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## Critical elements of success for educational leaders : a reflective essay

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## Critical elements of success for educational leaders : a reflective essay

### Abstract

Throughout my life and studies I have determined that several elements are critical to being a successful leader: (a) effective communication, (b) a strong work ethic, (c) motivational and positive, and (d) a complete leader. Each of these elements is needed and each has an importance of its own. Throughout this paper each element will be defined, information given about its importance to being a successful leader, and practical application.

**CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS:**

**A REFLECTIVE ESSAY**

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**A Research Paper**

**Presented to**

**The Department of Education Leadership, Counseling,**

**and Postsecondary Education**

**University of Northern Iowa**

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**In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Education**

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**by**

**Jennifer L. Pettlon**

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**Dr. David Else**

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has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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When anyone thinks about pursuing education past high school, much thought goes into the decision about which area of study the student will focus on. For me, this seemed to be an easy decision. By mid-year of my senior year in high school I could tell you my major, college choice, and rationale for these choices. Unfortunately, this wasn't the choice for me as I found out once I was in college.

Growing up, I was the middle child and only girl in a family of five. We lived on a farrow-to-finish hog and crop farm. During high school and even now, (although on a much smaller level), I have been involved with agriculture. In high school, I was very involved with FFA and the pork industry. When thinking about my career choice, I wanted to be involved with agriculture in some way. I chose to attend Iowa State University and major in Agricultural Business.

After my first year I knew that I was interested in agriculture, but it was not what I wanted to do as a career. It was a hard decision to make, but necessary for me. When I evaluated my choice, I knew I had only partially wanted a career with agriculture. Knowing that there was only one other career choice that interested me besides agriculture, I changed my major to Elementary Education.

When I was a little girl, my preferred play occupation was a teacher. I would use my little brother for a student and practice so that I could improve as a teacher. Thinking back on this now, I know that I should have begun my college

career in the education field. However, I am glad I started in Ag Business because it taught me a valuable lesson.

My early teaching experience was limited to educating others and teaching Vacation Bible School at church during the summers. Each summer I would spend a week teaching and helping with Vacation Bible School. I began doing this in 7<sup>th</sup> grade after I was too old to participate as a “student.” Once my major was changed, I knew it was one of the best decisions I had ever made. I took to my education classes very well. It was as if this was my calling and what I was meant to do.

My career choice was made because I like to help children. I enjoy working with children and seeing how they look at various situations and events. Children are very interesting and complex individuals. A student’s honesty is another reason I enjoy working with children. Children have the ability to teach us lessons that we have forgotten about as adults. They show us the innocence of youth and the excitement of being young. With teaching, you have the ability to help them and hopefully make their year in your classroom one of the best they have had.

As a principal, I will have day-to-day contact with the students in the building I lead. I want to take advantage of the joy they can bring while dealing with the not so joyful parts of education. As an adult working with children, you are a role model for these kids. They are very perceptive and can figure out how

you are feeling when you are in the classroom. They can be as compassionate as the teachers themselves. Some of the best teaching that goes on at school are the lessons that come up daily. These are what we call “teachable moments”. These have the largest impact on students. They learn the lessons we teach academically, but they also need lessons in life. Unfortunately, the lessons they should be learning at home tend to fall to the school to teach at times. I do feel that because the students are not learning these skills at home, the school is partially responsible for teaching these skills. However, I do feel that they should be getting these at home because schools can not be the only place where students learn these lessons.

Our ultimate goal is to do what is best for children. Getting people, adults and children to do what is right is essential. “Once we create an environment where it is cool to care, there are no wrong decisions” (Whitaker, 2003, p. 90). With a caring environment comes an understanding between children and adults. Caring creates the need and want for a successful school environment.

Education is an on-going process that we never completely finish. When I was growing up education was very important. My brothers and I grew up knowing that to find answers we had to have the ambition to look for the knowledge. Education is one way to find knowledge.

Another value I learned while growing up was the difference a positive attitude can make. I believe it is important to see the good things in everything.

Not everything that happens is good, but there is a lesson in all of these events.

These may not be the most pleasant lessons that will ever be learned, but that does not make them any less valuable to you as a person. Having a positive attitude can help others who are having a tough time dealing with problems. In the working environment, there is always someone who sees the negative and will try to sway anyone who will listen to become negative with them. Sometimes when things aren't going the way you expect them to, being positive becomes a choice that needs to be made. Motivation and being positive can and do work together for successful leaders.

During my childhood, I had to make several choices because of the responsibilities I had. My parents showed me that even though these decisions were very hard to make, the decision was made on what was a higher priority. It may not have been the choice I wanted to make, but rather a choice I had to make. There are some choices that I made to please others that now seem silly to me. Now I make decisions on what is best for me and for the situation or environment that I am in. This is another major part of being a leader. As a leader you cannot make everyone happy all the time. If you do that you are probably not helping your school or yourself.

I have described some of my childhood lessons that have shaped me. These decisions have shaped me into the person I am today. I have a strong work ethic, try to maintain a positive attitude, make decisions that are the best for the



situation, know the value of good communication, and will be a total leader in every way. These are hard values to maintain sometimes, but necessary when looking at being an educational leader who has the qualities that are needed to make a school successful.

Throughout my life and studies I have determined that several elements are critical to being a successful leader: (a) effective communication, (b) a strong work ethic, (c) motivational and positive, and (d) a complete leader. Each of these elements is needed and each has an importance of its own. Throughout this paper each element will be defined, information given about its importance to being a successful leader, and practical application.

#### Effective Communication

When people are asked to list characteristics of an effective leader, one that often comes up is a good listener. However I would argue that we want more than that. We do not just want a good listener; we want someone who makes us feel listened to. (Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2000, p. 7)

To be successful a leader must communicate effectively. There is communication in any business and leaders all have to communicate. The noticeable difference is whether or not the leader communicates clearly in understandable terms and often. In a school effective communication is

evidenced by the extent the staff knows details about events and expectations of the school.

### *Internal Communication*

Communication skills for educational leaders are a necessity (Hubbard, 2003). In every situation that a person is involved with, there is some type of communication. We begin learning about communication at a very young age. There are three types of communicators, (a) those who have very good communication skills, (b) those who work at communication and are effective, and (c) those who are not skilled.

Being an effective communicator is one of the most important traits a person can possess. Any person who deals with others has a need for good communication. Being an effective communicator does not mean that a person has to be a good speaker. This is a plus, but not a necessity.

There is a lot of information available to help individuals become effective communicators. In our School Governance, Law, and Intersystems Relations class we were given strategies to help us become effective communicators. To increase informed dialog it is important to have an agenda for every meeting. An agenda helps everyone form their thoughts before a meeting (D. Else, Personal Communication, 2002). Agendas are a very good way to let all those who will be attending know exactly what will be discussed. By having an agenda there will be a decrease in the amount of wasted time, those who will be presenting will be

prepared, and the staff will know what is expected for the meeting. Effective communication (a) increase confidence, credibility, and competence; (b) reduce misunderstanding and confusion; (c) save time for everyone; and (d) help you better negotiate your positions on project and budget matters (Manning & Haddock, 2001, p. 61).

It is my firm belief that having good communication increases working relationships and productivity. There are many instances when more than one person completes work, or time is wasted due to miscommunication.

Communication is best achieved through simple planning and control (Blair, 2003). In this day and age we are very casual when it comes to communicating. A casual tilt to conversation is informal conversation. Some people see this as talking rather than informing. Everyone does not always recognize this which leads to miscommunication. As educational leaders we are responsible for creating an environment that holds people to high expectations and supports their efforts. In business there are formalities that need to be respected. Every person is there to do a job and does not want their precious time wasted. One way to avoid this is to use all tools available to you effectively.

One example, if a meeting is set up to only give information, sending an email or creating a message to hand out to the staff would be more beneficial and less time consuming than having the staff sit through a meeting (D. Else, Personal Communication, 2002).

There are a large number of ways to be an effective communicator. When planning meetings, I will look at what material needs to be covered prior to deciding what type of meeting to conduct. If there is a need to convey information I will send an email, or hand out the information to teachers, rather than having a sit-down meeting. For meetings that are needed, I will prepare an agenda and try to have this out at least three to five days before the meeting. This will allow the staff to get prepared, if need be, and allow time for changes to be made to the agenda. This will also allow the staff time to reflect on issues that will be addressed at the meeting.

Another aspect that I will focus on is talking directly to the staff to find out what their thoughts are on issues. When it comes to teaching, the teachers are the ones who know the most about what is needed. This is mainly about the students, but also includes the other needs of the school. When making decisions, it is important to keep the lines of communication open, this includes those who will be affected by the decision(s) that will be made. Teachers are a resource that a lot of schools do not use. When making decisions about the upcoming year, and about students, I will include everyone in the decision-making process. Involving those who will be affected by changes really helps keep the lines of communication open.

### *External Communication*

As an educational leader, I am also responsible for communication between the school, the parents, and the community. Creating and writing a monthly school newsletter will keep people informed. I will ask the teachers about events, and/or activities that they would like me to include. To achieve this, I will ask the teachers to complete a survey, write their ideas down on paper, or have a brainstorming session at one of our faculty meetings. Community events are great places to create communication with the community and parents that you don't often see. With effective communication there is an increased sense of community, which helps with the success of the school.

Being an effective communicator is directly connected with the Iowa Standards for School Leaders. Communication is needed to fulfill all of the Standards. To be a visionary, instructional, organizational, collaborative, ethical, and political leader, a principal needs to communicate effectively. All of the standards are tied to the community; parents, students, administration, and all others involved with the school. As a principal, I am expected to communicate with all who are involved. The School Improvement Committee is focused on the future, and collaborates to decide on issues that will have an affect on the school and those who are involved with it. Instruction is communication. I have focused a lot of this paper on the organizational aspect of communication and the help that

effective communication gives. This is one skill that is critical to being a successful principal.

The connections principals make through communication with the students, parents, teachers, and other individuals who pass through their lives each year may number in the tens of thousands. Many of these interactions are heartwarming and memorable, others are filled with tension and uncertainty, but Communicator principals survive and thrive on this whirlwind of words by keeping it simple. They know that above all else, they must attend, listen, and seek to understand, empathize, tell the truth in love, and make connections. (McEwan, 2003, p. 6)

As a leader I will communicate with students, parents, and staff through (a) a weekly newsletter to parents; (b) a weekly bulletin to staff; (c) emails regarding information for staff to use; (d) agendas for all staff meetings provided to staff before the meeting; (e) staff surveys to gather information; (f) discussions with staff, students, and parents to find out how things are going; (g) advisory committee made up of representatives from all staff members; and (h) weekly check-ins with staff about classroom activities. Each of these activities will allow me to stay informed, inform others and will keep the lines of communication open.

## Work Ethic

Work ethic is a cultural norm that advocates being personally accountable and responsible for the work that one does and is based on the belief that work has intrinsic value. Research has shown that the many characteristics of work ethic can be summarized in three terms; interpersonal skills, initiative, and being dependable (On-Line Instructional Resources, 2003).

As a child I learned the value of hard work. Even as a young child I had responsibilities on our hog farm. Doing a good job and taking pride in your work were traits that my parents stressed to my brothers and me. I am known for working hard and doing a good job. This is important to me because I feel that how you complete a job determines your image.

If there is something that needs to be done, you need to take the initiative to do it. Taking the initiative is sometimes a burden in the workplace as well as in personal times because not everyone feels this way. As an educational leader, people notice your work ethic. Principals are judged on their work ethic.

The leader must demonstrate a strong work ethic for a school to run well. The leader needs to be a model of a consistently strong work ethic for others to follow. If individuals care and commit themselves to what they are doing, then that is the image those outside the school will see.

Ethics implies that we are talking about values and everyone has their own values (Hill, 1996). Lane Tarleton (2003) is a businessman who opened a

contract sewing operation in South Carolina. He had this business open for 5 years and sold it because of poor worker performance. Tarleton's definition of work ethic was an employee who got up in the morning, came to work, worked his/her eight hours and went home. He also included in his definition that this person would try and do the best job they could do for the company for those eight hours.

Quad Graphics practices a participative management style. This style of management is where the manager is in charge of nothing, but responsible for everything. The employees own the company and so it is their responsibility to solve any problem that arises in the workplace. This brings in accountability (Tarleton, 2003). Joseph Derderian, corporate human resources director for Means Industries Inc., says accountability is a key in the workplace. He goes on to say that "accountability is knowing what your job is, doing your job, and knowing that you're doing a quality job in your performance at work" (as cited in Tarleton, 2003, ¶ 17).

Todd Eklof (2001) wrote an article on his life and what having a good work ethic is to him. He writes about the hard work he had to do to survive as a young adult. While aging, he began to notice a difference about the people he was working with. This difference was how they worked. Eklof writes about attitudes toward work and how it seems that people are bored and working is an inconsiderate strain on their life.



There are major forces that mold how we develop and shape the people we become. These forces are: (a) biological strengths and weaknesses; (b) dispositions with which we come into the world; (c) conscious and unconscious meaning that we attribute to experience; (d) interpersonal experiences; and (e) larger neighborhood, cultural, and societal forces that have an impact on our lives (Cohen, 1999). These forces are important to know to help us understand our work ethic. Each of us has very diverse backgrounds and because of this we may view work differently.

The Arbinger Institute (2000) talks about being in or out of the box when it comes to work ethic. The saying, "being in the box," (p. 15) means that you see and treat humans as objects and "being out of the box," (p. 16) means that you see and treat humans as humans. I see a situation sometimes and think only about how it affects me. That is very hard to admit, because I do feel that I think about others a lot. Sometimes I feel that I think about others more than I do myself. Work ethic makes me as an individual solely responsible and accountable for my decisions and my actions.

There are many parts to having a good work ethic and as an educational leader I will be ultimately responsible for making sure my fellow educators are doing their job. I need to lead them to this end result, not dictate.

As an educational leader I can change the way I manage the school. If individuals are responsible the productivity will go up. If someone is not acting

responsibly, it will be my job to show them ways to become more responsible. Part of my job will also be to make sure each staff member knows what his or her job is and the responsibilities that go with the job. They also need to be able to self-monitor to make sure they are doing their job, and lastly they need to do quality work.

Doing quality work is where I feel true work ethic comes in. If I have a true work ethic, I want to do the best possible job that I can. If you have pride in your work you will do a better job and be more productive. As an educational leader I will need to hire those individuals who value having a good work ethic.

The principal must have interpersonal skills, take initiative, and be dependable. When prospective employees look for a job, they look for a leader. This leader should be someone they can look to as an example of what is expected. The principal who demonstrates a good work ethic, can expect that from staff. When the principal sets a bad example that may be seen from the staff as well.

Having a good work ethic falls under each of the six standards for school leaders. A good work ethic sets a tone in the school. It is used in shaping shared vision. Working collaboratively the staff has more ownership, which in turn helps with instruction and organization of the school. I truly believe that having a good work ethic is essential to effectiveness and efficiency. This is an area that those I work with and those I will work with will recognize in me.

By being outside the box, you as a leader have a better understanding of your employees and in turn you have a better working relationship which will lead to greater success. It all fits together. As a leader I have the ability to teach others about having a strong work ethic and how to make this work for them and the school. I will teach employees about “the box” (Arbinger Institute, 2000, p. 15). As a principal it is part of my job to learn about employees. It is also part of my job to tell employees about the school and the values that the school staff shares. If a person is to work for a school they must believe in the values of the school. One of the main values a school has is the value of quality work. Another value I will describe and instill is the value of working together.

### Motivation

“Great principals understand that people, not programs, make the biggest differences. Outstanding principals know that if they have great teachers, they have a great school” (Whitaker, 2003, p. 7). Being a motivational and positive leader means that there is an understanding of what a motivational leader does. Motivation by definition is “to give reason or urge to act” (Webster’s Dictionary, 2004, p. 96).

As an educational leader I want staff to be self-motivated. “Self-motivation... is at the heart of creativity, responsibility, healthy behavior, and lasting change” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001, p. 6). The two main types of motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic, which is where the

motivation comes from within or from outside sources. “Intrinsic motivation offers a powerful and often untapped source of inspiration for learning, yet we rely on outside sources of information to introduce new ideas and to move people along” (p. 6).

“Teachers are likely to give their best to schools that give them something in return” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001, p. 6). Motivation is one of the most important parts of inspiring others to continue to do better than in the past. It is the leader’s job to help others continue to feel motivated.

“Teachers who feel good about themselves will become inspired to teach and deliver instructions at an exceptionally high level” (Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2004, ¶ 3). Principals are in the position to help teachers become more motivated. “Principals who take the time necessary to make sure that teachers understand their worth will find that classroom instruction will improve as teachers’ self-efficacy improves” (Whitaker, et al., 2004, ¶ 3).

One way to motivate others is to create a positive work environment. With a positive school environment, staff will feel comfortable talking with other staff members about the job they are performing. These little pick-me-ups can go a long way towards motivating teachers. To figure out what things can be done to help motivate there is a need to look at different types of motivation.

“Herzberg explains that motivational factors are recognition, achievement, responsibility, and things of more intrinsic nature. Praise, acknowledgement, and

positive reinforcement fit into this category. Herzberg's theory is important because these essential items are things school leaders do have control over" (Whitaker, et al., 2000, p. 11).

As a leader I will choose the types of motivation with which I am most comfortable. Top Education on Management (2001b) identifies types of motivation. Achievement motivation is the drive to pursue and attain goals. Affiliation motivation is the drive to work better when you are complimented for favorable attitudes and cooperation. Competence motivation is the drive to be good at something, to seek job mastery, use problem-solving skills. Power motivation is the drive to influence people and change situations. Attitude motivation is the drive to act on how people think and feel. Incentive motivation is the drive to work for an award for performing an activity. Fear motivation is the drive caused by coercion. Fear motivation is a negative type of motivation. Incentive motivation can be positive or negative and so any motivation which is incentive based will have to be carefully scrutinized to make sure it is accomplishing the goal of increased effectiveness of instruction.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2001) defines and describes the three psychological needs that are keys to motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy is a person's drive to retain a sense of control regarding his/her actions. Competence is the desire to be good at what we value. Relatedness is the impulse to develop meaningful connections with others.

Motivation, performance, and development will be greatest when people are able to satisfy their basic psychological needs.

In order to satisfy these three needs, a leader must treat each need individually. Leaders support autonomy by minimizing controls and providing choice. Leaders enhance competence by ensuring meaningful feedback and optimizing the level of challenge for each individual. Leaders increase relatedness by cultivating a sense of belonging and generating opportunities to know each other (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001).

As a leader, I have the opportunity and responsibility to motivate staff. There are several requisites to motivate: (a) we have to be motivated to motivate; (b) motivation requires a goal; (c) motivation once established, does not last if not repeated; (d) motivation requires recognition; (e) participation has motivating effect; (f) seeing ourselves progressing motivates us; (g) challenge only motivates if you can win; and (h) group belonging motivates (Top Education, 2001a).

Motivation can happen with small acts. A couple of small ways to show you care are to ask staff how they are doing and notice how they are dressed each day (Whitaker, et al., 2000). Whitaker says that conversation is a critical part of building relations with staff. Face-to-face communication creates a positive feeling for the staff member that is then passed onto the students who will be entering their classroom. Noticing the daily efforts to look professional and presentable will increase the effort the staff will put into their attire. This small

comment will provide motivation for the staff member to continue to look his or her best when preparing to come to work.

“Motivation is perhaps the critical variable in producing maintained change” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001, p. i). As educational leaders we have many opportunities to motivate staff and students. If we remember to always motivate staff, this will continue through to children. When everyone feels motivated to do the best job they can, there is nothing that can not be accomplished.

A motivational leader fulfills all six ISSLC Standards. Being a motivational and positive leader means you have a vision for the school you lead. It also means instruction along with collaboration will be used in the school and community. Organization will be needed for success as a leader. A good leader must also be ethical in decisions made when dealing with motivation.

“Culture Builders know the power of affirmation and rewards when it comes to changing the culture and are always clear about what matters most to them – results, effective instruction, collaboration, teamwork, creativity, caring for kids, and communicating with parents” (McEwan, 2003, p. 99). As an educational leader I will find ways to be positive as much as possible and find ways to reward and recognize all individuals involved with the school. One of my first steps will be to find out what motivates the staff and students, both individually and as a group. I will then implement these motivational strategies.

Compliments will be given whenever deserved. Notes of encouragement will be sent to the staff. A tickler file full of inspiring quotes, and stories will be created and used as needed. The weekly bulletin will be used as a motivational resource. I will continuously be on the look out for ways to motivate the staff and students that I lead.

### A Complete Educational Leader

A complete educational leader requires a positive attitude, enjoys work, and helps others. A FISH leader is a leader who focuses on their job and the people included with that job. The FISH philosophy comes from Seattle's Pike Place Fish market. At Pike Place Fish market, the employees follow four principles to make their job the best that it can be. These four traits combined help define the complete leader.

The four principles of the Pike Place Fish market are (a) play, (b) make their day, (c) be there, and (d) choose your attitude. Each of these principles is important in making any business or in this case, school successful. Each plays an important part, and with all of these working together there is a huge amount of success for all involved (Lundin, Christensen, & Paul, 2002).

#### *Play*

Work made fun gets done, especially when we choose to do serious tasks in a lighthearted, spontaneous way. Play is not just an activity; it's a state of mind that brings new energy to the tasks at hand and sparks creative solutions (Lundin,



et al., 2002). When we think of play, we often think of people doing things that are not productive at all. Many managers and maybe even principals believe that if we let our employees play, they will not get anything done all day. The principle of play is to encourage employees to enjoy what they are doing. If you allow teachers to laugh while working without worrying about getting in trouble for it, they will be more inclined to offer suggestions if there is one needed for a troublesome situation.

Lundin et al. (2002) suggests that play is not restricted to a toy or game. It is the lighthearted feeling you release inside people when they are enthused, committed, and free of fear. Many companies have tried the FISH philosophy to help increase their productivity. Schools are filled with children and kids at heart. It makes sense to encourage staff members as well as yourself to have fun and play while working.

### *Make Their Day*

When you make someone's day (or moment) through a small kindness or unforgettable engagement, you can turn even routine encounters into special memories. "The world becomes a better place the moment you act on an intention to serve another," (Lundin, et al., 2002, p. 41). There are many times throughout the day that teachers need a little pick-me-up. As a leader I am able to give this little boost to a teacher. This can be done in many ways. I can notice how they are doing in a class, compliment the way they handled questions in a

staff meeting, and offer to copy a paper they need, or just sit and listen if they need someone to share their thoughts.

As an educational leader, we are responsible for working with teachers, staff, community members, students, parents, and other administrators. If we are able to make someone's day or moment, they are more likely to help us later on if we need it. One example is if a parent comes in to see me. I can try to make that person feel better before they leave and later they may be more likely to volunteer the next time one was needed.

### *Be There*

The glue in our humanity is in being fully present for one another. Being there also is a great way to practice wholeheartedness and fight burnout, for it is those halfhearted tasks you perform while juggling other things that wear you out (Lundin, et al., 2002). Be there is closely related to make their day in that to create memorable moments, you need to be fully present, that person needs to have your full attention, and when you are completely in tune and connected it gives you the opportunity to make their moment and to positively improve your relationship.

In the work setting there are many times when you are talking with someone and you can tell they are not paying full attention to you. This can be very frustrating for whoever is talking. One area that is important for leaders is to be a leader who is listening wholeheartedly to the speaker. If anyone has

approached you about a topic, they obviously feel it is important. By being there all the time you are also showing respect. As humans, it is hard for us to forget that one time that we were not treated with respect (Whitaker, 2003). Showing this respect all the time, everyday will ensure better relationships.

### *Choose Your Attitude*

When you look for the worst, you will find it everywhere. When you learn you have the power to choose your response to what life brings, you can look for the best and find opportunities you never imagined possible. If you find yourself with an attitude that is not what you want it to be, you can choose a new one (Lundin, et al., 2002). How you approach a situation is seen and noticed by all who you work with. If you as a leader choose a negative attitude, those who follow you will also choose the negative route.

Whitaker (2003) discusses the question, "Who is the variable" (p. 13)? As an educational leader, we choose how we talk with others and how we respond to situations. If a teacher asks the principal how he/she is doing, there are two responses that can be given. The first response could be, "I'm doing terrible. I just had a meeting with the nasty parent Mrs. Mean and she is driving me crazy." The second response could be, "I'm doing fine. My day is going pretty well, how are you doing?" The first response will lead to a negative tone and the teacher will leave the conversation feeling negative. That negative tone will most likely be carried to the classroom and passed on to students. The second response will

not cast that negative tone and the teacher will continue on in a positive way. This will also give the teacher some time to talk with the principal and also feel as if they are caring for each other. The teacher will then take this feeling back to his or her classroom and pass that onto students. As a leader I know that I want the more positive response to happen and to keep the positive attitude going.

Being a FISH leader directly coincides with the standards for principals because we are responsible for working with teachers, staff, community, parents, and students. Following the FISH philosophy will help the school I lead be a better community, have a better culture and climate, and increase academic scores by increasing the amount of care that everyone will give. The FISH philosophy encompasses a number of attributes that I feel are important to being a great educational leader.

A complete leader has many great qualities. A complete leader has a vision and goals for the school they lead. These goals affect instruction and call for organization. A complete leader collaborates with others while being political and ethical. Each of the six standards is met with a complete leader.

Throughout my essay I have listed several ways to be a good communicator, how to instill a strong work ethic and how to be a positive and motivational leader. Being a complete leader is an extension of each of these. I will create a culture and climate within the work place that allows the staff I lead to play. Each day I will make a conscious effort to make someone's day by

complimenting them or noticing the excellence and/or pride shown through his or her work. I will be there for each and every person that I meet. I will make sure the person I am talking with has my full and undivided attention for the duration of our conversation. Each day I will choose to have a positive attitude and to look for the positive aspect to each situation.

Many qualities are needed to make a great educational leader. The qualities that I feel are most important are being a good communicator to everyone, having a strong work ethic, being a motivational leader, and being a complete leader. Every school in our nation needs a leader who wants what is best for our students. To accomplish this, we need leaders who are able to work with all stakeholders in education. As an educator with the above qualities, I am excited for my chance to be an educational leader in our schools.

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