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## What I believe about leadership and education : a reflective essay

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## What I believe about leadership and education : a reflective essay

### Abstract

Communication is the ground work for everything. Without it an administrator cannot effectively move their school forward. However, the school needs a direction to go. When an administrator has a vision, he or she can lead the school in that direction – thus making the school a better place. In order for the school to be effective, it is also helpful to have an administrator that has good organizational skills.

Finally, a school is built for instruction. Above all else, an administrator must remember why they are there, to assist the staff in teaching children. The administrator must hold teachers accountable for their instructional practices.

Without communication, having a vision, being organized, and being an instructional leader, an administrator will be limited in their impact. When an administrator uses all these elements they will be highly effective with a significant impact on faculty and staff.

Administrators must have many more skills than just these four. However, these are four core elements that are essential for exemplary educational leadership.

WHAT I BELIEVE ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION:

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

And Postsecondary Education

University of Northern Iowa

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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By

Kathlynn W. Breinich

May 2005

Dr. Robert Decker

This Research Paper by: Kathlynn W. Breinich

Entitled: WHAT I BELIEVE ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION:  
A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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At the tender age of four I knew that I wanted to be a teacher. It did not matter that I had no idea what this involved, however, I spent my entire life living with teachers, and the thought of going to school everyday was exciting. I ended up following this young dream and went into education, still not sure of what I wanted to teach. I studied chemistry, physics, and mathematics in college, therefore everywhere I turned someone was trying to get me to go into research. They told me that I could make more money in research rather than in education, but I did not want to live my life based on money. I wanted to be of service and benefit to the young people of society. I realize to benefit society, it is easier to impact the young rather than change the established habits of adults. Therefore, I ended up teaching math in the high school setting.

Education is an evolving process. It is not just following the same routine every day, but leading the students in learning, using different methods to reach all of them. Doing the same thing day in and day out, or sitting with test tubes and chemicals as my only companions, was not my ideal work environment. I wanted to be involved, work with people, and see them grow into their dreams. Education takes on many different shapes and forms. It is the lecture in the classroom, allowing students to work together on projects, and giving tests over the material covered, but it is so much more. It is being a role model to someone who does not have a stable adult to look up to, helping them through whatever may be troubling them, listening to them so they know someone cares about them,

and celebrating when they have achieved a goal. Since I teach math many people think I just stand in front of the room and do math problems all day, everyday. However, they would be surprised to see what my classroom is really like. We discuss the big football game that was won or lost. I will point out good plays made by the students in that class. I talk about what is happening in school or around the world, always trying to relate these real world issues to math. We make fun of the stupid things I seem to do in class, so they realize that I am a person, just like them. While we discuss all of this I get to know the students, how they learn and how they live. Then I can develop the method that will be the most beneficial for those students.

I am now in my fourth year of teaching and I still enjoy going to school everyday. In the beginning, I had a very difficult time balancing teaching and discipline. I thought that if I sent a student out, then they would not be learning. I tried throughout my first year to keep all students in my room, which ended up stressing me out and the entire class was unable to learn what I was teaching. I have gradually gotten to the point that I will send a student out only after giving a couple warnings, talking with the student about potential resolutions and fail at completing them. Now, I rarely have discipline problems. I believe this might be because I listen to the students. I give each side time to explain then try to resolve any problems in class. Also, I keep class interesting. Some days I feel more like an actress than a math teacher. I also believe that a student should have a second

chance, without any lingering feelings about past problems. The student can either act better or there will be some disciplinary action. In our school that comes from the Dean of Students, not the teacher. Johnson (2004) says that “when students believe that success is possible, they will try. If they don’t believe success is possible, no matter how easy the material or how smart the student, they will fail,” (p.43). I agree with her statement and everyday I use this to reach my students.

During my second year I became an advisor for our student government, Student Senate. This group was not about governing the school but raising money for charities, feeding the homeless, and working on getting more school spirit. This was a great step for me. I was able to get more involved in the school, and with the students. Senate does most of the activities within the school, so it has been up to me to do a great deal of the planning. After a couple years with Senate, I decided that I needed to go further. I needed to get more involved in the school rather than with just the activities.

I knew it was time that I continue my professional development, or I would never do it. I wanted a program that was in the Quad Cities so that I would not have to travel. I thought about getting a master in mathematics education, since I need this to teach higher math, at my school. However, I realized that besides teaching higher math, it would not help me make a difference. I also wanted to give my career an outlet to move forward. So, I decided to enter the

educational leadership program because I knew this was a major area for making a difference. An administrator not only impacts students as teachers do, but also impacts teachers, parents, and the community.

As an administrator, I would have more voice in what happens in my school. I would have more opportunities to increase student diversity and tolerance, by bringing in programs relating to this topic. I could increase parental involvement in students' education. I could bring in programs for parents about living with adolescents, or even adult education for parents who need more education. As an administrator I could increase business involvement in education, providing students with the skills to go into business, and providing businesses future employees with the proper skills.

I realized that principals had much more to do than improve the school. An administrator must be a visionary, and have a plan on where the school needs to be, and that they need to be able to implement the plan with community involvement. They must make the school environment one where students can learn and teachers feel free to teach to all students. The administrator needs to be able to keep the school running efficiently, work effectively within the communities diverse needs, be fair and ethical in all that they do, and are the political voice for the school. By getting my administrative degree now I can, over the next few years, not only develop my teaching skills but also focus on



developing my administrative abilities. Being a good, effective administrator is not going to be easy, but I see it as the next step in my professional development.

I have thought about four essential skills that are essential for being an effective administrator. These essential skills: communication, being a visionary, being organized, and being an instructional leader are the backbone for all administrators.

### Communication

Communication is an essential skill that all good leaders should have.

“Communication is a prerequisite to problem-solving and one of the most fundamental skills in life,” (Covey, 1991, p. 138). In the short time that I have been in education I have experienced the extremes of good and bad communication. During my first three years in education, the principal was nearly obsessed with communication. She was so concerned that the staff knew what was happening that we had staff meetings at least two times a month. Sometimes, we would even utilize extended days to get out large amounts of information. I continually heard people complaining about the amount of meetings being held and that the information could have been sent in an email.

This year we have a new principal. We no longer have the vast amounts of staff meetings. In fact I can only think of three that were held after school to get out information. Now, I hear staff members complaining that they do not know what is going on anymore. I realize that no matter what, the staff will

complain. However, I think that I have seen the two extremes. I believe that communication, if used correctly, is the most important tool an administrator should develop.

The first important aspect of communication, for anyone wanting to be an effective communicator to know, is how to get information conveyed effectively and efficiently. The principal should avoid using words and tones that put listeners on the defense. What this means is that one should learn how to use language effectively. The administrator should be able to use clear, concise, and understandable phrases. Principals should avoid using slang, rambling, and mumbling. The tone one should use should be clear and audible. "Speaking forcefully suggests to the listeners that you have power. Mumbling has the opposite effect," (O'Leary, 2000, p. 24).

The second important aspect of communication is nonverbal communication. The speaker should exude confidence; this can include being slightly aggressive rather than being timid. When speaking, the administrator should have good posture and eye contact with whom they are speaking. The speaker should also give the listener his or her full attention. Nonverbal communication also includes using hand gestures. Some hand gestures speak for themselves, for example the "thumbs up" when someone does a good job. Others enforce the point being made, for example "punching a fist down on a conference table to lend weight to a point," (O'Leary, 2000, p. 31). Personal appearance is

also a nonverbal communication factor. If an administrator is dressed in sweatpants, no one would see them as in charge. An administrator must dress for the role as leader. They should appear as if they are in charge.

Communication is a two way process. It helps one understand the needs and ideas of others. Communication involves listening to others as well as speaking yourself. Covey (1991) says that "the most powerful principle of all human interaction [is] genuinely seeking to understand another deeply before being understood in return" (p. 272). Administrators continuously have to deal with complaints from parents and staff. I believe that the most effective way to handle these complaints is to listen. Make sure the speaker knows you are listening to them, and are sincerely trying to understand their side. Then, when they know you are interested in understanding their point of view, you can provide them the information they might not know. Whatever the case may be, everyone appreciates the sense that they are being heard.

The final aspect of communication is the written word. Administrators frequently use memos or emails to get information out quickly to their staff. It is important to make this type of communication as succinct as possible. The first thing that the reader sees is the subject line. "The subject line needs to be specific enough to differentiate that message from others on the same subject, but broad enough to cover everything in the message," (Locker, 1995, p. 150). The language of the memo or email must also convey the message you are trying to

get out, without being too wordy. If the message is too long, or covers material that the reader views as unimportant they are less likely to read it, make sure that it is being sent to only those who need to know.

As an educator and future administrator, I believe communicating effectively and efficiently are essential skills. It is important to be seen as someone who can speak efficiently and eloquently. There are two important reasons why this is the case. First, the staff needs to be kept informed. They do not want to be talked at, but talked to. They want to understand and be understood. The staff will then be satisfied. Second, it is important because there are times when the principal must speak to the public. Not only at when being interviewed by reporters because of some trouble, but also for the times of great joy, such as graduations. I hope to develop my communication skills so that I am capable of speaking effectively whenever I am needed. I want to be able to be the spokesperson for my school, when that time comes. I do not want to turn over the public relations to someone else, because my speaking skills are not sufficient for speaking to the public.

One of the most important reasons why an administrator must have good communication skills is due to the fact that they are always dealing with the public. An administrator is expected to stay active in the community. They join groups such as the Rotary Club and attend meetings involving all sorts of community leaders. Communication skills are necessary for the principal to

exercise effective political leadership which is the sixth ISSL standard. An administrator “must have a voice and use it to advocate for policies and programs that promote equitable learning opportunities and success for all students regardless of socioeconomic background, race, ethnicity, gender, language, or other individual characteristic. You cannot just advocate for the easy-to-teach, the likeable, or the college-bound. You must be the face and the voice for all students regardless of their circumstances,” (Wilmore, 2002, p. 96). For the reasons I have stated above it is important to learn how to communicate effectively and efficiently in written, nonverbal, and verbal forms.

### Having a Vision

A vision for your school is important for an administrator. They are “expected to set goals that will guide an organization in a specific direction,” (O’Leary, 2000, p.4). In schools, the administrator is expected to facilitate the mission of the school. When the administrator is hired they need to have an idea about where they want to take the school. They need to articulate the vision and mission to their new staff. Since this is the vision of the administrator the staff needs to buy into the vision. Once the staff has bought into the vision the administrator and the staff need to implement the vision.

The situation I have stated above is a requirement, yet it may only happen in a perfect world. When hired, an administrator must have an idea about where he or she wants the school to go, the purpose of education and how he or she as

leader can accomplish that purpose. But, a new principal needs to get the feel for the school before making any changes. Developing the vision and mission allows for the staff, which has been there longer, to show a possible different path for the school to go. Working with the staff gives the administrator an opportunity to create a shared vision for the school. Allowing staff, students and parents to help create the vision will give them ownership in the school. Lambert (2003) says that “a shared vision based upon the core values of participants and their hopes for the school ensures commitment to its realization,” (p.6). With commitment comes coherence of the vision and the learning environment. When there is coherence there is a quality throughout the school.

Part of having a vision is being proactive. The principal needs to take the initiative to change the school instead of waiting for something to happen.

“Taking the initiative does not mean being pushy, obnoxious, or aggressive. It does mean recognizing our responsibility to make things happen,” (Covey, 1989, p. 75). Being proactive means acknowledging, correcting, and learning from mistakes, which is an important part of being a principal. Everyone makes mistakes, but it is how we handle them that sets apart effective principal from those that are mediocre. Wilmore (2002) says that “falling down and making mistakes, personally and professionally, only proves we are human. It takes real guts to pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again, but this is the only way your school will ever reach its vision,” (p.23).

Part of the vision must include making the school a more positive place to learn. The single person responsible for the school culture and climate is the principal. He or she will set the tone for the school. The principal is the individual that everyone will go to in times of problems. The principal can choose to react positively or negatively. The principal that chooses to react positively will have a positive staff and a positive learning environment for the students. Whitaker (2003) gives an example of having a positive attitude. After meeting with an angry parent, "I walk into the hall and a teacher says innocently, "How is your day going?"...I can choose to filter my response: "Things are great, how about with you?" If that teacher feels good about the world, we both move on, smiling. If the teacher has concerns, at least I have not made them worse," (p.29).

As an educator and future administrator I feel that being a visionary is an essential skill. When I become an administrator I will work with my staff to develop the school's mission. I feel that all the stakeholders should have a say in where the school will go, especially since I may not be able to see what needs to be done right away. I will help them develop a shared vision for the school. Not only will this give me insight into what the school needs, but it will help create a strong commitment to making the vision a reality. After all, what we really want is for the school to move forward, it is better to work with people rather than

through them. An environment of mutual respect and trust will be created by working with the students, staff, and parents.

I feel it will be my duty, as the principal, to set the tone for the school. I want my school to be a positive and caring place for students to learn. “By consistently filtering out the negatives that [do not] matter and sharing a positive attitude, we can create a much more successful school. Consciously or unconsciously, *we decide* the tone of our school,” (Whitaker, 2003, p. 33).

Being a visionary aligns with the first ISSL standard, the visionary leader. “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community,” (Wilmore, 2002, p. 19). The visionary leader must be prepared to encourage others to keep implementing the vision, even if it appears to be failing. They are the ones that motivate the school and all those within to be the very best, and achieve the highest of goals not only for the school, but for themselves. That is why being a visionary is a critical element for being an exemplary leader.

### Being Organized

Good organizational skills are important for a leader to be effective. I believe that good organizational skills include planning ahead, organizing everything from self to tasks, having an efficient work environment and many



others. "An orderly, efficient school environment is prerequisite to the emergence of visionary leadership and optimal student learning," (Brock & Grady, 2004, p. 29).

When a person accepts a job as an administrator, planning must begin immediately. "Planning is the process of determining what is to be achieved, setting appropriate objectives, and identifying action steps for accomplishing them," (Shermerhorn, 1992, p. 22). When beginning the school year a principal needs to be able to look ahead to all the important tasks that will happen during that year. It is important that the principal keeps good records of the tasks that need to be completed.

Calendars are one way of keeping record of what needs to be done and when. Whether the principal chooses to use a day planner, a personal digital assistant, or a computer, they need to keep track of all the big tasks that need to be done. For example the principal can easily look ahead to when ITED testing will take place, and then they will know when to begin planning the schedule for the testing days. The principal will also be able to look at their calendar to see what important events are coming and have a good record of things for upcoming years. As a part of the calendar the administrator must also schedule time for interruptions. The interruptions can include impromptu meetings with faculty, parents, and students as well as crises that may arise.

Planning is only part of being organized. Having an organizational system is also important. For the past three years I have worked with a woman at West High School, she was a very successful educator and accomplished many wonderful things throughout her career. However, she was the most unorganized person I have ever met. She could never find anything that she needed, including her keys. Her organizational system included half sheets of paper put into whatever she was currently working on, a money bag with things crammed into it, and a calendar stuffed so full that the covers were falling off. Her classroom was the same; the desk was piled high with random things, such that things were often lost. She spent most of her time looking for things that she had lost. Even though she was successful, she could have been even more productive if she did not have to spend so much time looking for things. The same would be true for an administrator. They can be more productive and successful when they are organized.

Before trying to organize the office, the principal should think about training his or her secretary to handle mail and phone calls. The secretary can open the mail and determine whether or not it is something that the administrator needs to deal with immediately, soon, or not at all. The same thing can be done with phone calls. The secretary can decide whether a phone call is urgent or not. Having a secretary do these things will help clear up time for the administrator to deal with other tasks.

All organized people have their own systems for staying organized.

However, one very important thing to keep in mind when trying to organize things is that everything has its place. All paperwork that has been dealt with should be filed away as quickly as possible. Having an in-out basket can be very helpful. Everyday the principal can deal with what is in the in-basket and stay on top of things. When something has been dealt with, then it goes into the out-basket for filing. The principal will then know what has been done and what still needs to be completed.

Another aspect of organization is keeping a tidy office. A tidy office is important for a few reasons. First, the principal will be more productive if the office is tidy. The administrator should be able to find needed items, and not spend as much time looking for items. Second, the principal will often have impromptu meetings with parents, staff, and other important members of the community. A tidy office is more welcoming than an office that is cluttered. Not only will there be less distraction but it can also be an indicator of how effective the principal is as a leader. "Principals who work in rubble, lose things, waste precious time hunting for them, and convey a message of dubious leadership ability," (Brock & Grady, 2004, p. 70). Lastly, in event of an emergency and the principal is unable to do his or her job, someone else could find important information.

During April of my second year of teaching at West High School, our associate principal died suddenly after having surgery. We had a teacher working towards his administrative degree, and he filled her position for the rest of the year. Filling in for her meant that he had to be able to access all files necessary for students as well as daily operations. If she did not have a tidy office this could have been a very large problem since she was responsible for organizing graduation.

As an administrator I plan on using effective organizational skills. I currently try to plan well in advance. I have kept a calendar from the past two years for Student Senate so that I know what we have done in the past and when. The multi-year calendar helps me plan events for the upcoming year based on when events happened in the past. I am already effective at organizing paperwork and would normally keep a tidy office, no matter what my position. To increase my organizational skills I would make use of my support staff. I am easily drawn into email and tasks like that, so I would have my secretary look over email and mail first. That way I am able to spend my time on what is important rather than trivial. I would also have the secretary use the same method with phone calls. I would then be able to deal with urgent calls first, then at a later time deal with less urgent calls. My organizational skills will help me open up time to deal with crises, as well as getting out into the halls to be visible to my students and staff.

Organizational skills are necessary for the principal to exercise effective organizational leadership, the third ISSL standard. "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment," (Wilmore, 2002, p. 52). In order to manage the school organization and operations an administrator must be organized. They should know what has been done in the past and what works and what is not working. Administrators need to be organized to be able to know how well the school organization and operations are functioning.

The administrator needs to be able to find all information regarding everything in the building, for example the budget from previous years. The administrator must also recognize what is important and what can be delegated to the associate principals. The principal needs to know when special activities are in advance so they can plan for them. The administrator will also need to meet with faculty, students, and parents concerning the school. First impressions are very important and if the principal's office is untidy then the principal will appear to be inefficient. Therefore, it is very important for all administrators to have good organizational skills. Being organized can separate the most effective principals from those less effective.

## Being an Instructional Leader

Administrators, as seen by the community, are not only leaders of the school but also of the teachers. Therefore, being an instructional leader is extremely important for administrators. "Through their work, principals create, nurture, and sustain successful and healthy teaching and learning environments for teachers as well as students. The principal's primary role is in modeling and supporting the learning of others, the essence of instructional leadership," (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003, p. 169). Instructional leadership has many areas, including: curriculum, school climate, hiring teachers and staff, motivation, and accountability.

The first aspect of being an instructional leader is to be the building's curriculum leader. Many times the school district will mandate that a particular curriculum should be taught. Therefore the principal needs to share the board's vision with his or her school. Sometimes the principal may find that a new curriculum would be beneficial to their school, then he or she becomes an important catalyst in adopting the new curriculum. The principal can survey the parents, students, and staff to learn what is important for each group of people. With this information, the principal can then go to the board and seek to have new curriculum added to the curriculum already in place.

The instructional leader cannot stop there. He or she needs to monitor the teachers to ensure they are adhering to the curriculum and persuade them to

continue growth within the curriculum. Monitoring can take place with scheduled and unscheduled observations. Scheduled observations give the principal insight into how a teacher prepares for his or her class and the observation itself.

Sometimes these observations seemed to be staged. "A 'staged' performance is not as accurate as what happens daily inside the classroom," (Brock & Grady, 2004, p. 63). However, if a teacher can demonstrate excellent teaching skills during a "staged" observation, then it shows that the teacher is capable of good teaching. Then the principal can work to help the teacher be an effective teacher daily instead of during only "staged" observations. If a teacher cannot demonstrate excellent teaching behaviors during a "staged" observation then the principal needs to consider his or her choices carefully. An unscheduled observation gives the principal a look into what might be more normal. When making observations, the principal must give feedback to the teacher. The administrator can give positive notes about what went well or feedback on styles that may be unacceptable. Observing the teachers is very important, especially when the performance of schools is judged on how well students achieve.

Successful schools understand that the direct improvement of teaching and learning in every classroom comes via a constellation of individuals and groups who undertake a myriad of activities and initiatives. These activities and initiatives provide continual reflection and changing of

classroom practices guided by the educational aspirations of the school (Glickman, 2002, p. 2).

Having a positive school climate is another important aspect of instructional leadership. Many people say they can tell a lot about a school by the way it feels when they first walk in. The feeling is the school climate which is set by the principal. The principal needs to model to students and staff a proper way to behave. When the principal models the acceptable behaviors to his or her staff, they will know what is expected. "Staff members watch and measure the principal's level of enthusiasm, work ethic, and dedication as well as what the principal notices and rewards," (Brock & Grady, 2004, p. 54). Teachers, in turn, model the acceptable behavior to their students. When the teachers see an improvement in their student's behaviors they feel better about their school. The school climate becomes positive because students and staff have a greater connection to their school. Another part of school climate is the physical building. The administrator needs to make sure that graffiti is taken care of, the walls are not dingy and dirty, and the building is in the best possible shape. When the building is inviting the students and staff will have a higher morale, which in turn helps student achievement.

Hiring teachers is another aspect of instructional leadership. Hiring a new teacher allows the principal to bring great teachers into his or her school.

Whitaker (2003) states that "the quickest way to improve your school is to hire



great teachers at every opportunity,” (p. 43). It is very important to hire great teachers because they will help bring the school up to their level. When great teachers do wonderful things, others notice and try to emulate styles of that teacher. However, it is important to note, that a principal must help make new teachers feel welcome. When great teachers do not feel welcome, they can fall into the groups of teachers that spend their time bad mouthing students and administrators in the teacher’s lounge. The environment then becomes toxic.

Another aspect of instructional leadership is motivation. The administrator must learn how to motivate the students and staff to be their very best. Alderman (2004) states that “the task for schools is to foster a will to learn and ‘the teacher’s role is to encourage both confidence and high achievement in their students’,” (p. 14). With this in mind, the administrator must help the teachers by motivating students to learn. Motivating students to learn is a very difficult task, but with the help of parents and staff it may be manageable.

The best way to begin is to help students achieve a higher self-esteem. If the student believes that he or she can learn, then they will. Working on self-esteem should be done at all levels of school. Children will learn so much more when they feel better about themselves. The way to do this might be to help the students engage themselves and teach them to use their resources to their fullest extent. When they succeed, no matter how small the success is, they will feel better about doing it themselves. “[S]elf-esteem is something students experience

when they engage in something fully and use their resources fully, as when they are striving to master something new,” (Dweck, 2000, p. 129). Motivation can be in the form of inspirational emails sent to the staff, encouraging remarks over the intercom, or even encouragement to staff or students in the hall. Motivation, on some level, should take place everyday.

The last aspect of instructional leadership is accountability. The accountability is for all levels of the staff, including the administrator. The administrator needs to make sure that the staff is accountable for what the students are learning and how they learn. The newest way to look at accountability is using a student-centered approach, also known as holistic accountability. “The terms ‘student-centered accountability’ or ‘holistic accountability’ refer to a system that includes not only academic achievement scores, but also specific information on curriculum, teaching practices, and leadership practices,” (Reeves, 2004, p. 6). Student-centered accountability also balances both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Reeves (2004, p. 122) lists seven principles for accountability. The principles follow with a key question to ask. Administrators should ask themselves these questions as they try to be more accountable.

*Congruence:* Is the accountability system compatible with rewards and incentives already in place in the district?

*Respect for diversity:* Does the accountability system include multiple measures of student achievement, some of which apply to all schools and some of which apply to individual schools based on school needs?

*Accuracy:* Are the measures outlined for the system correct, are they used appropriately, and do they reflect the use of alternative evidence rather than only test scores?

*Specificity:* Does the accountability system delineate clear ideas of what is expected and what must be done to help students achieve (descriptive and prescriptive)?

*Feedback for continuous improvement:* Does the accountability system allow for both formative and summative evaluations, and are the results used to make informed decisions about school improvement and new initiatives?

*Universality:* Is there accountability not only for students, but also for central office, board members, parents, teachers, and school administrators?

*Fairness:* Is the accountability system structured so that everyone knows the rules of the game, the rules are applied consistently, and all have the opportunity to play by the same rules?

Asking these questions will help school administrators decide how to develop an accountability system for their school and district.

Being an instructional leader aligns with the second ISSL standard, the instructional leader. "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth," (Wilmore, 2002, p. 32). The instructional leader must be prepared to be an advocate for the curriculum and be accountable for that curriculum and the way it is taught. They are the ones that motivate the students and staff to be the very best, and achieve the highest of goals. They need to hire great teachers at every opportunity. The administrators must observe all their staff to make sure the level of excellence is maintained and the curriculum is being taught properly. For these reasons, and many more, that it is why being an instructional leader is a critical element for being an exemplary leader.

### Conclusion

Communication is the ground work for everything. Without it an administrator cannot effectively move their school forward. However, the school needs a direction to go. When an administrator has a vision, he or she can lead the school in that direction. Thus, making the school a better place.

In order for the school to be an effective building, it is helpful to have an administrator that has good organizational skills. When the administrator is organized, the school will be more organized. Finally, a school is built for instruction. Above all else, an administrator must remember why they are there,

to assist the staff in teaching children. The administrator must hold teachers accountable for their instructional practices.

Without communication, having a vision, being organized, and being an instructional leader, an administrator will be limited in their impact. When an administrator uses all these elements they will be highly effective with a significant impact on faculty and staff. Administrators must have many more skills than just these four. However, these are four core elements that are essential for exemplary educational leadership.

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