation to continue learning should increase. Such records are also important to have in a child’s file should it become necessary to reconsider the least restrictive learning environment (L.R.E.) for him/her. Students are not the only people in a building who need to be assessed. Every person in the building, even the principal and custodian need to be evaluated periodically.

As an evaluator I want to provide positive examples of a person’s work and also provide suggestions with strategies for improvement. I will make sure my suggestions are clear and unoffensive. When the time arrives for my evaluation I will expect the same honesty and professionalism from my evaluator(s) that I provide to my colleagues. An observation I made, while attending an elementary principal’s meeting, of a practice that I would like to implement was sharing the results of my survey with the persons I in turn evaluate. I would then choose three areas in which improvement was needed and share with my colleagues how I planned to make such improvements. This helps show them that I am human to, prone to the same evaluations and procedures as
are they. It will convey to them that I am a lifelong learner who is eager to do my
best to cooperatively implement an appropriate learning environment, curriculum,
technology, and assessment practices.

How Do They Know You Care?: The Principal's Challenge, by Linda
Lyman follows a principal, Ken Hinton, noted for his caring ways in carrying out
his administrative duties. I appreciated his mannerisms and interactions with
others. One interaction that particularly stayed with me was his belief, “that
learning and individual growth result when teachers are valued” (Lyman, 2000, p.
116). This is so true! As a teacher I am willing to try new strategies, to ask
questions, and to provide better care to my students because I know I have the
support of my principal.

Not only do teachers need to feel valued and supported in their profession,
students also have these same needs in their profession. Teachers and
administrators need to be aware of current and present best practice teaching
techniques where, “...teachers refuse to accept...randomness. They believe that
content does matter and that for school to work, it must make sense to students...”
(Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998, p.185). “The point is that students learn
something from the process (the manner in which the product is attained or
communicated) even while they are focusing on the content of the assignment”
(Aronson, 2000, p. 132). In such cases students may learn more about working
cooperatively than about the details of World War II. Once they have developed
a basic grasp of working cooperatively, during their next class session they can focus on the details of the War.

Students have needs and desires when they enter our schools. In a sense they are our customers whom we are privileged to serve. An eye-opener to me was reading *Listening to Urban Kids: School Reform and the Teachers they Want*, by B. L. Wilson and H. D. Corbett. The interviews that were shared in the book showed that students do care about learning and they know how they can and will learn. There are reasons for their actions and their attitudes. Educators must remember that we often aggravate a situation, "...[M]isbehavior was sometimes the product of frustration in class and...good teachers taught in a way that encouraged students to pay attention" (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 107).

Students are like sponges when we reach out to them with information they know they need:

> With rare exceptions, they wanted a teacher who nudged them along and made sure that they worked. Students felt that few of them had the confidence, drive, perseverance or determination to do it on their own. They wanted and expected to be motivated to learn. And that unwavering push usually had to come from their teachers (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 70).

A key to teaching is knowing what students want and need. The request for a push from a teacher is often given in silence. When a teacher silently grants such a request, great things happen: learning takes place, mutual respect develops, and students begin to believe in themselves. Would you describe learners as
"beneficiaries" or "participants" in the learning process? Wilson has a clear description:

The distinction between students as "beneficiaries" and "participants" is significant. Using the image of a beneficiary obligates adults to improve the educational system with the best interests of students in mind. Using the image of participant demands that young people become directly and formally involved in reform activities before and during the implementation phase. The former is better than not using any image of the student role in reform at all, but the latter represents a more potentially meaningful and powerful impact on students' classroom lives (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 126).

What a powerful statement. When our school has the opportunity to select and reform the curriculum we will be sure to involve students as participants. As I have written earlier, it is crucial to listen to our students. Students who have a voice in their curriculum will be far more involved in the classroom. They will know their ideas and input is appreciated, heard, and followed.

We must have a base curriculum to help our teachers facilitate children's learning. When creating committees to choose the curriculum, N. Damaren warns in his article that committees must extend merely beyond existing. All committee members must keep the best interests of the children at the forefront of their work. They must work cooperatively to create a learning friendly environment. Damaren refers to this by writing that administrators "... 'must walk the walk' in a spirit of openness and collaboration" (Damaren, 2000, p. 55). Developing the curriculum will require hard work and serious consideration. Professional
development, life long learning, and preparing effective members of society are the foundation upon which student learning is based. I look forward to the day I am able to work with a school to bring about such a positive environment in an administrative capacity.

Organizational Leadership

Organization is a skill that is crucial to an effective leader. If this skill is not polished, attaining the vision will be chaotic. In order to maintain the high quality of standards I will expect when I am a principal, I will need to accept the responsibility of organizing a multitude of tasks and items. It will require me to be able to present my thoughts in a clear, concise manner. My files must be understandable and accessible to those with whom I share the files. Complete understanding of the operations at a district and building level will also be necessary. Successfully implementing programs and carrying out the school’s vision will be key in my success as a principal. Additionally, creating a budget, a safe environment, completing evaluations, and day-to-day business must find a balance in my actions as a principal.

While it is primarily the teachers’ responsibilities to guide students’ learning, as a principal I am responsible for the method in which teachers go about fulfilling these responsibilities and for the amount of growth students make in their learning. In order to be in continuous knowledge of these situations I need and want to be present in the classrooms. This can wreak havoc on a
principal’s schedule. When I wrote out my mentor’s calendar for next year I was
astounded by the number of meetings and tried to block in time for her to visit
classrooms. I will have to learn to balance the paperwork with the peoplework.
My passion is learning and in my classroom observations I want that to shine
through, never implying that I am “out to get the teacher.” I feel confident after
reading L. Monroe’s book, Nothing’s Impossible: Leadership Lessons from
Inside and Outside the Classroom that I can maintain this balance. Monroe noted
that her mentor taught her “…classroom observation is the principal’s most
important method for improving school tone and student achievement. In
business, they call it MBWA: Managing by Walking Around” (Monroe, 1997, p.
128). I am now bound and determined to be a leader who can MBWA!

Organizing paper, meetings, facilities, and schedules, is just the tip of the
iceberg. People need to be lead by an organized leader who can help organize
their thoughts and actions while leaving room for personal choices of
organization. I agree with Monroe when she says, “…it’s impossible to run any
organization from behind a desk…. You’ve got to walk around, watch people
work, schmooze with everyone, and make yourself visible” (Monroe, 1997, p.
111). In this way a leader will know, with certainty, what is occurring in the
building and be able to assist/participate in any way necessary.

I began being organized in first grade when I got my own desk. From
there I have become increasingly organized. As an administrator I will work with
people in our building to make sure it is a clean and safe place. Plans will be in effect to attain our vision. Managing people and paperwork will come to a balance. By working together we can maintain an organized atmosphere that welcomes learning.

Collaborative Leadership

Students, staff, faculty, families, businesses, and volunteers are each individual gears within the fine-tuned operation of a school. As a principal I will draw upon the community leadership and leadership within the building to reach our vision. Although each group functions to contribute to the school, they each have specific goals that they wish to see met. There will be constant requests for change. “Teachers and principals commonly compare their restructuring efforts to ‘rebuilding a 747 while it’s in the air’” (Donaldson, Jr., 1993, p.1). If I am ever in the situation of having to restructure an educational system McAdams shared excellent advice. Restructuring a system needs the following changes; “... in roles, rules, and relationships between and among students, teachers and administrators at all levels...” (McAdams, 2000, p. 250).

In order to achieve such a daunting task, I fully agree with G. A. Donaldson, Jr. who notes that the key to the success of any changes within a building is that all of its members “feel the stewardship for the institution” (Dondaldson, Jr., p. 4). He reminds the reader that working together “should not add more responsibilities onto teachers’ already heavy work loads” (Donaldson,
Jr., 1993, p. 1). As I have learned from seasoned administrators, a new administrator must have a plan for implementing change, but wait a bit before making an overhaul. I will encourage people to work together to develop new programs and to improve existing programs. Working together toward common, pre-determined goals can assist the change process. The 747 will land.

As an administrator I will be interacting with a wide variety of people. I must be willing to "1) face criticism, 2) welcome self-examination, 3) set achievable goals, 4) nurture new efforts, and 5) monitor and celebrate" (Donaldson, Jr., 1993, p. 6). There will be many groups to which I will need to attend. I will want to be closely involved with each one. Realistically, I know that is not possible. That will require me to be a leader who is willing to delegate authority and responsibility to others. "...[F]or a school... to run smoothly, the principal, the assistant principals, and the teachers had to meet and talk frequently in order to ensure that everyone was clear about the mission and philosophy of the school" (Monroe, 1997, p. 110). The talking will keep me updated and prevent me from always taking the lead. I am able and ready to lead in such a manner.

As I lead I will remember that parents are key collaborators with educators. "Principals must invite parents and other community members to become partners in the learning process at school, at home, and in the community" (Speck, 1999, p. 113). We are educating "our" children, not "their" children. Have you ever heard a teacher refer to the students in his/her class as
“my kids?” As educators we do adopt our students into our lives and caring realms, and we must remember to “…include parents as equal partners” (Lyman, 2000, p. 45). Every parent wants his/her child to succeed in school, to be involved, and to have friends.

In matters of school climate and safety, we need to prevent winners and losers on the educational field. E. Aronson writes about the jigsaw method, working in side groups and then reporting back to one’s core group. He notes that the power of the jigsaw method is well-captured by the following quote: “Before you know it, if you’re not careful, you can get to feeling for everybody and there’s nobody left to hate” (Aronson, 2000, p. 149). In the same notion of cooperation and safety, “…a daily community circle is the forum for discussing ‘good news’ and ‘bad news’” (Aronson, 2000, p. 108). I currently use community circle on a daily basis in my classroom and look forward to implementing this strategy into the school where I will be the principal. It helps develop a high level of trust and companionship. I can be an outlet for students to share both joys and concerns in an appropriate format. I will have the opportunity to listen to a variety of community circles when I am an administrator. What a perfect way to truly hear kids’ voices and get to know them. True collaboration, I believe, is everyone sharing their respect for one another’s ideas and personalities, in this spirit an excellent educational environment emerges.
Ethical Leadership

An administrator's every step should be guided by what is considered ethical. It is necessary to be aware of and uphold all laws, professional codes, and confidentiality codes. It will be important to practice professional discretion at times when there are no prewritten laws or codes of ethics. There will always be someone challenging my processes, but I plan to make it clear through my actions that there is no room for doubt about my code of ethics. This will be the perfect opportunity to capitalize on unity rather than diversity. Through my position as role model, I will be able to achieve this change of thinking. I am skilled at interacting with all styles of people and assessing things from their point of view. It is through the utilization of these skills that I will carry out my position of principal.

"Leadership should internalize the importance of consistently exploring appropriate instructional strategies, modeling the notion of respect, and convincing others in the learning community to do the same" (Thomas et al., 2000, p. 128). Such consistent exploring keeps one aware of educational practices that are ethical and those which are not. Modeling this will create peers who also do so and lead to an ethically correct environment. There will always be challenges to an ethically correct environment, but by questioning right and wrong, by visiting with others, and by reading professional publications, I can curb such challenges and bring them around to assist in a positive way.
"Because a public school is a governmental agency, its conduct is circumscribed by precedents of public administrative law supplemented by those legal and historical traditions surrounding an educational organization that is state established, yet locally administered" (Alexander, K. & Alexander, M. D., 2001, p. 1). One of my greatest ethical challenges I am anticipating in holding an administrative position is that of class-equity. Every student is entitled to a free and appropriate public education. I can follow the law books for creating an equitable education for all; I can follow the hiring processes in our district to ensure that everyone receives fair employment opportunities. What are we to do for those students who are not in “…middle- and upper-class homes [who] are afforded opportunities to discuss their ideas at home. …[T]o read, be read to, and to have conversations about what was read and how it makes them think and feel” (Thomas et al., 2000, p. 81)? Students who do not live in such an environment are not making connections between life experiences and their classroom learning. “Students are taught in, for them, a vacuum” (Thomas et al., 2000, p. 81). I would like to create programs that will help students from low-income and poverty environments have the chances to escape their vacuum and venture into a community full of experiences and practical applications to their learning.

Overall, I am awestruck with lessons I learned from Lyman’s book about principal Ken Hinton:
Hinton is also committed to an ethic of care. For him caring is not just a feeling, but is about the right of people to have their essence respected. Caring, for Hinton, is clearly a value and a process, a way of being in relationships (Lyman, 2000, p. 141).

Hinton’s eloquence makes my blood run fast and furious. He clearly has an ethic about him that is well practiced and respected. I strive to develop into an educator with such a clear view of life and a display of efficacy in all that I attempt and accomplish.

Political Leadership

Public relations are at the forefront of any administrator’s mind. Everyone is an expert on education, after all we’ve all been in school. All stakeholders of education want to be sure that, as educators, we are being held accountable for the education of our communities’ futures. While the foremost political interactions an administrator will have will be with parents, it is crucial to keep in mind that “...public schools cannot focus on just satisfying parents and students. They must also satisfy the public” (McAdams, 2000, p. 250). In order to fill such a tall order administrators need, “…implementation plans, teaching materials, training for principals and teachers, reports to demonstrate compliance, program evaluations and policies and procedures to deal with noncompliance” (McAdams, 2000, p. 251). By reporting such activities, all stakeholders are aware of the progress being made and are less likely to become accusatory about our building’s accountability.
In the capacity of principal, I want to implement Hinton’s strategy for greeting anyone who enters my building, “The ‘Reception Office’ sign above the door reinforces that visiting persons are to be ‘received,’ and no one left ungreeted or just standing” (Lyman, 2000, p. 58). I know my mentor works with our office staff to create such an environment. We are going to try to implement this practice in our school office. Hinton’s idea emulates his caring philosophy and demonstrates his respect for people.

Educators need to be seen as professionals. I believe that education is a necessary tool for people to possess in order to function in our society. As an administrator I must be able to initiate change, on large and small scales. Keeping abreast of political decisions influencing education is crucial to presenting the proposed changes and keeping things that are working in place. I must be able to answer the public’s questions. I will uphold the public policies that have been created to ensure a quality education for every student. Most importantly, I must be a public school advocate. Rather than always worrying about political views of schools, I will strive to help “…school model what society should be” (Monroe, 1997, p. 193).

Personal and Professional Vision for Administrative Practice

I can feel it in my blood! I come from four generations of educators. I have seen my dream of becoming a teacher come true. Teaching is my passion and I am ready to transfer my leadership and teaching skills into an administrative
position. Learning is something I do each day and I would like to share my enthusiasm with a whole school full of students, educators, and support staff. My vision focuses on the administrator’s responsibilities to the profession, the school atmosphere, and the interactions with a variety of people.

As an administrator, I have many responsibilities including facilitating learning, maintaining an organized climate, focusing on students, continually learning, and leaving time for my family and myself. These factors must come into balance with one another and with the school environment in order for me to be an effective administrator. “In this way, a better person-environment fit or principal-school configuration fit is achieved, leading to a more effective school organization” (Griffith, 1999, p. 279). Each school environment will require different styles of leadership and “... there is one best style for each situation....” (Bulach & Lunenberg, 1995, p. 339). I am always striving to fulfill my responsibilities to the profession of education. My vision of my responsibilities to the profession, the school environment, and the interactions with a variety of people is based on experience, observation, and research over several years.

A study I read about the correlation between school climate and school leadership made note that: “It was apparent that the leadership of each school, particularly that of the principal, had influenced school climate, educational performance and teacher, student, and community satisfaction” (Dinham, Cairney, Craigie, & Wilson, 1995, p. 51). Similarly, a study regarding school climate and
job satisfaction indicated “...that school climate has a noteworthy association with job satisfaction...” (Taylor, D. L. & Tashakkori, A., 1995, p. 223). Knowing this, it will be necessary for my leadership to help create a climate where all stakeholders feel valued, able to facilitate learning, and able to learn. I have a vision of a school where learning is honored, where all people are treated with respect, where friendships blossom, and where new ideas are encouraged. I envision my love of learning shining throughout the school and spreading to all who enter the building. We will become a community of learners who learn from our troubles and our successes. As a mentor often told me, and I strongly believe, “Be an educator because you know, in your heart and mind, that education is the profession for you. Then be the best educator you can be.” I am ready, in my heart and my mind, to implement my vision as an administrator!

Conclusion

Now that the photos have been taken and developed it is time to place them in the photo album. As a principal I must be able to carry out the intricate roles of an administrator. There are six areas in which my leadership skills must shine. First, in order to see my vision become a reality I will share it with the staff in our building and welcome their input. “Key aspects of facilitative power include enabling, negotiating, empowering based on the sharing of power, and using power together with others to reach desirable ends” (Fennell, H.-A., 1999, p. 26). Our vision will remain posted in our school’s office where people can
read it and reflect upon it, daily. Periodic self-evaluations by our staff will keep it in the forefront we work together to reach that goal. Second, an environment will be created that is conducive to learning includes the curriculum and physical needs of the school. Third, in I will have a system of organizing each of my responsibilities. Fourth, it will be necessary to attain my vision by collaborating with stakeholders in the school community. We will need to work as a team. Fifth, through my actions, I will model my beliefs of upholding all laws, professional codes, and confidentiality. Sixth, I will encourage communication about education with community members and follow all regulations and laws. I will also model my desire to be a lifelong learner, a leader, a listener, and a decision maker. There are many photos I will have in my principal’s album. I have many pages that are eagerly awaiting those photos.

I am looking forward to utilizing my expertise of these qualities to help students learn, achieve, and shine. Children are at the core of my desire to be an administrator. The job of an administrator is not one I will take lightly. This is evidenced in the portfolio that accompanies my Philosophy of Leadership. I have demonstrated leadership skills in all six Iowa Standard areas. Children deserve excellence in their educational journeys and I will help ensure excellence for them. Not only are they our future, but they are also a precious gift for today. I will be proud to be instrumental in students’ development from an administrative position.
References


