

2000

## The Administrative Role: a Reflective Essay

Donald R. Taylor  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©2000 Donald R. Taylor

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



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Taylor, Donald R., "The Administrative Role: a Reflective Essay" (2000). *Graduate Research Papers*. 1613.  
<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1613>

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](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

---

## The Administrative Role: a Reflective Essay

### Abstract

Like everyone, my experiences, values, and goals are the basis of what has become my philosophy of education. My philosophy of education, in turn, determines my teaching style and together they define what I believe to be the purpose of education. Knowing that philosophies tend toward the idealistic by nature, my idealistic vision is not intimidated by the challenge of administration. The purpose of this reflective paper is to identify characteristics that are essential for a successful principalship. I will also articulate what I believe about each characteristic, provide research findings to support my perspective, and discuss how I might implement my beliefs. Without experience beyond working with my mentor, my positions may be more theoretical than practical. We are not separate from all other times. We are connected to the past and the future. Our world is a product of all that has been. Our time is what has developed due to the contributions of all that came before us. All that we have is a gift, willed to us by our history. We must accept the responsibility and challenge of making the world of the future a better place than it was when we received it. Hence, to grow and improve we must change as an individual and as people.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE:  
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

---

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

Donald R. Taylor

December 2000

This Research Paper by: Donald R. Taylor

Entitled: THE ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE: A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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

Dave Else

1-5-01  
Date Approved

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor/Director of Research Paper

Dale R. Jackson

Nov. 10, 2000  
Date Approved

\_\_\_\_\_  
Second Reader of Research Paper

Michael D. Waggoner

January 8, 2001  
Date Received

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

Like everyone, my experiences, values, and goals are the basis of what has become my philosophy of education. My philosophy of education, in turn, determines my teaching style and together they define what I believe to be the purpose of education. Knowing that philosophies tend toward the idealistic by nature, my idealistic vision is not intimidated by the challenge of administration. The purpose of this reflective paper is to identify characteristics that are essential for a successful principalship. I will also articulate what I believe about each characteristic, provide research findings to support my perspective, and discuss how I might implement my beliefs. Without experience beyond working with my mentor, my positions may be more theoretical than practical.

We are not separate from all other times. We are connected to the past and the future. Our world is a product of all that has been. Our time is what has developed due to the contributions of all that came before us. All that we have is a gift, willed to us by our history. We must accept the responsibility and challenge of making the world of the future a better place than it was when we received it. Hence, to grow and improve we must change as an individual and as people.

Because of the fact that I was raised in a blue-collar household, I traditionally saw administrators in schools as the boss. From my perspective, that meant the person in charge. The administrator would be the primary decision-maker in any given school, responsible for management, hiring and firing, and

coordination of school programs. Based on my many experiences, I have come to the realization that no one is knowledgeable enough or talented enough to run something as complicated and complex as a school without help. Supporting my realization Portin, Shen, and Williams (1998) note:

Principals are approaching the limits of the amount of time they can dedicate to the job. Legislators, school boards, and district administrators who are proposing additional change that will affect the school and the principal's role should realize that many principals are severely limited in their capacity to take on additional duties. In addition to the time constraints, the principals, because of external priorities, are increasingly becoming managers, rather than instructional leaders. (p.1)

Information suggests that "running" a school is not just management, yet management is stealing increasingly more time. Management alone does not necessarily afford greater learning opportunities for student achievement, but it is certainly an aspect of the learning environment. Just as we cannot overlook management, we must not become so preoccupied with it that we let other roles of the administrator suffer. Guthrie and Reed (1991) point out that a principal has at least an equal responsibility in leadership as well as management.

School administrators must be both managers and leaders. As managers, they must ensure that fiscal and human resources are used effectively in accomplishing organizational goals. As a leader they must display the vision and skills necessary to create and maintain a suitable teaching and learning environment, to develop goals, and to inspire others to achieve these goals. (p. 199)

Likewise, Farren and Kaye (1996) identify five roles of an administrator as

(a) "facilitator, to create and open and accepting climate; (b) appraiser, ... to

make standards and expectations clear; (c) forecaster, ...to help people locate and access additional sources of information; (d) advisor, ...to point out possible sources of support; and (e) enabler, ...to connect with people with the resources they need to implement plans of action” (p. 179-180).

It is my contention that given the increasing roles and responsibilities of a principal, one cannot function effectively at the top of a pyramid through a top down process. A creative and innovative principal must use team concepts and create a learning community aimed at student achievement through a cooperative effort.

There are common elements crucial for a successful principalship. A shared vision, an effective comprehensive school improvement plan, and leadership are necessary for me to succeed as a principal. Everything must start with my personal vision, which reflects my core values. However, the previously mentioned essential elements would be rendered ineffectual without an all encompassing understanding that there must be an engaged community that has a shared investment in the success of the educational process. Mathews (1998) states, “An engaged public is one in which people have decided among themselves that they have to be invested directly in making decisions that make a difference through change” (p. 5).

My personal vision and core values must be compatible with the system I lead. Vision is an aspiration of where you want a school to be. It is critical to

understand what the school is accomplishing and to determine what it is that the learning community wants the school to accomplish that it is not currently doing. The state provides guidelines for this process by mandating a school improvement plan. An effective plan that improves student achievement is imperative to being a successful principal. A plan for improvement and growth means that there will be change. For change to be carried out effectively takes cooperation and leadership. It is the principal's job to provide the leadership and facilitate the cooperation for students and the district to evolve into a successful learning community.

#### Personal Vision

I believe that schools should provide an equal opportunity, multi-cultural, public education for all students. Schools should address the needs of individual students and serve communities by preparing students to be contributing members of a changing society. Students should be adaptable enough to meet life's challenges, confident enough to act on those challenges, and benevolent enough to realize that the good of the many is greater than the needs of the few. They should be intelligent enough to identify problems, creative enough to provide solutions, committed enough to apply their solutions, empathetic enough to be sensitive to the needs of others, and inclusive enough to allow everyone to contribute to the task of making a better world.



Education is the key to progress. If schools are to meet the needs of students and communities they must produce a student that is a life-long learner with the ability to be creative and cooperative in addressing and resolving life's challenges and community issues.

I believe that schools have historically been and should continue to be the change agents of society promoting both growth and improvement. To provide lasting improvement, we should promote the acceptance of differences among people, sexes, races, life styles, and nations; but not at the expense of common or shared values. This acceptance of difference would afford a greater degree of "buy in" by more people. As educators, we have a duty to society to provide programs to prevent or correct social problems. Diversity can provide perspective and shared values can provide a stable direction. Public schools should be dealing with sex education, drug education, and other social issues to meet our responsibilities to students and society.

My vision focused, I must share it. Speck (1999) states, "Collaboratively developing the climate and culture within a learning community causes the principal to be a vision-builder, moving from 'my' vision to 'our' vision" (p. 48).

### Expanding the Vision

To be a successful principal, it becomes imperative that through observations during the interview process, I accept a position that is compatible with my beliefs and vision. I cannot go into a district and tell them my vision and

expect them to accept it as their own without question. My personal vision needs to be blended with the visions of others. Barth (1993) suggests, “the most hopeful and ambitious means by which a school comes to have a vision is to grow one” (p.10). This creation entails including staff, parents, students, and community partners, so all can have ownership in the blueprint that will provide direction for all to work toward. Lumpa, Whitaker, and Whitaker (2000) point out:

Each faculty member has their belief system and vision in place. It is at this point that the vision of the school can begin to evolve and unfold. Pulling together into one vision becomes easier when all stakeholders feel confident in their contribution. There are many different routes to a vision. Developing a vision is a complicated process that cannot be achieved in a two- or three-hour faculty meeting. (p. 47)

Pinchot (1996) states:

If people feel part of the learning community, if they feel safe and cared for, if they are passionate about the mission and values and believe that others are living by them, they will generally give good service to the whole. And if they are dedicated members of the community, it will be safer to trust them to create their own leadership roles across the organizational boundaries. As community members, they will worry less about defending their turf, trusting that if they take care of the organization, it will take care of them. (p. 27)

To build a learning community, I need a diverse perception obtained through surveys, personal questioning, and meetings with organizations because the vision needs to be open-minded, adaptable, and inclusive. Likewise, I think that an effective vision must always stretch just beyond grasp, thus making it

eternally, a work in progress. If the school is always working toward improvement, a climate of growth, which makes evolutionary change a constant, is created. Hence, change would be the norm to the extent that if it didn't occur people would be uncomfortable.

The vision is the consensus of expectation in a given learning community. To find out if we are meeting those expectations we need to determine where we are currently with regard to student achievement, professional growth, and community involvement. Determination of school effectiveness is achieved through assessment.

#### A Plan That Facilitates Change

We begin with communication. Communication facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and communication keeps teamwork alive. Little matches the importance of communication to efforts necessitating coordination. It builds and sustains trust between teammates. The left hand not only needs to know what the right hand is doing, but needs to be able to anticipate what the other hand is going to be doing in the future. Teams need to know what is planned if they are going to be expected to execute a desired change.

I will need to keep the learning community informed and involved. As a team, we will need to meet, talk, and engage in an open give and take dialog. I must encourage people to express their differences in opinion. The only way a team chemistry can develop is through deliberation and consensus focused on a

shared vision. I must serve as the person who connects the groups within the educational community thus ensuring quality control on communications.

Mediocre communication systems deter effective change.

The State of Iowa has mandated that a school improvement plan be implemented in every school. The school district where I become a principal will have a school improvement plan in place or they will be in the process of implementing one. The needs of an individual school district will dictate direction for improvement. Whatever plan is selected to be used must focus on the shared vision. The plan must align student achievement, curricula development, professional growth, and changes or improvements to the vision.

Data analysis is pivotal to the school improvement process. It supplies the information that is necessary to make good decisions. Bernhardt (1998) explains:

Schools that are not using data in a purposeful way need to transform their thinking about data. If the focus of data analysis efforts is on comprehensive improvement of the entire learning organization, it is likely that other data analysis needs – such as external reporting requirements – will be met. Clarifying the purpose of the school sets the stage for all systems and data analysis work. (p. 10)

To be an effective principal, I must immediately begin gathering information. I would find it necessary to meet with students, teachers, parents, organizational members, community partners, and others to learn their perceptions of the learning environment, the demographics of the school, community needs, and all other aspects of the educational process. A comprehensive improvement plan will

benefit student achievement, professional growth, and provide for ongoing assessment for continuous progress. For change to be implemented effectively, I would find it necessary to base it on information and research. Holly (personal communication, March 20, 2000) pointed out:

It is better to focus on less change but base it on more information . . . while changes should be needs-based and data-driven, they should also be accompanied by comprehensive and creative assessment of progress. It's a question of changing less and assessing more.

As I suggested before, it is probable that I will inherit a school improvement plan. It is likely that the plan would have room for ongoing assessment to determine growth or improvement. After gathering information, I can identify growth areas and the students, staff, and parents who expressed these growth areas as areas of interest, would be empowered to begin looking at possible alternatives. Identification of alternatives should be carried out through the school improvement planning process, be based on need, be data-driven, and focused on the vision. As Phillips (1993) points out, "Remember that your followers generally want to believe that what they do is their own idea and, more importantly, that it genuinely makes a difference" (p. 48).

To be effective as a change agent, I must facilitate development of a vision that includes tradition. The stakeholders' feelings must be included in that vision. I must also coordinate the collection of all types of data to assess what is being done and communicate that information to the stakeholders. Lastly, I must

empower the stakeholders to design a plan for comprehensive ongoing improvement. To succeed in this evolutionary process will take time, patience, perseverance, and leadership.

### The Multiple Roles of a Principal

As a principal I will have many responsibilities. As I established previously, the principal performs many roles. Speck (1999) says:

The principalship has evolved into multidimensional roles: leader, educator, manager, and inner person. These complex and interrelated roles define how the principal helps develop and foster a true school learning community where the entire school community develops habits of continual learning. (p.30)

In all the research I have done throughout my coursework, this explanation has the most meaning for me. It identifies everything I must personally address to succeed as a principal and build a learning community.

I believe I must be clear about and committed to my beliefs about schools and the educational process. I must take an active role in improving school culture and climate, as well as, aligning and implementing curriculum instruction that is focused on a shared vision. I must communicate the vision, build trust, and empower and motivate the staff, the students, and the community. Finally, I must organize and execute the necessary day-to-day tasks to achieve success.

### The Inner Confidence Necessary for the Principalship

One of my strongest assets as a potential principal is my inner strength. My experience, passion for education, and my faith provide me with a strong base

from which to build. The fact that I have a reflective, enthusiastic, professional personality that is accepting and shows a sense of humor will enhance my ability to lead. To establish a climate of trust is imperative to my success as a principal. My twenty-seven years of teaching experience, collaborative approach to solving problems, and emphasis on inclusive strategies are going to provide a team expectation that people will see they can be comfortable contributing to and can personally benefit from, thus providing the impetus to build a comprehensive school improvement process. To be effective, I must be myself. I am social, relaxed, student-centered, and goal oriented. I want what everybody wants, a good school.

### The Balancing Act: Educator, Leader, and Manager

As educators we have three primary responsibilities, all centered on the needs of students. First, educational systems must provide an atmosphere for a positive socialization process. Socialization is necessary to help students learn how to work with others to accomplish goals and also determine how to relate with their community and greater society.

Secondly, a relevant and diversified curriculum and strong academic programs are significant responsibilities of education. They are essential elements necessary to provide students background, understanding, and experiences to build on, thus enabling them to develop successful life skills.

Development of life skills is the third responsibility of education, and is necessary to facilitate problem-solving, higher order thinking skills, and survival. Foremost, academic process and curricula are important, but we should never lose sight of the fact that we teach kids, not math, science, or social studies. It is critically important that we teach all kids regardless of learning style, handicaps, or weaknesses. Every kid is at-risk and every kid is talented and gifted.

To be a capable leader, I must be able to effect positive change that provides comprehensive school improvement and aligns curriculum, professional growth, and student achievement with the shared vision. Balancing the roles of educator, leader, and manager is like a juggling act.

Educator. To be an effective educational leader I will need to keep apprized of educational innovation, effective curriculum developments, and a variety of learning and teaching strategies while encouraging a collaborative team chemistry and continuously checking the quality of teaching and student achievement. Speck (1999) calls this the “Educator” (p. 42) role.

Keeping informed on innovation, curriculum, and learning strategies will provide credibility, which is necessary to be successful. Because I believe in facilitating a professional development plan for the assessment of teachers, it is imperative that I am informed. This plan should include a goal or objective and an effective procedure to reach that objective. I think it is important that each teacher and I sit down and design the objective and procedure together and it



should be a natural growth area not an add on. I am a proponent of the concept of cognitive coaching. Pajak (1993) explains:

Cognitive coaching is a process of mediating, nurturing, and enhancing the intellectual functions, perceptions, and decision-making processes of teaching. With cognitive coaching, the supervisor applies a set of strategies that are intended to enhance the perceptions, decision, and intellectual functions of teachers. Improving these inner thought processes of teachers is prerequisite to the improvement of other behaviors that result in increased student learning. (p. 264)

The more informed I am, the more credibility I will gain with teachers. The credibility will help me be a more effective educational leader in facilitating professional growth specifically and coordinating comprehensive school improvement in general.

Collaboration and collegiality were inferred when I considered a shared vision and both need to be included throughout the discussion of all the roles of administration. No one individual alone can make positive change happen. It is a team project. Speck (1999) states:

The role of leader has changed from being the sole province of the principal to one of shared leadership with teachers... findings reveal that principals in restructuring schools engaged in substantial delegation of leadership responsibilities by yielding power and decision-making authority to teachers. (p. 223)

Odden and Odden (1995) further suggest:

Rather than being the key decision-maker and “thinker” in the school as the person holding the top position in the hierarchy, principals in restructuring schools facilitated the activities of a myriad of groups and sub-groups, all engaged in decision-making on several fronts. (p. 150)

As a team, we can accomplish so much more than we can as individuals, especially when we see the diversity and expanse of all that we need to consider. Insightful research of innovative concepts like “brain research” as expressed by Pool (1997) are critical for the growth and improvement of the educational process, and for meeting the demands for improved student achievement.

Multiple intelligence as presented by Howard Gardner (1993), suggests:

One way to incorporate the multiple intelligence theory would be to create individual-centered schools. In these institutions, teachers would learn as much as they could about each student, then craft your teaching, and the materials to that child’s profile. (p. 74)

This theory is worthy of consideration for improved effectiveness in meeting the needs of students.

Glatthorn (1997) states, “Principals can best discharge their leadership role if they develop a deep and broad knowledge base with respect to curriculum” (p. 3). To do so would depend on working with others who have areas of expertise. While I may be able to facilitate a coordinated effort, I can not know about all

curriculums, hence I am dependent on the efforts of teachers. I need to provide them with opportunities to grow and develop.

Professional development as part of the evaluation process as described by Bowers and Flanders (1991), bring up even more important issues to be reflected upon. There is a wide range of educational issues that need to be carefully addressed and deliberated. Given all the information and varying approaches to education, if schools are to flourish in the Twenty-First Century, students, teachers, administrators, community partners, and school boards must work as a team to define what is best for their specific school. As Covey (1996) explains:

People have enormous talent, ingenuity, intelligence, and creativity. Most of it lies dormant. When you have true alignment toward a common vision, a common mission, you begin to co-mission with those people. Individual purpose and mission are co-mingled with the mission of the organization. When these purposes overlap, great synergy is created. A fire is ignited with people that unleashes their latent talent, ingenuity, and creativity to do whatever is necessary and consistent with the principles agreed upon to accomplish their common values, vision, and mission in serving customers and other stakeholders. This is what we mean by empowerment. (p. 153)

Leader. As a leader, I must remain alert as to what is going on in my school and anticipate the direction of change in its future. I must encourage teachers to be leaders and decision-makers. I must motivate them and empower them with opportunities to make decisions that make a difference for student achievement and school improvement. We must monitor research-based changes, celebrate our successes, and remedy our weaknesses. By promoting the concept that we are a

team working together to achieve the same objectives and constantly assessing development, we can build a better school and a better tomorrow.

I clearly understand why I put such a heavy emphasis on collegiality, collaboration, empowerment, and team concepts. In relationship with leadership, team is what's happening. As Bolman and Deal (1995) point out:

Empowerment liberates energy for more productive use. When people feel a sense of efficacy and an ability to influence their world, they seek to be productive. They direct their energy and intelligence toward making a contribution rather than obstructing progress. Empowerment enrolls people in working toward a common cause. (p. 103)

To empower others, hopefully suggests diversity of opinion, which places a premium on perception and communication. As Lumpa, Whitaker, and Whitaker (2000) espouse:

Perception is a crucial aspect of leadership. The words you say as a leader are very important, but how people perceive your words is where the rubber really meets the road. What people perceive is what they feel is the truth. Effective leaders understand this aspect of communication and continually try to improve. People do not just want you to hear them; they want to feel that you are really listening to them. Aspects of communication, such as nonverbal communication and listening skills, are essential components of effective leadership. Showing a sincere interest and gaining feed back are also important aspects of the leadership role. (p. 61)

It is critical for team success to communicate clearly, regularly, and by multiple means. Personally, I must make sure people don't mistake my enthusiasm as a sign of being too directive or aggressive. I must maintain control.

To communicate with others by using a memo in the mailbox, e-mail, and personal communication rather than only one means of communication will make communication more effective. As a leader, it is my responsibility to model communication skills. I must also take responsibility to get out and be seen, talk to people, and be proactive. In this way, I will encourage involvement, soften the level of concern when I am present, and it will give me the opportunity to see what is happening.

Encouragement and motivation provide impetus for involvement and growth through change. By empowering others, soliciting new ideas in a risk free environment, and clearly communicating those new ideas, people will begin working together toward their shared vision through comprehensive school improvement to enhance student achievement. Senge (1996) notes:

The challenge of systemic change...will, I believe, push us to new views of leadership abased on new principles. These challenges cannot be met by isolated heroic leaders. They will require a unique mix of different people, in different positions, who lead in different ways. (p. 57)

From my coaching experiences, I see a leader as someone who can help everyone play at the next level while minimizing the weaknesses of each individual, including himself/herself, by compensating with the strengths of the team for the purpose of meeting an existing challenge and/or team vision. It is imperative that I support teachers and students. Validation, edification, and recognition motivate others to the next level. When people hear that what they

are doing is good and effective, when they are recognized and thanked, they work harder. Lumpa, Whitaker, and Whitaker (2000) stress:

I [Lumpa] truly believe that “Raise the Praise – Minimize the Criticize” should be not only the belief system for all educators at work, but also our guiding principle for life. It is critical that we operate from this perspective every day. Looking for, acknowledging, and reinforcing the many positive things that occur in our organization may be the single most essential factor in cultivating positive morale. (p. 29)

A good leader is someone who can capture the focus and direct it on the vision rather than their leadership. Leadership is not about power and dictatorship. It is about cooperation and achievement. Leaders serve the public not their own interests. Leaders are responsible for the coordination of an effective plan which best serves the most people. Emphasis should be on the most people because no plan meets everyone’s needs. I must have the ability to allow others to contribute their talents and creativity to a given project so that they feel ownership, while exhibiting the self-confidence and willingness to take calculated risks and to direct the business of developing a plan that will continue to evolve and provide for on-going comprehensive improvement.

As a leader I must be able to delegate responsibilities to others and stand up and be accountable for the actions of the group. The diversity of any decision making team is vital because it provides fresh ideas and creative solutions. Too much direction or control can squash good ideas, but left with neither no direction nor a timeline, little can be accomplished.

Trust is the true test of leadership. Can I be counted on? Am I consistent? Am I fair? Real teamwork necessitates faith in each other. Trust is something earned through shared experiences of cooperation through challenging times. Sustainable comprehensive change must grow from knowing that if I slip today, someone will pick me up and I'll pick them up on another day. Speck (1999) says

“Colleagues must have mutual respect for each other and their work. This can develop within a learning community through time together, professional development, and activities that require cooperation and teamwork” (p 23).

Manager. Finally, to be a successful principal, I must address the most visible part of an administrator’s responsibility. How I deal with the day-to-day tasks of organization, executing policy, dealing with daily issues, and assessing and improving the educational components that drive the system is what the general public will see. Most specifically, how I deal with their child or the issue they care most about is what will affect them. If I can’t deal effectively with the managerial aspects of my job, there will be little likelihood that I will succeed as a principal. Confidences in my ability to carry out educational growth and school improvement stem directly from how I function in the managerial role.

Attendance, student discipline, scheduling, personnel issues, the constant monitoring of the effectiveness of policy, and the measurement of student achievement are daunting managerial responsibilities. These responsibilities are

so overwhelming that many administrators see management consuming all of their time and preventing a balance between manager, educator, and leader. It may be difficult to separate the three roles, as some aspects of each run together.

Sergiovanni (1995) affirms:

Distinctions between management and leadership are useful for theorists and help to clarify and for various activities and behaviors as principals. For practical purposes, however, both emphases should be considered as necessary and important aspects of a principal's administrative style. The choice is not whether a principal is leader or manager but whether the two emphases are in balance and, indeed, whether they complement each other. (p. 37)

As I assume the position of principal, there will be board policies, student handbooks, faculty handbooks, and/or descriptions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; as well as, standard operating procedures already in place. Understandably those are what I will start with and I will make adjustments as I encounter a necessity. Discussion and collaboration with secretaries, other support staff, and teachers will be helpful in determining areas of concern. In the course of interviewing, I will have been informed by the school board, the superintendent, teachers, and community participants about areas of the concern.

Clearly, there are not enough hours in a day for one person to accomplish everything identified as administrative duties without a collaborative effort and delegating some responsibilities to teacher-leaders. Managing is a fluid operation



that is dependent on situation, time, prior study, preparation, policy, and decision-making. Management seems dependent upon events and situations and therefore, relies on situational decision-making. It would be extremely valuable to consider as many options as possible to try to ensure the best resolution to a given situation. Inclusion of other perspectives can be valuable in this process in some cases. Lunenburg and Ornstein (1995) explain:

Planning is important because it provides organization members a sense of purpose and direction, outlines the kinds of tasks they will be performing and explains how their activities are related to the overall goals of the school... Without this information, employees would not know precisely how to use their time and energies efficiently and effectively. Subsequently, they would respond to their job responsibilities randomly, wasting valuable human resources. (p. 6)

After many years of coaching, I have learned that decision-making requires a thick skin, self-confidence, and an emphasis on what is best for kids. I do not have a monopoly on the best answers and will make mistakes, but I have found that admitting mistakes and fixing them is healthy and builds credibility.

Assessing student achievement, monitoring a comprehensive school improvement plan, evaluating staff, and maintaining the guidelines of the master contract have all become managing and leading. Here is where managing, leading, and educating overlap and it becomes difficult to distinguish one role from another. Inclusion, when appropriate, discretion, when necessary, as well as, honesty, integrity, flexibility, understanding, and trust carry the day when it comes to managing and leading.

With twenty-seven years of teaching experience, I know there are a number of teachers, support staff, and community partners who have excellent ideas on how to improve schools. I also know that there are high profile people, believing their ideas are good, who take an active role in the public education process. It is my contention that if the stakeholders in a democratic learning community are willing to work together and focus on a shared vision, schools can be more effective.

### Summary

To succeed as a principal, I must be a coordinator and builder. Administration is not just a management position. It has been made clear to me that a principal wears many hats in the execution of his/her duties. It is equally clear that whichever role a principal is performing, the process must include a comprehensive school improvement plan aimed at increasing student achievement and that plan must be focused on a shared vision.

The key to being a good principal lies in the facilitation of an inclusive vision, the identification of where the school is in relationship to that vision based on research, and the development of an effective process leading toward the shared vision that is data driven. As principal, I will need to continually work toward assessing curriculum to effect change by enhancing the ability of the school and the staff to work toward the vision.

Collaboration is critical, but based on experiences, I know that there are school boards and teachers who see the process that I want to share with others as being the role of the principal. It is important that I see students, teachers, community members, and other administrators as people I am working for not working with. I must take the time and make the effort to provide the best possible service to the people for whom I work. I need to encourage regular and direct contact with the people I serve, thus, building stronger relationships and improving team chemistry. I need to anticipate needs, deliver appropriate service, and build a reputation of sensitive responsiveness. My educational experience and leadership skills are vital and enhance my chances to succeed as a principal.

## REFERENCES

- Barth, R. S. (1993). Coming to a vision. Journal of Staff Development, 14(1), 6-9.
- Bernhardt, V. L. (1998). Data analysis for comprehensive schoolwide improvement. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1995). Leading with soul: An uncommon journey of spirit. San Francisco, CA; Jossey – Bass, Inc.
- Bowers, C. A., & Flanders, D. J. (1991). Culturally responsive teaching and supervision: A handbook for staff development. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Covey, S. R. (1996). Three roles of the leader in a new paradigm. The Leaders of the Future. New York, NY: Drucker Foundation.
- Farren, C., & Kaye, B. L. (1996). New skills for new leadership roles. The leaders of the future. New York, NY: Drucker Foundation.
- Gardner, H. (1993). Multiple intelligence: The theory in practice. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Glatthorn, A. A. (1997). The principal as curriculum leader. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Guthrie, J. W., & Reed, R. J. (1991). Educational administration and policy: Effective leadership for American education. New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.
- Lumpa, D., Whitaker, B., & Whitaker, T. (2000). Motivating and inspiring teachers. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education
- Lunenburg, C. L., & Ornstein, A. C. (1995). Educational administration: Concepts and practices. New York, NY: Wadsworth Pub. Co.
- Mathews, D. (1998). Community politics. (2d ed.) Kettering Foundation. (Brochure). Washington, DC:

Odden, A. R., & Odden, E. R. (1995). Educational leadership for America's schools. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Pajak, E. (1993). Approaches to clinical supervision: Alternatives for improving instruction. MA: Christopher – Gordon.

Phillips, D. T. (1993). Lincoln on leadership. New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc.

Pinchot, G. (1996). Creating organizations with many leaders. The leaders of the future. New York, NY: Drucker Foundation.

Pool, C. R. (1997). Brain-based learning and students. Educational Digest, 63(3), 10-16.

Portin, B. S., Shen, J., & Williams, R. (1998). The changing principalship and its impact: Voices from principals. NASSP Bulletin, 82(602), 1-8.

Senge, P. M. (1996) Leading learning organizations: The bold, the powerful, and the invisible. The leaders of the future. New York, NY: Drucker Foundation.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1995). The principalship: A reflective practice perspective. New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.

Speck, M. (1999). The principalship: Building a learning community. NJ: Merrill/Prentice-Hall, Inc.