Educational Platform and Administrative Entry Plan

By
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Submitted to
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of
EDLD 567: K-12 Leadership

The University of Montana
Summer 2012
The following is a list of the Montana Professional Educator Preparation Program Standards that have been covered in the class EDLD 567: K-12 Leadership. The standards are followed by a summary of my own personal attitudes, beliefs, and philosophies concerning the field of education dealing with each standard individually.

1. **The successful candidate will facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community in order to promote the success of all students.**

   I believe that it is important for a principal to be involved in the development and implementation of a vision for their particular school as well as for the whole district. According to Matthews and Crow (2010), there are two different levels that a principal must address when looking at the school vision: the principals own personal vision for the school and the schools collective vision for success (Matthews & Crow, 2010). To me, the belief of the two levels of school vision is great because it allows for the principal to utilize the ideas set forth by the teachers and other staff members while still putting their own touch on what the school looks like. I think that a good leader needs to have their own vision for success, even if it is influenced by others. Allowing others to help with the overall vision of the school will only aide in getting support from the important stakeholders, and emphasizes the importance of working together as a team.

   The purpose of creating a school vision is to help in the structure building process for the school. This is important when working towards school improvement, and is described in the following statement from the state of Maryland: “The first step in developing more effective schools is describing the school you seek to become” (Creating A Vision, 2012). My feelings are that a principal has to lead the school through this process because the “The school
principal is key in leading the process of creating the shared vision for the school” (Creating A Vision, 2012). Including the staff in decisions regarding the needs of the school and its students is extremely important when trying to create an atmosphere that will foster school improvement. This process is started with the creation of a shared vision depicting what they as a group want the school to look like.

While working towards the development and implementation of a shared school vision, I am certain that there will be some resistance from different staff members or groups of staff members. It will be difficult to get everyone in the school community to agree on the proper course of action when trying to achieve school improvement and this is where I believe the quality of leadership in the school will be very apparent. This is where I think it will be crucial for a principal to take on the different leader roles as defined by Hoy & Miskel (2008). These roles are: Integrator, parliamentarian, educator, solicitor, and director (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). By taking on these roles, the principal can take the process through the different phases required to accomplish the task of creating a shared vision. The different phases would entail integrating divergent opinions in order to gain a consensus, promoting open discussion, explaining the issues and allowing for discussion, soliciting for advice before making final decisions, and making any unilateral decisions about the final school vision. Taking the time to work through the process with the team of educators in the building will only make the final product that much stronger, and will gain much more support from all the stakeholders involved.
2. Promote a positive school culture, provide an effective instructional program, apply best practice to student learning, and design comprehensive professional growth plans for staff in order to promote the success of all students.

“Every school has a culture whether or not the principal is attentive to it or shapes it. Culture is comprised of assumptions, beliefs, expectations, habits, and values which affect every aspect of the schoolhouse, and consequently student learning” (Building Positive School Culture to Increase Student Achievement, 2012). This quote really emphasizes what I feel is important for a principal or assistant principle to understand about the culture in a school. It is imperative that a school leader be attentive to the culture and that they work towards positively shaping it as it is directly linked to students learning. This is why the culture of a school needs constant attention from all school leaders, from the principal to the support staff working in the classrooms. With a consolidated effort throughout the school, this emphasis on culture can be very beneficial to the school improvement efforts taking place.

I believe that it is the job of the principal to ensure that there is an effective instructional program in place in the school. This is not a job that can be passed off as it is the essential function that our schools take on, and “instructional leadership is a significant factor in facilitating, improving, and promoting the academic progress of students” (The Principal's Role in the Instructional Process, 1991). It is my opinion that this important job starts by carefully selecting a staff that will support the vision of the school as well as buy in to the culture of the school. Having a staff that does not believe in the school’s goals can be very detrimental to the overall success of the school. Once a cohesive staff is in place, the instructional program can be continually adjusted to fit the needs of the students. This
adjustment needs to be revisited often as the population of any school is every changing, and therefore the need for curriculum adjustments also is a never ending process.

It is also the job of the principal to ensure that the staff has the opportunity to improve their teaching styles through professional growth offered in and out of the district. Supporting staff that wish to visit conferences and seminars is a very positive method of support, and will result in better practices within the classrooms. In the end, this will benefit the students learning and essentially will increase the student performance. By designing practical and worthwhile professional growth opportunities, the principal will push the entire school further towards proficiency.

3. Manage the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment in order to promote the success of all students.

The job of principal as manager has many different aspects in the modern school system. There are many different aspects that require close management within a school, and Matthews and Crow (2010) list some of them as time, personnel, money, and information. The role the principal plays in the management of the schools is essential to the daily planning, organizing, operating, executing, budgeting, maintaining, and scheduling related to the goals that permit a school to accomplish its goals as a learning community (Matthews & Crow, 2010). This can be a very daunting job if a principal is to take it on alone without the consultation of his or her peers, yet the principal needs to be in the conversation for all of the processes listed above. If the principal is not careful, the job of manager can overtake the job of school leader, and this is when issues arise with not meeting school improvement goals that are more related to student achievement. This is why I feel that a principal needs to surround himself with
trustworthy people to aide in some of the managerial duties. Depending on the size of the school, these duties can be delegated to assistant principals, finance officers, and other trustworthy employees. While the delegation of these duties will free up the principal to concentrate more on his school leadership duties, it is not acceptable for him to totally turn over these duties without staying informed of important issues that may arise. To be a true organizational leader, the principal needs to be able to delegate, but still be organized enough to be included in all major discussions and decisions.

4. Collaborate with families and other community members, respond to diverse community interests and needs, including Montana American Indian communities, and mobilize community resources in order to promote the success of all students.

As a principal, I think one of the most important duties is engaging the families of the students. “Increasing family engagement in their children’s education is proven to be effective as a means to increase student outcomes” (Collaboration Between Families & Schools, 2012). This collaboration can occur in a multitude of ways. The job of the principal is to ensure that the school is an inviting environment that parents and families are comfortable with. If the school is set up so that parents feel comfortable, I feel there will be much more positive collaboration between the two groups, which will in effect provide more support for our schools. “Collaboration between families and schools is a problem solving approach where the problems and conflicts are seen as challenges. Differences are confronted and ideas and information are shared. There is a concerted effort to find integrative solutions, those in which everyone wins” (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In order to facilitate this positive collaboration, I think the principal needs to properly manage the public relations between the community and the school. There needs to be a plan in place to monitor these public relations, and the principal
needs to take care to actively show the community all of the positive things that go on within the school walls. With this piece in place, the collaboration between the school and the community will of a much more positive nature and the students will benefit in the end.

In my school district, it is extremely important to be aware of the diverse communities that are present. My high school has a large population of Montana American Indians, and it is important to be aware of the cultural differences. Without recognizing these differences, many students will be left behind in their education, which ultimately hurts the community as a whole. As principal, there needs to be a priority set to manage the needs of all students regardless of their cultural background, and to do this, you must be aware of the different cultures present in your school. The Indian Education for All Act has made great improvements in our community, and has allowed our district of actively work towards closing the American Indian Achievement gap (Indian Education, 2012). Properly facilitating the requirements that go along with the legislation can greatly aide the principal in his aim to be more culturally aware. There are also multiple groups or agencies in the Great Falls area that can help the principal become more aware of the cultural differences in the many American Indian tribes that are present in our community. I think a principal needs to be actively engaged with these resources in order to properly address the cultural needs of all students.

5. Act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner in order to promote success of all students

Acting with integrity and fairness as a principal is possibly the most important quality that you can possess. The goal of every educator is to improve students’ achievement, therefore every decision that is made and every action taken should revolve around the
students’ learning. This ethical approach to education is sometimes lost as some people make decisions entirely for self benefit, but this is unacceptable in my opinion. Our goal should be to better ourselves as educators, not as individuals. The ethical manner in which an educational leader must present himself should represent his moral values and beliefs about education and the students. I do not believe that a principal or high level school administrator can do their job correctly unless they base their decisions on the betterment of the staff with which they work or the students that they serve.

While principals need to act in a fair manner towards everyone, the trait of honesty comes to mind in this situation. An ethical administrator will be “honest in all of their actions and communications. They are not only truthful, they are candid and forthright” (Josephson, 2010). This quote speaks greatly as to how a high level administrator needs to act towards his followers as well as all the stakeholders in the community. There is no room to hide the truth, but a necessity to be honest about the school’s outcomes as well as actions being taken to correct any shortcomings.

Another quality that a leader must have, also listed by Josephson (2010) is Loyalty. I think this fits right in with the ethical behavior that a principal needs to portray. This loyalty needs to be present in actions concerning the betterment of the students and staff, as well and to the decisions made by the teachers working under the principal. There is no easier way to lose the trust of your staff than if you are not loyal to their professionalism when dealing with angry parents or students, or the curriculum being taught in their classroom. I do not believe the principal needs to always agree with the teacher, but that he does need to support the
teacher when facing conflict, unless it is of extreme moral or ethical differences. With that being said, if the principal does not agree with all of the actions taken, I feel that the time and place to discuss this with the teacher is behind closed doors, not in front of the students, parents, or colleagues. This provides an opportunity for the principal to help the teacher grow professionally through individual conferencing without the fear of being belittled in front of parents or coworkers. Being loyal to your employees will benefit you as administrator by building loyalty towards yourself from the staff.

6. Understand, respond to, and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in order to promote the success of all students.

“The most obvious feature of the principal’s political role in the community is that principals have to interact not only with the internal school setting but also with the community in which the school exists” (Matthews & Crow, 2010). I think that it is very important for the principal to have communications with the community and the local businesses within the community. This political position is necessary because the school ultimately needs the support of the community when they are trying to implement new ideas or get funding for school related projects. I believe at a principal or district level administrator needs to have a position in the community because when mill levy elections come around, the community wants to know what positives will come from their support. The principal acting in a positive political role can influence supporters with his or her positive message. Getting this message out is the hard part, and if the principal already plays a visible role in the entire community, it is easier to communicate with those that are on the border between supporting and not supporting.
Having a positive position with the community also helps the principal to understand different needs that students and their families bring into the school. “Ignoring the role of principal as politician in the community harms the school’s ability to respond to student and family needs” (Matthews & Crow, 2010). For my high school, there are many diverse cultural backgrounds that require different social and economic needs for the students. The principal must be able to relate to these needs in order to provide the best education for all students.

With the social and economic status varying so much between students in any school, an issue that a principal must deal with is giving all students the same opportunities to participate and see success. Many times I have seen this issue arise around the cost that is required to participate in extracurricular activities. I have seen instances where a building principal believed so strongly that each student should have the right to participate, that he put aside a portion of building funds each year that could be used to “scholarship” a student that did not have the money to participate. This is just one way that a principal can work things out in order to provide for every student, no matter what their social or economic status is. I think that it has to be a goal that every student has every opportunity to be involved every year. This may take some work because there are some students with extremely large needs, but if the principal is in touch with the community and the needs of the families within the school, he or she will find a way to provide those opportunities for every student.
EDLD 567: Educational Platform and Administrative Entry Plan Assessment Rubric

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<td>Content is taken directly from texts used in the course and does not demonstrate a synthesis or application of the course material.</td>
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References


