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## **Collaborative leadership is a critical element essential for exemplary educational leadership : a reflective essay**

William R. Sieck

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## **Collaborative leadership is a critical element essential for exemplary educational leadership : a reflective essay**

### **Abstract**

Teachers, principals, and parents working together as an educational team to provide the best possible education for our children is a very important task. The efforts of the teachers in the classrooms and the leadership of the principal in the school are very important in this effort. In order for schools to do their best for the students several factors are needed. Many of these are things that need to be nurtured and supported. Some are always considered to be a work in progress.

A viable curriculum that is rigorous and relevant is important. Learning to set appropriate goals and working to achieve them provides success. Inviting parents and community to be involved in discussions and decision-making for the school encourages ownership. Providing children with a school that is safe and has an orderly environment requires planning and a daily effort. Encouraging teachers and staff members to demonstrate a high level of collaboration and professionalism is the duty of the school leader. These are all important ongoing efforts made by our school leaders.

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COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP  
IS A CRITICAL ELEMENT ESSENTIAL FOR EXEMPLARY  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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A Research Paper

Presented to

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Master of Arts in Education

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by

William R. Sieck

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Dr. Victoria Robinson

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Victoria L. Robinson

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Advisor/Director of Research Paper

Robert H. Decker

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Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper

John K. Smith

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5/1/06

Date Received

Head, Department of Educational Leadership,  
Counseling, and Postsecondary Education

Teachers, principals, and parents working together as an educational team to provide the best possible education for our children is a very important task. The efforts of the teachers in the classrooms and the leadership of the principal in the school are very important in this effort. In order for schools to do their best for the students several factors are needed. Many of these are things that need to be nurtured and supported. Some are always considered to be a work in progress. A viable curriculum that is rigorous and relevant is important. Learning to set appropriate goals and working to achieve them provides success. Inviting parents and community to be involved in discussions and decision-making for the school encourages ownership. Providing children with a school that is safe and has an orderly environment requires planning and a daily effort. Encouraging teachers and staff members to demonstrate a high level of collaboration and professionalism is the duty of the school leader. These are all important ongoing efforts made by our school leaders.

### Promoting Success For Students

A principal is an educational leader who brings together meaningful learning and a successful experience for each child. Our schools are showing increasing diversity in culture and family groups. Language differences, social influences, and economic situations bring difficulties to our classrooms. The experiences children come to school with are quite different. The concern is for arranging appropriate learning opportunities for each student. Providing support

for students that are struggling is being demonstrated. The recent legislation allowing funding for class size reduction has been useful. The intent of this funding is reducing the student teacher ratio. An extra teacher is provided to allow teaching students in smaller groups.

The new No Child Left Behind legislation is concerned with struggling students. The goal is to create the best educational opportunities for our children and to make sure they succeed. "Children who are having extreme difficulty learning to read and write deserve to have educators make every effort possible to ensure their success." (Schmitt, 2005, p. 1) Good principal leadership involves bringing together the talents and skills of teachers, administrators, and all stakeholders in our schools and communities.

Good leadership and good training for educational leaders will be important in helping children and schools succeed. School principals strive to set high standards. It is important to build a shared school vision with teacher and community input. Effective educators believe in the ability of all students to learn. They believe in the value of each student and that student's ability to become a happy, successful, contributing adult. Principals acting as our educational leaders need a good understanding of the difficulties confronting them. The newly adopted standards for school leaders will encourage them to bravely and meaningfully meet the challenges ahead.

Our school leaders need to promote the success of the students by encouraging professional growth for all teachers. Educational leaders who recognize and reinforce positive behaviors, successes, and innovative strategies will be important in improving our schools. “ A teacher-level factor that affects student achievement is instructional strategies. It is perhaps self-evident that more effective teachers use more effective instructional strategies. It is probably also true that effective teachers have more instructional strategies at their disposal.” (Marzano, 2003, p. 78) The principal needs to nurture success in the entire school community. It is important to find opportunities where teachers and students can be recognized and congratulated. The principal should set a high level of expectation for success and announce when it arrives with rewards and praise.

A principal should reveal educational leadership by encouraging appropriate teaching strategies and techniques. “The process of meaningful learning depends both on the material that is presented and on the way that the material is processed by the learner. There are two ways of fostering the process of meaningful learning: improving the way that the material is presented and improving the way that students process information.” (Mayer, 2002, p. 139) The primary focus of the school is curriculum and instruction. A principal needs to demonstrate knowledge of effective instruction and assessment strategies. The requirements are more than just additional testing of the students. Raising student achievement includes being skillful at understanding data driven instructional

improvement. The new policies for accreditation of Iowa schools and the continuous school improvement plans require understanding the value of assessments. The improvement plans require the educational leaders to make an on going effort to collect and evaluate student learning in the school. The data is used to evaluate how the school is doing and what changes need to be made.

Great principals have vision, passion, and commitment. A school principal is a combination of a great manager, ambitious instructional leader, and an incredible visionary. Organizational skills help keep the school progressing on its vision. An educational leader is a promoter and a good implementer. Decisions must be data driven. Choices should be made carefully using facts and good judgment with equity. Knowledge of current research, developing trends, local policies, state laws, and federal mandates are important. The rule at school is to always be striving to improve the program, delivery, or quality. "Curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are authentic involve performances and products that transfer into the actual world of citizenship as well as future scholarship." (Lambert, 1998, p. 23)

An effective principal strives to be consistent, fair, and ethical in making decisions. Fairness is always a key issue in making decisions. Using appropriate procedures when dealing with staff and students is very important. A decision should always be based on law and policy. Part of the job of being a school leader is accepting and implementing the school board's written policies. Occasionally



new issues have to be addressed. Issues of lock down procedures, crisis management plans, and issues dealing with safe schools have been of recent concern.

Care should be taken when making choices with the school budget. The school goals and vision should be considered when spending school funds. Aligning resources and working to stretch dollars is important. Using the school monies and buildings for the best possible uses is simply good practice.

Students and their families are the most valuable assets of a community. Students need the support of their family, the school, and the community around them. It is often the school principal that can provide opportunities to build good school and community relations. School leaders eagerly demonstrate good public relations skills. The ability to happily deal with people is a valuable asset. "One of the key responsibilities of an effective leader is to create a positive atmosphere...to continually take a positive approach....effective leaders understand the power of praise." (Whitaker, 2003, p. 23)

The interests of students, parents, and staff often need to be handled discretely. The principal must model honesty and dignity when speaking with students, teachers, and parents. It is by being serious about people's concerns that a leader builds trust with those he serves. Over time the parents and students will learn that the best interest of the school and the learning environment have been considered.

School leaders should enthusiastically model life long learning. It is necessary to promote the idea that we can learn and explore new interests throughout our lives. It is our special privilege to live in a world where learning and exploring new information is easily done.

Good ethical behavior is another area that is important for educational leaders. Every aspect of a school leader's life is observed. An educational leader who demonstrates family values can be a model for the community. The school leader needs to demonstrate ethical behavior in his/her professional, personal life, and in all contacts with the community. Ethical behavior, family values, and accepting the role of being a model for the community is important in promoting the value of education. This consideration is of great importance as an educational leader. Healthy life style choices and a strong moral character are important for educational leaders. The principal provides opportunities for parents and community members to participate in helping to making the school a better place to learn.

#### Effective Collaborative Leadership

A school principal can build community ownership and shared success into the school by including families and community members that are known to have different backgrounds and view points. Encouraging collaboration with all parts of the community requires learning about the divergent groups in the community. A principal needs to make an effort to understand the differences and

understand the difficulties parents are having in raising and educating their children in today's fast paced and ever changing modern world.

A variety of problems come from factors such as race, income, family structure, gender, religion, culture, language, and politics. The school principal needs to have the desire to seek out and the confidence to include a variety of viewpoints in school decision and policymaking committees. The principal's effort to bring together people with different views can be rewarding. Building these relationships can allow a healthy exchange of views and ideas. Only by bringing together a variety and sometimes opposing views can real discussions take place. A skillful leader will listen, value, and clarify opposing views for discussion. Some agreement can be made by first finding common values or by agreeing on a common vision. "Then we build on our small successes and lay a strong foundation of communication, cooperation, and collaboration for the future." (Wilmore, 2002, p. 68)

Always the principal needs to be polite and diplomatic with the community members he brings together. It is his/her goal to bring a variety of views and ideas to the table. The principal should always promote the positive, creative, and unusual things that are happening at school. The principal is a school leader that often acts as a mediator. The act of bring together a variety of views allows for collaboration to occur. Collaboration is the act of laboring together to

find a solution. Compromise may occur during the process of discussing, valuing, and conceding for the good of the group in reaching a decision.

The principal may be in the middle of a variety of issues between parties.

“Mediation is the process of finding common ground, of seeking win-win solutions to differences and disagreements that will be acceptable to both parties.”

(McClain, Romaine, 2002, p. 22) The important duty of the principal is that of leading discussions and finding alternatives that will allow all parties to have success. This skill involves using a process that allows fairness and dignity to all those involved. “...win-win is primarily a way of thinking. It is a fundamental paradigm based on what is probably the most often mentioned theme in all wisdom literature-the principal of mutual benefit or reciprocity, often referred to as the “Golden Rule”.” (Covey 1994, p. 213) In using this process we value more what is right. The process shows value for other people’s thoughts, opinions, and creative ideas. The first step is to invite others to speak. The second step is to listen carefully as they explain their point of view. When people that have been brought together really listen to each other “...instead of being on opposite sides of the table looking across at each other, we find ourselves on the same side looking at solutions together.” (Covey, 1994, p. 214)

A principal may bring together a diverse group of parents, community members, teachers, and board members to discuss ideas or problems. The most accepted model for this kind of group promotes the idea of equal partners. It is

much easier to speak in such a divergent group if it is understood that each voice is equally valuable to the group. The principal may introduce the individual members as an intentionally diverse group. The group is important for purposes of discussion because they come to the table with a variety of perspectives and experiences. This collegiate leadership style allows members to meet as equals and freely share their expertise. Respect should go to the individual with the most knowledge or experience, not automatically to rank or seniority. "The reason why this approach is spreading is because many minds are more powerful than one... Even in small organizations, the range of expertise required has expanded greatly, probably beyond the reach of one individual." (Heller, 1999, p. 36) It is from this frame of mind that all the members should be brought together and their input equally valued. It is considered to be highly unlikely in today's world that a single individual has the ability to see an issue from every perspective and really understand all possible outcomes of a particular decision.

Strong school-community partnerships can be promoted by keeping students and families informed about programs offered by the community that are linked to school or academic skills. Summer programs and educational partnerships with businesses need to be promoted. Schools may also encourage community service projects. The true value of many of these community connections is helping students increase skills through real world practice. Community projects may increase family pride by making contributions to the

community. Some of these activities help build a stronger community simply by involving families with one another. The principal needs to actively promote these healthy learning activities that rely on collaboration with the community. "Be visible. Be proactive. Leave the school. Go visiting. Tell your school's story, its triumphs, and its needs. Solicit help, input, alliances, and partnerships." (Wilmore, 2002, p. 69) The very best learning experiences come from connections to the real world.

As a principal I wish to meet the important expectations found in standard four concerning demonstrating skills as a collaborative educational leader. I will want to seek out and include diversity in the members involved in the school policy and decision making processes to fairly represent the community. I will want to promote active school-community relations. I will work to find avenues for connecting learning to the available community resources. I will want to be a visible and an active participant in the community and community organizations. I will strive to develop relationships with parents, community leaders, and businessmen and businesswomen. I will want to use the power of the media to promote the school in a positive useful way. Collaboration with the community helps instill a desire to be a valuable and trustworthy citizen.

#### A Model For Ethical Leadership

An important skill for a successful principal involves demonstrating ethical behavior and making ethical decisions with everyone in the school

community. “For organizations to be ethical, leaders need to be openly and strongly committed to ethical conduct.” (Daft, 2005, p. 576) A principal can be most effective as an ethical leader by being knowledgeable about the local, state, and federal governance of the public school, the funding of the public school, and each individual student’s rights involving education in a public school. A principal should always have a serious concern for following all written policies of the school, the ethical use of school resources, and fairly providing for all the students in the school setting. Each of these concerns requires knowledge of policies, laws, and the rights of individuals. “Leaders influence ethical values through their personal behavior as well as through the organization’s systems and policies.” (Daft, 2005, p. 576)

Our Iowa schools are very concerned with the individual rights of each student to receive the appropriate free public education. Teachers and principals are given the authority by the school board to provide the appropriate education and enforce the rules and regulations of the school. Part of the teacher or principal’s authority comes not from the school board, but from “in loco parentis” which means standing in authority in place of the student’s parents. “On the other hand, the student has a corresponding and reciprocal obligation to the school not only to partake of its benefits, but also, by action and deed, to assist in the advancement of its purposes and causes. The student fulfills this obligation by

respecting school decorum, by exhibiting the conduct and manners appropriate to the situation.” (Alexander and Alexander, 2001, p. 340)

Students with an individual educational plan have some additional rights involving devising an educational plan and the inclusion of the necessary school personnel and the student’s parents. “Denial of an education to students because of their disability-related behavior may violate several aspects of the IDEA and the principles behind it: (1) the right to an appropriate public education; (2) the right to an education in the LRE; and (3) the right to prescribed procedures for changes in placement. It is neither legal nor logical to remove a student from special education programs and services for the same behavioral characteristics and disability which entitled the student to such programs in the first place.”

(Bartlett, Weisenstein, Etscheidt, 2002, p.183)

In recent years school authorities have had to deal with the possibility of violence occurring in our schools. We have been presented with the need to devise school procedures and policies to provide for safety and the operation of the school under stressful conditions. Special school policies have been written into school board policy books. State laws have been reviewed and rewritten to help our schools deal with confrontations of violence.

Another recent concern in the public school setting is providing a school environment that is free from sexual harassment and bullying by students or teachers against other students or teachers. In each case the school has revised



school board policy books and student handbooks to take into account these additions. In each case specific rules have been written, appropriate consequences and reporting procedures are included in the wording.

In cases where a student's education is at risk because of his/her own behavior insuring the appropriate due process becomes an important concern. It is necessary to protect the individual rights of the student. The student's rights include the four aspects of due process and are defined by the courts as substantive, procedural, vagueness, and irrationality. Substantive due process protects the student's rights to property and liberty interests in his/her own education. Procedural due process includes the right of proper notification of specific charges and a hearing to present both sides of an issue. The vagueness test protects the student against arbitrary charges. The irrationality and presumptions test requires there to be a rational connection between the student's action and the consequences that are measured out.

The Supreme Court has recognized varying degrees of due process. The due process provided the student by the school district should fall under one of the three descriptions. The least restrictive disciplinary action would fall under the "deminimis" punishment description and have insignificant effect on the liberty interests of the student. These punishments may include a temporary in-school timeout, a detention instead of a field trip, or sending a student home for the last one or two hours of the school day.

The Supreme Court has also ruled that students that are suspended or expelled for ten days or less are entitled to “minimum due process”. This is defined as “oral or written notice of the charges against him/her if he/she denies them, an explanation of the evidence the authorities have, and the opportunity to present his/her side of the story.” (School Administrators of Iowa, 2001) A due process hearing is required between student, teacher, and or administrator.

Parental notification is not necessary, however it would be appropriate for the principal to visit with the student’s parents. In Iowa we have a compulsory attendance law and the wish to always keep students engaged in learning. Our most recent practice has been to assign troubled students to a week or two of a specific alternative school. This provides for the compulsory attendance requirement and the student to receive some special counseling services.

The highest level of due process is important for cases where the infraction results in an expulsion longer than ten days. This serious punishment would be the result of a serious threat, an assault, or the possession of a weapon. For serious cases the principal will need to review the student’s records, interview the teachers or students involved, review policies and rules, review documentation of previous discipline and intervention strategies, report the issues to the parents, and follow the complete and appropriate due process procedures and time lines.

The concern for communicating the school rules is a necessary concern.

Ethical leadership and demonstrating respect for the school rules is something that

should be discussed and modeled by the teachers and the principal. Ethical behavior is taught by carefully obeying the rules that we expect the students to follow. Teachers and principals who carefully follow as well as implement the school rules instill concern for them in the children they are teaching. Concern for each student promotes the need to have a clear view of the future.

#### Facilitating Instructional Leadership

The requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation have put a great deal of accountability for academic achievement onto the shoulders of the principals. To be judged as effective instructional leaders the students need to do well on achievement tests. The principal's duties include accessing instruction, determining the needs of the staff, and provide useful professional development for the teachers. Appropriate mentoring for new teachers is an important requirement of the school and is monitored by the principal. Encouraging the use of technology in teaching and learning activities is another responsibility. The federal No Child Left Behind legislation allows parents the choice to have their children attend another school if their present school fails to meet adequate yearly progress requirements.

The Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) approved for use in Iowa schools provides the framework for the teachers and staff at each Iowa school to collaboratively develop a design for their school improvement. Iowa schools are in the process of writing curriculum, administering the required

standardized testing, providing the testing results to their local community, gathering the state reporting requirements of the annual CSIP report, and designing efforts to demonstrate increasing achievement of their students.

Ongoing “school improvement is a journey from the here and now to a future destination.” (Zepeda, 2004, p.10) Rather than have the focus only on the achievement scores of the students, the Iowa school improvement model encourages schools to use a school wide, all stakeholder effort, to work cooperatively in designing, implementing, and evaluating instruction.

The work of the principal in being an effective instructional leader has changed from one of a single decision maker to that of a team leader in making choices. “As organizations, schools are different from private-sector production companies. The essential difference is that schools are responsible for providing one of the most complex forms of service of any public or private agency.” (Short and Greer, 2002, p. 15)

The teacher evaluation procedures in Iowa named the “Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program”, Senate file 467, provides an agreed upon statewide design to help improve instruction by all teachers. All Iowa teachers will be evaluated according to the eight Iowa Teaching Standards and their criteria. This is an implementation of an evaluation process for all teachers in each school across the state. Principals and future principals have taken special training to be effective evaluators of the practicing teachers. The principals will

provide a written evaluation of the teacher's ability to meet school goals, choose appropriate content, demonstrate planning, implement teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners, model effective management of the classroom, engage in professional growth, and demonstrate professional conduct.

The principals are being trained to collect data and the teachers are learning to provide evidence of the eight teaching standards. By clearly defining these standards teachers are encouraged to be more effective members of their school community. They are adapting to their new job requirements and the responsibility for increased accountability. The center of the Iowa school plan is not directly improving student standardized achievement test scores. In our Iowa plan the schools wish to tackle continuous school improvement by increasing the instructional efficacy in our schools. They plan to do this by nurturing better teaching, better lesson design, effective teaching strategies, including all stakeholders in making decisions, and by increasing the leadership capacity in the schools. "The most important work of the manager is to help employees recognize that their best hope of realizing personal goals rests in helping the organization achieve its goals. Empowerment is the process that encourages teachers to help the school achieve its primary goal of improving the learning opportunities of its students." (Short and Greer, 2002, p. 16)

The increased accountability has put pressure on the schools to be efficient, to demonstrate achievement, to show leadership skills, to teach

important skills, to rethink and rewrite curriculum, use various teaching strategies, to consider student achievement a first priority, and include technology in the design of the teaching. The effort to improve schools with the Iowa design has raised the concern of all stakeholders in Iowa.

Teachers all wish to be considered professional people. Principals need to encourage and teachers need to demonstrate best practice and their teaching expertise with innovative teaching strategies. The school improvement process is meant to be a cycle. It is an on going working plan of action. The plan includes improving instruction in order to meet the student achievement goals of the school. "A school climate that encourages involvement in decision making is characterized by openness, risk taking, and an environment that encourages teachers to try new ideas and approaches." (Short and Greer, 2002, p. 151)

It is a time to take ownership of our teaching responsibilities. The improvements taking place are varied because the requirements of the teachers and schools are comprehensive. The criteria of the teacher standards include many skills teachers use to demonstrate their success as professionals. Improving student scores requires the schools to first determine their student's needs. Curriculum and teaching efforts are then carefully crafted. Teachers are never done improving their skills. "There are two types of evaluation that bear on teachers' appraisals of their instructional efforts. Formative evaluation refers to the appraisals of their instructional program for the purposes of improving the

program. Summative evaluation refers to appraisals of teachers' competencies in order to make more permanent decisions about those teachers such as (1) continuation of employment or (2) awarding of tenure." (Popham, 2005, p. 322-323)

As a new principal I will use the new teacher standards and the evaluation process as an important and positive tool to encourage teachers to build on their talents. "The first step toward effective empowerment is effective hiring and training. Leaders look for people who have the ability as well as the desire to make a genuine contribution to the organization and then provide them with the training they need to excel." (Daft, 2005, p. 317) As an instructional leader I will encourage teachers to work at improving instruction for the benefit of their students as well as meeting the goals of the school. I will challenge teachers to evaluate and measure student progress and demonstrate student learning. I will promote the value of the contributions of students and staff by recognizing the successes and strengths they demonstrate. Successes should be celebrated. This promotes future success and helps build the school culture. Concern for the future requires educational leaders to study the trends and the needs of the school.

### Visionary Leadership

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by encouraging the development, articulation, and implementation of a vision for learning that is supported by the school and community. "One of

the most important functions of a leader is to articulate and communicate a compelling vision that will motivate and energize people toward the future.” (Daft, 2005, p. 510) Good leaders are always looking to the future and developing strategies to get everyone moving toward it.

The leader needs to know and understand what is going on in education, what things may look like in five to ten years, and set a direction that everyone can believe in. A vision is an attractive and ambitious future that can be realistically reached, but is not easily attained. Visionary leadership skills help to promote transitions and transformations in the school because great visionary leaders are able to articulate an optimistic view of the future and instill confidence that this shared vision can be reached together. The visionary leader is able to motivate people to change behaviors, give their best, and to help them reach this vision. The vision provides a connection between today and the future. It provides motivation and meaning to the work that people do. The vision provides a goal of excellence and high standards.

The school community should develop a vision together. When people do this they gain a common understanding of what their future will be like. The mission of the school is student centered. The mission describes the important reasons that the school exists and what we want to produce. The mission statement is a description of the skillful and successful students we wish to produce. Strategies that a visionary leader puts into play will connect the present



with the future. The vision also helps promote strategies to get the school in action.

The visionary leader communicates the vision and keeps it out in front for everyone to see. Reviewing the vision of the school helps build culture and develop values that are shared. The leader acts as a coach, a facilitator, and a servant to the group. By reaching the hearts and minds of the staff the vision becomes instilled into the culture of the school.

Our world is a much smaller place because of the recently available technologies. These new innovations have made instant communication possible, easy, fast, and very useful to businesses around the world. Digital communication is one of the driving forces encouraging schools to be very active in promoting learning through the use of new technology. The use of digital communication has made the world a smaller and flatter place to live. "On such a flat earth, the most important attribute you can have is creative imagination, the ability to be the first on your block to figure out how all these enabling tools can be put together in new and exciting ways to create products, communities, opportunities, and profits. That has always been America's strength, because America was, and for now still is, the world's greatest dream machine." (Friedman, 2005, p. 469)

A principal helps promote the vision of the school by providing professional leadership. He/she is proactive, is willing to share leadership, and has real knowledge of what is taking place in the classroom. The staff builds unity of

practice and purpose by developing their vision and mission together. A visionary leader encourages achievement by ensuring an attractive and orderly environment where teachers and students can take pride in their surroundings. Purposeful teaching is based on clear objectives using teaching strategies suited to the students. The school expects high achievement, the use of imagination, and problem solving skills.

The vision of the school includes encouraging positive reinforcement. The students receive direct and positive feedback that is specific, spontaneous, and varied. The vision of the school includes monitoring the progress of the student to aid school improvement goals and meet state requirements. Students can be required to take part in monitoring their own learning. Building interest and increasing self-esteem is important to the learning activities that are used. The school's vision includes increasing the home-school partnership with parents. The principal can develop learning organizations that encourage staff development, collaborative planning, and professional sharing of strategies. "The leader does not have to be the most inventive person on the team. As a leader he will need to release the potential for generating ideas that exist in the individuals and teams. This will help in both achieving a vision and resolving day-to-day issues."

(Heller, 1999, p. 62)

As a visionary leader I will work to ensure that students have the knowledge, skills, and values they will need to become successful adults. As the

principal I will communicate the vision and mission statements to the school community often. In the school we will celebrate successes with ceremonies and special activities. Assessment data collection will help aid the measurement of our success at reaching our goals. I will be willing to examine my own beliefs and practices when making collaborative decisions. The first Iowa standard describes these important considerations to becoming an excellent visionary leader. The school vision is developed with all of the members of the school community. Data is collected and reviewed in a timely way to find how the school has progressed. Necessary reports are made to the state and the school community. The vision and mission are also reviewed regularly.

The efforts by the principal to make data driven and collaborative decisions help develop ownership by the stakeholders. School improvement efforts will more likely be successful when teacher teams help develop the solutions to student achievement problems. Skills in using instructional leadership strategies help build a successful high achieving culture. "The evidence is clear; students achieve the most in schools where teachers develop a strong professional community, where there is a shared sense of purpose, a collective focus on student learning, collaborative instructional creativity, and reflective professional dialogue." (Stipek, 2002, p. 242)

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