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A preferred vision for administering secondary schools : a reflective essay

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A preferred vision for administering secondary schools : a reflective essay

Abstract

What is Leadership? Is leadership the use of power and authority to make decisions? Is leadership a skill learned over time to facilitate the process of change? These are questions which must be pondered. 1 Leadership is a process which involves the skill of communicating with others through teamwork to carry out a vision. Leadership is an influenced relationship between the leader and follower in pursuit of a common goal. As the mission and goals are defined, the organization has the opportunity to become efficient and effective. The leader-follower relationship is based on influence, change, mutual purpose, and commitment.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

**The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,
and Postsecondary Education
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In Partial Fulfillment

**of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Education**

by

Cora J. Turner

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What is Leadership? Is leadership the use of power and authority to make decisions? Is leadership a skill learned over time to facilitate the process of change? These are questions which must be pondered.

Leadership is a process which involves the skill of communicating with others through teamwork to carry out a vision. Leadership is an influenced relationship between the leader and follower in pursuit of a common goal. As the mission and goals are defined, the organization has the opportunity to become efficient and effective. The leader-follower relationship is based on influence, change, mutual purpose, and commitment.

Leadership has several functions which include organizing, team building, reporting, and communicating. Leaders with a vision must be committed and willing to step back and look at themselves in order to determine the process necessary to assist those involved in seeing long-term accomplishments.

Bolman and Deal (1995), indicate "heart, hope, and faith, rooted in soul and spirit, are necessary for today's professionals to become tomorrow's leaders" (p.10). A person of defined character, high ethical standards, strong personal commitment, solid professional practices, and demonstrated competent performance will be seen as the leader in today's society.

My dream for the future of leadership takes place on a continuum, by reaching one goal at a time and moving on to new ideas and thoughts about how students learn. Building trust and credibility in the school is important in reaching these goals. A leader realizes the job can not be accomplished alone. Educational leaders work with staff, students, parents, and community members daily to develop new ideas and carry out the goals of the school.

My approach promotes active student participation using life skills and practices to show that all students can learn. This approach places emphasis on the development of students' learning using communication skills, critical thinking, and enhancement of self-esteem in a well designed flexible curriculum that meets individual needs. Cooperation among parents, students, and teachers is equally important to enhance the effectiveness of learning.

School districts seek to hire educational leaders who are positive role models working to improve the educational process. Educational leaders can be superintendents, principals, teachers, school board members, parents, and students. Through a review of the literature, self reflection, and practical experiences, this paper will serve as a guide to professional practice in educational leadership.

Personal Educational Philosophy

At an early age education became a cornerstone in my life. High educational expectations have always been a part of my family's beliefs and values. I was born in the South, and until fifth grade I attended an elementary school in Mississippi. This was an all Black school with very high expectations. People of color were not allowed to attend school with Whites during the early sixties because of the violence in the South and differential treatment of Blacks. After the death of my father, my mother decided to leave the south and move to Iowa.

The educational structure in the South and North were totally opposite. While the race issue still existed, the educational system in Iowa was easier to access and offered more opportunities for Blacks to complete their education. In 1974, I graduated from Waterloo East High School and

enrolled in Wartburg College where I completed a degree in social work in 1978. My educational background prepared me to secure positions working with other personnel in the helping profession.

My first job was working for a job training program helping youth find summer jobs. I worked there for three years and was offered a position with Deere and Company. At John Deere I worked in production control as a trainer for a new inventory reduction program. I was employed with this company for four years. Next, I worked fourteen years for the City of Waterloo as Assistant Human Resources Director.

In 1994, I was offered a position with the Waterloo Schools in alternative education to develop and coordinate a program which allowed at-risk students to remain enrolled in school. I accepted the position with trepidation because of my limited background in the education field. However, these feelings were easily overcome as I relied on my past work experience and commitment to succeed. As time passed I became involved with teaching social skills in group sessions that discussed respect for others, values, self esteem, responsibility and other personal learning tools. I was no longer afraid because I realized I had worked in various leadership and teaching roles over the past sixteen years and possessed the necessary skills to succeed.

I view myself as a team player who communicates and listens to others, accepts new ideas, and sets high goals. I was taught that in order to succeed in life, you must take responsibility for your own actions. Education has always influenced my life.

Working in the educational environment has been a rewarding challenge. I believe education is important and necessary for all people to receive rewards and achieve their expectations in life. Education can make a

difference to the community in which you live, the values you possess, and your daily structure of life. I believe education brings about opportunities to help others and promote prosperity.

To maintain a successful academic setting, high expectations, accountability, determination, and creative teaching are necessary. Positive social skills must be reviewed often with students to foster respect for others. School leaders and other educational professionals must continuously seek out new programs to keep the students' interest and improve academic performance.

I picture myself as a leader. As a young person, I dreamed of a job where I had the opportunity to share my views and work with others. Over the past years through community involvement I have served in leadership roles on several boards and commissions. My community involvement has assisted me in understanding the makeup of our community and the ties between the community, parents, students, and the school.

Leadership Qualities

Several qualities exist in educational leaders who make a difference in the lives of students, parents, and other professional adults. To be effective one should be: a good listener; credible; a problem solver; able to show concern for others; prepared with the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the profession; flexible and able to adapt to change; a team player; a good communicator and model; able to remember details; and concerned about personal appearance (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993).

Effective educational leaders often find resources to enhance the instructional environment. They do not need incentives to function as an educational leader. An effective educational leader is knowledgeable about

educational pedagogy. They utilize their personalities, visions, commitment, and interpersonal skills to exercise effective leadership strategies.

A leader must have a strong moral, ethical, and professional character to create a positive learning atmosphere where students can achieve to their full potential and have a chance for equal opportunities in the community. To have a good school environment, a school leader must assist in motivating the staff to teach at a level where negative feelings are removed, and the opportunity for quality education and learning exist. Educational leadership should focus on providing measurable objectives to assist students and teachers in achieving higher academic levels. Building a learning community is the most important and demanding responsibility of a school leader (Speck, 1999).

Modeling as an educational leader can serve to motivate students and staff. Staff must see their leader taking a stand, being involved, and having a vision of where the school is headed. Educational leaders who are visible, remain involved with their staff, model their beliefs, and organize resources to accomplish the building and district goals. They provide positive feedback that promotes professional growth. Leadership involves building character and the ability to respond to fundamental goals that move the organization forward. It is the role of a leader to model values and standards to motivate others to follow and become involved (Conley, 1996). Modeling the way allows needed information to be passed on through open communication.

Leadership involves taking time to have contact with others. The development of a personal approach shows care and concern for what happens in the lives of others. The time to praise and offer compliments becomes important in motivating others and recognizing their successes. You learn information, facts, and reasons, and show commitment in finding

solutions when you demonstrate a commitment to work with others.

Leadership involves circulating among people to develop trust. Trust involves developing a shared vision, strong alliances, and partnerships in decision making.

Establishing credibility as a leader is also important in the process of working with others in an organization. Credibility is how leaders earn trust and confidence from their constituents. Credibility is essential for those who share the responsibility of getting things done in an organization through work efforts, trusting relationships, shared values, concern, and commitment. It is a characteristic that people demand of their leaders. Several practices of discipline have been discussed in the process of establishing credibility in an organization. Values, credo, capabilities, and competency provide the leader with the foundation to become confident in his/her abilities to assist others. Credibility is important to the leader and to those who are willing to follow (Kouzes & Posner, 1993).

The educational leader must understand the purpose of the school and work to develop a strong vision. David Conley, (as cited in Lashway, 1997), notes that vision exists when people in an organization share an agreement on the school's values, beliefs, purposes, and goals that guide their behavior. A clear vision is important because a school with a clear vision has a standard by which teachers can gauge their own efforts.

In the role of visionary, a leader projects a detailed vision of what the organization is to become, a vision of a better educational institution. A leader sees the vision in terms of results. A leader works with others in the school allowing open communication and ownership in the development of a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). The shared vision is internalized by all, and each

person is allowed to develop his/her own visions. Educational leaders focus on the future rather than the present. An effective educational leader has a dream or vision which is the force that invents the future.

Vision matters because it creates an understanding between the real and the ideal, pushing people to work together. "A vision that reflects the needs and purposes of the surrounding community not only improves education, it rebuilds the relationship between the school and its public" (Mathews as cited in Lashway, 1997, p. 1).

Other important qualities in leadership involve sharing job responsibilities, demonstrating a high tolerance for differences, maintaining a sense of humor, and becoming a life-long learner. Being a leader requires a person to continuously seek professional development opportunities. New methods and materials are being developed daily, and it is important to be a life-long learner. Leadership involves keeping teachers informed about educational strategies and developments in the field of effective teaching.

Effective educational leaders enable others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). They understand that as leaders they do not achieve success by themselves. They speak the language of "We". They are effective because they enlist the support and assistance of all those that must make the project, instruction, or change work. They understand and employ a sense of teamwork in all they do. An effective leader understands that no person can do the job alone. They encourage from the heart and lead from the soul (Bolman & Deal, 1995). Furthermore, being an effective leader requires knowledge about responsibility, time management, personality characteristics, and leadership style.

Leadership Roles

The literature on leadership suggests that the role of a school leader involves many facets such as being a resource provider, maintaining a visible presence, and being an effective communicator. Educational leaders assume a different role each time they modify their behavior to achieve a desired goal. Each role has its own appropriate behavior, speech, thought and feelings. The leaders ability to assume different roles while maintaining integrity creates a foundation for developing and maintaining an impression of a committed leader (Dunklee, 1998). Other roles include: instructional leader, disciplinarian, human relations facilitator, evaluator, and official representative.

As an instructional leader, the role is usually based on knowledge of educational literature and pedagogy (Schneider & Gorton, 1991). The leader's traditional role is to improve instruction, often through classroom observation. He/she is to be knowledgeable about classroom management and strategies to help teachers improve their classroom instruction. Leaders are expected to be administrators of instructional time, coordinators of curriculum, and monitors of student progress. Educational leaders and teachers know that all students can learn. The key is to find strategies to ensure that all do learn.

School improvement efforts are accomplished by gathering ideas from staff to develop new programs and looking at other resources to find ways to bring new ideas into the school. Instructional leadership is sharing research, seeking funds for classroom projects, monitoring student progress, and sharing professional development ideas on the new trends in education (Marshall, 1993). Leaders must understand their own learning style to assist others in daily encounters. The way one perceives reality and reacts, can form a pattern of communication. In leadership this pattern dominates the

way new ideas are integrated, decisions are made, and information is shared with others. Instructional leaders must influence others to use new and appropriate instructional practices based on their own knowledge so all students have the opportunity to learn (Whitaker, 1997).

As disciplinarian the leader is expected to manage chronic behavior problems, resolve conflict, and monitor students as needed. A school's culture is to promote harmony and understanding among staff, students, and the community. The leader is to be knowledgeable about positive approaches to improving student conduct (Schneider & Gorton, 1991). The leader's role is to remain involved and promote ways to empower students to become problem solvers, to use their minds well, and to model positive behavior throughout the school day.

Next, as a facilitator of human relations, leaders are expected to meet the needs of staff and to develop cooperative and harmonious relationships among all. Through meeting the needs of employees and developing harmonious relationships, leaders can achieve the productivity decided by the organization. Through good human relations, leaders promote high staff morale and a humane school environment. Leadership involves allowing and learning from mistakes and accepting defeat. Human personalities, in the process of leading, can be a stumbling block. People trust leaders if they know mistakes are forgiven. Building respect and trust in leadership allows others to see a person as being capable of making decisions, committed and being respectful of others.

As an evaluator, the educational leader emphasizes school accountability. The main responsibilities include staff and program evaluation but may also center on student performance. The role of the evaluator may involve clarification of the evaluation process, development of a management

plan, establishment of evaluation criteria, and selection of a method for evaluation. School leaders not only have to draw conclusions and develop recommendations, they also need to report findings and implement those recommendations. Leaders view the evaluation process as continual information gathering, a system of accountability, a measure that promotes student achievement, a process that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of staff, and a process that focuses on improvement of instruction and student achievement. The evaluation process promotes self-discovery and self-reflection toward professional growth. Feedback from the leader should encourage the teacher to become actively involved in effective teaching methods.

Another role of an educational leader is being visible as an official school representative. Many principals get caught up in the day-to-day operations of the school and fail to realize that a major part of school business involves working with the students, parents, and the community.

To create a visible presence, school leaders must model behaviors consistent with the school's vision, live and uphold their beliefs in education, organize resources to accomplish building goals, make working with the staff a priority, and help all people connected to the school do what is best in meeting the needs of students (Whitaker, 1997). Kowalski and Reitzug (1993) pointed out communities expect school leaders to maintain a high level of visibility and to attend community functions. Parents, community members and school leaders are important elements in a successful school.

All of the above roles must be integrated to enable an individual to become an effective educational leader. The instructional program and school effectiveness are major components that an instructional leader must continue to examine in determining leader success.

As a school leader, I believe these roles are important in the process of working with teachers, students, parents, and the community in carrying out the vision, making decisions, and building trust. A school leader must realize the roles may change daily, and we must be flexible and understand our own values and purpose in leading. As leaders we are in the business of nurturing, developing, and producing student success. Also, we must be patient and understand that each staff person or student is different and these roles must be looked upon as a guide in the process of working with others.

Organizational Dynamics

What is viewed as a properly structured organization in society is of extreme importance in leadership. Leadership is concerned with how decisions are made in the organization, and it values the opinions of others. An effective leader must examine the issues within the organization and make a clear personal commitment to serve as a guide for professional practice.

In organizations, various leadership strategies exist to gain a better understanding of the relationships between the organizational structure and the behaviors of those who work in the school. Two main theories, bureaucratic and human resource theory, exist in schools. The traditional bureaucratic approach emphasizes firm hierarchical control, close supervision of staff, top down communication, written rules and policies, and a clear plan or road map for staff to follow (Owens, 1998). This leadership strategy disregards the feelings of others and often the school is run like a factory.

I embrace the leadership style that follows the human resource development approach. This approach emphasizes the concept of thinking about people, their commitments, abilities, and how they relate to the goals of the organization. This approach allows the school to demonstrate care about the quality of education in the building and the cohesiveness among

the staff. The culture and climate in a school that follows this approach allows for personal identification with attainable goals. This collegiate approach provides team building, good communication, and a shared vision (Owens, 1998). In essence, an effective leader arranges things so that the interests of the organization and the employee's self-interest coincide as closely as possible.

To be successful in educational leadership you must be able to influence others to follow. Leadership power is the potential to influence the behavior of others. Owens (1998) notes this power comes from two sources, the status of the leadership position and the personal qualities the leader possesses.

Hersey (1984) identified four sources of power in leadership: coercive power, connection power, legitimate power and reward power. Coercive power refers to the control of punishments such as reprimands, suspensions, and dismissals. Connection power refers to the power the leader has because of some special relationship with an influential or important person inside the organization. Legitimate power stems from the position the leader holds and the compliance followers believe is due to a person in such a position. Reward power refers to the power the leader exercises by virtue of being in control of rewards such as, promotions and special recognition (Lynch & Vineyard, 1991).

The use of power in educational institutions focuses on the ability of the leader to be goal-directed with a sense of purpose to produce results. The educational leader's self-esteem, self-confidence, reputation, personal resources, skills, abilities, and knowledge establish a leader's power or ability

to make things happen (Lynch & Vineyard, 1991). The true focus of the leader is to influence others to follow, creating a better organization with enhanced services to students.

Motivation and Staff Relations

Motivation of others is a common skill of leadership. School leaders study motivation in theory to discover the appropriate way to reward, supervise, and support staff. There are three common motivators in the aspects of life, home, family, and work. They are affiliation, achievement, and power. Affiliation is most concerned with team building, relationships, and a desire to keep people contented. Power is most concerned with the influences and challenges between people in charge. Achievement is most concerned with measurable and attainable goals for success (Lynch & Vineyard, 1991). In the workplace a key to understanding and working with others is necessary. Understanding motivation and being able to use it positively, to stimulate, supervise, and empower others is a necessary skill of an effective school leader.

As a leader, I must communicate with staff to see what inspires them to become involved. I must be willing to try their ideas, and offer praise for their accomplishments. I must recognize their efforts and show that as a leader I care about their work. I must make sure the jobs taken on by each person gives them a sense of achieving something of value and is challenging work. I must be willing to take a risk and lead others toward success.

I do not believe you can be an effective leader without positive staff relations. When examining administrator and staff relations, it is important to look at the style of the principal and his/her interaction with staff. Developing and maintaining high staff satisfaction and morale are important in the overall

effectiveness of an administrator and the learning environment. Staff satisfaction and high morale are necessary for achieving the educational objectives and goals of the school.

It is important for all leaders to know their weaknesses and strengths, and it is also helpful if leaders understand not only their own needs but the needs of others. Maslow (1954, as cited in Lynch & Vineyard, 1991) categorized human needs into five groups: physiological needs, safety needs, caring and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. These needs have a major impact on motivation and the insights to employee needs (Owens, 1998).

School leaders must assess both the strength and the level of satisfaction of these needs in themselves and others in order to develop strategies and interventions to promote a productive learning environment and affirmative staff relations.

As a leader, I would assess these needs by being available and visible for staff to approach. Next, I would be a good listener and offer solutions when appropriate. I would develop professional relationships with the staff and students to show that I care. I would seek advice from others to show I need support also. I would develop a line of confidentiality so staff would feel comfortable in sharing. Finally by understanding these needs allows a leader to recognize and empower others in finding solutions.

School Culture and Climate

School environment is shaped by the norms and beliefs upheld by teachers, students, parents and the community. The norms influence the actions of people in the school. School leaders must recognize the students'

and teachers' achievements, wants, and limitations to introduce change. Leaders bring about a shared sense of what is important and a shared commitment to help students learn (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Every school leader should be knowledgeable about Bolman and Deal's (1991) theory on reframing organizations. They divide organizations into four frames: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. These give insight into how and why a school and staff are the way they are and how the school and staff work. The four frames can be discussed in the context of how they affect staff and school climate.

Every employee brings values, beliefs, needs, and wants to the workplace, and this framework establishes the culture and climate of a school. Culture refers to the behavioral norms, assumptions, and beliefs of an organization, whereas climate refers to perceptions of persons in the organization that reflects those norms, assumptions and beliefs (Owens, 1998). Culture develops over a period of time and consists of what people believe about what works and what does not. The leader is key in setting the climate and culture of the building (Bolman & Deal, 1991). "In crafting school culture, school leaders are models, potters, poets, actors, and healers. They are visionaries and dreamers" (Peterson & Deal, 1998,p.30). The culture and climate of a building measure school effectiveness.

In addition, different models and frames can shape a school learning community. The structural frame emphasizes the importance of formal roles and relationships. This is commonly found in organizational charts.

The human resource frame, on the other hand, indicates that organizations are inhabited by individuals who have needs, feelings, and prejudices. The important aspect is to find an organizational form that allows people to get the job done while feeling good about what they are doing.

The political frame looks at organizations as arenas in which different interest groups compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is everywhere as individuals have different needs, perspectives, and lifestyles. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are all a part of every day organizational life. A good leader can develop solutions through the use of personal strengths and skills (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

The symbolic frame draws on social and cultural anthropology. It abandons the assumptions of rationality that appear in the other frames. The symbolic frame treats organizations as tribes, theaters, or carnivals. Organizations are cultures with their own rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths. Administrators who are successful examine the depth and complexity of organizational life as much as an astronomer uses different lenses to explore the heavens (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

Leaders frame and reframe until they understand the situation at hand. A successful leader of people is not only well-grounded in administrative theory but also knowledgeable in psychology, sociology, politics, and educational and counseling theories. Leaders know how and when to make a move with all people and use leadership to influence the behavior of another individual or group. They are effective with others because they have a clear vision, life long goals, and high expectations.

Leaders establish a school climate that supports the progress toward these goals and expectations. They continually monitor progress. Most of all they are supportive and look for positive features among their staff. They directly and sincerely praise their workers. Good leaders are committed to developing a supportive network and workplace among their staff (Owens, 1998).

I believe before you can develop any of these frames you must understand the changing nature of the work force, and that uncertain elements in environments can change the structure of an organization. Staff can enter the workplace with different agendas, they could be personal, political or different just because of a lack of understanding or communication. These frames allow a leader to continually look at the organization, seek solutions to meet varied needs, and deliver services essential to educating children.

A school leader can choose to use either of these frames at the appropriate time depending on the situation and the persons involved. A leader must understand what is going on in the organization and what can be done about it. The structural frame assists in establishing relationships in the organization and focuses on getting the job done. The human resource frame focuses on improving the relationships in the organization and allowing the interests and ideas of staff to be used in reaching a solution. The political frame looks for the power base and available resources in reaching a solution. The symbolic frame is not concerned with what happens but what it means in the organization. A leader must understand how to integrate and use all four of these frames, and develop a leadership strategy to assist the organization in reaching their mission and goals.

Final Reflections

In the book, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Covey (1989) notes that a leader must begin with understanding self to become effective in leading others. A system of empowered decision making must be developed to provide both teachers and students the opportunity to be involved and build trust, self esteem, and a high level of productivity. A leader must develop his/her own inner self in order to lead others. Leaders need to be aware that they have opinions that can interfere with reaching a

common goal. A leader must be willing to compromise for the good of finding a workable solution and be willing to lead the efforts in the change process.

A leader can have all the qualities, characteristics, skills, and knowledge of leadership but lack the ability to complete the task of being an effective school leader. School leaders must be both managers and leaders. As managers they must ensure that fiscal and human resources are used effectively in accomplishing organizational goals. As leaders they must display the vision and skills necessary to create and maintain a suitable teaching and learning environment, to develop goals, and inspire others to achieve and accomplish the job.

School leaders must be prepared to make constant changes which can establish new opportunities in a learning environment. They must also have a strong sense of purpose, be able to develop and share their vision, and be willing to put their vision into practice.

Leadership requires each person to be a continuous learner. Ignoring the need to learn and bring about change creates an environment of misinformation, mistrust, and the perception that the school does not care. People remember the kind of things that can cause harm for a long time, so in our role as a school leader we must respond to staff, student, parent, and community inquiries in the best interest of students. The role of being a school leader is not an easy one and a job that can not be done alone. Schools must become a place where people come to learn, grow, change, discover, and have their needs met. Our school's theme must be developed around who we are and what we want our school's to be.

Leadership is a relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow. Leadership involves being able to challenge,

inspire, enable, model, and encourage others in the process. Leading is having a sense of direction, being capable, competent, and having time to remain involved. Leadership involves being open, honest, and willing to take a risk in the process of change. Leaders keep the vision alive, continually conducting personal audits of what must occur in the organization. Leadership begins in the heart, demonstrated through communication and quality of life. A person's values, hopes, dreams, dedication, vision, honesty, abilities, and skills establish a pattern of trust and loyalty among others. To lead means to follow, to follow one must listen, to hear one must believe in themselves, to believe means to gain knowledge, and knowledge allows a person to feel confident in working with others (Phillips, 1992).

Leadership involves guiding people on a journey to a new personal, organizational, or social future (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). In leadership today, building a community of learners is the most important and demanding responsibility of a school leader. A leader must set goals and strive for results. A strong drive and determination to succeed must be visible so others will want to remain involved. Persistence is seen in today's leaders with new ideas and open communication, self confidence, initiative, a sense of humor, and high expectations. A quality leader knows where his/her ethical limits exist and can balance knowledge with professional values.

Through course work, reflection, classroom activities and my current position I feel the following behaviors and skills are important as a school principal. First, have a clear vision and be able to model what I believe. If I want others to work with me I must be able to translate the school vision into goals with high expectations for teachers, students, community and self. In

the process for leading I must continuously monitor for progress, and be willing to implement change strategies and intervene in a supportive and corrective way.

I must be committed to the school and demonstrate an understanding of the school culture and the perceptions of what will occur. I must be willing to spend the energy and time to collect data and involve others in finding solutions. I must communicate with the staff, remain visible and have a knowledge base of available resources. I must be willing to take a risk and be aware of my biases, strengths and weaknesses. I must know where my ethical limits exist and be able to balance that knowledge with my professional values. Leadership involves being assertive, open to new ideas, working with others, maintaining a sense of humor, taking risks, making decisions and taking a practical common sense stance toward life.

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