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A preferred vision for leading high schools : a reflective essay

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A preferred vision for leading high schools : a reflective essay

Abstract

In order to maintain our great educational system in America, it takes great school leaders. The school principal plays the most important role in the success of a school. A school leader is responsible for the management of the organization, operations, and resources. A school principal has now taken on a new role with the increased focus on accountability and student success. The principal is responsible for monitoring the improvement and success of all students. The school leader is the voice of the school and it's important to be visible around the community at businesses, churches, clubs, and organizations.

A PREFERRED VISION FOR LEADING HIGH SCHOOLS

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

And Postsecondary Education

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

by

Troy M. Osterhaus

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Dr. Dave Else

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A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

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Education is one of the most rewarding professions. Educators have the power to create opportunities for students through the teaching and learning process. They get the chance to see the success of students first hand. It is very important to have effective educational leaders. Administrators, teachers, and coaches all play a leadership role in one way or another.

I grew up with two brothers and two sisters on a farm north of Earlville, Iowa. I am the youngest of five children separated by only six years. Having brothers and sisters close in age, provided for a very loving family that has remained close to this day. While growing up, my parents instilled values of family, hard work, and respect. After graduating from Maquoketa Valley high school in 1996, I attended Wayne State College (WSC) in Nebraska for two years. I transferred to Wartburg College where I graduated with a BA in science education in 2001. It was not until my first year at Wartburg that I decided to go into education. I did play college basketball at both WSC and Wartburg. After graduation, I took a teaching job with the Maquoketa Community School District where I teach science and coach basketball. I am in my fifth year in the school district as a teacher and coach. I married my wife Jenny in 2002 and have a three-year-old, Lauren, and a one-year-old, Reese. Through these experiences, I have truly seen the importance and value of education.

Throughout my life I have always had a love for children. In high school and college I would volunteer time to read to elementary students, and spent time

tutoring and doing individual basketball workouts with high school students and athletes. I worked the Special Olympics for three years while I was at Wartburg. By doing these activities with kids, students, and athletes, I was able to see and experience the true rewards of working with young people. I was able to see the difference education was making in the lives of these people. Seeing these students learn and succeed, motivated me to become an educator.

As our society continues to become more diverse in race, culture, and language it is important that our youth are educated in order to prosper in this world. An educated society reduces violence and crime, and promotes economic development. It is the role of public schools to prepare every student to be successful in life. This means high schools need to prepare some students for college and other students with the skills necessary to enter the workforce. In order to do this, schools must be willing to change to meet the needs of the diversity of students within the school. Education must focus on the success of all students. This accountability puts a great deal of responsibility on our leaders and educators. Education is a fundamental right of every American and it is our job to provide the best education possible. We have a great educational system in America, but as professionals it is important to realize there is always room for improvement. It is important schools continue to change as the world and society changes.

In order to maintain our great educational system in America, it takes great school leaders. The school principal plays the most important role in the success of a school. This person must have the ability to create a vision that is shared and supported by the school community. This requires hard work and persistence. A school leader is responsible for creating an environment that is safe and conducive to student learning. This requires good instructional programs. It is the job of the principal to ensure success in each of these programs by providing help and assistance when needed. A school leader must stay knowledgeable of national, state, and local news and laws that could affect and change a school. This awareness and knowledge will provide the data needed to make tough decisions. It is important to involve faculty, parents, and other community members when making decisions. School leaders must make data-driven decisions in order to provide a sound base and reasoning for the decisions made. A school leader is responsible for the management of the organization, operations, and resources. A school principal has now taken on a new role with the increased focus on accountability and student success. The principal is responsible for monitoring the improvement and success of all students. The school leader is the voice of the school and it's important to be visible around the community at businesses, churches, clubs, and organizations. While being visible it is important to promote the value of education, talk about the successes of the students, the school, and relay any new happenings within the school to

community members. This type of promotion helps to create a school community filled with pride. It is in a collaborative school and community culture that a principal can most effectively maintain the vision, instructional programs, and management of organization, operations, and resources.

I enrolled in the Educational Leadership program at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) because I believe in the value of education and the success of all students. I want to have the opportunity to lead and promote the success of a school by working with teachers, students, parents, and community members to ensure the success of the school. There are many challenges facing schools today, and I look forward to having the opportunity to face these challenges and any others that may arise in the future. I look forward to the learning opportunities throughout this program in order to prepare me to become an effective school leader.

Education is a very rewarding profession. I plan on being involved with education the rest of my life. Like the ever-changing world and society, so changes the education profession. It is through education and leadership that America is able to succeed and prosper. The following elements are critical to the success of educational leaders in today's high schools: leading ethically, leading learning, the change process, and organizational leadership.

Leading Ethically

It is critical to be a leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. Ethical leadership and decision making is based on your values and beliefs. In the field of education, leaders must value every student receiving an appropriate education that will allow him or her to be productive citizens in society. In order to provide this to students leaders need to accept responsibility, lead with courage, and promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Accepting Responsibility

By accepting responsibility for decisions educational leaders are able to develop trust and respect from the faculty, community, and students in the school community. This creates a learning community conducive to learning for all students. To maintain trust leaders use consistency in the decision making process. Effective leaders base all decisions on what is valued most in education, and that is what is best for all students. According to D. Else (personal communication, July 5, 2005), there are several questions educational leaders must ask when going through the decision making process. Is it legal? Is it ethical? Are there elements of the process or decision that are kept secret? Are there conflicts of interests? Would it matter if it were in the newspaper tomorrow? By asking these questions and always valuing what is best for

students, educational leaders are able make consistent decisions and accept responsibility for these decisions.

According to Heifetz and Linsky (2004), it is important to take the initiative to address the issues in your school and accept responsibility for change. Do not be quick to lay the blame on others, as this will run the risk of misdiagnosing the situation. Instead of creating me versus them, create an environment where the responsibility is shared and the problem can be faced together. Whitaker (2003) notes that effective principals work to make all teachers accept responsibility, and the great principals view themselves as responsible for all aspects of their school.

Leading with Courage

Leading with courage is a vital part in the success of a school. Leading with courage enables the school leader to make the tough decisions that need to be made. In order to lead with courage there must be confidence in the leaders ability to make the right decisions. If there is a lack of confidence, people will start to doubt the decisions and changes that are being made. When leading with courage, preparation is the key. According to Glickman (2002), detailed preparation is typical of great leaders. A prepared leader minimizes the chance of failure through extensive planning and enables himself/herself to adjust to unanticipated day-to-day problems that may occur.

Another critical aspect of courageous leaders is commitment. School leaders must be fully committed to the changes and decisions made towards the success of the school community. Any time there is change there is going to be opposition, and it is vital to stay committed to the decisions in order to support the schools vision. According to Glickman (2002), "The leader must be ready to deal with challenges from those who continue to resist change or refuse to participate. If the school has a solid foundation of common beliefs, it is the responsibility of the leader to have the moral authority to support the vision of the school" (p. 43).

When leading courageously there must be a foundation for decisions and sustained change. There must be underlying core beliefs that drive the decision making process. These beliefs should be developed through the stakeholders and they should define a good education and expectations for student learning. The primary belief of any school should be that decisions are made in the best interests of students. According to Glickman (2002), there should also be action research to help drive the decision making process. Action research is the ongoing process of assessing the school's practices on the basis of external research and the school's own continual collection and analysis of data. The internal research is critical, because all schools are different. Just because external research shows that a practice worked in one school district, does not mean that it is applicable to your district and learning community.

Acting with Integrity

Effective educational leaders must act with integrity. This means being honest and straightforward with the faculty and learning community. People want to hear the truth about situations and problems that may arise within a school. The truth may be difficult to deal with at the time, but in the end honesty and straightforwardness will allow school leaders to gain the respect of the school community. According to Wilmore (2002), acting with integrity is a critical element for school leaders. She explains:

Students, faculty, staff, and the community must be able to trust you, to know that even if you make an unpopular decision, you did so based on facts rather than favoritism. They need to know that you do not have any ulterior motives, that you are honest, and that the best interest of the school and community are of utmost importance to you. Act consistently and treat all people equitably. Show stakeholders in the school and community that you genuinely care about them. Nurture, sustain, and advocated for every person and for the school vision. Demonstrate respect for every stakeholder through honesty; hold confidences and treat everyone with dignity regardless of his or her circumstances. (p. 81)

By following these guidelines, school communities see leaders as people of integrity. This allows leaders to create a positive learning environment for all students.

Fairness

Treating people in a fair manner is a key element to the success of the school and programs. It is critical to avoid playing favorites. This can be very difficult because of the friendships and relationships developed within a school. Once a bias is developed or seen in the decision making process, this will have an adverse affect on the school and programs. Wilmore (2002) mentions there must be a safeguard built into your decision making process to provide consistency and to ensure fairness. Whitaker (2003) states, "Treat everyone with respect, all the time. If you always respond appropriately and professionally, everyone else will be on your team. But the first time you do not, you may lose some of your supporters, and you may never get them back" (p. 21-22).

Ethics

Educational leaders must act in an ethical manner in all aspects of their life. The decisions made must be based on good judgment and moral standards. The challenge presented by ethics is seen in the following question. What is ethical and what is not? According to Breeden (2001), "Showing good ethics may mean going against what you want or what is best for yourself" (p. 22). This may mean putting yourself in someone else's shoes and being empathetic. This can be a very difficult concept for many leaders. In today's world educational leaders are required to deal with a unique set of issues. Educational leaders must act as

role models for the students because they are living in a world where ethics seems to becoming a thing of the past. Wilmore (2002) states:

There are no easy answers to ethical questions. In all cases, you must seriously consider every aspect of the situation, empower those involved in the decision making process, stay open-minded, analyze all factors, and then reach the best data-driven conclusion you can based on the information presented. (p. 82-83)

When making ethical decisions it is vital to know the laws. Leaders must constantly ask themselves if it is legal. Leading ethically is a major challenge for today's leaders because of the many issues presented by society.

It is critical that educational leaders act with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner. In order to do this leaders must be willing to accept responsibility and lead with courage. With the increased expectations and focus on student achievement this is sometimes forgotten, but is a critical element educational leaders must possess in order to create a successful learning community.

The standard addressed by this critical element of ethical leadership is Standard 5 of the ISSL standards. "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (Wilmore, p. 80). This addresses standard 5 because being an ethical leader involves leading with courage, accepting responsibility, acting with integrity, fairness, and ethics throughout the decision making process.

Leading Learning

Instructional leadership which promotes the success of all students by creating and sustaining a school climate and culture that is conducive to learning is essential in effective schools. It takes hard work, commitment, and perseverance by the whole school community. In order to provide this type of environment, administrators, teachers, students, and the community must be involved in order to create a positive school climate that will promote learning and success for all students.

Teacher Involvement

One of the most important aspects to the success of a school is having quality teachers throughout the building. A critical duty of educational leaders within schools is to hire good quality teachers, and to maintain a staff that is well respected by the students and school community. Whitaker (2003) states two ways to improve a school significantly. Hire good teachers, and improve the teachers you have. This must be a top priority for effective instructional and educational leaders. Once hired, it is important that the teachers are involved in all aspects of school life.

According to Wilmore (2002), instructional programs need to be the primary focus of a school's energy, passion, and commitment. The curriculum and instructional programs are the fundamental purpose and indicators of the quality of education that a school can provide. These programs need to have high

expectations, which leads to closing achievement gaps and success for all students. Whitaker (2003) states:

It's the people, not the programs. All principals are aware that the students in their schools have individual needs. Great principals are even more aware that their faculty members vary in their individual abilities. Effective principals focus on the people in their schools. They see programs as solutions only when the programs bring out the best in their teachers. (p. 11-12)

With increased expectations, there needs to be a thorough look through the curriculum and how the standards and benchmarks are aligned with the school's vision and the standardized tests. All of this requires involvement of teachers in order to make the best decisions for students. When evaluating and making changes to instructional programs, Wilmore (2002) states, "Goals and strategies of the instructional program need to incorporate principles of effective instruction, research, and other resources including the school and district data. There should be multiple types of data from various sources in order to eliminate premature or incorrect decisions" (p. 35).

In order to maintain and create high quality instructional programs, teachers need to be leaders. With increased expectations, putting teachers in leadership roles will help to relieve anxiety and resistance to change that schools must go through in order to continue to achieve at higher levels and meet

expectations. Zepeda (2004) states, "Teachers as leaders can develop the instructional program, make positive changes in the school, share their expertise with others, and shape the culture of the school. Teacher leaders help to shape the culture when they are involved in choosing textbooks, shaping the curriculum, setting discipline standards, designing staff development, and selecting new teachers and administrators" (p. 50-51).

According to Lieberman and Miller (2005), there are three leadership roles of teachers that are critical to the success of a school. Teachers need to be advocates for new forms of accountability and assessment instead of using one test for the sole criterion of success. Teachers must be innovators in the reconstruction of achievement norms and student expectations. Teacher leaders can help schools become learning communities that prepare students to be successful citizens in society. This includes upholding high standards and giving all students a variety of opportunities to learn and participate. Lastly, it is important that teachers be stewards for the profession. Teacher leaders can promote the profession and advocate for the recognition of teaching accomplishments for a redefinition of teacher roles.

It is critical to realize that all teachers are not going to want to take on leadership roles outside the classroom, and it is important to respect that. Leading takes dedication, commitment, hard work, and skills that include the ability to build trust and rapport, making organizational decisions, using resources,

managing work, and building confidence in others. Lieberman and Miller (2005) note the difficulties teacher leaders may face including peer resistance, early burn out, balancing personal and professional lives, and conflict. Lieberman and Miller also note that when teachers lead, they help to create an environment for learning that has influence throughout the school community and affects students and teachers alike.

Today's society has created an environment of winners and losers. It is the responsibility of educational leaders and teachers to reduce competition and foster cooperation in classrooms. According to Aronson (2000), how a topic is learned is more important than the content of what is learned. The point is that students learn something from the process even while they are focusing on the content. Gunter (2003) presents the cooperative jigsaw model of instruction. This model was developed to increase students' interdependence. Instead of providing all the material to each student, each team member is given one piece of information. Students are then forced to fit the individual pieces together, like a jigsaw puzzle. It cannot be completed unless each team member shares his or her piece. This type of cooperative learning strategy creates an environment in which all students can succeed and feel like "winners."

Student Involvement

Student involvement in schools incorporates three main areas: being actively involved in the classroom, involvement in extra-curricular and co-

curricular activities, and community involvement. With the help of teachers and staff, students need to be involved in all areas of education. It is common to see the same students who are involved in many different activities, and a group of students who are involved in nothing. Schools provide something for everyone, and it's important to get students to take the risk and get involved. This brings about a tough question. How do we as educators get students motivated to be involved?

The most important aspect of education for students must occur in the classroom first, quality teachers and instruction motivates students to learn. Students must see the relevance of certain subject matter. Teachers need to be provided with a variety of resources and learning strategies to help students to achieve at their highest levels. Professional development that strengthens classroom instruction and offers teachers to practice new skills and receive feedback is essential. Professional development sessions will be determined through data analysis of student scores on standardized tests and teacher feedback.

Another very important aspect of education is getting students involved in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. Research indicates that students who are involved in these types of activities are more likely to be successful in high school and in their future life. According to a 1987 survey of individuals at the vice-president level or above in Fortune 500 companies, 95% of those corporate executives participated in sports during their high school careers! Participation in

high school sports and activities was a better predictor of success for these individuals than were grades or SAT and ACT scores! Research from across the country indicates that students involved in high school athletic and activity programs are absent from school less than nonparticipants, have higher GPA's, experience fewer discipline problems, use drugs less, and display better sportsmanship and citizenship (Iowa High School Athletic Association, May 2, 2006). According to Holloway (2002), students involved in activities are less likely to drop out of school. Athletic participation reduces the probability of school dropouts by about 40%.

Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities help schools teach students skills and provide learning experiences that may not be possible in the classroom. The key is getting more students motivated to be involved. What motivates students to participate in extracurricular activities? According to Holloway (2002), a wider variety or selection of activities will result in a stronger effect because students' individual interests and needs will more likely be met. Activities that are less competitive are more likely to motivate students to participate because the risk of failure is not as high. Educational leaders must promote these activities to the incoming freshmen so they can become knowledgeable about the activities and life-long benefits of these activities. An activity fair during freshmen orientation could be used to educate the students on the various activities offered at the high school level.

Community Involvement

It is important that students are involved in the community. This type of involvement allows students to see the types of skills necessary to be successful citizens in today's society. It shows the community the great students that are at the high school because of the tremendous work and effort by the high school faculty and staff.

Community involvement is critical to the success of students and the school. Educational leaders must advocate for on the job training in order to provide students with the experiences and skills necessary to be able to enter the workforce or attend college. There needs to be a good working relationship between the community, the school administration, staff, and teachers. It is the responsibility of the leader to maintain a positive working relationship at all times.

The standard addressed by this critical element of instructional leadership is Standard 2 of the ISSL standards: "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 development" (Wilmore, p. 32). This addresses Standard 2 because it takes a collaborative effort from the administration, teachers, students, and community in order to provide instructional practices that are best suited for the students.

Leading Change

With the increased expectations for teachers, continual societal changes, and increasing changes in technology, schools need educational leaders who are prepared to implement changes that meet the needs of teachers, students, and the school community. In order to implement change there must be clear communication on why change is needed, a collaborative team effort with clear responsibilities, and continual monitoring and assessment of the change process.

Reason for Change

According to Starratt (2005), it is the responsibility of the educational leader to ensure through hiring, evaluation, and professional development programs, that teachers will: be knowledgeable about the curriculum they are expected to teach, use a variety of learning strategies to communicate information to students, insist that students take away important life lessons, and know and understand students well. As society and today's students continue to change, so must the teaching and strategies used to reach their learning needs. The type of changes needed by a school may consist of professional development, additional programs (academic or athletic), technology for the classroom or teacher grading systems, and many others. In any case, it is vital that the reason behind the proposed change is clearly communicated to the school community. Many times the reason for change may involve student test results, diminishing facilities, or the discovery of new technologies.

How do people change? According to Hunzicker (2004), there are five stages that take place when leading educators toward change. The first stage is called precontemplation; a person is not yet ready for change. In this stage the person may not know there is a problem or the reason for the proposed change. The second stage is contemplation, the person realizes a problem exists, considers change, but is not ready to commit. The third stage is preparation; change is attempted but not sustained over long periods of time. The fourth stage is action; experiences have caused change to take place for periods of time. The last stage is maintenance; change is established and practiced for long periods of time. It is important educational leaders understand these five stages that people may go through when trying to change their behavior or actions. It is also critical that the teachers, staff, and any other personnel understand the reason for implementing the change.

Develop a Team

With change comes resistance. There is going to be coalitions formed to resist the change for a variety of reasons. Many times people will resist change because they come with their own agenda. They do not see how the change will benefit them, their students, or their program. Teachers tend to use tunnel vision and only look at their discipline or area, instead of viewing and thinking about how the change will positively or negatively affect the whole school community.

According to King (2004), there are external and internal barriers that teachers must overcome when they start thinking about and become excited about change. Externally, teachers may get negative feedback from students, parents, friends or family, and the community. Internally, the teacher may be questioning the change in their mind. How will the students react and learn from this new curriculum? How well prepared am I to implement this new technology into my classroom? Do I have the support system I need? These are valid questions and concerns, and the leader needs to be aware of concerns that may arise during the change process.

These barriers and possible sources of resistance make it critical to develop a team when implementing change. The first team on board must be the administrative team. This team must do the research, collect the data, and clearly communicate the reason for the change. It is then the job of the educational leader in each building to develop a team and plan for implementing the change into the school. This team could consist of department chairs or any other staff members who would like to participate in the planning and preparation for implementation of change. According to Hunzicker (2004), the key to changing teachers' behavior is to change their basic beliefs. It is the job of the school leader to change the basic beliefs of the team, so they can relay those beliefs to the other teachers in their department.

Bolman and Deal (2003), note lateral coordination consists of informal meetings, coordinating roles, and networking. This allows for more flexibility and ownership of the people involved with the change process. By using this type of structural organization, people will tend to buy into the change, instead of resisting it. I feel it is critical the educational leader uses lateral coordination instead of vertical coordination, which consists of the educational leader making rules, and commanding the teachers accept the change. Teachers want to have a say and take ownership of the new change that is taking place. This makes the development of a team concept critical. It also provides a support system for teachers when the new initiative or change may become difficult, frustrating, or confusing.

Implement and Monitor Change

After communicating the need to change, and developing a team and a solid support system, it is time to implement the change. The initial stages of change may bring excitement, resistance, frustration, and doubt. This is where the educational leader must rely on the team to help teachers who encounter frustrations or problems with the change. This will help to alleviate the workload of the educational leader due to the many other duties and responsibilities that need to be tended to during the school day. It is critical that the educational leader not implement the change and then forget about it. It is too often in education that new ideas, concepts, or programs are started and then forgotten as

the year progresses. This will cause the leader to lose credibility when trying to implement a change in the future.

The change that is implemented must be monitored. There must be checkpoints in place in order to evaluate the progress of the new initiative. The educational leader must have clear communication channels in place in order to receive timely feedback on the positives and negatives of the change. This will allow the team to be able to make any additional changes necessary in order to ensure success of the change. Monitoring of change may consist of data collection for new teaching strategies used in the classroom, or informal meetings on the use of new technology in the building.

This change process could be used to implement a new curriculum, program, or any other change that is needed within schools. It is critical to keep the number of new initiatives to a minimum each year. Too many changes can cause low teacher morale within a building, and an overloaded plate for the teachers and the administrator. It is important to get a feel for the building and staff before trying to implement a multitude of changes that "seem to be needed." Teachers are busy with planning, students, parents, and the community, and therefore if change is going to take place it needs to be worth the time of the people involved in the process. The key for leaders is to follow through with the new initiatives. Clear communication and continual evaluation of the initiative is critical for success.

The standards addressed by this critical element are Standard 1, 2, 3, and 4. For Standard 1, a vision must be in place in order to implement a change. For Standard 2, it is the job of the leader to implement new ideas and teaching strategies in order to ensure the success of all students. For Standard 3, there must be a solid structure and support system in place within the school in order to make the change. For Standard 4, it takes a team effort in order to have success in the change process.

Organizational Leadership

Increased expectations and accountability have put more pressure on school leaders to improve schools and increase student achievement. Educational leaders are required to manage complex organizations in order to improve schools and promote the success of all students. It is the responsibility of school leaders to create an environment in which organizations can thrive in an ever-changing world. There is not a one-fits-all strategy that leaders can use to manage schools. There must be a balance between the structural, human resource, and political frames that represent school communities. The role of educational leaders is to find the right fit for their school community.

The Structural Frame

The structure within a school provides a blueprint of expectations for all school personnel. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), there are two issues at the heart of an organizations structure, differentiation and integration.

Differentiation is the “division of labor” (p. 49) or allocating work. Integration is coordinating the various roles after the responsibilities have been determined. It is the responsibility of the school leader to place people in positions where they can be successful. Too much work can create frustrations and a lack of productivity and student success. Too little work can create boredom and a waste of valuable resources. School leaders must take advantage of opportunities to make changes in personnel and job responsibilities that will benefit the school community.

What is the best way to coordinate the roles within a school? According to Bolman and Deal (2003), there are two types of coordination, vertical and lateral. Vertical coordination uses authority, rules, and policy. In general, vertical coordination uses top-down leadership. Lateral coordination uses meetings and leadership teams. Educational leaders need to use vertical coordination to set clear expectations and guidelines that teachers must follow to ensure the success and safety of the school and students. This would include contract time, duties and responsibilities, emergency procedures, scheduling, and discipline.

Many times teachers do not respond well to commands, rules, or top-down authority. It is critical that school leaders use lateral coordination when making decisions that will affect the teachers and their students. According to Zepeda (2004), there is a need for teacher leadership in order to build trust, communicate

more openly, promote risk taking, and build a commitment and support for change. Teachers are a valuable resource that can be used to provide input on new textbooks, the curriculum, student needs, hiring new teachers, or designing professional development. Educational leaders need to provide teachers with leadership opportunities in order to create a positive working environment. This can be done through departmental teams and committees. It is the job of school leaders to organize these teams and committees, and to conduct meetings that are productive where teacher input is valued.

The Human Resource Frame

Educational leaders know that great teachers are what make a school great. This reiterates the importance of providing teachers with leadership opportunities in order to avoid mediocrity and status quo. Whitaker (2003) states that it is the people, not the programs that make a school successful. Whitaker also mentions two ways to improve schools. Hire good teachers, and improve the teachers you have. Educational leaders need not only look at the needs of students, but teachers as well. Teachers come with a variety of individual needs that must be fulfilled by other teachers, professional development, or the administration. Great leaders find a way to keep the good people. This can be done by rewarding them, investing in them, or empowering them with leadership opportunities.

When principals are dealing with teachers, it is critical to treat them with respect all the time. Perception is reality. It only takes one negative statement or

action to create an environment in which the staff views the leader as negative or disrespectful. This could lead to a poor climate and culture within the building. It could lead to low teacher morale, which in the end affects the success of the school and the students.

Bolman and Deal (2003), state that leaders can either use Theory X or theory Y when working with employees. A leader who uses Theory X manages with tight control or threats, and perceives the people as lazy with little to no ambition or self-motivation. A Theory Y leader arranges the organization so that the people can achieve their own goals with self-interest and self-direction. How does this apply to school leaders? I believe principals have to lead with theory Y. Teachers have a great interest in their job, they are self-motivated, and are willing to set goals to improve their teaching. It is the responsibility of the educational leader to have teachers set goals, monitor improvement, and provide assistance when needed. There may be times where Theory X needs to be used with issues or problems that may arise with teachers. This reiterates the importance of hiring good teachers, improving the teachers you have, and putting people in positions where they can be successful.

The Political Frame

Within any school system there are people of power who try to influence the decisions of the school leaders. These people are community members, parents, and the teachers within the building. There may be several groups trying

to influence school leaders to make a decision that “benefits them.” This creates a situation where bargaining and negotiating may take place among the stakeholders. In the end, it is the responsibility of the educational leader to make the “final decision.” There is one central question involved here. Who gets what? Many times this question becomes even more difficult in schools due to a lack of resources.

How does a leader decide, “Who gets what?” According to Bolman and Deal (2003) there are four skills necessary when making decisions in a political arena. These skills are agenda setting, mapping the terrain, networking, and negotiating. The agenda for change should include a vision and a strategy for achieving the vision. The agenda should address the concerns of the stakeholders. When mapping the terrain, the leader should determine channels of communication, identify political influence, and anticipate strategies others might employ. Networking involves identifying relevant relationships with proponents and opponents to facilitate communication, education, and negotiation. Negotiation should be used to build consensus between parties. Educational leaders must make the final decision with the best interests of students at hand. This should be the base for all decisions. It is important to avoid bias in decision-making in order to maintain and build trust with the school community.

The structural, human resource, and political frame provide ideas about how to lead a school. Great educational leaders use a combination of these

frames in order to manage schools. The standard addressed by this critical element of organizational leadership is Standard 3 of the ISSL standards. “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, p. 52). This addresses Standard 3 because an educational leader must be able to balance the structural, human resource, and political aspects when leading a school.

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