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## Administrative style determined by experience and personality

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## Administrative style determined by experience and personality

### Abstract

In this reflective essay I will share my personal characteristics and background which have colored my view of life in general and administration in particular. These observations, along with the knowledge and skills added through work experience and course studies, result in a selected style of administration which I believe will work well for me as an individual. References supporting the success of my selected style of administration through site-based management have been included. Site-based management is the delegation of authority by the central office or hierarchy to the principal and teachers. This management style has also been called teacher-empowerment, site decision making, school-based management, and participatory management. Regardless of which of these names is used, the concept behind them is essentially the same.

**ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE DETERMINED  
BY EXPERIENCE AND PERSONALITY**

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Presented to  
The Department of Educational Administration  
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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education**

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**by  
Kelli Trausch  
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This Research Paper by: Kelli Trausch

Entitled: ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE DETERMINED BY EXPERIENCE AND PERSONALITY

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

  
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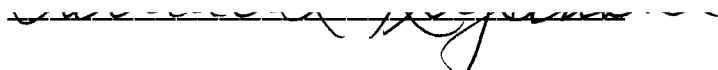
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In this reflective essay I will share my personal characteristics and background which have colored my view of life in general and administration in particular. These observations, along with the knowledge and skills added through work experience and course studies, result in a selected style of administration which I believe will work well for me as an individual. References supporting the success of my selected style of administration through site-based management have been included. Site-based management is the delegation of authority by the central office or hierarchy to the principal and teachers. This management style has also been called teacher-empowerment, site decision making, school-based management, and participatory management. Regardless of which of these names is used, the concept behind them is essentially the same.

The site-based management style will be augmented by instituting work teams in my school which will utilize expertise from various members of the community, as well as administrators and staff members. Common goals and understandings will be more

likely to bring about desired outcomes. Research is cited that supports this view.

I will take my role as an educational leader to heart in the manner in which I nurture staff development. Caring and sharing attitudes among administrators, community members, students, and staff will be foremost so that positive growth takes place in both students and staff. Again, research noted will indicate the need for such attitudes.

#### Philosophical Base or Influences

My views and philosophies on administration were shaped as a result of several influencing forces. Those forces were: 1) my elementary school experiences, 2) my junior high school years which just happened to include going to school where my father was principal, 3) my high school education which included good lessons on what not to do in administration, and 4) my overall family structure which included my administrator father, my mother who is an elementary teacher, and two brothers and a sister who didn't hesitate for one minute to share ideas on how schools

should function or how an individual could be channeled into productivity.

### Elementary Years or Influences

I still possess many vivid memories of my elementary education years which helped to shape my views about administrators. I learned early that an administrator had to earn respect by being able to act decisively or authoritatively at times, had to be able to share decision making processes with others, or sometimes had to take a back seat and let others make the decisions. The trick comes in knowing when to do which. Fortunately for me, my elementary school principal was a man of great physical presence. He was probably 6'6" tall, but seemed ten feet tall to me. Because of this impressive physical presence, I developed a healthy respect, maybe even a tinge of fear, for this man. I believe this was good because it taught me that this man and his position meant a great deal to a structure and mass of teachers and students that seemed quite confusing to me at the time. He was always able to bring calm to a situation, or to direct

large numbers of people in an assembly with relative ease. Not only did my principal instill a feeling of presence and positive control to my life during my elementary years, but so did my father. He was also a large man well over six feet tall. He seemed to be in control of every situation at home, and also brought a calming presence of sorts to all family situations. Activities at my household seemed to be well organized, never stressful, and always efficient.

I would have to say that my elementary years taught me that an administrator could bring a presence to the job and must be objective. I envision myself as an administrator who can take total control of a situation if those involved are not able to render good decisions. I believe that as an administrator I must appear confident, and yet at the same time must show a genuine caring attitude.

### Junior High Years or Influences

The experiences which probably shaped my views on administration the most took place when I attended junior high



school where my father was the principal. From most children's point of view, it would probably seem to be a scary situation always having your father watching over your shoulder or hearing complaints about how tough your father was on your friends, or worse yet your enemies. Yet this was seldom the case; it was the exact opposite. My father did not watch over my every move, nor was I held at bay by teachers who knew they could use my situation to their advantage. The objectivity and fairness my father applied to the job of principal made my junior high experience very positive. Even students who were disciplined by my father (back in the days when corporal punishment was acceptable) did not hold ill feelings against him or me. I believe this is because he was fair about discipline, and the students knew they had crossed the line and deserved whatever punishment they had received. The teachers also seemed very pleased with my father's administrative abilities. School activities were always well organized, class scheduling was always developed without conflicts, and he had an open door policy. To get an appointment with my dad all one had to do was

walk in and sit down. Knowing that teachers and students alike were comfortable at my father's school gave me a sense of pride in my father and in the job he performed.

I believe my junior high experience showed me that one must be fair, objective, and willing to listen. I only hope as I enter administration that I can be half as successful at the job as my father was.

#### Highschool Years or Influences

I would have to say that any negative feelings about administration were the result of experiences during my high school education. My high school principal left me with several bad memories about administration, and I only hope I don't repeat those same mistakes. To begin with, I seldom saw the principal. He didn't attend many school functions, nor did he seem to be seen among the school population during the normal course of a school day. When I did encounter him, he always seemed to be on the outside looking in or seemed to be unwilling to take much of an active part in school activities.

In retrospect, my high school experience taught me that one must be involved and be able to make decisions. Furthermore, an administrator's conduct must be above reproach at all times. A person in an administrative position can lose respect quickly if students or teachers see displays of anything less than exemplary behavior.

### Undergraduate Years and Family Influences

A more recent shaping of my administrative views was probably a product of two things: my early college education and *my family structure*. *These two forces seemed to point out to me* that there are two sides to every coin. That there are diversities of attitudes, morals, and cultures in society. One must be able to listen to, and often adapt to, differing viewpoints. One must be flexible with personal convictions or opinions if others' ideas or viewpoints are to be heard. One must also be able to accept criticism because administration, no matter how well it is conducted, will always have its nay-sayers. This is especially true in this era of deteriorating family structure where it's easier to

blame the school than it is the home if the child fails.

### Site Leadership

My father made a move to an elementary school seven years ago. Over a span of the last few years, he has become a leader in introducing site-based management. He pioneered the movement in his district by volunteering as the pilot school the first year. He has been instrumental in spreading the information he has gained in those experiences to not only the other schools in the district, but outside the district as well. In sharing the information with me, I can see that my father's ideas are very similar to my own. Both he and I see teachers as positive contributors to the total school experience with expertise to be tapped in such things as the hiring of school personnel, establishing budgets, determining curriculum, scheduling, setting discipline policies, and developing school calendars. I see myself as an administrator who could comfortably share that power with my staff and would recognize them as the valuable resources that they are.

### Instructional Leadership

My father has been an active instructional leader in his schools. He takes an active part by actually teaching lessons in new techniques and technology in the classrooms. He does not fear putting himself in a position that could conceivably bring him criticism if he failed to perform to certain standards. He advocates taking risks to try something new without fear of failure. He attends staff development sessions or inservices right along with his staff, which many of the other principals in his district do not do. I view these aspects of the job of principal as being critical if one is to be an educational leader. I would have the interest to further my knowledge on new techniques and technologies and would certainly want to share them with my staff.

### Staff Development

My father's concern for staff is apparent when one views the steps he takes to help a teacher who is struggling in the job. He will work to help that teacher overcome problems, but if

improvement does not take place and student instruction suffers, he will then make the difficult decision to terminate. I envision myself as an administrator using many of the same types of tools that he has used to both help a teacher or dismiss a teacher. My goal would be to aid and guide the teacher so that the desired improvement should occur. A professional improvement plan which could include visitation to other classrooms, enrollment in courses to enhance teaching abilities, a peer mentor, and formal evaluations which should include constructive criticism by administration. When all avenues for improvement have been exhausted and the required gains have not been forthcoming, then steps necessary for dismissal must be initiated. The necessary documentation of the problems, as well as the assistance given to remediate them, will make the dismissal proceed properly.

### Professional Experience

The most recent shaping of my administrative views came as a result of my teaching in two different districts under two different female administrators. Both had very positive attributes

when it came to having an open door policy. They were also very kind and thoughtful administrators when it came to dealing with staff. Both would leave encouraging or complimentary notes in staff mailboxes or would give tokens of appreciation, such as stickers or notepads. Even if one of the employees did something wrong, neither took a condemning attitude, but rather would try to find some way to help solve the problem or make the situation better. One of them was very involved in the classrooms and would often drop in for a few minutes.

I have also taught in a country school with a small staff and no administrator. This experience showed me some of the reasons why administrators are truly needed in a school's makeup. It was apparent that the teachers had good ideas and knew well what their classroom and student needs were, but they needed someone to help them focus on how best to accomplish or attain them. When dissension occurred among staff members or between staff members and parents, there was no one to mediate or take action as needed. There was no one who had an overall view of the

monetary needs of the school. Although a teacher could determine the needs of the classroom, no one was watchful to meet the needs of the school in the overall sense. No one worried about the roof, the janitorial needs, the bus repairs, etc. The year that I was there, the roof needed repair, but no one had budgeted for the \$30,000 replacement costs; consequently, we were placing buckets around the rooms to catch the drips when it rained. There was no one to monitor teachers or to check student progress. Halfway through this year, with only two years of teaching experience, I was appointed as head teacher by the school board. I gained actual administrative experience by attending school board meetings and dealing directly with school board members; by receiving and acting upon information of a confidential nature; and being mediator for staff, students, parents, and school board members in many different settings and combinations. I had input on how money for the school would be spent. I was involved in finalizing end-of-year student records and reports to the state.

These experiences have shown me that one must be flexible,



yet forthright. One must also be willing to accept change because education is beginning to experience turmoil that it has never faced before.

### Influences of Graduate Coursework

Most of the positive aspects that I have discussed support or lean toward a site-based management style of administration. Site-based management is being looked at today as a viable means to produce change. I look at it as the decentralization and deregulation of the traditional school management structure, and the restructuring of the decision making process to include individual school personnel, students, and communities.

Carr (1988) believes that as the nation becomes more concerned about the quality of education our school personnel are providing, educational leaders have no choice but to reevaluate current operating methods and pioneer new practices that will be more effective. If staff and community members are part of the process of determining the methods of instruction, the ways budgets are spent, and how schools operate in general, they will be

more accepting and supportive of what schools are doing to adapt to the new needs of society. Snyder and Anderson (1988) reported that as school budgets become tighter and as greater educational demands are placed on graduates, the task of implementing effective changes becomes even more challenging. Districts are being pressed to utilize available resources to their fullest extent. They are attempting to reform by deregulating, decentralizing, and reorganizing to meet these challenges. One method of reform embraced by some schools is site-based management (Carr, 1988).

Principals who are taking part in site-based decision making programs are showing great enthusiasm for their newfound autonomy. Heller, Woodworth, Jacobsen and Conway (1989) reported that 96% of the principals questioned thought they should have more decision-making responsibility in their building instead of at the central office. Stover (1989), Neal (1989), and Dreyfuss (1988) found budgeting power left principals greater freedom to choose where and how funds were distributed inside their schools. They were able to prioritize and spend money efficiently in needed

areas. At the February 1990 meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, one principal who encouraged the teachers to become more involved in the budgeting process stated, "Teachers finally believe me when I say there is no money in the budget." The principal felt teachers had a greater understanding of restrictions and limitations under which a principal functions after being involved in budgeting decisions (Executive Educator, 1990).

Joan Grady, principal of Cherry Creek Schools in Englewood, Colorado, believes that the move from central hiring of teaching personnel to building level hiring would place pressure on a principal to hire the very best for the building. It makes the principal directly responsible for the caliber of the staff. (Dempsey, 1988)

Foster (1990) saw principals' job descriptions to be much broader. They were seen as facilitators and overseers of the programs put together by their staff. Most importantly they had to encourage, motivate, and empower their teachers to work as a

positive unit.

Rist (1989) described teachers as finding site-based management to be inspirational and fulfilling. Raelin (1989) called the new freedom for teachers "operational autonomy." This operational autonomy presented the opportunity for teachers to set and reach goals that were once out of their grasp. Dreyfuss (1988) listed some of the new areas in which teachers received decision-making authority: (a) discipline policies, (b) curriculum, (c) budgeting, (d) extra-curricular activities, (e) mentor programs, (f) peer assessment, (g) hiring of personnel, and (h) negotiation of salaries. Snyder and Anderson (1988) reported that reforms fostered positive work attitudes, bettered relationships among teachers, and increased self-esteem.

Does the decision-making process or the results ever reach the students? Snyder and Anderson (1988) found the students benefiting from greater academic success, student rewards, and having a place in the decision-making process. Jenkins and Houlihan (1990) found encouraging results in one of Cincinnati's

public schools. This school reported higher test scores and improved attendance. They also reported that a survey of the students showed them as being happier in school. Payzant (1989) saw an even broader benefit for students. School personnel would be able to build programs that would best fulfill the needs of their students and communities.

Snyder and Anderson (1988) reported that Florida educators launched a statewide effort in conjunction with the Florida Department of Education to train school leadership teams to develop within-school partnerships. The Minnesota Department of Education also initiated a similar statewide program with excellent results. It has been determined that the partnerships are quite effective when the programs are established as problem solving enterprises, when teachers and principals take partnership roles in shaping the school's future, when teachers share with one another their information and resources, and when principals help groups or individuals to succeed in solving problems. As a result of these new management techniques, teachers are contributing ideas

more often and are more enthusiastic, the number and quality of working groups increases, and negativism decreases (Snyder and Anderson, 1988).

A school faculty and its principal, in conjunction with parents and students, is the obvious natural management team best able to carry out reform efforts. School personnel must be included in addressing and solving educational problems at the local level. The best school transformations may be achieved through site-based management which includes transformational leaders, school effectiveness teams, budgeting, strategic plans for the school, and performance reports for the school (Carr, 1988).

Prince William County in Virginia, a school district with an enrollment of 40,000 students, turned to school-based management which gave principals the authority to draw up their own school budgets. Originally involving five pilot schools, the program was to be expanded to include all 56 schools of the county. The principals in turn were required to seek the advice of parents and teachers in drawing up the school budgets and, thus, people had a

greater stake in programs that they had chosen as priorities to receive funds. Side benefits will result, such as greater effort to save money by conserving electricity and supplies, when teachers can apply the money saved to their prioritized projects (Neal, 1989).

Benjamin Troutman, director of curriculum and staff development for the Virginia Beach Public Schools, feels that many principals are extraordinarily threatened as their traditional ironclad rule is giving way to tapping the expertise of teachers and parents. Principals who have spent their entire careers under an authoritarian system seem to have the most problem adjusting to school-based management (Stover, 1989).

My beliefs have strengthened that many schools have not adapted efficiently to our changing world when comparisons are made between the way schools are being run and the way corporate America has made adjustments. An increasing number of corporations - including 3M, General Foods, Proctor and Gamble, and Aetna- have shown that employees are better able to monitor

themselves than supervisory personnel can. By forming self-regulating work groups to break down functional barriers which limit participation, stifle productivity, and complicate necessary communication, corporations have experienced positive results which included greater innovation, improved employee attitudes, and reduced absenteeism. Lake Washington School District in Kirkland, Washington, has followed the lead of successful businesses by instituting self-regulating work groups which included principals, central administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents, and business leaders. Individual buildings likewise function as work teams. Each team is concentrating on three major areas: use of time; staff members; and community, business, and parents partnerships. The teams also develop plans to allocate resources and support the operational needs of schools (Scarr, 1992).

Staff development is a necessary ingredient in changing the ways schools function so that desired results can be achieved. If teacher training institutions will not make the needed changes to



prepare teachers to meet today's demands, then school administrators must look for ways to aid the staff. Michael Fullan, Dean of Education at the University of Toronto, has identified four core capacities for building greater change capacity: personal vision-building, inquiry, mastery, and collaboration. Personal vision-building must be encouraged to give meaning to the work done by educators. Inquiry for internalizing norms, habits, and techniques for continuous learning must be on-going. Mastery is necessary for effectiveness and must go beyond one-shot workshops. Working alone imposes a ceiling effect, while collaboration encourages vision and growth (Fullan, 1993).

#### Personal Professional Vision

I do not fear the site-based management movement since I have not been indoctrinated with a lifetime of employment within an authoritarian school system. Also, my father has shared with me the many positive aspects and benefits which are occurring within his school as a result of the switch to site-based management. This sharing of success by someone so near to me

goes along way in dispelling some of the misconceptions brought forth about site-based management.

Site-based management beckons as the ideal school management style for me as an administrator. My personality does not require that I be in charge of all situations. I do not fear input from others, but welcome it instead. My tendency to be open-minded and my willingness to listen to others' points of view would work well with the shared decision making processes required for the success of site-based management.

I feel that exposures to both positive and negative sides of administration have broadened my knowledge and abilities and will help me in administrative positions that I might obtain in the future. Those positive aspects include being able to take control when needed, maintaining a calm demeanor, being objective and fair, making sound decisions, having an open door policy, sharing decision making, being an instructional leader, being receptive to new and innovative ideas, and listening to students' concerns and ideas. I have also realized that now, more than ever before, school

administrators are facing ever worsening social and economic times and that one's ability to adapt, particularly through shared responsibility and shared decision making, could make the critical difference, not only to peers and subordinates, but also to ever impressionable children.

I feel that our schools have stagnated. They have not changed rapidly enough to meet the needs of a changing society and changing world. Getting fresh ideas and learning from others can aid in restructuring and improving our schools.

Good qualities in teachers do not come about through legislation. I believe that good qualities come to the forefront when they are appreciated and nurtured. My selected style of management lends itself to developing more positive staff attitudes and to developing a desire to contribute in individual teachers because they believe that their input would be valued.

Communities, as well as employees, will be more accepting of a school's goals and needs when they have helped to establish and prioritize those goals and needs. I would prefer to work in

a setting in which I would have the support and help of my employees and the community members. I feel that a school setting which utilizes work groups and shared decision making, as opposed to an authoritarian style of administering, would give me a better chance to develop the rapport that I hope to have with staff, students, and community.

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