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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

The key topics of education will be revealed throughout the entirety of this essay. The purpose of education and why leaders are important to school success will be the first topic. The section describes how leaders mold the school and work with teachers to find best practice is key to school-wide success. The next area the essay dissects is how the principal leads learning for students and teachers. School leaders have to bring teachers up to the maximum potential through staff development.

The third section will explain the importance of leadership during the change process. The fourth portion addresses how to make improvements in the school as an administrator. The final segment the essay confronts the servant leader. To be successful every school leader must put the needs of the children and staff before their own.

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 Requirements for the Degree

Master in Principalship

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by

Michael J. Irvin

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Dr. Nick Pace

This Research Paper by: Michael J. Irvin

Entitled: WHAT I BELIEVE ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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

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Being an educator is the finest profession on this earth. The influence teachers have on the lives of students is the most important role an adult can occupy with a child. Teachers change the world for every student that who walks through the school doors. The administrator's role in this process has been to guide the teachers through improvements to improve student learning.

The key topics of education will be revealed throughout the entirety of this essay. The purpose of education and why leaders are important to school success will be the first topic. The section describes how leaders mold the school and work with teachers to find best practice is key to school-wide success. The next area the essay dissects is how the principal leads learning for students and teachers. School leaders have to bring teachers up to the maximum potential through staff development. During the improvement opportunities teachers will gain knowledge of better practices to enhance student learning.

The third section will explain the importance of leadership during the change process. The school leader must include all stakeholders in decisions while attempting to make a change. This creates opportunities for new leaders within the current staff to be formed, which is the mark of a successful principal. The fourth portion addresses how to make improvements in the school as an administrator. Educating teachers to become continuous learners needs to take place to generate improvements. The administrator must foster learning in professional development gatherings to uncover best practices.

The final segment the essay confronts the servant leader. To be successful every school leader must put the needs of the children and staff before their own. To accomplish this goal, principals must be leaders in the school instead of managers. Each administrator must develop great teachers to lead in each classroom.

### **The Purpose of Education and Leadership**

In the ever-changing world, Americans must place the greatest importance on education. Education has been the backbone of American culture since settlers stepped foot on the American soil so many years ago. The educational system must mold children into leaders so those leaders can face the challenges of the future.

The appeal of teaching was not strong while I attended high school. Math was my strong suit and came rather easily as a teenager. Therefore, a pursuit of a mathematics degree was the clear option for an indecisive teenager. High school graduation had passed and the time had come for thank-you letters to be sent to those who had molded me over the last thirteen years. I compiled a list of those people, mostly teachers and coaches, who collaboratively molded not only me but also thousands of students in the years before. Tears streamed down my face as I thought of how important these teachers were and what they had done for every

student in the school system. At this moment I knew I wanted to make a change similar to the transformation I had undergone with their guidance.

Pursuing an education degree exemplified the fact that education is the drive behind our society. I decided to become an educator to enhance the lives of children and have a positive impact on the future of many students. I went into education hoping to change the world. This may seem like an impossible task but if I have influenced one student's life in anyway, I have changed the world.

Education is changing just like the rest of the world. As education undergoes these changes, the intent of school is altered. In the 1800's the purpose of education was to mold a child become a better person with teaching from a religious perspective. Time passed and the emphasis of education turned to the gaining knowledge of the content in the basic subject areas.

The intent of education will change many times throughout my tenure as a teacher and an administrator. In recent generations, American education has sought to balance academic excellence and social justice. I believe the ratio should be more towards academic excellence than social justice.

Academic excellence must be the main focus of education. Teachers are trained as professional to teach subject matter to children. The same teachers are taught to use different strategies to reach children who learn in different ways. It is very important for these teachers to educate the students on the subject matter as this the only place where they will learn the information.

Social justice must not be forgotten in the school system. An quality education should be available to every child in the United States of America, but social justice is a process that only lies partly on the shoulders of the educational team. If the subject matter is presented to the students to become successful then the student must further pursue the opportunity to thrive in life. There must be a balance between the school and parent's role in education. The responsibility lies in the hands of both influences with more push coming from the parental end. The parents must lead their student to success or at least be a tremendous partner with educators to motivate their child.

Effective leadership is an essential element of the educational system. The leadership of parents and teachers shape the student in many different ways. The most important leadership in a school district belongs to the administration. The opportunity to lead the leaders has incredible significance. The administrative leader makes a world of difference because these administrators control the way the leaders express the information which is vital to the children. The leadership in school is similar to leadership in any type of work. Leaders set the pace for others to follow. A good leader will set the pace high enough that others must push themselves to reach the bar. Teachers, who are leaders in the classroom, must set expectations as high as possible for students. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) help set realistic goals for student progress. An



administrator's leadership role is to lead these teachers into the field of learning. The importance of leadership from the administration entails many more duties.

Leadership is holding teachers to the highest standard of achievement. When the standard is not met, the leader must take all necessary actions to attain success. This may not be the most glamorous task, but is necessary for the good of the school and the students. This includes actively coaching the teacher, making a plan for improvement, or even setting up mentoring sessions. The achievement of the students should be the most important objective of all educators and at all cost should be continuously strive towards. A leader ensures this fire still burns deep inside of all educators and constantly adds fuel to these fires. As an administrator, I will constantly be coaching the teachers who need assistance. Bringing out the best in athletes has always been the reason I coach so this transition should be very smooth.

Leadership is not a one-person job. I have learned this in many different situations throughout my short career as an educator. I feel leadership is based on relationships and built on teamwork. An effective leader is a team member who is willing to put the extra effort forward to ensure success is achieved. Educational leadership, like other forms of leadership, is based collaboration and teamwork. If success is going to be achieved by all stakeholders, it must be a team effort. Collaboration with teachers, peers, community members, and students will allow a school to run smoothly and efficiently.

The world has been changing and will continue to evolve. Changing with the world and implementing many different strategies is the only solution for the United States to maintain success. The future success of the United States lies in the hands of these upcoming leaders. Individuals dedicated to changing the world will mold these future leaders. This is why education must be the most important emphasis in America today. I can not wait to get the chance to become on of these leaders.

### **The Leader of Learning**

Student achievement has been the focus of many current reforms in education. Hiring new teachers with fresh ideas and more motivation has been the focus to get students to achieve to the best of their abilities. Whitaker stressed this point in 2003 when he wrote What Great Principals do Differently. The next best means of achievement was to improve the teachers that are currently in the system (Whitaker, 2003). This improvement is made by constant reflection.

Black (2001) defined reflection as “thinking systematically about practice and learning from experience” (Black, 2001). Reflecting is very important when dealing with a profession that can be very repetitive year after year. Teachers should reflect each lesson to determine the best way to teach the students in following years. The lesson should be dissected to establish which decisions made during the class period worked and which did not work. Teachers should

reflect “critically questioning and reflecting on what we do, how it works, and why we believe it is important” (Cranton & King, 2003). I will constantly be pushing my teachers to reflect. This may be done with rescheduling teacher schedules so planning times match with other teachers to bounce ideas off of each other. It may also be done by reflecting as an entire staff.

Many different strategies are being thrown into the teaching pool in attempts to meet the No Child Left Behind law. Each initiative that has been placed on the teachers’ plates increased the need for reflection of those ideas. The importance placed on implementing the new strategies and preparing for the following day has made it hard for professionals to find time to reflect at the conclusion of the day. “We are so busy planning the next day, we too frequently forget to reflect and improve upon what we did today” (Easley, 2006).

As time has become limited teachers must dig deep and find a way to reflect. “The bottom line is that, however pressed we are for time, to help our students reach their fullest potential, we must reflect” (Easley, 2006). Reflection comes in many forms in the teaching profession. Reflection for some might be self reflection. It could also take the form of class surveys or surveys from other teachers. There is no one correct way to reflect as long as reflection is taking place/

Easley wrote an article in April of 2006 that explained how to find time and ways to reflect. She came up with a few of her best ways to tell if a lesson

was a hit or if the lesson was a failure. Easley stated the best way to determine if a lesson worked or not was to refer to the stakeholders. The stakeholders are anyone who has to do with the student's education. Make the parents partners in the education of their children. Set up meetings with these parents to find what the parents know about their children's preferred learning styles (Easley, 2006).

The next stakeholders would be the other teachers in the school. Teachers must ask other teachers, who teach the same students, what works best in their classrooms. The teacher connection does not stop here. Discuss strategies with teachers in other age levels and teachers from other schools. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards has enabled communication between teachers from different districts. The board has created forums and message boards online on the Nation Board website where teachers can discuss different strategies and ideas to form the best possible classrooms (Black, 2001). I think this could tie into the planning time with other teachers. Often at smaller schools there may be only one teacher in each department. Guiding the teacher through the website may open new doors for the school

The most important stakeholders that will be consulted the most often will be the students. The gatherings with these stakeholders take place daily with hundreds of occurrences in each day. Ask the students what they liked about your teaching styles. The students know styles worked and which ones should not be used again. Teaching the students to become part of the reflection process is very

helpful not only so they can help make you a better teacher but it helps the students reflect on their work to make them better learners (Easley, 2006).

Student evaluations can also be done in survey form. The students filled out an evaluation on the teacher giving hints on how they learned the best, what things they wanted to see more of, and the things that should be thrown out of the teacher's strategies. The most important step to this evaluation must be for the students to be anonymous. This insures the students have the right to be open and free in evaluating the teaching.

Formal teacher evaluations, preformed by administrators, are a great way for professionals to reflect. The state of Iowa has spent numerous dollars to improve the evaluation process of the state's teachers. The eight state teaching standards and forty-two benchmarks have been adding to help teachers reach the goal of becoming the best possible teachers. Principals use standards and benchmarks as guidelines to evaluate the teacher performance. The tools are used to see if the teacher has met the important ideas the state has set to identify the acceptable teacher. Along with the observation the principal provides feedback to the teacher where improvements are possible. The teacher should reflect on the suggestions to become a better teacher.

In the past few years, the Iowa Department of Education starting suggesting that each professional complete a portfolio to show how the standards have been met. Each benchmark must have evidence to show that the teacher met

the criteria described in the benchmark. This is another situation where the teacher has an opportunity to reflect. The standards and benchmarks make it very easy to see where improvements can be made to be a better overall teacher.

The principal must push the teachers to become better teachers through all forms of reflection. Teachers sometimes need a little nudging to do the little things such as reflection. The principal must take the time to push these teachers toward the light of reflection. Implementing the strategy is the concept of reflection is where many schools find difficulty. Principals must make sure each of his or her teachers are reflecting and this can be accomplished through a great professional development plan.

The individual goal of a principal must be for self-improvement. This goal will only be accomplished with reflection of implementation of different school-wide initiatives. The principal must be a lifelong learner who is willing to place a great importance on leading the school improvement (Patti & Tobin, 2003). This learning must be focused on improving the school through a staff development plan. According to Kapp, Copland, and Talbert (2003) there are four steps to implementing a staff development plan based around reflection.

The first step should establish a focus on learning. The principal must get everyone on board to become a better leader of learning and teacher (Kapp, et al., 2003). The teachers must be able to relate the ideas from this

section to their classrooms. If the staff development does not seem relevant to the teacher, then the battle is lost before the project is started.

Once the attention has been focused on learning, the principal must push the idea of a community that values learning. Every teacher in the building must stress learning. The role of the principal is to guide every teacher to become the best possible. The goal for the principal should be to have an entire staff work as one unit (Kapp, et al., 2003). This unit should work together to become the best staff possible that collaborate with each other to become better.

Part of becoming a lifelong learner as a principal should be to networking with colleagues in other districts. The third step of the reflecting staff development plan would be to engage external resources (Kapp, et al., 2003). Getting ideas for the community and the education community will be very helpful in making your school successful. Use the resource available to become as educated as possible over the current trends.

Shared leadership must be last step in process. The principal should get the stakeholders to take active roles in the school. The transformation of delegating powers to capable individuals puts the lead stakeholders in charge of the school. The stakeholders need understand there can be more than one way to become a good teacher so let them brainstorm on how the school can reach its full potential (Kapp, et al., 2003).

The ISSL Standards are to principals as the Iowa Teaching Standards are to teachers. The state of Iowa has been very precise on the standards, which should be met, and what steps an administrator must take to improve. Principals must meet the six unique ISSL Standards and use the standards as guidelines to become a great administrator. ISSL should also be used as a reflecting tool for principals where strengths and weaknesses can be easily seen. Each of these standards deals with using new trends to become the best school possible.

The main component of a productive school has to be centered on reflection. A building that has teachers and administrators, who revisit ideas to improve their own expectations, will be a building with many successes. Principals must give the teachers time to reflect during the day. A daily reflection log may be the way for some teachers or even a lesson reflection log for each lesson. I think it would be juvenile for an administrator to require this to be handed in but it may be necessary for teachers to reflect.

Many forms of reflection must take place in the school. All stakeholders, including students, parents, and other teachers, need to be part of the reflection process for optimal success. The reflection must be the key for the educators, both teachers and administrators, to become better in the classroom, better members of a team, and lifelong learners.



## **The Leader of Educational Change**

Administrators have a very unique role in the educational process. These leaders get to make choices that direct the entire school in the right or wrong direction. Decisions made by these individuals will have a spider web effect, as the outcome will change the lives of many professionals under his command. Many times he or she has to make decisions that will affect the future of many students in the building. The pressure placed on his or her decisions can be very stressful. The pressure put on the administrator's shoulders day in and day out makes the job worthwhile. If the right decision has been made students will succeed but if the wrong decision has been made the school could be in trouble.

While this may sound like a job few would want, these are the reasons that I wanted to become an administrator. One of the joys of being an instructional leader is being in the mix of everything. In this section, I will share what I have learned through reading and the guidance of many school leaders. Above all, I have learned that all stakeholders must have input in important decisions that will make the school function properly.

In education administrators and teachers are bombarded with new techniques and theories to improve education through instructional tactics or learning methods. How does this administrator choose the right path for change in his school? What is the next step towards our goal?

Change has been a scary word for many teachers. For veteran teachers the world of education has been like a pendulum. A new mandate swings the pendulum one way with a fancy new name followed by another swing in the opposite direction. Most professionals have the ability to see why some teachers fight every new initiative that has been placed in front of them. The word change must be the first obstacle administrators must bust through to be successful in reform of a school.

When I become the leader my first job as a school administrator, I am going to eliminate the word change. The word has become poison to teachers, which will automatically red-flag any idea, whether good or bad, before the idea entered the door. I will use the word improve which implies our group will always work to better itself. Getting better always will prevent the school from falling victim to the pendulum rut.

Another obstacle might be the lack of research on the initiative. Longo (2002) points out many ideas fail because school administrators fail to look at all aspects of the new design. While supporters point out all of the potential benefits the proposal may bring to the table, an administrator must not be too eager to jump on the wagon. Prior research on the topic must be done before introducing it to the staff. This research should include discussions with schools that have implemented the strategy, looking for those who counter the usefulness of the idea, and look at the data pertaining to the subject. The head of the project must

be very knowledgeable about what to expect during the reform (Cuttress, Fullan, & Kilcher, 2005). Administrative journals are also a good place for an administrator to find information on different topics. It will be a challenge to stay on updated with all the information out there but I will constantly research important topics.

The last major obstacle also deals with a lack of understanding on the part of the principal. While a deep understanding of the plan must be gained, without a comprehension of the change process the proposal will fail (Cuttress, Fullan, & Kilcher, 2005). Principals who gain a detailed knowledge about change will develop leaders amongst the current staff. Too many times leaders of change jump into the change process with a hot new idea only to find it has failed to have any impact in the school (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007). Administrators must have adequate planning and use the proper steps to make any scheme work inside the school walls.

As I listened to Dr. Willard Daggett talk at the Iowa High School Summit in 2006. I was blown away by a comment he made. He captured this particular audience and the words spoken were the most logical thing I had heard out from a speaker in a long time. He explained to the audience of teachers that we were the best in the nation. He said Iowa has the best teachers in the nation, most likely the world. At this time people were eating out of the palm of his hand and I was at the front of the buffet line. He told those present no one works harder than

Iowa teachers. Daggett pointed out Iowa teachers cannot possibly work harder, but they could work smarter. Improvements should be made to develop the amazing amount of time put in by these teachers to optimize performance.

Dr. Daggett used the oldest cliché in the book by saying the teachers must work smarter, not harder. When I become an instructional leader I will use these words to inspire my teachers. I feel almost all Iowa teachers want improve and teacher more effectively, but many teachers lack the guidance from the administrators and peers. This is where the smarter part comes into the recipe.

Teachers in Iowa put in many extra hours in an attempt to give the students the best possible education. Asking these teachers to put in any more hours would result in burnout for many of these professionals. The administrator needs to step in and show these teachers how to improve their teaching with the same amount of work or possibly less. New techniques discovered through research by the principal may be the answer to efficiency. Getting the teachers at the school to buy into the new technique will make the world of difference.

Buy-in must be gained by careful articulation of the plan. This would be a very hard step if the leader of change has little idea about the initiative or change process. Slow communication should be the start of improvement in this stage with advancements that need to be made. Personal goals for the group would fit into this category along with the vision of how the plan should work. The vision decided upon should be shared as often as possible. Portis and Garcia (2007)

report administrators should “use every single opportunity to communicate the unified vision and expectation” so staff will always have a constant reminder what they work towards (p. 99).

Stakeholders in the school building must feel like their opinions matter to the administration related to what is taking place in the school. Utilizing team decisions has been an important buy-in tactic. Sometimes all teachers and staff cannot be a part of team efforts. To reach these types of surveys must be conducted to get an overall feel for the staff needs and wants.

This approach worked great at Aplington-Parkersburg when a new principal was hired. Members who wanted to be a part of the hiring committee or team had the opportunity but every member of working staff in the high school was polled to see his or her thoughts on the important characteristics for a principal. The new principal has now arrived and has benefited from a supportive faculty. This is due in large part to the buy-in on the committee’s decision.

When the opinions of the stakeholders are valued, the administrator will find useful to take a closer look at the group of stakeholders (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007). Does this group only include the teachers? Does it include the teachers and building personnel such as janitors, secretaries, and etc.? The answer to the question should be anyone the influences the school in any way. This means parents, coaches, teachers, building personnel, administrators, local business owners, and students. School leaders must extend their invitation for buy into

their staff and other stakeholders. Although not all decisions require opinions from every member sometimes the heartfelt invitation is sufficient.

Administrators must understand changing a school cannot happen merely through individual efforts. School teams must be made to lead different aspects of the change. “Leadership, to be effective, must spread throughout the organization” (Cuttress, Fullan, & Kilcher, 2005). Others, who have already bought in to the idea that the change has been focused around, must influence the nonbelievers. Mintzberg (2004) explained the legacy of a principal after he retired was not only the impact of student achievement but how many leaders he or she has fostered in the education world. The leaders being created by the principal would be great candidates for directing the teams, which are essential to complete the entire change process.

Reflecting on an idea should be almost as important as the plan itself. Many times a plan will include every necessary step to perfect an idea but no reflection has been incorporated. Great ideas fall apart because an administrator failed to make time to make contact after the scheme has been put into place. Follow up on an initiative cannot be stressed enough.

Reflection may be conducted in a number of different ways. Regrouping as a staff to discuss what ideas worked and what ideas did not would be an excellent way to start the process (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007). Asking the group of professionals to comment on the effectiveness of a scheme they have invested

their time to will help you build a sense of ownership in the building. Polling the staff with surveys could be another way to gain the opinion of the group if a face-to-face meeting cannot be conducted. Another important reflection tool should be to network with other administrators in neighboring districts to see how their style work compared to the one tried in your building. Reflection must be the key to success no matter which type is chosen.

Administrators must believe in and understand an idea before attempting to put the change process into motion. The change process can become extremely complicated before the initiative becomes common to stakeholders. The focus of improvement must be completed with the as many stakeholders as possible. Success in the change process cannot be attained without many members on board with your idea. A good leader will create other leaders in this process. Once everything looks successful remember reflect, reflect, and reflect again.

### **The Leader of Improvements in Learning**

One of the most frequent asked questions in classrooms as students grow older is “Why should we learn this?” or “What significance will this have on my future?” If the usefulness of the information in the near future is not evident then students may decide the information is a waste of time. Unfortunately, some adults take a similar approach. Just as it has become important to point out the relevance of important information to a class full of students, it has become more

important for the teachers to see significance in the learning process. It has become very important that school leaders understand how to guide adult learning within the district.

Why should teachers have the drive to learn new information? How is adult learning the same as student learning? How does adult learning differ from student learning? How does the administration lead adult learning? These questions highlight the important ideas in professional development, which will in turn trickle down to student learning. The questions are ones that I will continually ask when I am a principal.

An inspirational quote by an unknown author comes to mind as I thought about the need for adult education. The adage goes, “We get better or we get worse, we never stay the same.” The quote falls perfectly with the idea of professional development. The world continues to change everyday and as a professional, a teacher must learn new trends, ideas, and strategies or the teacher will not adequately prepare students for the future. A teacher must stay current with the proven and tested practices to become the best and stay on top of the teaching profession.

The role of the principal must be to create meaningful professional development opportunities. The school leader must place specific teachers on different teams to assure the right teachers are collaborating to gain knowledge.



The world continues to change at a rapid pace. Keeping up with changes in technology is a seemingly endless battle. Students' minds maintain to expand at a quicker pace than ever thought possible. Daggett pointed out children are used to seeing ideas at a faster pace than ever imagined. He was quick to point out the problem but the solution seemed to elude the crowd of educators at Iowa High School Summit in 2006. The only way for educators to battle the ever-changing world has been to keep up with the latest trends in education. Teachers must learn the latest strategies for student achievement. It is up to the administrator to lead these teachers with useful professional development pertaining to the latest trends. If teachers fail to understand how students are learning differently, our educational process will fail.

Teaching students can be very different than teaching adults. The two groups may also hold many similarities. The administrator must understand both areas of learning. It is very important to look at the differences and similarities of adult learning and student learning before trying to switch from one sector to the other (Drago-Severson, 2006). Many administrators fail to compare the groups before diving into the realm of adult education.

Principals have the responsibility to ensure that both students and teachers have the necessary learning opportunities that will allow them to grow and develop. Each group needs to have its basic developmental needs met (Drago-Severson, 2006). In learning all information must be pertinent and useful to

those who are trying to learn. Daggett pushes the idea of relevance of learning. His concept of relevance describes that if the idea is not going to be used why would anyone teach it? The focus of any learning must be something that people will use. This idea applies to both adults and students.

Whether a group of adults or children are being lead, a principal must relate the knowledge shared in a way the learner will use it (Drago-Severson, 2006). This will captivate the learner and keep him or her interested in the information at hand. Each person will interpret the information in a way that will be relevant to his or her experiences. Storing information happens this way in adult and adolescent learning.

Similarities between children and adult surface again when talking about the best learning styles for each individual learner (Terehoff, 2002). Every learner will learn in a different way. Teachers of adults must pay close attention to the way that different adults learn just as teachers of students. It is imperative for teachers to meet as many different learning strategies as possible.

The main differences in learning styles start to become more obvious in the area of how the different age levels relate the information. At a younger age students tend to learn because they are forced to do so. Many students come to school and learn because for years students have come to school to learn. The vast majority of students do not see the relevance of learning for knowledge purposes. Students are more worried about the grade in which they will receive.

Adolescents usually store information because it pertained to the previous day's lesson.

Adults commonly seek practical, relevant information they will use the information in the near future in their job or to further learning. Transformative learning deals with adults' ability to connect new information with the past experiences and with noteworthy aspects in his or her world (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006). An adult leader must to understand connecting information in a way that other adults see as relevant to their lives will be the key to success.

Adults revisit the learned information more often than students do. The reflection done by adults has enhanced learning. Once learning has taken place it becomes imperative to re-examine the effectiveness of what was learned and how it will apply to the learner's life. Many times learners hear information but never apply the knowledge. By reflecting adults can evaluate the information as well as the effectiveness of the implementation of the information or strategy.

Styles of learning and reflection are important to the learning process but the options for an administrator to implement information should not be overlooked. In many cases administrators lead learning with a form of staff development. The learning from a school wide in-service may be an obvious way to teach adults but many other ways of touching teachers are helpful in adult education.

Leading teachers in team activities can be overly important for learning to take place. The team may consist of members from different subject areas such as science or from an entire high school staff. By putting teachers in teams it should give the adults time to collaborate on different models or ideas throughout the school (Dirkx, 2006). Adults need time to discuss information and talk through different ideas to transfer the information useful knowledge.

While creating teams, an administrator has a unique opportunity. The person in charge gets the chance to create leaders (Drago-Severson, 2006). Creating leaders inadvertently generates three positive outcomes. New leader might be born in the district may be the first outcome. This person has more buy-in to all procedures created in this group. The person feels like part of the overall puzzle. The second side effect may be the teacher has more confidence in his abilities. The teacher feels important, more vibrant, and more involved in the school process. This teacher has become a person the principal can count on. The third thing the teacher may have opened up some time for the administrator. Once some of the duties are delegated to the group and the leader of the group the principal can foster other groups or work on unrelated agenda items.

The most important way an administrator can create instruction leadership opportunities should be the evaluation process. The evaluation, formal or informal, should give the teachers great ideas on what to work on for future

opportunities. As an administrator gives advice this person should use all the information related to adult learning such as how adults learn differently.

The teacher evaluation, if conducted correctly, should give the principal a unique one-on-one chance to educate the teacher. The discussion developed by the teacher and principal will be an opportunity for improvement. Principals must give the teachers immediate feedback so they can connect the information with the events of the class. The teacher and the administrator need to try to find better ways to improve the teacher's status.

Administrators must understand how to shift from teaching children in the classroom to leading adults through professional development. The similarities and differences are important for the principal to understand for optimal success to trickle down to student success. All types of adult education are important to the success of the school. As a school leader, the principal must organize meaningful professional development opportunities for optimal school success.

### **The Servant Leader**

Teachers are frequently asked the question why they teach? Although at times a teacher may struggle to come up with a quick response most teachers would agree the answer is for the kids. Improving the life of another human being gives meaning to the teacher's life. It fills a void in the teacher's life in a way that nothing else can. Seeing the spark in a child's eyes when he knows the correct

answer is hard to match by any other high on this earth. It is truly the greatest profession in this world. The only feeling that can parallel the joy of teaching is leading those teachers to success.

The principal has a very unique goal in the process of molding children. The school leader must do three things to have an effective school. The first goal is to guide all teachers so student success is the most important priority. Once these teachers start to see how vital student success has become the principal must gain buy-in on his initiatives to lead teachers to become better teachers. The last the goal should be for the principal to always be a leader first and manager second.

Special people understand how important it is to give to people they decide dedicate their lives to give back. Teachers fall into this small group of people servant leaders, which is someone who puts the needs of others before his needs (Greenleaf, 1996). The remarkable thing about teaching is the fact that everyone on the earth gets to experience the learning curve. In our youth everyone gets the chance to learn from a teacher. This process is very important to improve society.

Educators are an excellent example of servant leadership but are not alone in this group. Soldiers, law enforcement, religious clergy, and others all put other people's needs before their own needs. The world would not run smoothly without these people. Those who practice servant leadership focus all attention

on putting others first. The concept is easier said than done. It will require sacrifices for the good of those who are served (Hunter, 2004). In education the children must come first. The question must be constantly asked if the idea or initiative the best thing for the students.

The role of the principal in servant leadership is a very busy one. Once the principal leaves the classroom the one on one contact with students becomes scarce. Administrators must teach and guide the teachers to serve the students. The goal for the administrator is to instruct the teachers that the focus is not to better their personal lives but to better their instruction to improve students. This task maybe easier said than done but most teachers have their attitudes in this direction before entering the profession. The principal is there just to nudge the teachers if necessary.

In my short time in education I feel I have met some the great servant leaders in the business. Ed Thomas sits at the top. He is the head football coach at Aplington-Parkersburg. Ed won multiple awards for district and state coach of the year as well as being named NFL High School Coach of the Year for having the most players in the NFL.

Before joining the Aplington-Parkersburg school district, I had a preconceived notion about Ed Thomas and his falcons. He is a big shot coach who only cares about winning. My ideas were absolutely shattered upon joining this staff.

I have never met anyone as focused on changing the lives of others as this man. He continuously explains to the student-athletes that winning and losing means nothing. It is the process of becoming a good man that he is interested in. He pushes the team concept and hard work as if it is the key to success in life. I think the slogan "Do What's Right" should be tattooed across his forehead. This man is always about others. I am amazed this man is married with the hours he puts in to make things better for others. As an administrator, my goal is to have this kind of impact on my staff. Principals need to focus teacher's attention to becoming better leaders for the children. Teachers must be focused on changing students to make them better instead of worrying about our distractions such as salary, work hours, or many other complaints that circulate in the teachers' lounge.

As administrators it is essential to point teachers into this mold. The focus is always on the kids. Tate (2003) explained this by saying "skilled servants are those who inspire others to 'enroll' in their vision" (p. 35). Pushing the idea of kids first must be plastered on the walls so everyone can share the vision. It might be impossible for this transformation to occur without buy-in from the teachers on the staff. The eagerness to follow a vision is accomplished with collaboration of the vision (Blunt, 2003). Teachers will work hard to achieve an idea, which they helped create.



The vision of a servant leader always contains the idea of serving the students. The administrator must gain buy-in to the school vision. The big picture, helping students to be the best they can possibly be, must constantly be expressed to the teachers (Greenleaf, 1996). The words alone are not enough. There must be a sense of urgency in the words so the staff works hard toward the vision. The idea of bettering the students cannot be overlooked in any aspect of teaching. During a normal day Ed Thomas, one of my mentors, will be moving from one group to another explaining to the players what every second means to the success of the team. A principal might not be quite as edgy as Coach Thomas but pushing the idea of the vision must be done early and often.

I enjoyed Wis' impressive her statement about management versus leadership. She explains, "Managers get things done but leaders have the ability to create a vision and inspire the momentum needed to move things forward" (2002). I had never quite heard the idea put in this way before. She points out managers will keep the school at the same level as before but the leader has the capability of taking the staff to unimagined heights. The idea of leadership in this context is the type of power that servant leadership possesses. When the good of the whole group is thought of instead of best thing for the individual the possibilities are endless.

The focus on serving others seems too unfulfillable for most people. The idea could not be any further from the truth. Serving others is a common way to

make a life meaningful (Herman & Marlowe, 2005). Once a person finds his or her purpose in life the rest comes easy. The principal must guide each of these teachers to realize their mission in life.

The most recent support of this concept in my life is the priest at my church. I have recently started converting to Catholicism and have had an excellent opportunity to get to know the priest. The Father had a very strong calling in life to become a priest. He has given up everything to serve people and feels his life is the best it possibly could be. Father Quint might be the happiest person I have ever met and he has the fullest meaning in life. I assume my life will be similar once I fully grasp the importance of an administrator. The school leader has to be completely committed to lead teacher to believe in school improvement.

The principal should be continuously striving for success in three areas. The first major goal area would be getting teachers to put students before their own. Sometimes teachers make students an important priority but fail to serve the students to the highest level. The second area of emphasis needs to be gaining buy-in from the staff. Incorporating teachers when creating the school vision can be very vital to successful buy-in from the staff. The last area is for the principal to focus on leading and serving the teachers instead of being a manager of learning. Accomplishing these three goals will be a great foundation for school-wide success.

## Conclusion

Teachers and administrators have the opportunity to change the lives of children. In my life those people have worked extremely hard to make a difference in my world. These people have had an amazing influence on my choices and I want to give back to people in the same way.

Education is the great equalizer in the world today. With a quality education, the sky is the limit for students. Teachers setting high expectations must push student to the limits. For learning to take place teachers must push the envelope and try new teaching styles. An administrator must set equally high expectations for teachers to strive for. The leadership expressed by a principal must trickle down through the levels of learning for optimal learning to take place.

Great leadership must be the main goal of the principal. Without leaders learning would not take place. The mark of a great administrator is the number of leaders he creates (Mintzberg, 2004). The newly created leaders will simplify the role of the administrator since these people can lead the individual group efficiently. Any change that must take place in a school will be lead by the leaders created by the resourceful administrator.

Teachers and administrators have the opportunity to change the lives of children. In my life those people have worked extremely hard to make a difference in my world. These people have had an amazing influence on my choices and I want to give back to people in the same way.

The new leaders will guide any other improvements, which will most certainly arrive on the principal's desk. The administrator might have the leaders, which he created, present ideas to the staff during professional development meetings. These leaders will guide other teachers to be better teachers with new practices or fresh current ideas. This is an important way the principal can foster continuous learning and improvement.

A very important idea a principal must master is the servant leader. The students must come before all other needs. A servant leader very seldom thinks about his own needs before the needs of his school. This administrator must lead the school instead of manager the people inside.

A leader must work hard continuously at achieving the five topics of this essay. A principal will always be improving as long as reflection on past and current practices is taking place. This improvement is a must for optimal school-wide success to take place. As stated before, education is the great equalizer and it all starts with the school.

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