2006

Educational Leadership

Aaron J. Stecker

*University of Northern Iowa*

Copyright ©2006 Aaron Stecker

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1554

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
Educational Leadership

Abstract
A leader is someone who can find a way to make it happen. In education, a leader is someone who can motivate a learning community to work together to achieve greatness. A quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes on my folder states, "Greatness is not where we stand, but in what direction we are moving; We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but sail we must" (Holmes et al, 1858). Educational leadership is a calling that will see its fair share of both good and bad days. Quality educational leaders will be someone who can steer the ship regardless of the conditions. They must have strong vision, powerful motivation, and a high level of integrity in which the people who work for them can develop a deep sense of trust. Leaders must understand that they are only as good as the faculty and staff that work with them. Principals must find ways to challenge the staff and students to do better each and every day so that our young people receive every opportunity possible to pursue their own dreams. Being an educational leader is a strong challenge that I am truly looking forward to meeting.
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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

by

Aaron J. Stecker

May 2006

Dr. Victoria Robinson
This Research Paper by: Aaron J. Stecker

Entitled: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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

4-10-06
Date Approved

Victoria L. Robinson
Advisor / Director of Research Paper

4-12-06
Date Approved

Robert H. Decker
Second Reader of Research Paper

4/13/06
Date Received

John K. Smith
Head, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary Education
Why I Became An Educator

Growing Up

As I was growing up, education was a very important part of my life. It started with the location of my home. The block I grew up on had the elementary school on one corner and the junior high/high school on the opposite corner. I grew up respecting the importance of the school and its role in a neighborhood.

During my high school years, I had the privilege of working with some fabulous teachers and coaches. While all of my teachers worked hard to challenge me and help me grow, there were a few that really stood out as educators who went above and beyond in their dedication to student development. The teachers I appreciated the most were the ones who made classes challenging. They taught me to appreciate a difficult class and the satisfaction gained by being successful. They also really focused on the whole student and continually discussed character, discipline, and leadership. One of the most important lessons I have taken from my high school experience comes from my high school football coach. He was not only a dedicated teacher and coach, but he was a devoted family man who involved them in everything he did. His approach to his life became a huge influence in a critical turning point in my life.

In College

Education was not my first choice in college. For the first three quarters of my college career my focus was on science and in particular pursuing
medicine. As I entered my senior year at Wartburg, I began to take stock in how I wanted to live my life. Medicine was not going to allow me to be the family man that I was brought up to be nor the family man I had seen so vividly demonstrated in high school. I wanted to find a way to be able to dedicate my life to family but also be involved in a profession that allowed me to be a significant influence on others. Education had always been an important part of my life and seemed to be able to provide me the style of life that I wanted to live. At that point, I made the decision that I was going to become an educator and it is a decision I have never regretted.

What I Believe About Education

The Big Picture

Education is the backbone of a democratic society. The success of a country like ours depends on the preparation we provide our youth to become the leaders of tomorrow. For our nation to continue to be leaders in innovation and productivity, our educational system must remain rock solid and continue to grow stronger in an increasingly competitive world. The responsibility of preparing young people to move our society forward falls squarely on those who have chosen to dedicate their lives to teaching. As educators, we must strive for continuous improvement and enhancement of the education system. We must work to provide the pathways necessary for an increasingly diverse student population.
On a Smaller Scale

At the root of the education system is teacher-student relationship. An educator has the opportunity to influence the life of a young person in a way that so few can even imagine. We have the power and the opportunity to take a child who has no direction or vision in life and put that student on a path that will allow him or her to achieve great things. Our motivation, encouragement, and effort will influence that young person to look deeper into things and want more out of life. We can challenge that child to question why and to find out the answers for themselves. As teachers, we provide the tools to become productive and influential members of society one student at a time with love and compassion that can only be found in education.

Why I Entered the Educational Leadership Program

As I have stated, the change to a career in education has been a decision I have never regretted, but the past few years have led me to believe something has been missing. After being involved in some committees that carried some level of leadership in our district, I found a new level of satisfaction in the education profession. I enjoyed being involved in some of the decision making on the curriculum level and began to think about pursuing educational leadership. The more I considered this pathway, the more it seemed to fit my background. I have always taken on leadership roles in anything I have been involved in throughout my life. I feel I possess qualities that would make me a strong leader and I feel I
have a lot to offer in terms of ideas and vision to help make schools better. I am looking forward to developing the skills necessary to capitalize on my leadership qualities as I work to complete this program.

What I Believe About Leadership

A leader is someone who can find a way to make it happen. In education, a leader is someone who can motivate a learning community to work together to achieve greatness. A quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes on my folder states, “Greatness is not where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but sail we must” (Holmes et al, 1858). Educational leadership is a calling that will see its fair share of both good and bad days. Quality educational leaders will be someone who can steer the ship regardless of the conditions. They must have strong vision, powerful motivation, and a high level of integrity in which the people who work for them can develop a deep sense of trust. Leaders must understand that they are only as good as the faculty and staff that work with them. Principals must find ways to challenge the staff and students to do better each and every day so that our young people receive every opportunity possible to pursue their own dreams. Being an educational leader is a strong challenge that I am truly looking forward to meeting.
Principals must demonstrate many different types of leadership as they work to improve education. Educational leaders must first and foremost be visionary in their leadership. This vision will lead them as instructional leaders, as positive change agents, as seekers of continuous improvement, as leaders through service to the learning community, and as collaborative leaders.

Instructional Leadership

Leadership in the schools of tomorrow will take on a much different look than in the past. The six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, one of which is instructional leadership, define this leadership. While all six standards are certainly important, it is instructional leadership that must take a central role for principals. Educational leaders must be visionary, collaborative, ethical, and political in their leadership, but the central focus of all of these is student learning. Principals must provide “instructional leadership focused on strengthening teaching and learning, professional development, data-driven decision making, and accountability” (Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), 2000, p 4). In times when restructuring our secondary schools has become a priority, principals must keep student learning and achievement at the heart of change. For that reason the development of instructional leadership must be the central goal in the professional development of educational leaders. All of the standards are essential “but, in a crucial sense,
leadership for student learning is the priority that connects and encompasses all...major roles” (IEL, 2000, p 4) a principal will fill.

For many years instructional leadership has focused on teaching. How well is the information presented? Is the teacher managing the classroom efficiently? Does the teacher use multiple methods of delivery? The principal’s focus has been on what teachers are teaching and helping them teach it more effectively. Although this approach can be and has been moderately successful, this cannot be the approach used anymore. The center of attention must change from teaching to learning. To what extent are the students learning the intended material? How can we improve the time and support necessary to facilitate an improvement in student learning? These are different questions that can lead to tremendous innovation in how students learn and how teachers teach. Principals will be evaluated on student achievement and instructional leaders should focus first and foremost on how well students are learning and how learning can be improved (DuFour, 2002, p. 13).

Making the change from teaching to learning will require vision and collaboration. Administrators ought to have a strong idea of what kind of learning community they want to establish and then follow this up by collaborating with faculty, staff, and parents to involve all stakeholders in the process. For principals to be able to accomplish this they must first take on the role of lead learner. Educational leaders do not have to be experts of each curriculum taught in their
buildings; a solid understanding of what is being taught will be sufficient.

Principals will be required to be experts and on the cutting edge in instructional strategies and best practice instruction. They must have a strong understanding of strategies to improve student learning and put themselves in a position to help the staff implement these strategies. Instructional leaders must be willing to be the biggest risk takers in the building. As principals demonstrate willingness to research and experiment, the staff will follow their lead and a community of lifelong learners will develop.

Teachers must be provided opportunities to collaborate with one another. They must have the time and resources available to identify the essential curriculum in their areas and share the best practices for instruction with their colleagues. Educators must also work together to develop ways to assess how well students are learning the curriculum. Finally, teachers will need to be able to collect data, analyze results, set new goals, and establish new areas to focus improvement. Administrators must work to create a professional learning community that provides "an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they (educators) work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone" (Defour & Eaker, 1998, p. xii).

Being an instructional leader is certainly one of the main reasons a person pursues administration. Student learning is the exciting part of the job. Unfortunately, management issues such as discipline, scheduling, buildings and
grounds, and budgeting demand principal’s time as well. Such issues make it difficult for administrators to place as much focus on instructional issues as they would like (IEL, 2000, p. 6). In order to be an effective instructional leader, principals have to devote a significant amount of time developing instructional leaders within the school (King, 2002, p. 63). Associate principals, facilitators, department chairs, and master teachers can all fill roles and assist in instructional issues. In developing this collaboration, a principal is reinforcing that student learning is a school-wide goal and that everyone has a right and the potential to be involved in school leadership (King, 2002, p. 63).

Instructional leadership is the glue that holds together the other standards for educational leadership. Student learning is the encompassing focus of all of the other ISLLC standards. Principals have to shift the focus from teaching to learning. By focusing on student output instead of teacher input and being driven by results rather than intentions, instructional leaders can make dramatic improvements in student learning and achievement (DuFour, 2002, p.15). Principals who have the best understanding of this will be able to provide solid instructional leadership in times of significant school reform.

This shift in emphasis from teaching strategies to learning strategies will require a different way of doing things in public schools. Educators will need to be involved in analyzing current practices, researching new and improved practices, and implementing them in their own schools. In essence, educators
must be willing to change how they are currently doing business. The change process can be a difficult one to navigate for a building principal. Understanding the different phases of change and why there is resistance to change will be important skills for any successful educational leader.

Change in Education

Educational change or reform is a hot topic everywhere. From politics to coffee shops, people have opinions about how to improve public education. While some of these people have no merits on which to base their beliefs, many people out there have great ideas and intentions for improving public education. The demand for a better public education system is high and, in most cases, it is fair. Our schools are not as good as they could be. No organization is. An organization that believes things are going well and attempts to keep the status quo is falling behind; schools are no exception. Change is not something to resist or fear. Quality educational leaders will see change as an opportunity to assess current values and visions. Through self-analysis they can identify areas of concern and make the necessary adjustments to improve through collaborative efforts that are based on strong core beliefs about what is best for kids.

Mandates and initiatives for reform are coming at schools in many different directions. Parents, community leaders and politicians all demand, rightfully so, that their schools meet the ever changing needs of their students. Many educators avoid change and I feel it is because their belief about the core
mission of education has been misplaced. Rudolph Giuliani talks about the struggle for school improvement in his book, *Leadership*:

The New York City school system was never really going to improve until its purpose, its core mission, was made clear. What the system should have been about was educating its million children as well as possible. Instead, it existed to provide jobs for the people who worked in it, and to preserve those jobs regardless of performance. That’s not to say that there weren’t committed professionals at every level within the system. There were, and that’s the shame of it. Those with their hearts in the right place were the ones who suffered most.

Until I could get everyone involved to sit together and agree that the system existed to educate children, fixing little bits of it was symbolic at best (Giuliani, 2002, p. 176).

This is certainly a bold statement and it can be considered threatening by those in education. However, there are some strong truths in this analysis, not only in New York but also across the country. Perhaps it is this truth that makes “change” and “reform” in education so difficult. When No Child Left Behind or other similar mandates come down the line, educators can focus on how this will affect them. Instead, they should be focusing on how this can impact their students. Are the mandates and initiatives pushed on educators perfect? No. Are they easy to work with? No. Do they make the job of educating young people
easier? No. Do they give us an opportunity to evaluate and develop core beliefs, to work together to make improvements in our organization, and do what is really best for kids? Absolutely.

Teachers struggle with change because too many times it is handed down and demanded of them. Why does this happen? The answer to this question can be traced to a poor assumption about organizational change. When change is being done to the teacher rather than by the teacher, they will generally think first about what is best for them rather than what is best for the student. Most people act first in their own self-interest, not in the interest of the organization (Patterson and Patterson, 2001, p. 52). Administrators must keep this in mind when implementing systemic change. A principal must approach the issue with a positive attitude focusing on the opportunity for collaborative change for the betterment of the school and the students. Strong educational leaders will recognize that it is the faculty, staff, and parents that will make or break school improvement plans. Collaboration is the key to success. The role of the principal will be to involve the entire learning community in establishing a set of values or core beliefs before any change initiatives can take place.

A school has to have a set of values and principles that guide its every decision. Once a school has a vision that is agreed upon by all of the necessary stakeholders it will have a structure that supports the process of school improvement. Every change or initiative in a program must now align with the
core beliefs established by the learning community. Mandates are no longer threatening. Instead, educators can ask themselves where this mandate fits into their core beliefs and how can it help them meet their already established improvement goals. As Giuliani implied above, until all of the stakeholders can be on the same page and support the same ideals, real change cannot occur. This is not meant to imply that once a vision is established change will be easy to achieve. School leaders will still be met with confusion, skepticism, or outright hostility from some stakeholders. Once decisions are made a school leader must be prepared to deal with these challenges from those who continue to resist or refuse to participate. If the school has set down a solid foundation of common beliefs, leaders have the moral authority to support the vision of education (Glickman, 2002, p. 43). Educational leaders must be ready and willing to stay the course in rough waters and lead a school with courage.

Change and transformation in our schools will not be an easy task, but it is a necessary one if we are to truly improve student learning and performance. Data shows us that our students are not improving at the same rate as students are in other countries. For our students and our country to continue to be competitive in global market, educators must become open to the idea that change is necessary for us to achieve the individual student goals and the overall goals of the
educational system. Once a principal can create a climate open to change and transformation, a principal can direct the efforts of the staff toward improving student learning.

Improving Student Learning

Principals are challenged to improve the learning that takes place in their schools. While improvement of student learning is the bottom line, it is the improvement of the faculty and staff that service these students on which this foundation is built. The road toward improving student learning involves many different paths and strategies, but two themes really seem to stand out in the research. The first is improving the climate and image of the school. The second is improving the quality of instruction in the school. Although there are other factors that lead to improved student performance, these two seem to be the focus of improved student learning.

Improving School Climate and Image

When two principals renowned for successful improvement in urban schools were asked where they started, they both commented on improving the image and climate of the school first. Lucy Phillip, principal at Groves High School in Garden City, GA, set a three-pronged action plan for improving student achievement. First, she set out to establish a calmer, safer environment in which teachers could focus more on teaching than on management and discipline issues. Second, she focused on cleaning and repairing all facilities. She made it a point
to work with the custodial staff to be sure they understood her concept of clean.

Finally, once the climate and image were improved, she began to focus on improving student academic outcomes (Krajewski, 2005, p. 14). Students must feel safe, welcome, and a sense of pride in their school before they can focus on learning. Creating this environment is an important first step in improving student learning.

**Improving the Quality of Instruction**

“School improvement is actually a very simple concept. However, like many other simple concepts, it is not easy to accomplish. There are really two ways to improve a school significantly: get better teachers and improve the teachers you have” (Whitaker, 2003, p. 7-8). As mentioned above, a safe and encouraging environment is an important start. Once that is in place, the quality of instruction provided by the staff is critical. The better the staff, the better the school will perform. The job of the principal is to have quality people in place with character, a true sense of purpose in education, and an infinite amount of energy. Administrators accomplish this by hiring the absolute best they can hire and focusing on ways to help the ones already in place improve.

**Hiring**

“Hiring teachers is the most important thing you will do as a principal. Hiring is a $1 million decision” (G. Reed, public presentation, 9 June 2005).
When principals have an opportunity to replace staff, they have the ability to make a significant change in the climate and energy of their school. No matter what the talent level of the outgoing teacher, a principal should always try to hire someone even better. Hiring good teachers can make a school fun and effective for students. Hiring poor teachers can make learning difficult and turn kids off to school. The staff a principal hires during his or her time at a school is the legacy left behind for the students, school, and community after they resign (Slosson, 1999, p. 27).

Hiring the right people is so important because of the difficulty in removing a poor hire. “The balance of power between unions and districts in a litigious environment makes it almost impossible to discharge teachers who are merely difficult, inflexible, ineffective, and unfriendly, and choose to remain that way” (Slosson, 1999, p. 27). The process to do so is a long and tedious one that can completely divide a school. Getting it right on the front end in the hiring process can alleviate months of emotionally draining repair work down the road.

In hiring new staff, principals must look to hire talent first. Assuming that the only candidates that will be considered are those qualified to teach the position, talent level becomes one of the most important factors to determine. Many administrators focus on experience only. If two candidates have equal talent and one has more experience, certainly hiring experience matters. However, experience is not the best teacher; the best teacher is the best teacher
A talented teacher will always be a talented teacher. They will gain the experience and knowledge required to become a master teacher because that is what good educators do. Hiring simply on experience can lead to hiring a teacher who may not have the skills or the lifelong learning ambitions necessary to be successful in educating an ever-diversifying student population. If a principals want to focus only on experience in hiring, they should make sure it is great experience backed up by talent.

**Improving the Teachers You Have**

As discussed earlier, a principal cannot simply walk into a school and remove all of the poor or ineffective teachers. First of all, that is a difficult thing to do. Second of all, principals who come in with that kind of “chopping block” mentality would find very little success at the end of their tenure. Changes would be made in fear of job security instead of for the long term good of the school. The role of an effective principal is to improve teachers though solid instructional leadership, by showing teachers what good teaching is, and giving them opportunities to develop those skills in their own classrooms.

This cannot be accomplished from behind a desk in the office. Instructional leadership can often be one of the most difficult roles a principal fills. All principals are pulled in many different directions at all times of the day. Less effective principals use this as an excuse for not getting into classrooms.
every day or even every week. Great principals have the same demands but they
do not let it keep them from their number one priority of improving teacher
effectiveness (Whitaker, 2003, p. 37).

Staff development can provide very good opportunities to share
information and ideas about classroom trends and techniques. This time should
be well thought out and well planned to maximize its effectiveness. However, too
many times staff development can be two or three hours of great ideas that never
leave the meeting. Teachers go back to their classrooms with great intentions, but
get caught up in business as usual and leave the new ideas behind. A more
effective route in making teachers better is to create opportunities for the best
teachers to share and demonstrate what they do best.

Often times principals can put too much of the burden of improving
instruction on themselves. Effective administrators are smart enough understand
that they are probably not the best teachers in the building. Good principals will
realize this and put their best teachers to work for them (Whitaker, 2003, p. 38).
As instructional leaders, one of the most important things we can do is get people
into the classrooms of our best teachers. Let them see what makes an effective
teacher. Let them see the interactions, the transitions, the differentiation, and the
relationship building that makes them the very best. Give teachers the time to
collaborate with one another about best practice and best practice throughout the
school will result. This collaboration amongst teachers is one the most basic and
effective ways to improve student learning because it can help all of our teachers be as good as our best teachers (Whitaker, 2003, p. 41).

There are many pathways a principal can take in improving student learning. Whatever pathway chosen, the most effective path will include a plan to improve the school climate and image as well as a plan to improve teacher effectiveness through both the hiring and teacher improvement processes.

As educational leaders work to promote improved student achievement they must look at the leadership style they will use in accomplishing this task. The days of a principal introducing an initiative and the staff carrying it out because the principal said so no longer exist. Principals must take on a more active leadership role to inspire the staff to embrace new ideas and believe they will be effective. The role of a principal has become one of service in which they assist teachers in gathering research, implementing ideas, and providing the support necessary to make change initiatives take hold.

Service Leadership

Principals are making a transition from an authoritarian model of school leadership to a shared leadership style. Effective principals understand that learning communities of teachers, parents, and community members all sharing in and taking responsibility for the improvement of schools can accomplish much more than any single individual could dare to dream. In this capacity, principals become more of a service agent establishing and promoting opportunities for
stakeholders to share ideas, problem solve, develop school vision, and implement improvement strategies. This process promotes the development and continued learning of all stakeholders that is then trickled down to promote more extensive student learning. Successful principals create vehicles that lead to the staff and community growth that can meet the goals of the school and the school district. Faculty and staff who work together in shared leadership roles to explore school problems and opportunities will better serve students (Grasinger, 2001, p. 43).

Gordon Donaldson, a professor of education at the University of Maine, states:

"Schools cannot grow and strengthen themselves if they are focused on a single individual. Leadership is invested in a community. It is a capacity belonging to the organization. Leadership is something that you and others contribute to. When framed in this way, it becomes a matter of service" (Fish, 2002, p. 78).

Educators that become service agents and involve stakeholders in the decision-making process and deciding the direction of the school create an environment of collaboration. Collaborative leadership styles allow educational leaders to include the community as a whole and therefore increase the level of involvement, commitment, and investment by all stakeholders in improving schools.
Collaborative Leadership

Serving students and improving student achievement by serving the learning community invested in this task has become a major focus of school administrators. Building the framework that promotes such a widespread division of leadership and responsibility can be daunting. Why should principals undertake such a task? There are several positive outcomes of this effort. Leadership teams form an accountability that fosters increased quality of work. The diversity of these teams provides more information and better action ideas. Fresh ideas and points of view promote learning new perspectives from one another. The more people involved in the task, the more likely that mistakes will be eliminated. The collective power of working as a leadership team increases the probability of risk-taking by the group (Grasinger, 2001, p. 42-43).

Developing Leadership Capacity

Creating a school environment where faculty and staff readily take on increased leadership capacity is not an overnight process. Many are entrenched in the “you tell us what your vision for the school is, and we will act on it” mentality (Lambert, 2005, p. 64). Teachers can find it is difficult to assume increased responsibility in decision-making and they withdraw from it. This can be difficult for administrators as well. Moving from an assertive style of leadership to a facilitative style can be a challenge. A school will typically move through three

[Note: The text continues on the next page]
phases during the development of high leadership capacity. They include the instructive, transitional, and the high capacity phases (Lambert, 2005, p. 63).

The instructive phase is an organizational period where the collaborative process and organization is established. The open sharing of visions, beliefs, best practices, expectations, and ideas for improvement are shared and discussed by the entire team. The role of the principal in this stage is a more assertive one. The principal must start conversations, challenge assumptions, establish procedures and structures for collaboration, and teach new practices. During this phase, a principal must show strength and resolve in their leadership to demonstrate a commitment to this process (Lambert, 2005, p. 64).

The transition phase is characterized by the gradual decrease in the leadership capacity of the principal and the increased leadership capacity of the team. The rate at which this transition occurs will depend on how quickly the teachers respond to this increased role. Some will be ready immediately and run with it while others will be very tentative to take hold of the reins. The difficulty of school leadership is realized in this phase. Many teachers will want to abandon ship at this time. Principals must prevent this by keeping a hand in the process by problem-solving, coaching, continuing conversations, and promoting a supportive atmosphere (Lambert, 2005, p. 64).

Once teacher leadership has shown the initiative to embrace their new role, a school can move into the final phase of high leadership capacity. The role
of the principal becomes that of facilitation and co-participation. Teachers begin initiative actions, take responsibility, and identify areas of improvement for student learning. During this phase, the principal and the teacher begin to share the same concerns and collaborate together to develop solutions and attain goals. A school that reaches this high leadership capacity now has the ability to sustain school improvement for the long haul, even through changes in school leadership (Lambert, 2005, p. 65).

**Characteristics of Collaborative Leaders**

Principals who are effective at establishing a learning community or shared responsibility atmosphere have a wide-array of leadership styles but certain characteristics facilitate success. These administrators have a strong understanding of self and values, a strong belief in equity and the democratic process, strategic thought about school improvement, a vulnerable persona, knowledge of teaching and learning, and the ability to develop leadership capacity in others (Lambert, 2005, p. 63). I feel the most important of these may be a vulnerable persona. While it is imperative for principals to have high levels of confidence and competence, it is also important principals let their staff know that they do not have all of the answers. Exhibiting this vulnerability will allow team members to feel a level of safety in bringing their ideas to the table. The threat or fear of rejection has been eliminated when principals admit that they are seeking help in finding answers.
There are some pitfalls to avoid in developing school leadership capacity. Membership and collaboration on leadership teams must be voluntary. Forced participation will foster resentment and resistance. The success of a leadership team is also contingent on the interest level of the team. Members must be involved in the topic areas in which they have a vested interest in order to maximize member participation (Grasinger, 2001, p. 43).

One of the most important roles principals can take on is one of service leadership by providing the direction, support, opportunity, and any other resources necessary for the faculty and staff to maximize their leadership capacity. Effective leaders "realize that authentic student centeredness requires that concern for students and their learning be embedded in a culture that values teachers, invests in their learning, and encourages their professionalism" (Segiovanni, 2004, p. 48). The key to improving student achievement is to improve the level of instruction received. Providing students with a faculty and staff that are engaged in the planning and implementing of strategic goals for a school through a collaborative network will ensure students receive a high level of instruction.

Educational leadership in the 21st Century will be a challenging task but it is difficult to imagine a more rewarding experience. People who devote their lives to improving the future of our young people are some of the most devoted people we have to offer. The opportunity to lead this group of people in creating
productive and innovative citizens that will represent themselves well in society is exciting. Successful leaders will commit themselves to being the lead learner in their schools. Principals must work to become experts in instructional strategies and provide staff many opportunities to work together and share ideas on best practice. Administrators will also work to create a climate in which change is not something to fear. Instead, change will be looked at as an opportunity to reflect on current practices and develop a better, more effective way of providing for our students. Effective leaders will surround themselves with like-minded educators who will focus on student achievement. This will be accomplished through both the hiring process and by providing effective professional development that teachers can believe in and actually use. Staff development and improvement strategies will come through collaborative efforts of all learning community stakeholders, not just from the principal’s office. The ideas and initiatives for improvement will be invested in and committed to by teachers, parents, community members, and students alike. The principal will be a service agent ensuring that these stakeholders have the resources and time necessary to create their own strategies for improving student achievement. The reward of success. This will be an incredible challenge for educational leaders to invest themselves in, but the reward of success in this endeavor will be a legacy worth the sacrifice.
References


References
