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Abstract

It is important for every future administrator to think about and reflect upon their values and beliefs regarding educational leadership. By identifying these ideas early in their education, one can better learn how to put them into administrative practice. Without this set of beliefs, a future administrator may find it difficult to evolve into an effective leader.

In order to attain this growth, I will utilize the six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL) and their respective indicators for knowledge, disposition, and performance. The standards for visionary, instructional, organizational, collaborative, ethical, and political leadership will be employed to organize and articulate my belief system for administrative leadership and practice.

Personal Professional Vision for Administrative Practice:

A Reflective Essay

A Research Paper

Presented to

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts in Education

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by

Lisa Lueken

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A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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It is important for every future administrator to think about and reflect upon their values and beliefs regarding educational leadership. By identifying these ideas early in their education, one can better learn how to put them into administrative practice. Without this set of beliefs, a future administrator may find it difficult to evolve into an effective leader. This core set of values and beliefs provides a foundation on which future experiences can be built.

While reflection and identification of one's values is an important a step in the growth of an administrator, it is not an easy task. It requires reflecting on the educational belief system one already has and determining how it will be affected by the role of an administrator. In order to attain this growth, I will utilize the six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL) and their respective indicators for knowledge, disposition, and performance. The standards for visionary, instructional, organizational, collaborative, ethical, and political leadership will be employed to organize and articulate my belief system for administrative leadership and practice.

Visionary Leadership

The first Iowa Standard addresses visionary leadership. According to the standard, an administrator needs to "promote the success of all students, facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community"(Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). I think visionary leadership is essential because, without it, it may be difficult for an administrator to effectively demonstrate the five other leadership skills. If an administrator does not have a vision to share with the students, staff, and school

community, he/she will never get the support needed to implement their instructional, organizational, collaborative, ethical, and political goals. This sentiment is reflected by William C. Cunningham and Paula A. Cordeiro (2000) in Educational Administration: A Problem-Based Approach. They believe that "The creation of the ideal twenty-first-century school will ultimately depend on the staff's ability to visualize it and work toward it. It is the leader, however, who is responsible for inspiring, developing, coordinating, and assessing staff efforts (Cunningham and Cordeiro, 2000, p. 190). Visionary leadership is crucial to garner support needed to successfully administer a school. Developing visionary leadership should be the first step an administrator tackles, for it provides the basis for the rest of his/her work.

Knowledge Indicators

Developing and sharing a vision is not an easy task. When I look at the knowledge indicators for the visionary leadership standard it becomes apparent that an administrator needs to be able to see the big picture. They need to know how to use data, understand systems theory, and be able to communicate and negotiate as well. I think this may be a difficult aspect to master because it requires staying abreast on all these parts while completing the daily tasks of the job. It requires tremendous focus and determination because it can be easy to lose sight of the big picture and the end goal.

Lorraine Monroe (1997) demonstrated in her book, Nothing's Impossible: Leadership Lessons from Inside and Outside the Classroom how important it is for a principal to keep the big picture in mind while communicating a vision to a core group of believers who can help execute your plan. Using her personal experiences, she explains, "At Taft, I had the good fortune to be surrounded from the beginning by a small core of

believers . . . They all caught my vision and my seriousness. Improvement at Taft was a long-term dream plan, acted out day to day by ordinary and extraordinary people" (Monroe, 1997, p. 140). These people included teachers, assistant principals, support staff, and custodians that helped spread her vision after she articulated to them her dreams for a high school that was in need of success. Through her communication, negotiation, and leadership skills, she was able to bring about day to day changes that resulted in her "big picture" goals for the school.

Dispositions Indicators

The challenge of articulating and sharing a vision becomes even more apparent when one takes into consideration the dispositions indicators for visionary leadership. Not only does an administrator have to champion high student achievement, but they also have to be concerned that this is completed within an inclusive community dedicated to continuous school improvement. In order to commit to these dispositions, one has to be aware of their far-reaching implications.

The members of the school board in Houston faced the problems associated with a non-inclusive community when they wanted to create a document that explained the board's vision for the Houston Independent School District. In Fighting to Save our Urban Schools and Winning: Lessons From Houston, Donald McAdams (2000) explained how the school board attempted to clarify to the public that the problems faced by the district were not personnel problems, but organizational problems that the board needed the support of the community to combat. The board's vision was to restructure the district with the help of civic leaders, parents, business leaders, educators, and labor leaders. The restructuring was not the heart of the vision, however. The board's vision

was committed to "increased student achievement, reduced drop-out rates, safer schools, more parental involvement, less regulation of schools, greater district responsiveness to school communities, and an improvement in the district's image" (McAdams, 2000, p. 7-8). The board reflected the need to include many stakeholders in the process of implementing a plan to continually increase student achievement. The problems they encountered in this task paralleled the problems a school can encounter if their community is not inclusive.

Performance Indicators

In order to achieve the encompassing goals of visionary leadership, leaders should reflect upon and implement the performance indicators for this standard. These indicators stress the importance of careful planning in order to master visionary leadership. Careful planning, in turn, requires data analysis in the beginning of the vision development process, using available school and community resources, communicating with students, staff, parents, and community members throughout the process, and, finally, monitoring and communicating the progress towards the vision with these same people. A vision is nothing if it is not shared with others and this standard reflects the importance of communication in the visionary development process.

The social psychologist Elliot Aronson (2000) attempted to demonstrate the importance of research in developing programs to develop his vision of an emotionally safe school environment for children that promotes high academic achievement. In his book, Nobody Left to Hate: Teaching Compassion After Columbine, Aronson explains his theories on the importance of emotional intelligence development in children in order to help parents and the community understand their role in the cultivation of his vision

for schools. Social research has shown that programs in schools aimed at identifying students with depression and helping those students learn strategies to deal with the problems associated with the disease have resulted in significant decreases in the occurrence of full blown depression in those children. According to Aronson, "It turns out that learning strategies of emotional intelligence is not only good for students' mental health, it is also good for a school's bottom line—academic achievement. No matter how you look at it, higher emotional intelligence means higher academic achievement" (Aronson, 2000, p. 101). His work was created during a time of heightened emotions surrounding schools and attempted to keep visions for emotionally safe schools alive during a time of violence. His work also serves as an example for leaders who are faced with emotionally charged situations that they should remain steadfast in their planning for the continued implementation of a shared vision.

Instructional Leadership

While it is important to create and share a vision with the school community in order to promote the success of students, it is essential that a leader correlates the vision with instructional practice. As a high school teacher, I think the second standard may be the standard with which I am most comfortable based on my classroom experience. My teaching experience has already influenced my belief that this is an important standard that I think many administrators erroneously overlook. According to the instructional leadership standard, an administrator needs to "promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining school culture"(Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). This standard's indicators were the focus of my undergraduate studies

and I spent much time and effort learning how to understand and implement these ideas into my classroom.

It is important that an administrator looks back at the instructional leadership criteria so they don't lose the focus of the role of instructional leadership among all of their other priorities, especially how the development of a quality curriculum can support the achievement of the vision for the school community. According to Allan A. Glatthorn (2000) there are three key reasons why an administrator, especially a principal, should work to perfect their skills as an instructional and curriculum leader. These reasons include,

> First, a quality curriculum is essential in achieving educational excellence . . . Second, though both state and the district have key roles to play in the development and implementation of curricula, there is widespread agreement among the experts that meaningful change takes place primarily at the school level . . . Also, there is abundant evidence that the principal plays a key role in determining the overall effectiveness of the school (Glatthorn, 2000, p. 25).

Knowledge Indicators

As I stated earlier, being a teacher makes the indicators for this standard seem almost law because I devoted so much previous attention to them in my undergraduate work. The knowledge indicators, in particular, that are the most important are understanding student growth and development in the context of effective instruction, assessment, and curriculum design. One cannot forget, however, the role of the school culture and staff development in the act of obtaining this goal.

Linda Lyman (2000), in her book How Do They Know You Care? The Principal's Challenge, observed these knowledge indicators at the Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center. When reporting on the premises of the curriculum of the

center, it is apparent that this special school was designed with the understanding of

student growth as one of its primary focuses. The four premises behind curriculum are

> Young children learn best through active, engaged, meaningful learning, young
> children learn best when the school develops a sense of community for all
> participants, young children function best in programs which value and reinforce
> continuity, and young children learn best in environments which are appropriate
> for their age and stage of development and when they are with teachers who
> consider and respond to them as individuals (Lyman, 2000, pp. 38-39).

It is easy to see that the team who created the curriculum, instruction, and

assessment goals for the school understood the importance of instructional leadership

when they tied these curriculum premises with a project-based approach to instruction

with multifaceted assessment.

Dispositions Indicators

In order to understand the disposition indicators more completely, one must first

internalize the belief that student learning is the fundamental purpose of schooling.

When this becomes a core belief, it is easier to understand the other dispositions for

instructional leadership. These include recognizing that students learn in different ways

and that learning can only take place in a safe and supportive learning environment that

advocates life long learning.

In the book, We Can Have Better Urban Schools, the idea of recognizing the

different ways in which students learn is articulated as a fundamental way in which to

combat the problems associated with urban schools. Authors Cornell Thomas, Paulette

Fitzhugh-Walker, and Phildra T. Jefferies (2000) explain that "If the true concern is to

enhance academic success in urban schools, then curriculum issues should also take into

consideration the concepts of culturally-sensitive environments, learning styles, multiple

intelligences, taxonomy of knowledge, and needs satisfaction" (Thomas, Fitzhugh-

Walker & Jefferies, 2000, p. 27). They believe that when these concepts are included in the development of curriculum, the curriculum will provide "the foundation that can enable students to transgress from one level of educational objectives to other levels" (Thomas, Fitzhugh-Walker & Jefferies, 2000, p. 31). When a foundation is laid according to these principles of instruction, lifelong learning becomes an attainable goal for students.

<u>Performance Indicators</u>

If an administrator wishes to create the type of environment in which instructional leadership can grow, they must adhere to the performance indicators for this standard. I think the most important of these is that there is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff performance. Schools that don't exhibit high expectations for all set themselves up for lower performances by the aforementioned individuals. According to this expectation, then, leaders should provide multiple opportunities for all students to learn and be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. The responsibility rests upon administrators to seek and model these ideals in order to achieve instructional leadership success.

Lorraine Monroe (1997) encountered a culture of low expectations when she became a principal and set out to change the way the staff, students, parents, and community viewed the expectations for the students and school. She began this process by directly observing teachers in their classrooms to demonstrate her focus on the importance of instruction. Her observations demonstrated that she was working to create a more conducive environment for learning for students. She learned that classroom observation is "the principal's most important method for improving school tone and

student achievement. More broadly, I realized that being everywhere around the building, observing, listening, and schmoozing with everybody were serious acts of leadership" (Monroe, 1997, p. 128). By directly observing teachers and students, Monroe created a culture of high expectations, not only for herself, but also for students and staff as well. She recognized, as administrators should, that devotion to the practices utilized by instructors within their classrooms helps shape the success of the entire school community.

Organizational Leadership

The next piece of the leadership puzzle, organizational leadership, enables the administrator's vision to best align with instructional practices to obtain the goals of the school community. Organizational leadership requires an administrator to "promote the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). In other words, an administrator must attend to the behind-the-scenes work so that everything can function to ensure that the students have a proper place in which to learn. According to Marsha Speck (1999) in The Principalship: Building a Learning Community, this is considered the manager role of an administrator. This role includes, "preparing, planning, providing resources, maintaining facilities, handling student problems, and keeping a safe environment (Speck, 1999, p. 69). To me, this seems to be the nuts and bolts of an administrator's job.

Knowledge Indicators

Acquiring organizational leadership will require me to put forth much effort because I am still gaining understanding of the knowledge indicators for the standard. Luckily, I already know that it is a necessity that I continue to deepen my understanding of school safety and security issues, school facilities issues, legal issues impacting school operations, and human resources management and development.

Elliot Aronson's (2000) work exhibits the importance of understanding these issues. He believes school safety and security must be solved in conjunction with an emphasis on compassion within a school. With regard to the safety issues presently facing school, Aronson explains,

> It is reasonably clear that a major root cause of the recent school shootings is a school atmosphere that ignores, or implicitly condones, the taunting, rejection, and verbal abuse to which a great many students are subjected. A school that ignores the values of empathy, tolerance, and compassion-or worse still, pays lip service to these values while doing nothing concrete and effective to promote these values-creates an atmosphere that is not only unpleasant for the 'losers,' but one that short changes the 'winners' as well (Aronson, 2000, p. 70).

Therefore, an administrator cannot dismiss how students are treated within the school in their efforts to create an organizationally sound, safe learning environment.

Dispositions Indicators

In order to fully understand the implications of organizational leadership, I must first recognize the importance of my role in obtaining information regarding the processes of the school and the school climate and culture. An effective administrator needs to exhibit certain dispositions to attain this knowledge. The most crucial of these is to feel comfortable taking risks and take responsibility for those risks while making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching in a safe environment.

Lorraine Monroe (1997) was an administrator that understood the consequences of taking risks. She knew that when she attempted to implement organizational change, there would always be those people who wanted to interfere and impede the progress. She also knew, however that "the alternatives to risk taking are deadly. Doing nothing, running scared, and second-guessing kills initiative, blights creativity, and ultimately sabotages the organization and the good work it should be accomplishing" (Monroe, 1997, p. 151). She decided the negative consequences of risk taking were a necessary evil in order to accomplish the goals of the school.

Performance Indicators

Within the concepts of risk taking and organizational leadership, an administrator needs to be attentive to the importance of time management, fiscal management, communication, and the problem solving process if they want to achieve a safe, clean, and aesthetically pleasing school environment. While this is an important goal for an administrator, they can't forget to share the responsibilities with the stakeholders in this process. This is an attainable goal, but needs to be accomplished within the context of organizational leadership.

Donald McAdams (2000) learned the lesson of including stakeholders firsthand while trying to restructure the Houston Independent School District as a member of the school board. While serving as a school board member, he learned a lot about the needs of urban schools within the framework of organizational management. He felt that in order for school districts to be organizationally functional it required some very deliberate changes. Specifically, he learned that "School communities need to be empowered. Parents need to be involved. Management systems need to be

decentralized. Business functions need to be outsourced. . . . And everything must be done with strategic intent and with a focus on the organization as a whole" (McAdams, 2000, p. xvii). Through reading the many disagreements with community members, parents, and administration regarding how to make the Houston Independent School District more functional, I learned how organizational leadership is a pivotal role for school leaders.

<div align="center">Collaborative Leadership</div>

In order to accomplish the visionary, instructional, and organizational goals, an administrator must achieve collaborate leadership skills. Collaborative leadership is a vital aspect of an administrator's job and should not be taken lightly. Collaboration is a highly useful tool and a "must" if an administrator wishes to garner support from parents, staff, and the community. Collaboration is a hot topic in my school as of late because we are undergoing efforts to increase collaboration and communication among teachers. While I think we are gaining success among teachers, there still lacks effective communication and collaboration between administrators and teachers and administrators and the community. I think an administrator really needs to nurture collaboration with the teachers and the community so people are more willing to buy into their visionary, instructional, and organizational plans. The implementation of these plans could be very smooth if solid, collaborative, trusting, professional relationships exist among the administration, the staff, and the community.

Knowledge Indicators

An administrator must understand how the process of identifying the dynamics of the community and identifying trends and issues that affect the community, can aid the

implementation of their goals. McAdams (2000) had practice with this concept as well. Through his position he learned that important trends in the community revolved around neighborhood "wars" over schools. He explained the premise of the neighborhood wars by saying, "In urban systems resources are inadequate, parents and communities put their own children first, and quality education is defined not only by curriculum, teacher effectiveness, and facilities-it is also defined by the race and class of the students in the classroom and in the schools" (McAdams, 2000, pp. 58-59). By identifying the underlying issues of class and race, the school board worked tirelessly to include the various community perspectives during collaborative projects.

Dispositions Indicators

Administrators, like school board members, need to be committed to seeing the parents, community, and students as integral parts of the educational process. They need to value the role of these people in the decision-making process and invite them to be stakeholders in the process. While the parents and communities are often consulted during the decision-making process, very often students are left out of the communication. Bruce L. Wilson and H. Dickson Corbett (2000) researched the role of students in the process of educational reform in their book, Listening to Urban Kids: School Reform and the Teachers They Want. From their research, the authors concluded that students have valuable information to contribute to the change process. The authors believe students should be included as much as possible, and that they have historically been ignored as an essential element of the improvement process. "That is, students do not have formal opportunities to work out the meaning of change for themselves, to receive technical assistance in trying out their new roles, or to obtain formative feedback

on how they are doing" (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 127). Administrators need to be

very cognizant of the capabilities students bring to the collaboration process involve them

in the change process, not as recipients of change, but as formulators of change.

<u>Performance Indicators</u>

Administrators also need to recognize the resources students, parents, and

community members can bring to the table and use these resources whenever possible to

create ownership of the decision. In order to accomplish these ideas, administrators

should actively seek business partners and community groups to support school goals.

They ought to be highly visible to the staff and community and create a comprehensive

program of community and parental relations. Finally, they must create opportunities for

the staff to develop collaborative skills to aid this process. The Valeska Hinton Early

Childhood Education Center understood these concepts when they developed their school

philosophy. The process of creating the philosophy involved an advisory committee of

15 that included many stakeholders. The final paragraph of their finished product

directly reflects the goals of a collaborative leader: "We encourage families, citizens,

community organizations, schools, and government to work together to create a safe and

positive environment for all children, to stimulate their level of learning and to inspire

them to reach their full potential" (Lyman, 2000, p. 35).

Another example of utilizing community resources to support school goals can be

seen through the work of the Rheedlen Centers for Children in Families in New York

City. Geoffrey Canada (1998) is the president of the Rheedlen Centers and relates how

the focus of the community centers corresponds with the needs of the schools. In

<u>Reaching Up for Manhood</u>, he details how the centers use the concept of work in the

centers to motivate students to succeed in school. At the Rheedlen centers, teenagers are allowed to work and earn money provided they are enrolled in school and receive passing grades. If they fail to do so, they lose their jobs at Rheedlen. By connecting work and school, Rheedlen has seen many of its teenagers graduate from high school and go on to college. According to Canada, "While teenagers might not have figured out what passing tenth-grade English has to do with being employable later on in life, they know that passing that class has everything to do with keeping a job today" (Canada, 1998, p. 120). The Rheedlen Centers are excellent examples of community resources that educational leaders should collaborate with to achieve their school goals.

Ethical Leadership

Just as collaboration is an indispensable part of an administrator's position, so is the next standard, ethical leadership. I previously mentioned how reflecting on different types of leadership provides the foundation for my belief system. I believe the foundation of all leadership rests on ethics. I do not believe an administrator can administer well according to their visionary, instructional, organizational, and collaborative goals if they are not aware of their ethical standards, values, and beliefs. Ethics should be the basis upon which their decisions are made. An ethical leader needs to "promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner"(Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Knowledge Indicators

Ethical leadership can be a difficult area to master because it requires constant professionalism, scrutiny of one's actions, and responsibility for one's actions. In particular, it needs to incorporate the knowledge indicators that reflect understanding the

purpose of education in society, the values of the diverse school community, and the

purpose of a professional code of ethics. Cornell Thomas, et al. (2000) reflects these

sentiments when he states, "The process of teaching and learning must continue to help

and support existing social construct. Preparing our young to understand their roles and

support the existing norms and values of this society must continue to be the primary

purpose of school" (Thomas, Fitzhugh-Walker, & Jefferies, 2000, p. 83-84).

Ethical leaders must strive to make connections between the values and norms of

society and those of the school. Administrators should learn from ethical leaders of the

past and incorporate the experiences ethical leaders throughout society into the

educational arena. A great example of an ethical leader from the past is Katharine

Graham (1997). She became the president of the Washington Post following her

husband's suicide and led the paper through its revolutionary uncovering of the

Watergate scandal. Amidst vehement opposition to the reports, Graham contended,

> We always did our best to be careful and responsible, especially when we were
> carrying the burden of the Watergate reporting. From the onset, the editors had
> resolved to handle the story with more than the usual scrupulousness attention to
> fairness and detail. They laid down certain rules, which were followed by
> everyone. First, every bit of information attributed to an unnamed source had to
> be supported by at least one other, independent source. Second, we ran nothing
> that was reported by any other newspaper, television, radio station, or other media
> outlet unless it was independently verified and confirmed by our own reporters.
> Third, every word of every story was read by at least one of the senior editors
> before it went into print, with a top editor vetting each story before it ran. As any
> journalist knows, these are rigorous tests (Graham, 1997, p.471).

Graham displayed ethical leadership during a political crisis and in turn, provided an

example for future leaders in any occupation to follow.

Dispositions Indicators

     The administrator needs to act according to knowledge of ethics, keeping in mind that every student has a right to a free, quality education. The authors of <u>We Can Have Better Urban Schools</u> reiterate this belief when they proclaim,

> In effect, the challenges that urban schools present to educators and policy makers alike today is the challenge of designing school environments and practices that, by virtue of being driven by the valuing of quality and equity for all, take as their starting point a fundamental belief in every child's ability to learn and grow under the guidance of caring professionals who not only have a sound understanding of and respect for human variation but are able to commit themselves to bringing out the very best in every child entrusted to their care (Thomas, Fitzhugh-Walker, & Jefferies, 2000, p. 95).

The authors' statements highlight not only the importance of providing every child a quality, equitable education, but also that this belief rests in a leader's acceptance of the crucial role of ethics in their decisions about children.

Performance Indicators

     Finally, an administrator needs to demonstrate ethical actions. Their actions need to reflect their personal and professional ethics, an equitable treatment of people, and high expectations that others in the school community are held to these same standards. Kenneth Hinton, the principal at the Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center, demonstrated ethical actions even when faced with difficult decisions. Linda Lyman (2000) perceived the complexities that arise in these types of situations when she noted, "Combining a caring attitude and ethic with bureaucratic responsibilities can be challenging because of caring's conflicting claims" (Lyman, 2000, p. 74). When Hinton chooses to dismiss a teacher, he uses his ethical standards on the level of care needed for each child in the school. For instance, he released an experienced teacher after she refused to make changes in her classroom in the way she treated children. This decision

reflected his caring decision making, and strangely enough, "demonstrated the care for

the teacher who had lost the heart to care by encouraging her to leave the profession"

(Lyman, 2000, p. 75). In Hinton's actions lie excellent examples for leaders on how to

incorporate their values and ethics into their decision-making strategies. If an

administrator fails to act according to a personal code of ethics, the staff, the parents, and

the community will easily see this, and the administrator may have difficulty gaining

support for their initiatives.

<div align="center">Political Leadership</div>

While an administrator needs to hold themselves responsible for their ethical

leadership, the last standard, political leadership, often allows others to hold the

administrator responsible for their actions. Through the development of political

leadership, an administrator will achieve more success with their visionary, instructional,

organizational, collaborative, and ethical objectives. According to the political leadership

standard, an administrator needs to "promote the success of all students by understanding,

responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural

context" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Knowledge Indicators

Others can hold administrators responsible regarding this standard, but "things"

like the law, in particular, enforce this standard the most. An effective administrator

must have a sizeable amount of knowledge regarding the law as it relates to education

and schooling. They need to understand how society, economics, politics, and culture

shape the school culture and respond appropriately when there is a need to address

change and conflict resolution within the school community. They also need to know

how these facets affect policy development within the context of the school. Donald

McAdams (2000) reflects the understanding of the roles of economics, society, politics,

and culture, when he comments about what he learned in Houston about the political

nature of schools:

> Implicit in the Houston story from Chapter 1 is what I consider to be the core
> issue in urban school reform: governance. Urban schools are centers of conflict.
> Schools are where we send our most precious possession, our children. They
> affect our neighborhoods, our property values, and our tax rates. Schools are at
> the center of American's obsession with race, so schools are the major arena in
> this country for ethnic politics. Schools are about the core values of society.
> Everyone who wants to change or protect the status quo wants to influence the
> schools. And public education is big business. Schools are about vendors,
> contracts, and jobs. School reform is not reasoned debate about children,
> curriculum, teaching, and learning. It is political combat. Everyone is for school
> reform. But nearly everyone has another agenda (McAdams, 2000, p. xvi).

As aggressive as his stance sounds, I pity the future administrator who goes into a

leadership position not understanding these basic truths about the political nature of

schools and school reform.

In addition to understanding the political, social, and cultural context of a

community, a leader must understand the role of economics in making decisions about

schools. Political and ethical decision-making must not wilt under pressure from the

community to establish and run schools according to economic considerations rather than

educational considerations. In his book Ordinary Resurrections: Children in the Years of

Hope, Jonathon Kozol (2000) warns those involved in education to be wary of the

unethical and political enticements of decision making in schools according to economic

efficiency and cost-effectiveness. He recognizes that

Those, however, are the usual criteria for budgeting decisions in most programs that serve children. 'Productivity' is almost everything. Elements of childhood that bear no possible connection to the world of enterprise and profit get no honor in the pedagogic world right now, nor in the economic universe to which it seems increasingly subservient (Kozol, 2000, p. 135).

Recognizing the role of economics and their political implications is essential when determining how to make the best decisions for children, parents, and the community without compromising one's vision and ethics.

<u>Dispositions Indicators</u>

In addition to knowing how society, economics, politics, and culture affect policy development, an administrator needs to show commitment to advocating education. They need to reinforce the idea that education is a key factor to social mobility and actively participate in policy-making decisions that affect education. Lorraine Monroe's (1997) actions as a principal in a tough urban school mirror her advocacy for education. She decided to create an honors program for students at Taft High School when none existed and critics told her there were no "honors" students at Taft. She ignored these comments after realizing, "we had to prove to the community and to the kids themselves that academic excellence at Taft was not just a matter of history and that our students were capable of achieving great things" (Monroe, 1997, p. 138). She asked the counselor to identify potential honors students and form honors classes initially for the incoming ninth-graders. "Average" students found much success in the honors programs and were examples for the other students in the building. Their success demonstrated the value of education to their peers, especially when most went on to college and some even went to Ivy League schools (pp. 138-139). Monroe's decision had some very political implications but proved that educational success can be promoted in any school. An

administrator that demonstrates political leadership recognizes the diversity within the

school and how this should be used to enhance education.

Performance Indicators

Finally, an administrator works to maintain open lines of communication within

the school community so that the community works within the state, federal, and local

regulations and addresses trends and concerns that could affect the school environment.

These ideas become increasingly important regarding issues of school safety and

discipline. An administrator needs to demonstrate political leadership by making

discipline decisions for students with disabilities and students without disabilities

according to the law. The leader needs to ensure that everyone within the school

community has working knowledge of applicable laws so students can be treated

equitable and fairly. According to Senator Harrison Williamson,

> We must recognize our responsibility to provide education for all children [with
> disabilities] which meets our unique needs. The denial of the right to education
> and to equal opportunity within this nation for handicapped children-whether it be
> outright exclusion from school, the failure to provide an education which meets
> the needs of a single handicapped child, or the refusal to recognize the
> handicapped child's right to grow-is a travesty of justice and a denial of equal
> protection under the law (Yell, 1998, p. 69).

Administrators must promote equitable and fair treatment under the law when faced with

educational and discipline decisions regarding students with disabilities.

Conclusion

After reflecting upon these standards and their respective knowledge,

dispositions, and performances indicators, I have a better understanding of the role of an

administrator. Granted it is not an easy role or even an easy role to define, but it is

fathomable when you incorporate the six Iowa Standards. The guidelines for visionary

leadership show me the importance of seeing the big picture and always working toward a common goal. The guidelines for instructional leadership show the need to utilize my teaching experiences to deliver a quality education to every student through my guidance of teachers and incorporation of best classroom practice. The guidelines for organizational leadership demonstrate how attention needs to be given to the day to day operations of the school so that a safe school environment can be preserved for optimal instruction. The guidelines for collaborative leadership illustrate how vitally important it is to communicate with parents, staff, students, and community to foster support for the learning goals of the school. The guidelines for ethical leadership stress the importance of having a professional set of values on which to base your decisions so that there is an equitable distribution of goods and services within the school to students. Lastly, the guidelines for political leadership explain how social, political, economic, and cultural factors can and should affect the decision making process within the school community to ensure that learning opportunities are available to all students.

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