

1995

A preferred vision for administering secondary schools: A reflective essay

Michael S. Maze
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1995 Michael S. Maze

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



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Maze, Michael S., "A preferred vision for administering secondary schools: A reflective essay" (1995). *Graduate Research Papers*. 2884.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2884>

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.

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.

A preferred vision for administering secondary schools: A reflective essay

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to articulate the fundamental values and beliefs which will lend guidance as I prepare to enter the field of administration. It is important that I establish myself as a professional educator, whose primary allegiance is to properly educate students and develop their minds so they may reason and think abstractly. I have been often asked why would a young man like myself want to teach in the public school system, where so many children are disobedient? My only rationale is that I love children and what other way is there to touch so many lives in such a positive way. Upon completion of high school, I knew that I wanted to be an educator, but pressure from my parents to be an accountant superseded my decision. I chose and completed a major in business administration with a minor in economics and accounting, but I was not happy! I knew I wanted to be an educator and go on to be a principal. I returned to college and completed a post-baccalaureate certification program in education. Upon entering the masters program here at the University of Northern Iowa, I knew that the job of a principal was time consuming and demanding, but what I did not know was that it is the most difficult job in education. I await the challenge of becoming a principal to continue the support of promoting education and advancing civilization through educating America's youth.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR ADMINISTERING SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Department of Educational Administration
and Counseling
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

by
Michael S. Maze
July 1995

The purpose of this paper is to articulate the fundamental values and beliefs which will lend guidance as I prepare to enter the field of administration. It is important that I establish myself as a professional educator, whose primary allegiance is to properly educate students and develop their minds so they may reason and think abstractly. I have been often asked why would a young man like myself want to teach in the public school system, where so many children are disobedient? My only rationale is that I love children and what other way is there to touch so many lives in such a positive way. Upon completion of high school, I knew that I wanted to be an educator, but pressure from my parents to be an accountant superseded my decision. I chose and completed a major in business administration with a minor in economics and accounting, but I was not happy! I knew I wanted to be an educator and go on to be a principal. I returned to college and completed a post-baccalaureate certification program in education. Upon entering the masters program here at the University of Northern Iowa, I knew that the job of a principal was time consuming and demanding, but what I did not know was

that it is the most difficult job in education. I await the challenge of becoming a principal to continue the support of promoting education and advancing civilization through educating America's youth.

During the course of the program, the notion of having a vision repeatedly arose. I know for certain now that having a vision lends precedents to guidance. Being able to lead and manage students, faculty, and a staff are characteristics an administrator must possess. I found this to be true. According to Snyder (1988), as managers, school administrators are expected to procure, organize, and coordinate both physical and human resources so that the goals of the organization can be attained effectively. Principals are perceived as leaders; therefore, there is no room for digression. In addition, I have come to witness the importance of being diversified in character when dealing with parents, students, and staff. The job of a principal demands that an individual function in many different roles in order to successfully facilitate the education process. Thus, expectations of principals are high. Consequently, these expectations are from parents, students, and teachers. According to W. I. Banks,

(personal communication, May 14, 1995)," students expect principals to create and maintain a safe and orderly environment, enhance students' self-esteem, sense of responsibility, and ability to get along with others; and be highly visible". In addition, teachers' expectations of principals are numerous but teachers mainly expect support from their principal when it comes to discipline. As noted by Blumberg and Greenfield (1991), "teachers often demand unwavering principal support in matters of discipline" (p. 138). Lastly, parents have expectations of principals that corresponds with those of students. According to Roe and Drake (1980),

"Parents expected principals to initiate improvements in teaching techniques and methods, make certain that curricula fit the needs of students, direct teachers to motivate students to learn at their optimal levels, direct teachers to coordinate and articulate the subject matter taught on each grade level and afford teachers the opportunity to individualize programs" (p. 132).

I have come to realize that these expectation are attainable and that my ultimate purpose here on Earth is to educate.

Mission Statement

My mission as an administrator will be to insure that every student, everyday receives the maximum

educational opportunities available. This can be accomplished by being an effective leader and school manager. Although leading a school instructionally is important, I feel that being an effective school manager is by far the most difficult and time consuming of the two. According to R. H. Decker, (personal communication, February 7, 1995), "if you can not manage a school, where you diminish the fighting, love making in the hallways, and food fights in the cafeteria, you will be perceived as an ineffective administrator". I certainly believe this to be true, because as noted by Gorton and Schneider (1991), "school administrators, (specifically principals) who remain in their offices, were characterized as unfriendly, lazy, and uninterested" (p. 94). Thus, this type of perception of a school administrator can ultimately lead to his/her dismissal as a building principal. I strongly believe that principals should lead and manage schools by getting out of their offices more and being visible to the students and staff. It is very important that the principal lead by example; his/her attitude will set the tone of the academic atmosphere within the school. In addition, principals

have to be an instructional leader to insure that education is occurring in the building and that students are learning. As cited by Smith and Andrews (1989), "an administrator is usually involved in a variety of situations that call for leadership. Probably the most important area for which an administrator has leadership responsibilities is the instructional program" (p. 67). Although attempting to help students is my primary reason why I have opted to pursue an administrative role in education, I feel that my focus should start with teachers, since they are the individuals who directly influence students on a daily basis.

Parental Involvement

I believe that education begins in the home and filters over into the classroom; therefore, it is important to develop some type of collaboration with parents in the education process. As cited by Henderson (1981), "the evidence is now beyond dispute: parental involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools" (p. 45). Consequently, many parents can not be as involved as

they would like to be; therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to see that students are properly educated. As a result, I contend that teachers are the most important aspect of the education process, and their success depends solely on the principal's effectiveness to be a leader.

Philosophy

It is my professional philosophy that in order for students to succeed, a caring and nurturing environment must be provided for each and every student. Principals should furnish this type of environment by employing teachers who are creative, empathetic, skilled and knowledgeable of content. Students should not be taught by teachers who are simply teaching to collect a pay check. Students recognize the teacher's non-chalant attitude, which provide an injustice to the education profession. It is evident that a student will lose interest rather quickly if a teacher is not skilled in the art and craft of teaching. Therefore, it is essential that principals seek teachers with a caring demeanor, who in addition are energetic and vivacious.

Values

I strongly believe that all educators are to be valued for their effort to educate. The process of educating is mentally, physically and emotionally exhausting. Therefore, it is the ultimate responsibility of the principal to make his/her faculty as comfortable as possible. I believe principals can achieve this goal by frequenting classes for a brief moment on a periodic basis. This would deter misbehavior among students and assure that teachers are doing their jobs. Students would acknowledge the principals presence and behave accordingly, and teachers would appreciate these visits. Teachers would then perceive the principal as being supportive and caring. According to Gorton and Schneider (1991), "circulating frequently connoted to students that the administrator knows what is going on in the school and is interested in what students are doing" (p. 94). In addition, the principal should make certain that teachers have all the needed resources that are needed to effectively educate students. Next, the principal should make certain that facilities are in the best working condition. For example, chalk boards should be

washed and cleaned; air conditioners and heaters should be in operable condition; ceilings nor floors should pose a health hazards to the students or the teacher. As cited by Niece (1988), "the physical environment in which we work can and does influence what we do and how we feel" (p. 80). For example, facilities can affect our flexibility in teaching, our communication pattern, the amount of noise and extent of discipline problems in the school, and many other facets of the total educational enterprise. Thus, a well-maintained, bright, sparkling, flexible physical facility suggests a school that people care for. These type of schools often times lifts the spirits of individuals who occupy them. Moreover, there are numerous things a principal could and should do to make his\her staff feel valued and worthy of their efforts.

Cooperation and Team Work

It is my professional belief that teachers and administrators both seek to work toward the common grounds of advancing a literate society by educating students; therefore, I think administrators and teachers should cooperate with one another to achieve their goals. As noted by Stedman (1987), "the climate

of effective schools are warm and accepting" (p. 216). These schools are happy places where administrators do not rigidly impose rules on teachers and students. In addition, principals need to delegate more authority to teachers in an effort to provide them with more ownership in the education process. Involving teachers in decision making is advantageous to administrators. Johnston and Germinario (1985) stated, "the most effective teacher-administrator relationship, in terms of both morale and productivity, is a participatory one" (p. 91). I believe teachers should be able to assist in determining what textbooks will be purchased for their class or grade level. Also, teachers should have an active voice in how allocated funds should be spent with regards to purchasing instructional material and other educational aids. This type of cooperation would boost the morale of teachers and assist the principal with the day-to-day operation of the school. Teachers who participate in school administration manifest: a higher morale than teachers who do not participate, more positive attitude toward their principal, their colleagues, and their pupils and higher regard for themselves and for the teaching

profession. According to Schneider (1984), "the job satisfaction of teachers relates to the perceived level of influence in decision making and to the extent to which teachers were participating in school decision making at the level they desired" (p. 27). In addition, it is also my belief that once principals and teachers develop a professional working relationship with one another, students will benefit tremendously, because both the principal and teachers are working toward a common goal, the education of students.

Community Involvement

My philosophy of school and community involvement is that schools should incorporate community support in its daily functions. According to Connors (1988) who states, "a school is not an independent or isolated entity; it operates in a social context, an important element of which is the local community" (p. 399). It is evident that schools draw their students from the community and depends on the community for much of its financial and social support. Every administrator should develop a good understanding of maintaining an effective school-community relation. Also, not only should the principal perform in the capacity of a

public relations agent, it is imperative to get teachers involved in some type of public relations duties as well. Principals should make certain that teachers are contacting and collaborating with parents and community members rather than simply informing the community of what is occurring at school. There should be an established two way communication cycle, that will inform the community of the current and future events taking place. This communication cycle should address all the issues the school is facing, whether they are good or bad. I believe this to be true because as cited by Bagin and Wherry (1982), a school should communicate to the home both favorable news and information about general problems. The public knows the school system is not perfect and is reassured to know that we are aware of our shortcomings as well. Unfortunately, for some communities, information by word of mouth and hearsay is the only means of communication. I believe that principals need to make certain that each and every teacher exercises some type of public relations techniques, whether it be by making telephone calls, sending out correspondences, E-mailing, or simply making appearances in the

community. In addition, I feel that community input should be valued. As noted by Krasnow (1990), "when parents and teachers work on school improvement tasks together, there is pleasure in discovering the power of their own voices to create change beyond the classroom and pride in contributing to goals that are shared by the community" (p. 11). Building collaborations to promote the development of students both academically and socially are of great importance. Students perform better academically when there are mentors, volunteers and resources from the community to assist them. This is true because as cited by Zacchei and Mirman (1986), "being mindful of increasing need and decreasing resources, many schools have reached out to the businesses and agencies in their communities to supplement and enrich their offerings" (p. 133). I think involving the community by implementing a mentoring program is essential to a high school and the community in which it serves. Consequently, there have been arguments that question whether or not mentoring programs are effective but researchers have proven that mentoring has certainly had a positive effect on the lives of both the mentor and mentee. Weinberger (1992)

states, "the benefit of mentoring are reciprocal" (p. 4). Mentors benefit from the satisfaction of having a positive impact on a youngster's life; students benefit by being successful in school and remaining in school. As a result, students value the friendships and the help provided by mentors and they look forward to utilizing these individuals on a daily or weekly basis. Also, community involvement is important because it provides additional support to the faculty and staff that would ordinarily not be rendered.

Management

I undoubtedly believe that a principal's greatest task will be managing a school to assure the safety and well-being of each and every student. It is important that principals make certain that all students are educated in an environment that is conducive to learning. This environment should be free of "corrupt" teachers, bullies, fights, and gangs. Students can not function at their expected capacity, if they are being harassed or criticized by their peers. It is evident that the peers of students are their worst enemy. Principals and teachers must be able to maintain total

management of their school in order to foster the learning environment that it must exhibit.

Instructional Leadership

It is my belief that the curriculum of a school is the driving force behind the success of that school; It is important for principals to be instructional leaders. Greenfield (1987) defined the term instructional leadership as "actions undertaken with the intention of developing a productive and satisfying working environment for teachers and desirable learning conditions and outcomes for children" (p. 60). Although there may be a desire by principals to spend a great deal of time being an instructional leader, they can not, because the managerial aspect of schools requires more time and attention from administrators. As noted by Cuban (1986), "the job description for principals invariably lean heavily upon managerial duties that carry out the intentions of the school board and superintendent" (p. 109). Thus, the notion of being an instructional leader does appear to be somewhat unattainable, but with determination, perseverance, and support from the staff, I honestly

feel that the task of being an effective instructional leader can be attained.

I feel principals can certainly be effective instructional leaders. One important personal quality needed for effective instructional leadership appears to be the extent to which an administrator perceives accurately the existence of an instructional problem or area in need of improvement. This is indeed important, because principal's must be able to recognize problems and weaknesses in curriculum and be willing to deal with them accordingly. One way to this may be attained is by having a vision. As noted by Peterson (1989), "the degree to which principals have a clear and strongly held set of long-range goals (vision) of their schools increase the clarity of their problem findings in curriculum" (p. 88). Unfortunately, many principals would like to ignore instructional problems in their school, but it is not fair to the students who depend on their principals to make sure that they are receiving the best and most competent education. This can be attained by competent and consistent evaluation of teachers and remediation efforts provided by the principal.

I believe that principals may also reach the goal of being an effective instructional leader if he/she possesses a clearly stated vision. As noted by Manasse (1984) "a vision can be developed through a program of continuing professional improvement, travel and consultation with various leaders in education" (p. 44). Having a vision is of great importance, because many teachers have become very complacent and are no longer motivated in their current position. It is important that the principal clearly identifies their expectations to all the staff through their vision of where they think the instructional program of the school should be headed. I believe that if the principal can get the staff to buy into his/her vision, the task of being an instructional leader will run rather smoothly. One way this can be attained is by setting up an instructional leadership team that consist of teachers that share the same vision as the principal. As a result, it is essential to state a vision that keeps teachers aspiring to improve their instruction and academic development of the students.

In addition, it is important for administrators to be aware of the different curricular programs. Having

this type of knowledge will certainly signal to teachers that the administrator can offer some type of expertise advise or opinion regarding instruction. Teachers often times resent administrators who are not familiar with the different curricular programs. As noted by Hallinger and Murphy (1985):

"knowledge about the different aspects of the instructional and curricular programs, and skills introducing a change in that program, as with the people who staff it, are key elements in the expertise that administrators need if they intend to exercise effective instructional leadership" (p. 55).

Lastly, one of the most important aspects of being an instructional leader is the need to take risks. These risks may be at the expense of both personal and professional costs. Administrators are often times faced with faculty members who are hesitant to change. I understand that as a principal I may have to "rock the boat" in order to effectively initiate some type of change that is ultimately beneficial to students.

Conclusion

Although I am near the end of my master's program, I am aware that I am embarking on a new realm of my life. Becoming a secondary school principal is indeed a challenge I look forward to. However, I clearly

understand that this position will not be easy, but it is I, who must maintain the strength, determination, perseverance, leadership skills, and vision to successfully lead a community of students and staff. Am I ready for this position? Yes! I am, for I will do all I can; while I can for God and my fellow man.

REFERENCES

Bagin, D., & Wherry, J. (1982, June). Ten ways to improve your relationship with your public. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of American Association of School Administrators, San Diego, CA.

Conners, A. J. (1988). Let's hear about good stuff. Clearing House, 61(9), 399-402.

Cuban, L. (1986). Principaling: images and roles. Peabody Journal of Education, 63(1), 107-109.

Gorton, R., & Schneider, G. T. (1991). School-based leadership: challenges and opportunities. Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Publishers

Greenfield, W. D. (1987). Instructional leadership: concepts, issues, and controversies. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. Educational Leadership, 45(1), 55-56.

Hathaway, L. (1988). Educational facilities: designing to enhance learning and human performance. Education Canada, 28(4), 28-35.

Henderson, A. (1987). Parent participation and student achievement: the evidence grows. Columbia: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Johnston, G., & Germinario, V. (1985). Relationships between teacher decisional status and loyalty. Journal of Educational Administration, 23(1), 91-105.

Kransnow, J. (1990). Improving family-school relationships: teacher researcher from the schools reaching our project. Boston: Institute of Responsive Education.

Manasse, L. (1984). Principal as leaders of high performing systems. Educational Leadership, 41(5), 42-46.

Niece, R. (1988). The impact of environment on teaching and learning. NAASP-Bulletin, 72(508), 79-81.

Peterson, K. (1988). Vision and problem finding in principals' work: values and cognition in administration. Peabody Journal of Education, 4(11), 87-106.

Roe, W., & Drake, T. (1980). The principalship. New York: Mac Millan Publishing.

Schneider, G. (1984). Teacher involvement in decision making: zones of acceptance, decision conditions, and job satisfaction. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 18(1), 25-32.

Smith, W., & Andrews, R. (1989). Instructional leadership: how principals make a difference. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Snyder, K. (1988). Managing a productive school work culture. NASSP-Bulletin, 72(510), 40-43.

Stedman, L. C. (1987). It's time we changed the effective school's formula. Phi Delta Kappan, 69(3), 215-224.

Weinberger, S. (1990). The mentor handbook. South Norwalk: Educational Resource Network.

Zacchei D., & Mirman, J. (1986). Business education partnerships. Andover: Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement.