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Five components essential for leading a K-12 school in the twenty-first century : a reflective essay

Gregory A. O'Connell
University of Northern Iowa

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Five components essential for leading a K-12 school in the twenty-first century : a reflective essay

Abstract

Administration is an occupation that requires much time and effort to provide success for students. Success has many critical elements that I will outline in this paper. First and foremost the administrator must have a passion for their role as the instructional, visionary, political, ethical, organizational, and collaborative leader. Managing the physical aspects of the building also engage the learning environment to be safe and successful. One of the last components is quality instruction. District curriculum can only provide to the students what the instructor "feeds" to them. Students need to be provided differentiated instruction to meet their individual needs.

FIVE COMPONENTS ESSENTIAL FOR

LEADING A K-12 SCHOOL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

and Postsecondary Education

University of Northern Iowa

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts in Education

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by

Gregory A. O'Connell

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Dr. Gregory A. Reed, Advisor

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Gregory A. Reed

_____   _____
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Date Approved   Advisor/Director of Research Paper

Victoria L. Robinson

_____   _____
1-18-05

Date Approved   Second Reader of Research Paper

John K. Smith

_____   _____
1/19/05

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                                                  Postsecondary Education

"Perhaps 'chief of educational staff' is a more appropriate name for this new leader than the former title of principal" (Heller, 2004, p.9). Administration is an occupation that requires much time and effort to provide success for students. Success has many critical elements that I will outline in this paper. First and foremost the administrator must have a passion for their role as the instructional, visionary, political, ethical, organizational, and collaborative leader. The leader must also work hard to build relationships with the staff, students and entire community at the beginning to promote student success. Effective management of a school starts with the hiring of teachers who are eager to support the goals and the mission of the school. Managing the physical aspects of the building also engage the learning environment to be safe and successful. Building a sense of organization for the schools vision can show staff ones determination to attain these goals. Students sense the organizational system within the building and in each classroom. Providing active and organized staff development will lead staff members to want to promote higher success in their students. One of the last components is quality instruction. District curriculum can only provide to the students what the instructor "feeds" to them. Students need to be provided differentiated instruction to meet their individual needs.

Passion for Education

Coming from a farm in northwest Iowa, I feel my values and beliefs have been embedded in me since childhood. We learned a responsibility and respect for our duties both to the animals and the land, which we farmed. Our parents encouraged us to be honest with others and ourselves. That would contribute to making a happy, loving family. Lastly, they provided and encouraged us with the knowledge and skills we needed to do anything we set our minds to, thus we were given freedom.

My passion for education began when I was in elementary school watching some outstanding teachers. My third grade teacher understood and identified some of my reading deficiencies. She was willing to take the time and help me work on sounding out new words and helped me look for strategies that I knew. She was a great role model and is someone that I still keep in touch with today! Many other teachers took active interest in my desire to become an educator and provided me a chance to come in and watch their classrooms in action. This was a great opportunity for me to see teachers in the field.

Leadership is defined as "going before or along with" (Guralnik, 1987, p.343). Even though things are cyclical in education, I feel one still needs a grasp on organizational, instructional, visionary, political, ethical and collaborative skills. In order to lead, one also has to exhibit credibility. When a leader is expecting people to follow, they need to offer credibility to their audience whether that is staff, students, or family/community members. I feel that I have built much credibility over the past years in our district. Since my second year of teaching first grade, I have worked to in-service our district teachers on our new math program. This took organization and planning, vision for the future, ability to instruct with knowledge, and willingness to receive feedback from fellow colleagues. I also feel it has challenged me at times to think about the whole picture of the program and how to disseminate this information to our teachers. I have also taught many technology classes through a grant with Kirkwood Community College. This provided me an opportunity to teach teachers how to use various pieces of software in their classrooms.

We must continually reform education, so that we make it best for all children. Education is the backbone of our society. We educate our young to become responsible and worthy contributors to our society. Not all students will respond with the same vigor. Yet, it is

our job as educators to reach those that are apprehensive. As educators we are helping to form the lives of tomorrow's teachers, doctors, lawyers, senators, health professionals, secretaries, presidents and all other occupations. Our job is highly important in order to provide the backbone for our society. The passion that we display for education will make a difference in the families that we are working with.

Building Relationships

"Learning is enhanced when schools encourage parents to stimulate their children's intellectual development" (Graue, Weinstein & Walberg, 1995, p. 9). Building relationships with families of one's population does this, I believe. Building relationships is certainly essential among one's staff, students and the community around you. Relationships need to be built with all three groups to promote responsibility and a shared ownership in our children's successes. Then the successes can be recognized and celebrated by students, staff and the families/community.

Building relationships with staff members is highly important since they will be interacting with students and families. They must be encouraged to initiate open lines of communication with the families that will be in their classroom. As my mentor did as principal, I would entice my staff to send postcards to their perspective classroom members. This could be a quick note of excitement for the upcoming year and/or an invitation to the open house that has already been planned. This begins to create bonds with the families and teachers in a building. Hopefully this also creates a positive beginning to the school year. This communication needs to be encouraged and supported throughout the school year. Being a veteran teacher, I would highly suggest reaching out to the families in one's classroom; they are the best people to spread news. "One important way you can show interest and concern for your students is by taking the time to

attend activities in which they are involved, both in and out of school" (Connolly, Dowd, Criste, Nelson, & Tobias, 1995, p.21). This news spreads just as fast good or bad. It is a great way to build a reputation in the building and in the community.

The principal needs to continue to encourage staff cohesiveness through various opportunities. These could be, but are not limited to: having a book club, gourmet club, offering leadership opportunities for staff members, or attending conferences on a perspective initiative. This would show the principal as an instructional and collaborative leader, encouraging life-long learning and working together towards a common vision and set of goals.

Staff development provided by the principal needs to promote a safe and caring learning environment for children. Therefore, it would behoove him/her to demonstrate a safe and supportive learning environment during staff development meetings or initiatives. This would show the principals dedication to being the instructional leader. Here the principal is also serving as a role model for his/her staff, setting potential guidelines for how to react to students as the principal does the staff members. Treating people fairly, equitably, and with respect needs to resonate in the principal's words and actions to be an ethical leader. "Be equitable and fair to everyone. Your behavior will speak for itself and reap multiple benefits for the culture, climate, and equity of the campus" (Wilmore, 2002, p.82). I hope that if staff has been treated this way it will transcend to each individual classroom.

Promoting community-building activities in staff meetings can also build relationships among staff members. I feel that a staff that collaborates will see higher student achievement and create a caring school community. "The resiliency studies highlights environments of caring/sharing, participation, and high expectations. Tribes doesn't just suggest what a positive learning environment should be...it makes it happen" (Gibbs, 2000, p.50). This will make

parents, community members, and students eager to attend and work hard each day. "If improved student achievement is the goal, then teachers must believe that they can 'mobilize available resources to solve problems and promote achievement" (Wortham, 2004, p.1).

The staff should have a time to come together and discuss behavior expectations in the school as a whole. Using the Girls and Boys Town Educational Model, (GBTEM), not only enhances a feeling of fairness, but also consistency. Students need to know ahead of time what is expected, and be given time to learn and role-play what appropriate behavior looks and sounds like. This has been extremely effective in our building, as the model is used building wide. The students know the expectations no matter where they are in the building. We have all built a common language with students and families. "As much of research indicates, the effectiveness of your instructional interactions with your students, academic as well as social, is largely dependent on the relationships you develop and maintain with them" (Connolly et al., 1995, p.18).

Building relationships with the families and the community around the school may not always be easy, but it certainly is necessary. The connection or relationship between home and school is crucial as noted by Bloom in the book by H. K. Wong and R. T. Wong (1998):

It is evident that when the school and home environments are mutually reinforcing, learning is likely to be the greatest. The nature of the learning environment is most critical during the periods of most rapid change in learning—the early years of school (Wong & Wong, 1998, p.43).

The visionary principal communicates her/his vision and goals to not only the families, but also the community at large. Keeping families informed of happenings and changes at school is the greatest way to build relationships with them. When problems arise the families need to feel that

the issue was confronted and resolved in a timely manner. Here is where I think I would educate my families through the use of common language. The GBTEM has a program intact entitled, Common Sense Parenting. This may be a springboard for some parents to feel connected to the language that is being used at school. Realizing that not all parents would have access to or take time for this book, communication is the key. "Clear expectations help children understand what they should and shouldn't do. They provide a framework for positive behavior. Even though kids won't meet your expectations all of the time, consistency and patience will pay off in the long run" (Burke & Herron, 1996, p.79). Communication through the school newsletter could include skills that will be worked on and the steps to fulfill them.

Reaching out to the community and building relationships with area businesses can provide resources and support to the school. This way the school and community are working together to serve each other. "Research indicates that parental involvement in education can increase student achievement, student self-esteem, and community support for schools" (Sawyer, Pinciaro & Bedwell, 1999, p.84). I would highly encourage this by asking business employees to come and volunteer in our school. This would put the community in the school, for first hand looks at the diversity and challenges that are encountered daily. "Right or wrong, accurate or not, your reputation will precede you" (H. Wong & R. Wong, 1998, p.101). An informed public can provide a collaborative and supporting climate.

As a principal, building relationships with students is important. The principal needs to be visible and approachable in order to create these necessary bonds. I would try to be in the cafeteria daily so that I could help promote that safe learning environment in our school. I would use the same common language that would be used in the classroom, therefore showing students the collaboration between the staff and the administration. As a principal, I would travel to

classrooms on a regular basis and set up some times to go into each classroom and share my love for reading, writing, mathematics or science. I believe it would be encouraging for students to see their teacher collaborating with the principal to meet their educational needs. Here again, this would be a time for building relationships with students as one goes into classrooms and interacts with them. The effect of relationships goes far beyond one teacher as stated by R. Weissbourd, 2003:

> In relationships, moral qualities are shaped. Adults do not simply transmit moral qualities and beliefs to children. These qualities and beliefs emerge and continually evolve in the wide array of relationships that every child has with both adults and peers starting nearly at birth, and in children's felt knowledge of what is harmful, true, or right. In these relationships, children continually sort out, for example, what they owe others, what they should stand for, what traditions are worth keeping, whether to follow rules, how to contribute to their family, classroom, and community—in other words, how to be a decent human being (Weissbourd, 2003, p.26).

Hopefully when students see that the principal, staff, and families are all working together for their best interest, they will join in on the efforts and raise their achievement levels. "Relationships do not develop over the course of a few days, weeks, or even months. Rather, a relationship can be viewed as continually developing over time"(Connolly et al., 1995, p.20), but can last a lifetime!

Effective Management

"Research tends to suggest that principals must first and primarily be the instructional leader, but not at the expense of effectively managing the school" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.140). Effective management of the school environment, I believe, can be divided into

three sections: the physical environment, personnel, and the students. All three are very important to the success of any building. When they are managed effectively they can lead to a very successful school environment. Michael Fullan writes in his book about school leadership that the competent manager is one who "organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives" (Fullan, 2003, p.10).

When one is looking at managing the physical environment, I think we really need to look at making sure that the building is physically safe for students, staff, and our community members. As this safety is being examined, the administrator and the head custodian need to see that the building has all been evaluated. Making sure that doors are providing safety, bathroom facilities are operating correctly, lighting is working, and rooms are clean and sanitary. If the building is clean and safe it will provide a safe learning environment for students to learn, grow, and hopefully succeed. As administrators we need to be organized to keep a well maintenanced school environment. "The school administrator must work in collaboration with faculty and staff to ensure an appropriate and inviting school environment" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.369).

Safety is another consideration when it comes to physical management. The school needs to have a plan in place to create the safe environment. The school needs to practice fire, tornado, clear the playground, and crisis drills so that everyone knows what to do if these situations should arise. Practicing these drills can provide the administrator with valuable feedback to share with staff and students. This will also share a vision of effective communication with the staff. The plans need to be clear and readily available for new and guest teachers in our building. The administrator needs to explain the importance of teaching the routines of drills to their students. They need to provide a rationale or purpose for practicing these drills at school. Maybe it will

lead some students to discussing this at home…and making a plan of their own! One can never underestimate the effects that can be made. As an administrator we are mandated to practice fire and tornado drills not less than four times a year (Iowa Code, 2001, § 100.31) because they are an important part of learning about safety.

Still another piece of the physical management of a school would be the budget. As the administrator of a school, it is important to be an organized leader when it comes to allocating funds. We "must have a basic understanding of how schools are financed" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.368). Looking at the vision of the school, the administrator needs to develop and implement strategic plans and goals for the upcoming year, and years ahead. Fiscal responsibility will also be an important organized trait to have as an administrator. Looking at other funding sources through grants and community support will be more important as we progress, "finding new and creative sources for obtaining funds will dominate the discussion at the local level" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.368).

Managing the personnel in one's building could certainly be one of the most important jobs the administrator does to affect student achievement. Hiring the best teachers will make all the difference in the climate in the building. "I'd rather start with someone who has a jarful of talent and a thimbleful of technique than the other way around" (Whitaker, 2003, p.45). The administrator needs to support the instructional initiatives within the district and have high expectations for staff and students. "Great teachers have high expectations for students but even higher expectations for themselves" (Whitaker, 2003, p.17). The administrator is the instructional leader; therefore he/she must provide quality staff development to reach the many levels of his/her staff. "To differentiate staff development is to practice what we preach" (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000, p.80). This may include the use of some of these staff members to

assist in staff development time. The administrator must also view managing the environment by considering how the school is arranged. This person must make decisions on how to use the school facilities in the most effective and organized way. "Individuals must learn from their own starting points or readiness levels rather than from a generic point of understanding" (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000, p.35).

The administrator needs to maintain a direct connection to the learning environment by having high expectations. Staff members will be watching to see if the administrator is expecting a lot from them or if status quo is enough. Staff's need a leader that will encourage them on their educational path. Statistics are staggering with how many teachers leave the profession after only a few years on the job. "The average yearly turnover rate in education is 13.2 percent" (Heller, 2004, p.5). He goes on to say that, "29 percent of new teachers leave education with in their first three years, and by the end of five years, 39 percent have left" (Viadero, 2002, p.7) (Heller, 2004, p.5). With these astounding numbers we really need to mentor and encourage our new teachers. "Principals will have to spend more time than ever before in formative supervision roles, nurturing new teachers" (Heller, 2004, p.6). I would encourage staff members to go the extra mile by keeping them a part of the data collection process. I would want them to have first hand information of how to improve their instruction. Having staff members become integral members of action research teams will provide them the access to data.

Managing personnel will not always be easy because conflicts will certainly exist sometimes. It will be important at these times for the administrator to be a good listener to both sides and ethically make the best decision for the students in the building, since they are whom we are all working for. This is where the administrator must evaluate the impact that they have on others. It has been stated in studies the importance of, "the principal and teachers as the main

determiners of school success" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.137). He/she is the role model for the staff, students, and the community in which they work. "The greatest free resource available to schools is the role-modeling provided by teachers, administrators, and staff" (Payne, 1998, p.87).

The third piece the administrator must effectively manage is the students. The administrator needs to encourage students in assemblies and in daily conversations to do their best...and a little more. "For effective principals, the start of the year is a chance to set the tone for the school year and, more importantly for the school" (Whitaker, 2003, p.105). Having high instructional expectations for students could lead them to be life-long learners. In schools it is important to instill in the students that EACH one has responsibilities and contributions to make to their school and community as a whole.

Student discipline is always going to be an issue with management. "Discipline should be seen and used as a form of instruction" (Payne, 1998, p.113). Having shared goals and expectations within the building will be important to providing the best education for students. "A well-managed classroom is also a predictable environment" (Wong & Wong, 1998, p.88). I believe this can be done through the use of the Girls and Boys Town Educational Model. The founder of Boys Town Father Flanagan states, "There are no bad boys. There are only bad environments, bad examples, bad thinking" (Connolly, et al., 1995, p.2). Teaching students social skills that they can carry with them for a lifetime may make a strong impact on the future. "School management in the next century will be the management of relationships: the relationship of child to learning, child to child, child to adult, and school to community" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.142).

Effective Organization

"Vision is the fundamental force that drives everything else in our lives" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.177). Following, I identify three strands of organizational leadership: vision, resources and communication, are integral to the principalship. A principal needs to have a vision for their school that matches that of the school district. As the School Improvement Plan (SIP) or Title I plan is being compiled, it is highly important to have the staff involved in the goals for the school as a whole. This will make them more willing to help with the achievement of these goals. They also need to have a commitment to the goals so that their expertise can be used for staff development. This would show my commitment to collaboration between the staff and the administration. "The research shows that the most effective schools are those with a well-ordered environment and high academic expectations" (Wong & Wong, 1998, p.143).

When organizing and planning a school year, I feel it is very important to organize things onto a calendar. A calendar is one way to show a desire for effective communication with staff and families, thus utilizing organizational and visionary leadership. "Plan the calendar for the entire year. Record every event and activity that is scheduled on the calendar. Schedule faculty meetings and tentative times for formal classroom observations" (Brock & Grady, 2004, p.71). As the administrator, I would take the responsibility of contacting teachers to meet with me to discuss the following year's calendar. This would show my commitment to the creation of a caring school community, through organizational and ethical leadership. I feel this should be done before teachers leave for summer break, but if this is not possible; contacting a representative from each grade level to come in would have to suffice the first year.

To have an organized and well-run school, the schedules for specials, Title I, library, computer lab, lunch and recess must be aligned for success. This too should be worked on collaboratively with the staff. "Cooperation must start at the classroom level because that determines the organizational climate of the school" (Wong & Wong, 1998, p.264). They should provide feedback on the various options that are available. Staff should be made to feel comfortable sharing their ideas and thoughts in the group. They need to feel that their ideas are desired and considered valuable. As the year progresses—a good organizational leader would monitor and modify the schedules as needed to provide the best possible performances by staff and students.

A big organizational task for the principal is facilitating the use of space in a building. How many classrooms are being used? Are there other areas available for use? The administrator needs to take an objective look at the layout of the school and determine if there needs to be some re-arrangement. Again, the students and staff's best interest must be taken into account. What is best for the students? This question must resonate while the administrator is making these organizational decisions, "as principals we must adhere to our core values. No matter what others want us to do, we must focus on what is right for our students" (Whitaker, 2003, p.114). Going right along with space, is the construction of class lists. As I have seen in the past, when parents request a particular teacher it works out fine—as long as there are tangible reasons for the request. If a teacher has built a relationship with a particular family, they may feel more comfortable with that teacher's style. I feel that it is important for the classroom teachers to make the first draft of class lists, at least at the elementary level. These teachers are with this group of students everyday and they know which pockets of students would not work well with each other. Teachers need to organize each classroom by spreading the students heterogeneously.

Each classroom should be equal when it comes to ethnicity and sex. The administrator needs to have final judgment of arrangements, but this collaboration with staff is very powerful. The teachers again feel that their opinions are valued.

Additionally, an administrator must be organized when it comes to data collection. They must be able to sift through assessment information to find the pertinent items to share with their staff. The administrator needs to be able to show the staff how to use this information as a way to drive instruction. This is key to reaching the school's vision and goals on their SIP. Teachers are the most important indicators of improving achievement; therefore they must be encouraged to use the date that they receive upon assessing students. This is a big job, but it will be a strong indicator of how well one's staff collaborates and shares information amongst their grade level teams and action research teams. "Great teachers establish expectations at the very beginning of the year; so do great principals" (Whitaker, 2003, p.111).

A final strand in organizational leadership is the communication with families, staff and the community. The administrator must be an effective communicator to have community, family, and staff support. The newsletters that go home need to be compiled in a manor that is very user friendly. Putting newsletters up in area businesses can assist with community support. "Communication inside and outside the school is imperative to the accomplishment of the school's goals as well as to the public image and perception of the school" (Wilmore, 2002, p.56).

As a new administrator is organizing their year, I feel it is important to look at the vision of the school and see how the resources available can help students succeed. Then communicating this to staff, families and the community will enhance the student's learning

experience. "Just because something has been done a certain way for a long time does not mean it cannot be improved with change" (Wilmore, 2002, p.54).

<div align="center">Quality Instruction</div>

Providing quality instruction is one key essential to being an exemplary administrator. This can be accomplished by: hiring quality teachers, modeling use of data collection to drive instruction, promoting success of the school improvement plan by implementing quality staff development, providing scientifically research-based materials, and providing students and staff needed support/resources and encouragement. "Above all, school leaders need to 'feed teachers' emotionally and professionally. Celebrate their successes and cultivate their leadership qualities. True leaders reproduce. True leaders make other people great" (Wortham, 2004, p.2).

One of the most important tasks of an administrator is the hiring of his/her staff. These individuals that are hired are to be held to high performance standards. This would show the knowledge of the administrator in the areas of visionary and instructional leadership. Implementing this into my school would be done in collaboration with other staff members. I would want their opinions on whom they think would best work with our staff toward our common goals…the educability of all students. Students are affected daily by quality instruction delivered by teachers that are ethical. The teacher must model the behaviors and expectations that are expected of the students. The teachers are one of the most important factors in a child's success in school. Education provides the backbone for student's future opportunities. The successes of students are hinged on many people says W. G. Cunningham and P. A. Cordeiro (2000):

> Research has shown that the principal is the single most important individual to the
> success of any given school (Miller, 1995). School effectiveness research in the 1980's

pointed to the importance of the principal and teachers as the main determiners of school success (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p.137).

Staff development must apply to helping students achieve. Robert Marzano says it best about the need for staff development, "seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other factor" (Marzano, 2001, p.3). The administrator becomes the model here again for showing his/her knowledge of the principles of effective instruction. Teachers are the single most important delivers of instruction to students. They need to be aware of how the staff development topics transcend to student learning. Students are affected by the way the staff internalizes the information, if they carry it back in a positive or negative light. I would infuse staff development by offering expertise of my own and by other staff members. I think staff development needs to encourage staff members to align their teaching to be consistent with our schools vision and goals.

Since modeling is important to effective participation, I would model what I would do if I were in the classroom. I would be gathering data on a particular topic, for example attendance. As I gather information I would share my results with the staff. I would model how to use the information in tracking specific students who are consistently absent. Technology would be increasingly important as I started to chart and graph my data. I would encourage staff members to start small with some data in their classrooms. Teachers that are comfortable with technology could show how they compiled their data and shared it with their stakeholders. This would show the collaborative leadership skills the administrator possesses to give staff members a chance to share their results. "There will never be a guarantee that a given program will work in a given school, just as no physician can guarantee that a given treatment will work in every case" (Slavin, 2003, p.24).

I would infuse this by encouraging staff members to serve on committees and be involved myself. Therefore the responsibility for choosing curriculum is shared to maximize accountability and ownership. This way I know the process that was taken and can be knowledgeable with my staff and community members. By implementing scientifically research-based materials, I would then be able to show visionary leadership skills by modeling my core beliefs. I would also be maintaining a direct connection to the learning environment by my instructional leadership. "We are here to promote the success of all students" (Wilmore, 2002 p.19). By collaborating with the selection committee, I would be showing my dedication to bringing the latest issues and trends to my staff to impact student achievement. R. E. Slavin sets up the possible ramifications of these movements (2003):

> The movement to ask schools to adopt programs that have been rigorously researched could have a profound impact on the practice of education. If this movement prevails, educators will increasingly be able to choose from among a variety of models known to be effective if well implemented, rather than reinventing (or misinventing) the wheel in every school (Slavin, 2003, p.24).

Yet another way to show that quality instruction is valued in my building would be by providing support and encouragement to staff and students. Providing needed materials to staff members directly affects students every day! I would be demonstrating ethical leadership by helping to provide a quality education for all. Students and staff will more likely perform when they have the essential needed items for instruction. I would infuse needed resources by offering staff members, choices in materials purchased. Then I would be watching to see how the materials are implemented and how they effect instruction…conversely assessments. Celebrating student's achievements and successes would be one way to express to students my

dedication and support for them. I would create student work bulletin boards to showcase work on a bi-weekly basis. The students would hopefully be encouraged to do their best.

Conclusion

I would provide support to our families in understanding the need for academic support at home. In a section on ways parents can help, S. Zemelman, H. Daniels & A. Hyde say (1998):

> Every child needs to go through the "lap stage" of reading development, ideally at the ages of two, three and four with a parent. But if this doesn't happen, then school must help the child recapitulate this critical experience with someone else (Daniels & Hyde, 1998, p.41).

This could be meet with resistance, but then I would pull some data that has been collected to show the results of added family support. This would show my efforts in collaborative leadership.

Education is a foundational component of our democracy. Children, through adults, are educated to help them make informed choices in their lives. As an educator, I feel it is as important to educate the family, as it is to educate the child. I became an educator to make a difference in the life of a child, as someone did for me. As I have taught at the upper and lower elementary levels, I have made a difference! I would like to expand the scope by becoming an administrator. Becoming an educational leader is an awesome task that I look forward to broadening.

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