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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

The purpose of education is to prepare students for a life filled with decisions. Therefore, it is the duty of schools to provide students with opportunities to develop the skills needed to make these decisions. Obviously, students attend school to receive an education, but educators cannot stop there, they must also help students to grow socially.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary Education

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

Brian L. Ortman

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Educational Philosophy

The purpose of education is to prepare students for a life filled with decisions. Therefore, it is the duty of schools to provide students with opportunities to develop the skills needed to make these decisions. Obviously, students attend school to receive an education, but educators cannot stop there, they must also help students to grow socially.

History and Purpose

Education is the foundation of all societies. It has been throughout history. Though the definition of what education is varies from society to society. The definition depends on the needs of the particular society. In the United States alone, the purpose of education has changed drastically over the past two hundred years. In the past, to be educated was to have the necessary knowledge and abilities to perform a skill (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). Many of these skills were agriculturally related. As the country has developed society has made many technological advances, which have created new opportunities for individuals. In the short span of just over two hundred years, society has moved from agrarian to technological (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). Along with that change has come a change in the definition of what education is. Education has become more formal. Children are now required to attend school through a certain age, usually sixteen. Whereas in the past, formal schooling was not deemed to be essential. Creating well rounded and literate students is now extremely important.

Today's society is much more complex than the past. The ability to perform many tasks and be knowledgeable in many areas is necessary. A pattern is forming. As society becomes more complex, more is demanded of the educational systems and its members. As the United States and other countries throughout the world become more technologically advanced, the more education individuals will need and the more important education will become. Education is necessary to advance both as a society and as individuals.

Socialization and Safety

Education allows people to understand the world around them and also allows them to interact with others. The current educational system in the United States provides students with a safe environment to develop the necessary social skills to be an active member of society. Students learn to communicate and interact with others while gaining an education. Education alone cannot develop active and successful members of society. In order for a society to flourish, its members must work together. Therefore, I believe that the educational system serves two purposes: to educate and socialize the members of a given society. In today's world, one cannot exist without the other. In order for a school to meet the goal to educate and socialize its students, I believe that several things must be in place: 1) a safe environment, 2) opportunities to construct knowledge, 3) multicultural education, 4) high expectations and success for all and, 5) development of life-long learners.

Safety entails not only physical safety but also freedom to make mistakes and to be different. First, if the environment is not physically safe students are less likely to focus on education. They must first feel that their lives are not in danger. In recent years, this has been perceived by members of society to be an increasing problem. A great deal of discussion and effort have gone into making schools safe for children. At Nashua-Plainfield we spent a great deal of time creating policies and guidelines concerning these issues. As a child the only guidelines I was familiar with were those related to tornadoes and fires. Many schools now prepare for acts of violence on the premises. We now have policies concerning bomb threats, intruders, and weapons. Once physical safety is ensured it is important that the environment is conducive to learning. Students must have opportunities to explore, express themselves, and take chances without the fear of being ridiculed by other students and teachers. Another recent trend has been the incorporation of character education programs and other programs concerning the diversity of our populations. Students are now not only educated in the traditional academic areas but also in areas such as sexual harassment and bullying. The older students at Nashua Elementary participate in the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program (D.A.R.E.) and the Project D.A.T.E. program the Cedar Valley Friends of the Family, both of which discuss the importance of treating others with respect regardless of their differences. Programs like these are being developed throughout the country to address these issues.

Creating Knowledge

Recent research has shown that students create knowledge as they explore their environment. The curriculum should offer students opportunities to construct their knowledge, rather than be taught using traditional methods. Students should be offered chances to apply the knowledge they acquire through real world activities. Students retain information better if they are able to engage in these type of activities. They are also better able to adapt the knowledge they gain to other situations (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Meier, D. 1995). During my five years at Nashua Elementary I have increased my use of problem based, real world activities in my teaching. Each year I have seen an increase in overall standardized test scores and have found that students are better able to solve their own problems. Therefore, I believe the curriculum should focus on problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. These skills are necessary for success in today's society. Surveys of some of the top companies in the world reveal that these companies are more concerned with a prospective employees ability to work with others and be creative, rather than the technical skills they possess (Daft, 2002). Teaching students to be inquisitive allows for further exploration as they progress through life and allows them to take responsibility for their education (Meier, 1995).

The Changing Face of Our Nation

As the world changes so does the make up of our nation. Today's society is much more diverse. Groups considered minorities continue to gain in population as the majority shrinks. Also, large numbers of immigrants are entering the United States each year. Therefore, it is important that the curriculum be representative of the many cultures that make up society. Stereotypes must be eradicated. The most effective way to accomplish this is through direct contact with people of various backgrounds. I have found this to be true in the community of Waterloo. As Bosnian and Hispanic immigrants have settled in the Cedar Valley, numerous stereotypes developed. As a volunteer at Elk Run Elementary I had the opportunity to witness the the positive results of students interacting with one another and educating each other. The school provided students opportunities to learn from one another and exposed them to the various cultures. Through these opportunities the stereotypes were erased and students began to celebrate their differences. Students should learn to accept differences among people and understand that everyone is unique and has something to offer.

High Expectations for All

All too often standards by which students are evaluated are set at a minimum rather than raising expectations for children. This was a major area of concern of teachers in the Nashua-Plainfield School District, especially with the

new state mandates. Instead of pushing students to achieve at high levels, the standards and benchmarks were set at levels which most students could achieve. Many teachers argued that if they were to be held accountable they wanted to be sure that students could achieve. They did not want to set the level too high because they felt that there were students that no matter what would not attain those high expectations. Unfortunately, I believe that this was a detriment to students. Some students may not be able to achieve these levels, but is it fair to hinder others opportunities? Also, we will not know if these students are unable to achieve at these levels unless they are given the opportunity to try. It is human nature for people to want to succeed. Humans often push themselves to limits that others find difficult to believe. Children are no different. Set the bar high and help them to attain their goals. Expect no less of them because they are children. They will surprise many people (Meier, 1995).

As can be seen from my previous views on education I believe that the purpose of the public education system is to create life-long learners and to create responsible members of society. I feel that if these two goals are met the students will be prepared for the work force. They will also have studied a great deal of material and gained knowledge through their studies. Therefore, meeting the other purposes stated by Kowalski and Reitzug (1993). Students that realize that learning never ends, whether it be job skills, social skills, or life's lessons, will see the value of being prepared for the work world. They will understand that

survival is difficult in our society if they are not prepared to meet the needs of employers. Life-long learners have the ability to reason, rationalize, and problem solve. All of which are necessary in the work force. I also feel that creating responsible members of society ties in with the goal of preparing students for the work force. The majority of occupations in today's world require people to work with one another. If they have developed the skills to become an active and responsible citizen they will understand the need for cooperation among various groups of people and individuals.

Skills and Values of an Effective Administrator

At the heart of almost every public school in America is a principal. The person who provides leadership and management. Over the years this profession has experienced numerous changes. During the early years of administration, the principal's duties were mainly managerial in nature (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). Today's principal must be adept in many areas. Principals are expected to take on the leadership responsibilities of a school, while also performing the role of manager. Each of these roles consist of a large number of smaller roles, each very important to the larger picture of what makes an effective administrator. What skills and characteristics do successful principals share? What values do they hold? More importantly, how did I come to choose a career as an elementary principal and how did I develop the skills and values needed to be successful?

What has brought me to this point in my life? Why do I want to be a principal? These are just two of the questions I asked myself before I decided to begin seeking my degree in administration. Like most people that decide that they want to become principals, I feel that I can make a difference in the lives of the people around me. I have also seen numerous examples of what I believe a principal should not be. It upsets me to see people in a position of authority and leadership who do not seem to care about the childrens' lives that they touch. These are the reasons that usually surface when asked these questions, but what actually led me in the direction I am taking?

Over the past few years I have developed more of an understanding of why I chose to become an educator. The original source was my love of children, the wonderful things they say and do, the honesty with which they conduct themselves (though not always flattering), and the opportunity to watch them grow into successful adults. During my short time as an educator, I found more deeply rooted reasons for my choice. The ideas and experiences I have gathered along the way have had a great influence on me. The development of many of these ideas can be found in the paragraphs below, some which cannot be found here also helped to influence me.

Leadership

As the profession of administrator came to encompass both the role of manager and leader the requirements placed upon principals has increased greatly

and have become intertwined. In the past the main responsibility of the principal was to manage people and the budget. This is no longer true. The role of leader has moved to the forefront. Principals can no longer sit behind a desk, give orders, and keep the school financially sound. Schools now focus on the contributions of all and the ability to work with one another to bring about the best overall environment for students. It is the administrators job to empower, motivate, and educate. That is not say that the principal is no longer required to make decisions on financial matters, it is now just a part of a much larger puzzle (Fullan, 1998; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Speck, 1999).

The foundation for my future career as a leader started early. Since that time numerous events have affected my path. Through my education and jobs I have had the opportunity to build upon this foundation. Athletics offered me many opportunities to build my leadership skills. It was here that I learned the importance of working together to accomplish a common goal. I also had several coaches that pushed me beyond my natural abilities to succeed at a higher level. Their expectations encouraged me to work hard to achieve goals and to hold my expectations of those around me high also. I also found that though I was not always successful, I learned a great deal from the mistakes and failures that occurred along the way. I learned to strive for success and to try harder when faced with adversity. The lessons I learned have been of great value to me throughout my life.

Communication

One of the most noticeable changes that has emerged since the increased emphasis on leadership has come in the area of communication, which I believe to be one of the most important aspects of the principalship. Leaders must be people oriented and interactional (Daft, 2002; Fullan, 1998). Principals must have superb communication skills. The role of communicator is one of the most time consuming areas a principal deals with day in and day out. In recent years the amount of interaction with parents regarding school related concerns has increased (Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998). As these concerns have increased the amount of parent involvement has decreased, thus making it even more important to be an effective communicator. Principals must be well versed in the policies of the district, educational strategies, and curriculum.

In addition to communicating with parents, principals spend a great deal of time communicating with staff members. This has always been true, though the nature of those interactions has evolved. Successful relationships concentrate on collaboration rather than the traditional supervisor-worker relationship (Belasco & Stayer, 1993; Daft, 2002). The role of the principal now encompasses providing support, seeking out resources, creating an environment that values cooperation, and providing feedback. The ability to listen has become an invaluable communication tool for administrators. Relationships can hinge on a principal's ability to be an effective listener. As in all areas of life people feel valued when

they feel that what they have to say is important (Schwan & Spady, 1998).

Another important aspect of this communication is finding out what teachers need in order to be successful. Through frequent conversations principals may find that a teacher is in need of support. No one person can have all the answers, so it is important that an administrator help the teacher to find the necessary resources to improve. Not only is important for administrators and teachers to communicate, it is also important that principals allow teachers to communicate. Frequent opportunities to visit with other educators is invaluable. It helps to build a sense of team and to provide opportunities for problem solving, feedback, and growth. The administrator should also be involved in these meetings to help in the process and to gain insight also.

My realization of the importance of communication came in later in my life. Education was not my first choice as a career. My college education began with a degree in Criminology. Though I later left this field, I learned many things that would be of assistance as I entered education. After graduation, my first job was as a counselor for juvenile delinquents. Some of the same skills I had developed as an athlete were put to use once again. I had the opportunity to work with people from various walks of life: teachers and administrators, lawyers, judges, social services, mentally and physically abused children, criminals, other counselors, psychologists, medical personnel, and dysfunctional families. I found that my communication skills were extremely important. I had to learn to

communicate in many ways dependent upon with whom I was speaking and the situation. I also had to enhance my listening skills. I found that this was probably the most important skill I possessed. When others feel that they are being listened to they are more likely to work with you rather than against you. I found that through listening I was better able to help people work through their problems or the situation at hand by listening to them and allowing them to solve their own problems. Through listening I was able to build some strong relationships that were useful in my times of need. It enabled me to create alliances with the people I worked with.

My ability to communicate with parents, students, staff, and the community has improved through my involvement in numerous committees, school activities, and creating newsletters. I have volunteered for six to seven committees each of my six years at Nashua. This has allowed me to keep informed on what is happening throughout the district. It also allows me to interact with the other members of the committees and staff members. It is often my duty to disperse the information to the staff members within my building and seek their feedback and ideas for future meetings. As a member of these committees and as a classroom teacher I have had the opportunity to plan numerous activities. Examples include a Red Cross Relief Fund within the communities of Nashua and Plainfield, a school fair with the help of parents, a lunch for the veterans of Nashua, and many student led assemblies. These

activities have allowed me to not only improve my communication skills, but have also helped to develop a positive relationship between the school and community and to do what is best for the children of Nashua. In the past the Husky Hotline had been more of an informational piece the district sent out each month. After taking over the duty of creating the Nashua Elementary portion of the newsletter, I decided that it would not only be informational but would also celebrate the wonderful things our students and staff were doing. Students are asked to write articles for inclusion and take a more active role in its development. Feedback from the community has been positive and the length has grown from half a page to two pages.

Community

Expectations of the principal's involvement with the community has also increased. It is often the responsibility of administrators to create partnerships with the business community and the community at large. In a recent survey by Portin, Shen, and Williams (1998) 83% of the respondents reported that more of their time was being spent on issues related to public relations. Many schools are establishing partnerships with area businesses. This is one of the most noticeable programs. Examples of such programs include the Waterloo School Districts Partners in Education Program and the state funded School-to-Work programs. Principals are often responsible for making contact with the businesses or state agencies. As funding decreases these partnerships may provide some alternatives

in terms of monies or services. Not only are businesses becoming increasingly important to schools, but so are organizations and the community members.

Using the resources within a community is valuable. In every community there are citizens that have skills that may add to the education of the students. In Nashua the local fire department and the Veterans of Foreign Wars have provided the students with knowledge that may not have otherwise had access to. Also, Nashua Elementary has adopted a Foster Grandparent program. Retired citizens volunteer their time to read with students, help in classrooms, and provide positive role models for the students. These type of relationships can be developed through a meaningful relationship with the community.

Vision and Change

Principals often find themselves dealing with the problems of the moment. Jumping from task to task and problem to problem at a moments notice. The role of principal requires flexibility. Upon entering most schools visitors notice the frantic pace of the principal's day. This is the picture that often comes to mind when thinking of the principal. Unfortunately it still exists, this role has not changed. Though these day to day responsibilities are important to the school, they are not the most important. Today it is also the responsibility of the principal to look to the future. It is essential to be a visionary, looking to where it is the school is going. Seeking out ways to improve and grow. Always striving to do better (Belasco & Stayer, 1993; Daft, 2002). Not only is it the duty of the

principal to create the vision, but it is also his or her job to see that others carry out the vision. The vision becomes the focus of every decision and act within the learning environment (Belasco & Stayer, 1993; Daft, 2002). It is what drives the school to achieve at higher levels. Once again requiring expertise in the area of leadership.

Here in Iowa, as well as throughout the United States, the education system is in the process of change. Research concerning education has found more effective means of educating students. This change has at least two major implications for administrators. First, as the research evolves so must the education of those who educate. Not only do teachers need to educate themselves on how to best meet the needs of students, so do administrators. The teachers will be looking to principals for support. Therefore, it is essential that administrators seek out recent information on research and its effect on their specific educational environment through professional development, reading, and networking with other professionals in the area of education (Danielson, 1996; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Evans & Mohr, 1999; Speck, 1999). This not only educates administrators but also models that educating one's self is important. Second, it has major implications for evaluations. Keeping current on the research will be helpful in this area also. In the past much of the focus on evaluations was to rid the education system of inferior teachers. Evaluation was and is viewed as a threat to the livelihood of teachers. With the current changes being undertaken,

the focus now shifts to helping teachers to improve their skills (Danielson, 1996; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Improvement is now the key. It will be the responsibility of current and future administrators to change the mind set.

Obviously, there are a great number of leadership and management roles a principal performs. I feel that each is of great importance, but believe that the ability to communicate, collaborate, create a vision and carry it out, to educate one's self and provide a model, and to provide meaningful feedback for others are of utmost importance. The ability to perform these roles effectively helps to determine the time and effort spent on other tasks.

The opportunities afforded me have been increased due to my involvement, I have worked with staff members, the administration, parents, students, and the staff to bring about some positive changes to our learning community. We have developed a new schedule for the lunch hour to improve supervision, lessen the chances of injuries to students, and allow support staff opportunities to interact with other staff members during that time. In addition, older students are now responsible for helping in the lunch room and helping younger students prepare for lunch which has resulted in positive relationships throughout the school. It has also helped to increase staff morale due to the fact that this was a collaborative effort. Other changes that have had a positive effect on the environment include the development of an outdoor classroom and school wide celebrations developed by the students in cooperation with staff members.

Not only have these changes helped to develop a positive atmosphere it has also helped in the development of our students as responsible citizens and life-long learners. The students and staff have become positive role models for one another. These changes were initiated by me but would not have been possible without the cooperation and dedication of those around me. I have learned that change is much more meaningful when people have ownership. Once the changes were initiated my role became one of supporter, helping the group to reach its common goal. I have learned that I do not have to be solely responsible for change, in fact, change will not take place if I am solely responsible.

Balancing Act

One of the more difficult components of the principalship is finding a balance between all the roles. A balance must be found between the time spent on the inner workings of a school (budgets, public relations, meetings, etc.) and the time spent with the students and staff. Failure to create a balance between management and leadership can be cause for numerous problems. Principals with strong management techniques but lacking in leadership will find that they lack a vision, the environment fails to deal with change effectively, and performance of members of the learning community deteriorate over time. Those with strong leadership but weak management soon find that budgets and deadlines are not met, there is very little structure throughout the school, and things often spiral out of control (D. Else, personal communication, 2001; Lambert, 1998). In order to run

a school effectively a principal must know the needs of the students and the strengths and weaknesses of faculty members (Whitaker, 1997; Zetterman, 1999). A principal must also show genuine concern for the students' and staffs' health, welfare, and growth (Whitaker, 1997). This is impossible to do without being visible throughout the school day and interacting with the students and staff (Goldman, 1998). I also believe that a principal must provide a model for his or her expectations of students, just as teachers must. These leadership roles must be combined with a strong understanding of financial matters, policies, and procedures. A truly effective and efficient school has a leader that is able to perform both roles: leadership and management.

Values

Several of the skills necessary to be an effective administrator have been discussed. Are there also values that successful principals have in common? I believe there are. Even with the skills an administrator cannot be effective if a set of values is not in place. These values help to determine what is important to the school. The following are values that I deem important to me as a future administrator.

First and foremost, I believe that helping to develop students that are valued members of society is important. I have met many people that are successful though academically they faltered. Their ability to relate to others and create meaningful relationships helped them to overcome their academic

difficulties. Therefore, I believe that it is important to help nurture not only academic skills but also social skills. Often times by developing the necessary social skills a student is able to overcome academic difficulties by recognizing other strengths they may have.

A second value I hold is that of the life-long learner. I view this as important, not only for students, but also for staff members and myself. I believe that the best way to help create students that are life-long learners is to show enthusiasm for learning and continue to educate ourselves throughout our lives. A true love for learning can be contagious. It is important that as educators we model our expectations of students. Educators cannot preach to students the importance of education if they do not truly value education themselves. Not only is it important to students, it is also important to the field of education. Educators must be in tune with the changes that are taking place within the field and apply new and innovative techniques to the classroom. Seeking better ways of educating students is a necessity. To do this teachers and administrators alike must continue to increase their knowledge base. Ian Jukes (personal communication, August 18, 2001), a leader in the area of technology and curriculum, stated at an in-service that, "We are preparing students for their future not our past." I believe that statement best embodies what the responsibilities of an educator are in terms of educating one's self.

As I think back, I find that education has always been an important part of my life. I have one person to thank for this, my mother. She spent countless hours with me as a child reading and playing, helping me to develop the skills I would need later in life to be successful. She helped to create a life-long learner in me. She helped me to develop the skills and values that I spoke about earlier. From the time of my birth, she helped to prepare me for the choices I would make later in life. She did not do this thinking that someday I would become a teacher or a principal, she did this to prepare me to be successful in anything that I chose to do. The skills and values that I wrote about earlier are not confined to the education profession, they are skills and values that are necessary in all professions to be successful. I now realize that my road to administration started early in life. I have always had a love for learning and school. She was the positive role model I needed. I plan to pass this on to the children that I come in contact with.

I have now spent six years as a teacher in the Nashua-Plainfield School District. During that time the face of education has continued to change and I have continued to grow. A great deal of effort has gone into learning about what it takes to be an effective leader and putting the knowledge into action. Through my course work and involvement in my school, I have had the opportunity to grow as a leader. First, I have continued to learn about the field of education through my administration courses and professional development

opportunities. On the average, I spend an additional 300 hours outside of school educating myself. I seek to learn more about how children learn and how to use instructional strategies effectively, always looking to find better and more efficient ways of educating children. This information is often shared with colleagues at inservices and through informal discussions.

I have found in my life that one of the most important values a person can hold is that of integrity. Without it little else matters. If a person is not credible all else fails to be of importance. This is especially true for administrators. Too often the downfall of a principal or superintendent is due to their lack of honesty and credibility. Students, staff, parents, and the community look to administrators in times of need and expect that the help or advice they are given is credible.

I also believe that high expectations for all is important. Expecting the best is key to creating a successful environment. People are amazing creatures, capable of achieving greatness. This is evident every day as we read the newspaper or watch television and see the wonderful things humans have achieved. Rarely do these articles and television shows focus on the field of education. Why? All too often the expectations are not set high enough. It is human nature to want to succeed, so why not apply this to students, staff, and administrators. Quite often we settle for the minimum. Standards and benchmarks are a clear example, they are devised to ensure that the majority of students will succeed because they are

set with the minimum levels of achievement as the goal. Most students are able to reach these standards with little effort. Why not set the standards higher and push these students to excel. It has been my experience that if people are challenged they often rise above the expectations set and achieve on an even greater level. Not only must we push our students to stretch themselves, we must *also seek to challenge the professionals in education, teachers and administrators.* It is through high expectations that education can reach higher levels of achievement. Teachers and administrators will increase their abilities, as will students.

Many of the people I worked with had low expectations for themselves, likely due to the low expectations placed upon them by the people they had come into contact. People expected them to fail, I did not. I found that though these young people had problems and had made some bad choices in their lives, they were for the most part good people. They too wanted to succeed, they had aspirations for the rest of their lives. I learned to see the good things in people rather than dwelling on the negative. These were children that for numerous reasons made some poor decisions or were placed in situations that made it difficult for them to succeed. They taught me to look at the positive and hold high expectations for all, not just those you felt were going to succeed. The low expectations of the parents of these children and juvenile court system eventually led me to leave for a career in education.

Over the past six years I have attempted to hold myself and others to high expectations. For those who do not seek out change and attempt to better themselves and others around them, I try to encourage them by speaking with them and sharing knowledge that I have gained through my education. I also attempt to include them in activities and hope that they will take a more active role. On several occasions, this has been effective, in other cases it has not had any effect. Hopefully, as we continue to make improvements those who do not take part will become involved. One thing that I have learned is to not give up on people.

Underlying each and every decision an administrator makes should be the following question: Is this decision what is best for children? I feel that to keep things in the proper perspective this question should be asked before making any decision. Ultimately, that is what education is about, the children. Without them there is no job. Educators must be the ones to look out for the children that will control the future. I believe that any decision made with this question in mind cannot be a wrong one. It may not be the easiest to carry out, it may not be the most popular, but it does have the most important factor in education in mind.

Vision for the Future

The world of education is entering an uncertain period in time. The economy is causing drastic changes. Technology continues to advance. Research is being done that challenges the traditional approaches of teaching. Larger numbers of students live in unhealthy situations. Schools are being asked to take on more of a parenting role than ever before. Society fears for the safety of their children. Fewer people are entering the teaching profession and others are leaving for higher paying positions in the private sector. To me these are not negatives, I see these as challenges. I look forward to the changes educators face. I believe that by facing these challenges the public school system will become stronger. When people speak of these challenges I see an opportunity for improvement. I see wonderful things for the future of education.

I envision a learning community where the students learning is the responsibility of the entire community not just the student. Where the school is the focal point of the neighborhood or community. The school will not be just a place where children come from Monday until Friday and morning to late afternoon. It will be a place that offers more than just an education. It will offer people the opportunity to learn about one another and work together for the betterment of the entire community. Creating a climate where the staff, parents, and community are all involved in the development of successful and responsible students is essential. As stated earlier the world is changing. Schools cannot

prepare students for every situation that arises or provide them with every skill they will need as they move into the work force. The schools can provide a model for what community means. They can teach children the social skills they will need as they enter the future. These skills are much more valuable than any other.

Not only will the community and the school work together, but so will the staff members and administrators. The environment will be one in which collaboration is a priority. Everyone will work with one another to improve student achievement. Staff will seek out new and innovative ways of educating students and share the knowledge and skills they possess. Everyone will be responsible for his or her professional development, creating a model for life-long learning. It is through educating one's self that a person is better able to educate others. This is not only true for teachers, but also for administrators. As a principal I intend to take part in the staff and professional development opportunities that the staff takes part in. Being responsible for the evaluation of teaching means that I too must have a true understanding of the current research and instructional strategies if I am to be effective and help others to grow.

The lines of communication will be open and honest, allowing for productive feedback and positive change. The role of the administrator will include supporting teachers, students, and parents. Shared-decision making will be widely used. The principal position will not be one of top down management. All stakeholders ideas and opinions will be valued. Most importantly, the

expectations on the learning community will be high, encouraging individuals to reach their full potential and beyond. The entire learning community will be responsible for seeing that all students are successful regardless of race, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, or disability.

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