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A Vision for Administering An Elementary School

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Abstract

My philosophy of educational leadership has developed from the experiences I have had over the course of my lifetime. It began with the values taught to me by my parents and has continued to build to the present. My parents provided a caring and secure family life for my four siblings and me. Neither my mother nor my father had the benefit of much formal education. Neither was able to graduate from high school because they had the obligation to contribute income to their families during the depression. Perhaps the hardships they lived through were the basis of the values they instilled in their children. We grew up understanding the importance of hard work, responsibility, and pride in a job well done. My parents taught us that education was the promise for our future. They instilled a belief that working hard in school and doing well would be the way to a better and more fulfilling life.

A Vision for Administering An Elementary School

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by

Karen L. Thorpe

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My philosophy of educational leadership has developed from the experiences I have had over the course of my lifetime. It began with the values taught to me by my parents and has continued to build to the present. My parents provided a caring and secure family life for my four siblings and me. Neither my mother nor my father had the benefit of much formal education. Neither was able to graduate from high school because they had the obligation to contribute income to their families during the depression. Perhaps the hardships they lived through were the basis of the values they instilled in their children. We grew up understanding the importance of hard work, responsibility, and pride in a job well done. My parents taught us that education was the promise for our future. They instilled a belief that working hard in school and doing well would be the way to a better and more fulfilling life.

I grew up in a safe and secure environment. I knew I was loved and that my family cared about me. The people around me had expectations for my behavior, my achievements, and supported my interests and goals. When children have this kind of nurturing environment they learn to trust in themselves and others. I felt safe in taking risks, in making mistakes, and in counting on people to do what they promised. I believe that this has had a great impact on me in my personal life and in my career. It has given me a positive and confident outlook toward my own work and toward working with others in education. I function from a belief that people are trustworthy and want to do well. I believe that people want to work together and want to solve their own problems. I believe that this approach is respectful of people and their values. I believe that people will respond to high expectations and trusting leadership.

My experiences as a child were the beginnings of the plan I followed as a parent. When I married and had a family of my own, I learned from my children too. My son, who struggled in school, taught me that even though our educational system can be uplifting for some, it might be discouraging for others. I learned that educators have an awesome responsibility to meet the needs of all children and treat them with patience, dignity, and respect. At the same time we must challenge them and teach them the skills they need to succeed. I know too, that parents have a great contribution to make to education. Their knowledge about the strengths and needs of their children can only add to the school experience. Every child can benefit from having a parent who is focused on their interests and works as a partner with the school.

My own experiences as a student in public school taught me how to read, write, and solve problems. I also learned about diversity. There were children at my school who did not look like me or learn like me. I encountered classmates who came from different kinds of homes, and had very different values. I learned to be tolerant and to appreciate the unique qualities that people from diverse backgrounds bring to each other. I learned that people working respectfully together can accomplish more than any one person working alone. I also believe that the times that I have lived through have made a deep impression on my approach to leadership. I was in high school and college during the turbulent years of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights struggle, and the race to put a human into space. I come from an era when women did not have the same opportunities that we now enjoy. I have learned to appreciate how far we have come while at the same time recognize that there are social issues that we need to address

through the institution of education. I have learned to disagree without bitterness and to speak up for what I believe is right. I have learned to look beyond myself for new perspectives and new points of view.

My view of leadership first developed during my training as a teacher and has become clearer over the course of my twenty-seven year career in education. I have taught all subjects and most grades in the elementary school. I have worked with parents and families, with community members, and as a teacher leader. These past experiences have given me a perspective for reflection about the kind of leaders that schools need now and for the future. For over ten years I had the privilege of working with an administrator who provided a model for working with people. She believed in empowering teachers and believed that the scope of leadership included developing leadership capacity in others. Over the years we developed a mentor relationship that I value greatly. The study of leadership has given me opportunities to discuss leadership within the context of current issues in school improvement, school organization, and school change. I feel that I am ready for new challenges in leading schools and teachers. I am eager to implement the best things that I have learned from the people who have been my mentors and my teachers.

Aspects of Leadership

I believe that there are three aspects of leadership that are critical for a successful school. First, I believe that a school leader must help create a safe, caring climate that is focused on the dignity and fair treatment of everyone.

Second, I believe that building leadership capacity across a school staff is critical. Leadership cannot rest in the hands of a single person. All the talents and skills of the people in an organization are needed to accomplish the work of a school. Finally, I believe that a school must have a focus on learning for both children and adults. It must be a place where people of all ages are encouraged to strive for improvement in their knowledge and skills through challenging work and meaningful accountability.

A Safe, Caring, Climate

When I speak of school climate, I am referring to the set of the values, safety practices, and organizational structures within a school that frame the way the organization functions and reacts. I am also referring to the effect these school norms and structures have on students. I believe that schools should be organized to nurture students as individuals and at the same time, help them interact with adults and peers in ways that will prepare them to be caring members of their communities. The values that we model in schools are reflected in the way people in the organization interact with each other, learn together, and solve the problems that they share. I believe that schools function best in a climate of open communication, mutual respect, and active participation. When people of any age are encouraged and expected to form opinions, ask questions, disagree, and speak their minds, the result will be broadened individual perspectives and the possibility of increased trust and tolerance. Everyone in the school must feel physically and emotionally safe and welcome. Schools must recognize and

preserve the dignity of children, families, and staff at all times. We must make every effort to understand the needs and cultures of students and respect their family structures, traditions, heritage, and language. Education and schooling are highly social activities that rely on the interactions of people, ideas, and viewpoints.

The literature related to successful schools supports the idea that attention to school climate is vital. In our leadership training we are often asked to explore, analyze, and understand our own values in order to articulate and develop our own leadership style. To support that process, knowledge and understanding of the types of leadership approaches help us define those approaches that best match our own beliefs and values. In the report titled Leadership in the Twenty-first Century from The Kellogg Leadership Project (as cited in Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000) researchers defined the purposes for leadership:

- to create a supportive environment where people can thrive, grow, and live in peace with one another

- to promote harmony with nature and thereby provide sustainability for future generations

- to create communities of reciprocal care and shared responsibility-where every person matters and each person's welfare and dignity is respected and supported. (p. 202)

If we accept these as desired purposes for leadership, then it follows that the resulting environment created by these purposes would be a supportive, social

organization. They imply an ethical responsibility for leaders to keep these purposes in mind as they make decisions related to the organization of the school, the models of human interactions, and the allocation of resources. The words in the quotation above create a vision of people-oriented organizations where human needs are addressed in tandem with the goals of student achievement and academic proficiency. Fullan (2001) strongly states, "To strive to improve the quality of how we live together is a moral purpose of the highest order" (p. 14). People and their human needs must be an important consideration of all decisions.

Joy Fopiano and Norris M. Haynes (2001) make connections between the school climate and the social and emotional development of young children.

> Learning for all children is in large part as much a social and emotional experience as it is a cognitive experience. Academic learning takes place in home and school environments where emotional and social experiences serve as the background or foreground for this learning. We cannot and do not turn off children's emotions when trying to teach them to read, to write, or solve math problems. If anything, many academic learning experiences heighten the need for children to be socially and emotionally skilled in order to be successful in school and in life generally. Increasing academic challenges require that children become more self-confident and display higher levels of self-control. (p. 56)

Fopiano and Haynes (2001) cite research that shows that the personal interactions children have with teachers and other adults in their schools correlate significantly with students' learning, achievement, and behavior. They describe a nurturing school climate as one that includes opportunities for children to interact socially as well as educationally with caring adults both inside and outside of the

classroom. The atmosphere is one of trust and mutual respect between students and teachers and between school personnel and students' families and caretakers. The adults in the school interact with students collectively and as individuals in the role of academic mentor and guide. Fopiano and Hayes further reinforce the importance of helping children develop positive relationships with peers in order to impact self-esteem and social competence. They believe it is the school's responsibility to plan and structure activities that bring students together and that help them gain an acceptance and respect for cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, and physical differences. These conditions are integral parts of the school climate and are created by aligning the values and beliefs of the people in the school with policies, procedures, and organizational structures.

Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1996) describe the Child Development Project originally started in collaboration with teachers in California's San Ramon and Hayward school districts. The authors identify five principles to develop "caring communities of learners" (p. 17). The principles include striving for warm, stable relationships among adults and students, opportunities for constructive learning, challenging curriculum, intrinsic motivation, and attention to social and ethical dimensions of learning.

These principles reinforce the importance of establishing a climate and culture that encourage children to care about each other and learning. The authors, Lewis et al. (1996) write, "Like a family, the caring classroom provides a sense of belonging that allows lively, critical discussions and risk-taking" (p. 20). The important goals of academic accomplishment are nurtured and supported by meeting the social and emotional needs of students first, then building on that

base to help them value learning and achievement. Issues related to school climate are ranked in the top five in the list of factors in schools that impact student achievement (Marzano, 2003). I believe a clear connection has been made between the positive climate of the school and the academic, social, and emotional well being of children and adults.

Creating a positive learning climate that will maximize academic learning and nurture the emotional and social growth of both students and adults is a priority for me. A school climate cannot nor should not be created by the principal alone. The values and culture of a school are very complex and are impacted by all of the constituents of the community. Even if one tried to mandate climate changes, it probably would not work. One must first understand and analyze the climate of the school, as it presently exists. The existing climate of a school may be in very close alignment with the outlined values of respect, dignity, and caring. In that case, one's job would be to model those characteristics in their own dealings with students, staff members, parents and community. At the same time a leader would communicate expectations that reinforced those values in his/her actions to teachers and students as well. These models of behavior must be consistent and frequent enough for trust to be built and maintained. This will take time and persistence. A new leader must expect to earn the trust of students, staff, and community members.

If there are issues that need to be addressed, I believe that the best way to improve the climate will be to involve all members of the school community in identifying problems and potential solutions for them. This may be accomplished by reviewing policies and organizational structures such as school and classroom

rules, current disciplinary procedures, and communication structures. Involving student groups, teachers, and families in these discussions will initiate open communication regarding these policies. Opportunities for input from affected groups creates an atmosphere of trust and an interest in establishing norms that fit the needs of all concerned.

Once problems and possible solutions have been identified, it is essential to form an action plan. The plan must include steps to undertake as well as methods of gathering evidence of progress at regular intervals. A positive school climate can reinforce itself when sufficient attention is given to maintenance. It becomes a strong priority and is modeled by everyone in the organization. The important thing for a school leader to remember is that the climate of a school is built over time, is a product of the values of all stakeholders, and must be modeled and reinforced by school leaders.

Building Leadership Capacity

I believe that schools are best when leadership is distributed across the entire staff and the capacity for leadership is nurtured in each individual. Schools are being scrutinized more closely all of the time. There is an increased sense of accountability for student performance, and expectations that schools can and should overcome social and community issues to support all learners. These expectations are causing new challenges and pressures for schools and educators. Now, more than ever before, there is a need to create an atmosphere of collaboration and a shared sense of purpose and responsibility for decision

making and problem solving among the school staff. Key to the success of this is an atmosphere of freedom and trust so that all can freely express opinions and offer ideas without fear of limits or reprisals. Structures must be present in the school that encourage teaming so that each person's individual contribution is enhanced by those of the group. This viewpoint is tied to the notion of distributing leadership across the school community to take advantage of the expertise of everyone in the organization. I believe in a transformational perspective of leadership that is focused on empowering others to accomplish the goals of the organization.

There has been a lot of study over the years to identify what school structures and processes of leadership are necessary to change the way schools function. In The Distributed Leadership Study, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) examine the practices of leadership in Chicago area elementary schools. The work of these researchers was designed to make leadership practice more transparent by doing an in-depth analysis to identify tasks, people, actions, and interactions of school leadership. The theory of this investigation was based on the premise that there is interdependence between the people of an organization, their tools, and the environment in which they operate. The authors defined leadership in schools as made up of positional leaders, principals and assistants, and informal leaders, those with knowledge and teaching expertise. One important conclusion they make is that in order to understand the knowledge that leaders must have to change schools, one has to analyze what leaders know and do together. This knowledge level and related actions must be explored at the group level rather than individually. Spillane et al. (2001) conclude that:

While individual leaders and their attributes do matter in
constituting leadership practice, they are not all that matters. Other
school leaders and followers also matter in that they help define
leading practice. Further, the situation surrounding leaders'
practice - material artifacts, tools, language, and so forth-is also a
constituting element of that practice and not simply an appendage.
Leadership practice (both thinking and activity) emerges in and
through the interaction of leaders, followers, and situation. (p. 27)

The work of these researchers validates my belief that an atmosphere of

collaboration is a key element in defining the leadership of a school. They

reinforce the idea that this distribution of leadership not only aids collaboration

but also is an essential ingredient of the leadership that moves a school forward.

Richard Elmore (2002) writes about this idea of distributed leadership and

collaboration in his article "Hard Questions About Practice." He believes that an

awareness of the elements of distributed leadership ultimately helps educators

create schools that use the combined knowledge and skills of all people to

improve teaching and learning. He argues that increased demands for

accountability require schools to explain the way they use resources and the way

they create structures to support the learning of students. State and federal

governments demand that schools get better over time. In order to make the

learning of students and adults in the organization cumulative, schools have to

coordinate and collaborate so that they are taking advantage of all of the

knowledge and expertise available. Elmore writes:

Leaders, then, engage people in shaping the content and conditions
of their own learning in organizationally coherent ways.
Distributed leadership is crucial for improving an organization's
performance because it requires a deep understanding of the
cognitive and affective skills needed to do the work and of the

ways in which the school's organization enables or undermines learning. (p. 25)

Elmore (2002) is saying that creating collaborative structures is the first step to ensure that everyone benefits in schools, both students and adults. People, as resources, have great potential for impacting the organization. By distributing the leadership across many people in a school, more people have a deep understanding of the problems and solutions for increasing achievement. Roland Barth (2001), in Learning By Heart, calls this collective power in the organization, "craft knowledge" (p. 56). He defines it as "the massive collection of experiences and learnings that those who live and work under the roof of the schoolhouse inevitably accrue during their careers" (p. 56). He raises the point that, each June, in every school district across the country experienced teachers retire without having had the opportunity to fully share the knowledge built over a career with other members of their profession. "In this way, craft knowledge is continually bled off from our schools, taken to the grave-unappreciated, unwelcome, unrevealed, and unused" (p. 60).

Lambert (1998) presents five assumptions that are the basis for building leadership capacity in schools. The first is that the word leader is not the same as leadership. She cautions that leadership must be separated from an individual person or an individual role. Instead it should be a part of the whole school community. A second assumption is that leadership is about learning because the intent of leadership is for constructive change. Her third assumption is that all members of a school have the potential and the right to work as a leader because the decisions made in a school affect everyone. The fourth assumption is that

leading is a shared endeavor. Without broad sharing, common purpose and focused action would be impossible. The last assumption is that leadership requires distributing power and authority across the organization. This requires principals to release some authority and requires staff members to learn how to accept and use the power and authority of their knowledge and expertise. The literature related to leadership in education supports the idea that building leadership capacity is an important function of successful schools. Opportunities for collaboration and distributed leadership help organizations build commitment and also help them make the most of the collective knowledge and experience of the school. Building the leadership capacity in the staff of a school will impact every part of the school community.

Lambert (1998) outlines some actions to take to build leadership capacity. She proposes these actions as guidelines rather than as a step-by-step plan. These actions fit well with my beliefs about how I could accomplish this as a principal.

A beginning point is to hire people who already have the capacity for leadership work. Schools need staff members who see themselves as accountable for the school community and the profession, as well as for the students in their classrooms. Procedures that screen applicants for a predisposition towards leadership can be helpful in getting the right people for the job. It is also necessary to identify the people already on the staff who have these same viewpoints. The teachers who volunteer for leadership positions, committee work, and problem solving teams must be supported as they take on these responsibilities.

The second guideline is to allow for people to get to know each other in order to understand the skills, values, experiences, and expertise the individuals in the organization have to offer. Opportunities for dialogue and collaboration that cross the boundaries of grade levels and roles in a school must be maximized. The more people communicate in meaningful ways, the more likely they will be to trust each other and overcome differences. Often teachers can be isolated in their own classrooms. Teachers can be encouraged to get to know each other by scheduling common planning time for grade level teams and helping teams focus their efforts on common issues. There are also many opportunities in a school for ad hoc committees on topics that range from planning a special event, purchasing new books for the library, or solving an issue related to school procedures. As groups of teachers work together, they are apt to discover and appreciate the talents that their colleagues bring to the job. Leaders will emerge and the roles of each individual will change along with the changing challenges of each new situation. It is not necessary or desirable to wait until everyone knows each other well before the work of the school is started. Rather, the relationships will grow over time as they are nurtured and supported.

Next, there has to be what Lambert (1998) calls a "culture of inquiry" (p. 81) in a school. This boils down to having discussions that are focused on important questions related to teaching and learning. These discussions and the work that results, elevates professional relationships by focusing attention on matters of substance. One type of inquiry that I have found effective is the action research model for school improvement. This research can be classroom based and can result from a particular problem that emerges from analyzing student

achievement data. Groups of teachers may be encouraged to apply research-based strategies over time and gather data related to the results. The action research model can also be applied across the entire school. By focusing on a common problem in student achievement, an entire staff can try new strategies and support each other in their efforts to improve teaching and learning through examining student work, peer coaching, co-teaching, and planning together.

Another part of the process is to organize the school for leadership work. This means that there must be an infrastructure that supports distributed leadership. One way to do this is to establish a building leadership team to collaboratively establish priorities, outline procedures for getting routine problems solved efficiently, and to spread tasks for problem solving across the school. Processes must be developed to outline decision making, structure staff development, facilitate communication, implement actions, and monitor progress. Key structures must also include the daily schedule and the calendar. Though calendars are almost always established at the district level, it is critical to advocate for important priorities for staff learning. Calendars must have time built in to the school year for professional development in increments that allow time for collaboration and reflection. Staff members are more likely to take on the leadership tasks when they are given the time to do so. Daily schedules must be developed in creative ways so that teams of teachers have time during the school day to work together on important issues of student learning. In a school in my district, we are working to create common grade level planning time of an hour and a half once each week. The structures will be in place to facilitate shared leadership for student learning. I believe that leadership capacity will be built

over time when all of the actions in a school are aligned with this goal. Every decision, every resource of time and people must be allocated in ways that support the distribution of authority and responsibility widely among the members of the school.

Focus on Learning

It has been my experience in education that those things to which attention is given are likely to improve. I think that it is very important for school leaders to focus attention on the learning of students and adults in the school. It seems ridiculously obvious that schools should have academic learning as an important focus but there are many other things that may compete for the attention of principals, teachers, and students. I believe that a caring school climate and distributed leadership in schools are critical to success. They are important because they support the school's focus on learning. A principal is key in developing this focus, establishing high academic goals for all students in the school, and in holding students and teachers accountable for achieving those goals. The role of the leader is to articulate a need for improvement goals, help students and teachers make a personal connection to them, and to create structures that allow for on-going monitoring and support. The emphasis from this perspective is a shift towards the importance of learning. Schools must teach but we measure our success with what has been learned rather than by what has been taught.

There is an expectation for schools to produce academic results from national leadership, at the state level, and from local school districts and communities. Data is often the beginning point for determining the greatest achievement need for the school. The data collected may be from norm referenced test results and supported with other kinds of achievement data collected in the classroom. Meeting achievement expectations requires a collective focus in an organization. In an interview with Dennis Sparks (1999) Emily Calhoun makes the point that one learning goal is sufficient in a school if a staff is focusing on student performance. She refers to having just one goal when she says, "...it screens out some of the competing demands for time and attention and affects how resources will be invested" (p. 55).

It then becomes important to build the collective capacity of teachers in a school so that all teachers have the competencies they need to help students learn. Ultimately this collective focus must become a higher priority than the independent learning of individuals. Traditionally, schools have encouraged teachers to improve their skills by taking courses from colleges and universities based on their own personal interests. Rick DuFour (2001) contends that this, often random, individual development has not ensured that organizations can improve overall.

> It is time for a profession that has been fiercely protective of
> individual autonomy to acknowledge that individual development
> does not ensure organizational development. The random
> learnings of staff members may contribute little to a school's
> ability to solve its problems. (p. 16)

His solution for this dilemma is that a principal must become the

instructional leader of the school through his/her function as the staff

development leader. To do this, principals must ensure that a staff identifies

specific student achievement goals. The leader must then provide teachers with

the relevant data to determine the needs of individual students. From there a staff

must define the needed competencies to achieve learning goals and sustain the

commitment to achieving them until strategies and methods are an ingrained part

of the school culture. DuFour (2001) makes the point that these objectives are

achieved by school leaders through modeling a commitment to their own

professional development and becoming partners with teachers in learning.

Once the need for improvement is determined, data can also be used in

other ways. Dennis Sparks (2000) talked to Mike Schmoker about ways that data

can be used. Schmoker believes that data can guide a staff in selecting the

initiatives for staff development that will result in the greatest impact for teaching

and learning.

> Because all school districts have limited staff development
> resources, they should put the lion's share of those funds into staff
> development that is aimed as directly as possible at the schools' or
> teams' measurable achievement goals. Initiatives should be
> carefully selected to have the most powerful impact in the
> classroom. (p. 51)

According to Schmoker (as cited in Sparks, 2000) there are other ways

that data can support improved teaching and learning in schools. Examining

student work and collecting data at regular intervals can help teachers monitor and

refine the strategies that are being implemented. Keeping track of how often strategies are being used by both teachers and students can help a staff make decisions about the impact of initiatives on student learning. The focus on student outcomes is maintained. To make the shift from teaching to learning, it is critical that schools know exactly what they want students to know and be able to do and at what level of competency. When those skills and competencies are agreed upon, schools must then focus their attention on helping students reach levels of mastery and performance that will meet the standards. DuFour (2002) writes:

> By concentrating on teaching, the instructional leader of the past emphasized the inputs of the learning process. By concentrating on learning, today's school leaders shift both their own focus and that of the school community from inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results. (p. 15)

This shift in focus means that the leader becomes a facilitator to help teachers learn how to work in teams by establishing specific expectations and guidelines to manage the work that must be accomplished. The principal can also provide help, resources, recognition, encouragement and celebration. School leaders become a part of the energy and the force behind the changes that are taking place.

I believe that shifting the focus from teaching to learning has already started in our state. The Iowa Professional Development Model (2002) provides a framework that has student learning at the center. I would use this model as a starting place for making this shift occur in a school. As the model is introduced, the writers describe the basis of its design, "The fundamental tenet of the

professional development model is that student need will drive decision making, and student learning will form the basis on which professional development is judged" (p. 2). For maximum effectiveness, all teachers in a school must be involved in the initiative and the principal must be heavily engaged. It is clear to me that when increased student achievement is the goal; it is the collective efforts of educators that will make it happen.

In my current position, I have the responsibility of working with the Iowa Professional Development Model (2002) to guide professional learning in the district. Our elementary schools have been a part of the Every Child Reads (ECR) initiative for the past two years. ECR combines the use of research-based reading strategies with a model of professional development that is focused on action research. We frequently refer to the Iowa Professional Development Model to organize and guide our work. We begin by collecting and analyzing student data. From this data we determine our goals based on the needs of the students we teach. We also use research and data to choose the content and strategies that will most closely match our needs. In staff development, we include opportunities for teachers to review the research and theory behind the strategies that are proven effective for increased student achievement. Professional development is focused on demonstrations, collaboration, coaching, and practice in both the workshop and the workplace setting. On-going data collection is built-in to provide the needed feedback and opportunities to measure the effect on student performance. I would use the experiences I have had with Every Child Reads as a model for school improvement. This model will help me keep the focus in the school on student learning. My role will be to facilitate

student and teacher learning through the process of gathering student data, identifying a clear learning focus, and selecting appropriate strategies. I will support staff as we monitor implementation and check for student achievement gains. It will be up to me, as leader, to maintain the commitment long enough for substantial gains to emerge.

Conclusion

Through the reflections contained in this paper, a philosophy of education emerges. We pay attention to what we value and the things we pay attention to are most likely to take shape in our schools. I started with the story of my background and tried to give the reader a sense of where my values come from and how they have been developed over the years. I believe that children need to find safety, order, caring, tolerance, and structure in schools, now, more than ever before. As our culture grapples with the changes that are taking place in families and communities, schools will be called on to provide a climate that nurtures children in order to educate them. I believe that the role of a school administrator is becoming more and more critical to the future of our young people. We have many challenges ahead of us as we try to meet the needs of our changing future. Leadership cannot rest in the hands of any one person. All of us in education are needed to work together to make schools the best that they can be. Leadership must be distributed across the organization to take advantage of the multiple perspectives and many talents and skills of everyone in the organization. Finally, I believe that the work of the school must be focused on learning more than

teaching. When the focus of our efforts is on learning, then students and their work get all of our attention. Student needs will drive our decisions and student performance will guide our teaching. I am looking forward to the opportunity to lead the teachers and students of an elementary school. I am ready to take on the challenges that we face and believe that I can be a part of making a difference.

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