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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 principal of the 21st century must be able to balance many activities to meet the needs of all constituents. In creating an environment that meets the needs of all, the principal must focus in on six essential concepts: 1) creating a team approach, 2) building a shared vision through communication, 3) facilitating change, 4) managing time, 5) creating climate, and 6) improving instruction. I am convinced that if a principal focuses attention on these six concepts he/she can create a vision within the school that centers its attention on student achievement. When an administrator does so a vision to meet the needs of the entire community is created.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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

_____

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

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by
Shelly A. Petersen
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The best teacher is the one who NEVER forgets what it is like to be a student. The best administrator is the one who NEVER forgets what it is like to be a teacher " (Conner, 2000, p. 11). Neila Conners believes that one should never forget the trials and triumphs he/she has experienced in their past endeavors. I believe to be an effective school administrator one should never lose sight of what life was like before becoming an educational leader. I want to be the best leader possible for my school and community. I want to inspire students and staff to work to their fullest potential and beyond.

Leadership is not about being in charge. Kirsten Mikel Hilbert (2000) explains leadership in a powerful way:

> ....I have learned that leadership is not about being
> in charge or having power; it is about serving others
> and being their support. It is about compassion, the
> day-to-day practice of social justice, and the true
> meaning of being a servant to a community. (p.16)

This is the type of leader that is successful in a community and has earned the respect of staff, students, and community. This is who I will be as an administrator. Successful leaders not only set direction, organize, monitor, and build relationships with the school community, they also model values. Christopher Day (2000) believes that to be an effective school leader you must never lose sight of your values, "Principals who can balance a variety of pressures while never losing sight of their values best inspire and serve the school

community" (p. 56). An enlightened principal will be the principal of the 21st century; this is who I want to be.

The profession of principal during the 21st century will be more demanding than any other time in history. It will require leaders to be more competent, compassionate, and confident in their leadership abilities than ever before. Ferrandino (2001) notes:

> The principalship of the 21st century requires something more than a compendium of skills It requires the ability to lead others and to stand for important ideas and values . It requires never losing sight of a vision. These attributes are what tomorrow's ' principals will need - and what today's outstanding school leaders already posse (p. 440).

These are the attributes of an outstanding administrator and these are the attributes I will strive for, so I can become one of the outstanding school leaders for the new millennium.

The principal of the 21st century must be able to balance many activities to meet the needs of all constituents. In creating an environment that meets the needs of all, the principal must focus in on six essential concepts: creating a team approach, building a shared vision through communication, facilitating change, managing time, creating climate, and improving instruction. I believe each of these concepts are critical to create an *effective school*. I am convinced that if a principal focuses attention on these six concepts he/she can create a vision within the school that centers its attention on student

achievement. When an administrator does so a vision to meet the needs of the entire community is created.

Creating A Team Approach

A leader in today's changing world needs the ability to build and inspire teamwork within the organization. From the classroom to the assembly line, from small business to corporate America, teams are the basic building block of any successful establishment. Schools are no exception. Students need to learn how to work in-groups in order to succeed in our ever-changing society. Teachers need to work in-groups to build a school that delivers a paradigm that teamwork is important.

The principal of the 21st century needs to create an atmosphere that fosters the importance of collaboration. He/she must create an environment where everyone has input on the decision-making process for the school. Each building within the school system must have the opportunity to provide input to develop a shared mission for the district. Site-based leadership is one way to develop this team. The principal must create a site-based leadership team that allows every member of the building a voice. The site-based leadership team shares ideas and makes decisions with feedback from all school and community members. Making decisions in this collaborative manner will benefit all. Through input, school members take ownership and pride in the school, which influences

their behavior. When people feel they are a part of the decision-making process they are more willing to facilitate change.

Building and sustaining strong leadership teams is key to any successful program. School administrators need to create effective team experiences that focus on the districts' mission and goals. Brown, Buster, and Townsend (1999) note, "Great leadership teams don't simply happen. They grow in effectiveness as team members participate in learning activities that engage and challenge them" (p. 32). The principal needs to create challenging activities that thrust members beyond the status quo and make them stretch their minds, thoughts, and ideas a step beyond what they expected they could do. When staff members are pushed to their highest limits, they too will create atmospheres in the classroom that urge students to go a step further with their thought processes. Student achievement will not happen without quality leadership from all. In the school that I lead I will create an atmosphere where collegiality, teamwork, and student achievement is at the forefront of every person's mind that walks through the doors.

Building and sustaining a leadership team for the 21st century must be a focus of the administrator. I will create a leadership team that involves every member of the building and community. I would invite teachers, non-certified staff members, students, parents, and community members to be a part our building team. I will create a balance of diverse people for varied roles and

responsibilities. I would encourage senior staff member to bring their knowledge and stories to the team along with new staff members who bring fresh eyes and different experiences to the team. I would focus on creating a good balance of personalities that extend from the conservative to the risk-taker. Risk-taking is essential to school success. It requires everyone to be pushed beyond his or her comfort zone and allows the school to develop and grow.

Once the team members have been established I will begin the task of creating steps for a leadership team experience. This planning team will get together and oversee almost every aspect of the school. Its responsibilities will include curriculum and development, student achievement, climate and morale, budgeting, building maintenance, and an opportunity for powerful teaching and learning to occur. Team expectations will be set with all members being active and equal participants. The team's main focus will always be on student learning, meeting the needs of all students, and the mission, goals, and targets of the district for the coming year.

Brown et al. (1999) focus on a district team staying fit, "Like your personal fitness program, districts need conscious and constant attention. You don't get fit once and stay that way without effort. The same is true of a leadership team without effort the team gets flabby" (p. 33). Building a leadership team that is effective is ongoing. The principal must be constantly cognizant of the needs of his/her students, teachers, and community.

Successful teams begin with confident and effective team leaders. Neck and Manz (1998) contend, " The primary reason teams fail is due to ineffective leadership" (p. 26). However, leading a team requires a shift in mind-set and behavior for those who are accustomed to working in the "old school" system where the principal makes all the decisions and has the last word. The school of today must create a team vision in every sense of the word. The leader must share power, information, and responsibility to create an environment where best decisions are made. The leader of the 21st century must focus on facilitating others to learn to lead themselves. I will encourage team members to take responsibility in becoming self-directed, self-motivated, and ultimately effective, empowered team leaders. Building a team means creating a community united by shared values and commitment. I will be that leader.

Building A Shared Vision Through Communication

In order to accomplish a vision for the school, a leader needs to develop a site-based strategic plan. It is the principal's job to identify the trends that effect the school and decide how to best go about assessing the schools needs. Completing a needs survey, communicating with community and school personnel, allowing two-way communication in and out of the district are all ways to start this process. The principal needs to build a bridge between the school and the community through effective communication. This will create an environment of continuous life-long learning. The school can become the

architect that builds programs within its walls to break down the communication

barriers between the school and all agencies, businesses, and community

members that are a part of that district. When positive two-way communication

exists the school and community alike will begin to build a common vision for

the school. Through effective communication the principal becomes the vision-

keeper, as Lashway (1996) expresses:

> The leader embodies the vision in thought, word, and
> deed. Visionaries do not just communicate their dreams
> in so many words, says Gardner; "they convey their
> stories by the kinds of lives they themselves lead and,
> through example, seek to inspire in their followers."
> Clearly, leaders remain the key people in the process
> even if they are not the sole authors of their vision.
> (p.135)

Communication is essential. One is always communicating even when not

speaking. Often it is in the principal's best interest to communicate through

careful listening and little verbage. Principals must understand that they are

continually communicating to the public through their words and their actions.

The principalship is a position that one must realize is held to high standards,

ethics, and morals and one must be careful to communicate these positively to the

community one serves. Talking to people creates bonds toward a common vision.

I envision a school where the atmosphere is open, and staff, community, and

students are working together for a common goal. These goals are not only

school related, but also community related. I envision a building of learning and

community service. Through community service not only is education taught at

its highest hierarchy, but the feeling of pride, self-worth, and community

development is nourished. I want to make this happen for staff, students, and

community.

Being proficient in leadership skills, supervision, and administration

management can make a difference to an entire community. The leader needs to

use his/her knowledge of teaching and learning practices, child growth and

development, general knowledge, and the commitment to children to lead others.

The principal is the key factor between the community and school image.

Observing, talking, and meeting with staff and community regularly in structured

and non-structured events will enhance the leader's knowledge of the needs of the

school and the community. By doing this, the principal will create a sense of

harmony and purpose between the school and community. These things will lead

students and staff members toward achievement goals. An outstanding

administrator will continually seek to improve and enhance learning for all.

Sergiovanni (1991) notes:

> Leadership is not a right but a responsibility. Morally
> speaking, its purpose is not to enhance the leader's position or
> to make it easier for the leader to get what he or she wants ....
> The test of moral leadership under these conditions is whether
> the competence, well being, and independence of the follower
> are enhanced. (p. 324)

One of the major tasks as a school administrator for the 21st century is to become

an extraordinary communicator. Parsons (2001) states communication is a key,

"Communicate! Communicate! If I had to site one proficiency as being most

important to the success of a principal, it would be the skill of communicating

with staff students, parents, fellow administrators, and the community" (p. 50).

The skill of communicating with staff, students, fellow administrators, parents,

and community will be essential in the school I lead. I will communicate to staff

through weekly staff bulletins, e-mail, hand written messages, and most

importantly through face to face contact. I feel it is important to get to know the

staff both professionally and personally. I will begin the principalship by

learning all the staff member names and make sure that I meet and greet all

faculty as they begin their journey back into the classroom in August. Over the

year I will begin to gather information about each staff member's family hopes,

dreams, or challenges with which they are faced. I will make the office

accessible and spend a large portion of the day in the classrooms. By creating an

atmosphere of accessibility and caring for individuals, I will create an

atmosphere conducive to student learning.

As the leader of the building, I feel it is important to be an instructional

leader first. I will spend a large portion of the day involved in student activity.

I will communicate with students through classroom observations, hallway and

lunchroom contact, and after school activities. It is vital that students in the

building I lead know that I am accessible and that I care about each of them. When these two things exist positive school culture emerges.

As the building leader I will communicate to parents through monthly newsletters, telephone calls, e-mails, and personal contact. As an instructional leader positive parental relationships are keys to success. I will communicate with parents beyond the school walls to their homes and the surrounding community. It is a reality that all the parents I work with do not have transportation access. It is the duty of the administrator to be accessible to all; therefore I will meet with parents beyond the school doors. I will work with the parents on finding mutually suitable meeting places to conduct meetings and discussions in order to meet the needs of all students.

Community perception is key to the principal's success. As an administrator I will always strive to find new and inventive ways to communicate with the public. I will devise a school web site and post information about what is taking place in the school, along with test scores and other positive events. I will speak at community functions. I will create articles for the local newspaper and I will attend community functions where I have the opportunity to talk with the public in an informal setting. It is the place of the administrator to expound to the community the positive events that take place in the school and to build a positive school community relationship.

Facilitating Change

One must understand that changes in education are driven by more than

educational considerations. Political elements play a large part in today's

schools. Many trends in the state have eroded Iowa teachers' traditional ways of

teaching. These trends include demographics, the influx of migrant workers,

and the large population of at risk students.

The principal is the chief engineer in the change process. This does not

mean that the principal is the sole visionary for change, rather he/she is the

conductor of the orchestra for change. It takes many voices to develop a well-

conceived plan for a school and the principal's voice is no louder or no more

important than any other voice. It is the principal's responsibility to guide the

change process for the change to happen efficiently and effectively. Change does

occur for its own sake, but results from careful reflection of the school team to

build a learning community that centers its focus on a balanced education for all

in the learning community. Speck (1999) refers to the principal's responsibility

for change as:

> ....the principal has the capacity to make change through daily
> actions of promoting learning that analyzes the present, reviews
> research and practices, uses action research, and makes
> recommendations collaboratively to implement new ideas that fit
> the unique needs of the school ....Continuous learning and
> examining current practices are intertwined with change to
> achieve the vision of the school learning community. (p. 58)

Instructional leaders need to realize that change is not easy for most people, but
change is necessary in today's society to build innovative schools. Conners
(2000) notes the difficulty of change:

> The truth is that through any change 5% of the people will
> accept it immediately, 25% will slowly adapt and accept,
> 60% will take a "let's wait and see" approach and will
> eventually accept the new idea if it works to their
> advantage, and 10% will never accept any change. The
> most astute leaders recognize this and DON'T WASTE
> TIME FERTILIZING ROCKS OR WATERING
> WEEDS. (p. 47)

In other words, Conner's believes that the instructional leader should not waste
his/her time worrying about getting everyone on board with change. In
providing a climate for change leaders become change agents. They
encourage innovation, collaboration, and creativity in their staff. They
encourage and applaud the risk-takers on their staff because they know they
are the cheerleaders of the building that will influence change to take place
over time.

Change will be one of the most challenging aspects as an administrator.
Michael Fullan (1999) argues that isolated change is less effective than
collaborative change. Schools must create atmospheres where collaboration is at
the forefront. When people stay within the boundaries of their rooms they
become trapped within their old, stale paradigms where change withers and dies.
Fullan (1999) argues that successful change, "...is only possible if organizational

members develop trust and compassion for each other" (p. 37). It is the responsibility of the principal of the new millennium to create schools where trust and collaboration is nurtured.

People naturally feel uncomfortable with change and people in the education profession are no different. Change must happen for a purpose. This purpose must be seen as needed in order to compel people to change. Successful leaders create change in schools by showing staff, students, and community the change is aimed at improving student achievement. Wagnor (2001) states why teachers are so reluctant to change. " Three of the most common factors contributing to teachers' resistance are risk aversion, 'craft' expertise, and autonomy and isolation" (p. 379).

Traditionally teachers have flocked to the teaching profession because of its stability, security, and its high level of order. Teachers in the school I lead will be encouraged to be risk-takers. I will encourage them to step out of the box and think creatively. I will seek out individuals to be part of a team atmosphere who are willing to go a step beyond and push the limits to create opportunities that create change to improve student achievement. I will encourage the staff through positive reinforcement to craft their expertise and then share it beyond the classroom walls. I will allow staff the opportunity to share their expertise with each other and grant them the opportunity to present their unique craft at conferences. I will allow staff members to use

professional leave days to present and encourage them through positive reinforcement to continue to develop themselves professionally. I will continue to seek knowledge through professional development opportunities and use myself as a model of lifelong learning for students and staff.

People need to feel they are supported in order for change to happen. I will create opportunities for staff to get together and discuss how change can occur. I will create times during the day for people to talk and learn from each other. I will do this by making myself available to cover classrooms whenever needed. I will suggest creating early release times during the year for staff development to occur. By creating a feeling within the building that change is important for student achievement and giving staff time to develop it, change can be sustained.

A school will always have people who resist change. I will bring the resistors on board by allowing them to move toward change at a rate they feel comfortable with. I will subtly create situations where the resistors are asked to move forward in small manageable steps. I will create an environment where people feel they can make change without facing negative consequences. I will create an atmosphere where risk-taking is rewarded and failure is acknowledge as a step in the process toward an end goal. By creating an environment where people are comfortable with risk-taking we

will begin to make real progress toward creating a building focused on change to meet the needs of all students.

Measuring the success of change is an ongoing process. Change does not occur overnight nor will success. The administrator of the 21st century must be patient. Creating and sustaining change will occur over a number of years and can be evaluated by student achievement. Too frequently educators jump onto a bandwagon just to give it up in a few short months or years. Today's educator must be able to envision what the end product will look like and be willing to see the change through.

In the new millennium we are faced with a magnificent challenge of transforming schools into places that are focused on achievement. This requires the strength of a leader committed to taking risks and allowing the staff autonomy to create teaching environments that are cutting edge. I will be this leader.

Managing Time

A major problem facing schools today is time. The key to solving this problem is effective time management. Having a vision with meaning is one way to manage time. If everyone has ownership of the vision then the team knows the direction it is headed. Allowing planning time to bring different groups together will ensure ownership of the vision. Teachers need to be brought together in teams by grade, building, and district levels.

The principal of the 21st century must be ever cognizant of using time effectively. The role of the principal has expanded over the last couple of decades to encompass more than just a managerial position. The principal today and for the future must be an educational leader first and foremost, but he/she cannot overlook the managerial aspects that consume the day like the fury of a raging fire. As principal I must be constantly aware of the time I am spending on managerial duties and look for ways to do them more efficiently, so I can spend a greater percentage of every day as the educational leader of the building.

The school administrator today more than any other time in history must focus his/her time on instructional leadership. The day of the administrator is filled with never ending series of reports, phone calls, discipline problems, parent visits, teacher visits, evaluating, meetings, and requests to make appearances. The amount of time has never changed, rather the expectations of the principalship. Today's principal must give priority to instructional leadership while continuing to manage the day to day functions of a school. Coveys' (1989) time management matrix will be key to the success of the principal of the new millennium. Covey contends there are four quadrants of time management in the matrix that are key to managing time effectively.

The first quadrant in the time management matrix is urgent and important activities. These activities are things that come up in the school day and may or may not be planned; such activities that fall into this category are crisis, pressing

problems, and deadline-driven projects. These activities are critical and need to be handled by the principal immediately. When these issues occur everything else in the time management matrix must be shifted in relevance (Covey, 1989).

The second quadrant in the time management matrix includes activities that are important but not urgent. These activities include relationship building that are important but are not urgent. These activities include relationship building, vision, recreation, and recognizing new opportunities. Covey (1989) contends, "Quadrant II is the heart of effective personal management"(p. 253). Administrators tend to forget about this quadrant even though it is one of the most important because it is not urgent. Instructional leadership is at the very heart of Quadrant II. An effective administrator will recognize the need to be out in the classrooms focusing on instruction and aiding in the leadership of curriculum and development. The administrator for the 21st century must be a leader with strong interpersonal skills that focuses on people first and tasks second. This is the administrator I will be.

The third quadrant in the time management matrix is urgent but not important. This quadrant focuses on activities such as: phone calls, mail, some meetings, and fun activities. These activities are things that need to be accomplished in the principalship at some point, but they are areas that can be easily put off to another time. Quadrant III is an area that can be

skimmed from in order to make more time to be an effective instructional leader.

The last quadrant is Quadrant IV. Items in this quadrant are neither urgent nor important. Activities that fall into this category are junk mail, some phone calls, busy work. Much of the activities in Quadrant IV are activities that can be done by others and should be delegated by the principal. An effective administrator will spend very little time focused on Quadrant IV (Covey, 1989).

As I become an instructional leader I will focus my day in Quadrant I and II. I will prioritize the school day and focus my effort on being an instructional leader who is out in the classrooms, walking the hallways, talking with students and staff; and building relationships with people. Covey (1989) has no doubt that, " The essence of time management is to set priorities and organize and execute around them ....we must discipline ourselves to do as we planned" (p. 138). I will be the leader who will prioritize and organize the principalship to keep the focus on instructional leadership. I will delegate activities that others can do and focus on being the best instructional leader I can be.

<div align="center">Creating Climate</div>

In the traditional organizational culture a school places great emphasis on procedural rules and regulations, hierarchical control systems, and centralized decision making. Today's society is demanding a change to equalize the power. There is an expectation of creating a professional work environment, through

collegial, and collective management at the school site level. I believe when the principal creates an environment of consensus and collaboration, ownership of missions, goals, and objectives will flourish.

School climate is one of the most important issues that a principal of the 21st century must deal with. For decades we have used the word climate to capture the essence of the school's culture. Although it may be hard to define or put a finger on, climate is extremely powerful. It is taken-for-granted and often over-looked or ignored, but it is actually one of the most significant features of a school. The climate of the school influences everything: how a staff dresses, what they talk about, their willingness to change, the practice of instruction, and the emphasis on student achievement. Climate is the feeling in a building and culture is the underground stream of values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together and confront challenges.

Principals communicate core values in school every day. In order to create environments that focus on positive cultures, principals' need to create an atmosphere where staff have a shared sense of purpose, collegiality is shared, improvement is placed in the forefront, rituals and celebrations are recognized, and where success, joy, and humor abound. When a strong positive culture is created an environment is created that is focused on student success.

Leadership style has been the subject of great importance in the business world, military and industry, and educational institutions are no exception. Today's schools must seek out leaders who are first and foremost concerned about the morale of the school. No single issue will unite or tear away at the surface of an institution as the way people feel about the environment where they learn and work. Bhella, (2001) is of the opinion that, "Many studies indicate that social factors such as group interaction, supportive relationships, human relation skills, management skills, high performance goals, and above all morale, are the most important determinants of productivity and success in human enterprise" (p. 369).

Student achievement must be on the forefront of the instructional leader's mind. Bhella (2001) contends that morale of the building has a direct correlation with student achievement, " Perhaps teacher morale could be the most important factor affecting student achievement" (p. 369). To back up Bhella's statement there have been two recent studies linking student achievement to school morale. James Griffith (1999) created a study that linked effective leadership skills of the principal having a distinct impact on school climate. Once a positive or negative school climate occurred test scores would fluctuate depending upon the atmosphere the students were in. Bulach and Lunenberg (1995) concluded that principals who created positive school climates had test scores slightly elevated.

In both studies there is a linkage between administrators who work creating a high level of school morale and gains in student achievement. Leaders that are concerned about student achievement create environments where people want to come to school to learn and work. This is the administrator I will be.

No singular approach to management will address each school's unique mission. However, careful examination of the district's current management style and common practice, coupled with contemporary research and theory, can help to find a management style that is comfortable to the staff and myself. Using the appropriate management style with each person and setting, and staying aware of the factors that affect individuals on a daily basis will help me in the efforts to maintain a quality school. An "around the table" fashion is how I want to begin interactions in the school I lead. This will be an opportunity for people to express themselves in a non-threatening way. I want them to know they are the solution not the problem to educational transformation. I will create teams within the building that focus on student achievement and all the facets that are intertwined. I will create leaders within the building that can make decisions about instruction and the inner-workings of the building and I will support the decisions they sense are important. With this sort of team building in place and the staff is feeling they are in control of their own teaching student achievement will increase.

I will create an environment of collegiality by infusing a team approach to every aspect of the school building. I will look for leaders who are risk-takers and I will encourage them to bring the focus of teaching and learning to the forefront of the school I lead. I will be a part of the students and teachers lives by knowing each individual personally and showing them I care about them through notes, phone calls, and most importantly personal contact. I will be a team member not a team dictator. When all these activities exist morale will increase When morale is on the upswing student achievement will soar (Griffith, 1999; Bulach & Lunenberg 1995).

The quality teacher is another key to the school of the 21st century. If we want the best-qualified people for the 21st century then we need to help mold the teachers that are currently in our buildings. Conley (1991) describes the teacher as, " .... a decision-maker who creatively adapts knowledge to unique and varied problem situations, expands skills beyond 'textbook knowledge' continuously refines professional judgment, initiative, and decision making" (p. ,48). Teachers and principals alike need to expand their skills to build a professional working relationship that best enhances the knowledge of the students with which they work. This is the type of atmosphere I will create in the building I lead.

Improving Instruction

I believe evaluation coupled with positive interactive feedback is a tool to improving instruction. Teachers need to be given positive feedback by students, teachers, parents, community members, other districts, and administrators to enhance their lessons. On the converse side principals need to have the same positive interactive feedback to be effective leaders. After all principals are primarily teachers of teachers. Tell (2001) states, "The principal is the lead teacher. The word principal is not only a noun, but also an adjective, the first word of a two-word title, principal teacher" (p. 11). If one is assigned the duty of critiquing a teacher as effective or ineffective the principal must know what effective teaching is and what it looks like.

Evaluation has one purpose—the improvement of instruction. It will weigh heavily on the principal's shoulders to make sure school personnel are focused on enhancing student achievement. Danielson (2001) believes a way to foster teacher quality is by, "Enhancing the quality of professional development" (p. 12). Many schools are rethinking their professional development plans and are aligning the specific content and teaching skills towards the needs of the students. Allowing teachers to grow professionally through staff development is pivotal to building a school that places student success as a top priority.

When a teacher is bestowed with positive aspects of their teaching they will build and strengthen their teaching styles. When a teacher feels he/she is an asset to the school professional growth will be more likely. The teacher will be able to set goals for growth with assistance of the administrator. A principal must take the time to show care for staff and students. Azzara (2000) states, "The principal who takes time to pat a teacher on the back or to dry the eyes of a frightened child is the most effective leader" (p. 63). When you build these positive relationships and consider both teacher and student needs you build a bond that allows evaluation to be positive nonthreatening situation. The focus of evaluation and feedback is professional growth.

I will be fair and consistent in my assistance through evaluation. I will consider the teachers' needs when giving assistance in improvement through positive feedback. Helping them see their strengths may be the first step in helping them look at areas for improvement. Setting goals is one aspect of the evaluation system that I believe is vital to enhance quality teaching. Annual goal setting should be fulfilled by each teacher and facilitated by the principal. Sawyer (2001) feels that, " ....teacher participation in goal setting helps teachers become self-reflective practitioners who adjust their practices when necessary" (p. 45). In other words teachers become reflective about what and how they teach. When self-reflection occurs teachers develop into better educators.

Summary

I believe it is our responsibility as educators to provide all students with an

equitable, quality education consistent with the demands of our increasingly

diverse society. Kowalski and Reitzug (1993) articulate the school's

responsibility in an ever changing school population.

> Schools are responsible for educating an ever growing
> number of students who are at risk of educational
> failure, psychological failure, or social failure. The
> impact these students have had on schools has resulted
> in lower standardized test scores, an increased dropout
> rate, more extensive abuse of substances, a dramatic
> increase in gang activity, and greater violence toward
> students and teachers. Although some of these
> conditions have improved slightly in the past few years,
> the challenge of educating students to be productive
> members of society is greater now than it has ever been.
> (p. 264)

The challenges that await a new principal are indeed enormous, but if the

tasks are broken down into smaller more manageable pieces the likelihood for

success increases. The principal does not have the opportunity to hand pick the

students that come to school. The key is to build off the strengths of students,

thus promoting a positive self-fulfilling prophecy for students.

Student success is a heavy burden principals must prepare for in the 21st

century. The state and the nation alike are going to be looking at our schools

with a critical eye expecting to see academic growth of all students. Teachers and administrators will not be able carry the entire burden alone. The principal must look beyond the school's doors for help from the entire educational community. Neuman and Simmons (2000) agree that, "Distributed leadership cultivates collective ownership of both successes and problems, as well as responsibility for results. Leadership is the job of the entire education community, and learning becomes the focus and primary value for every member" (p. 9). Neuman and Simmons believe the principal's role in a school cannot be one of a single leader. The principal must be one who is willing to share the role and the responsibility to bring success to students. The principal is no longer the one who sits behind a desk and manages. An effective principal for the future will need to be a person who can build strong, positive climates that foster collegiality and encourage staff to be reflective practitioners.

As leaders in education we have the unique opportunity to work with peers to shape the future, and create a vision to shape our society. By using the practice of reflection we can be sensitive to the needs of others as we guide them while fostering our own growth and development.

As we look toward the 21st century we need to center our belief on what is good for kids and avoid getting stuck in our own paradigms. We want our paradigm to be open to opportunity not a threat. This allows us to see the school as a place where we all can come together as learners to develop. The

school can be the coordinator of a lifelong learning service. Flexible schedules, mentoring, discussion, technology, outcomes, integrated curriculum, developmentally appropriate activities, will help provide skills for each child to succeed. Each district will be unique providing for a choice in education. Choice provides links in cooperative learning to motivate all and regenerate interests in quality public education. When interest is regenerated teams can plan together in meetings and build foundations of support for education transformation.

In conclusion, the teachers and students in the school I lead will be special individuals with personal needs and talents. I want to help them meet their needs and reach their full potential, thus becoming positive contributing member of the 21st century.

Teachers and students are full of questions. I want to give their questions and answers dignity while supporting them in their pursuit of answers. Success breeds success; so I will facilitate and generate a challenging environment where all can succeed. My role will be to be there when needed, and step back when discovery and experience direct their interaction and exchange of ideas. I want to create an atmosphere where everyone is recognized as a contributing team member.

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