

Fundamentals of School Administration Class Assignment Anthology

Joseph A. Wright

Chadron State College

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of EDCI 629 (Fundamentals of School Administration)

Summer, 2018

Table of Contents

	Page
List of Figures	iii
Weekly Assignments	1-2
Week 2 – Journal Article Review #1	1-6
Week 3 – School Improvement Plan Summary	6-8
Week 4 – Anthology Check & Mid-Term Exam Scenario Response	8; 8-10
Week 5 – Clerk / Superintendent Interview	10-11
Week 6 – Journal Article Review #2	11-18
Week 7 – Concept Paper: Creating & Implementing a School Improvement Plan	18-29
Week 8 – School Board Meeting Summary & Final Exam Scenario Response	30-34; 35-39
Forum Postings & Responses	39
Week 1, Part I – Introductions	39
Forum Responses	40-41
Week 1, Part II – Public Values and School Policy	41-43
Forum Responses	43-45
Week 2 – Issues Shaping School Policy and Administration	45-47
Forum Responses	47-50
Week 3 – Educational Administration: An Overview	50-52
Forum Responses	52-54
Week 4 – Educational Administration As an...	54-56
Forum Responses	56-58
Week 5 – Development of Thought	58-60
Forum Responses	60-62
Week 6 – Administrative Work, Roles...	62-64
Forum Responses	64-66
Week 7 – Students and Teachers	67-68
Forum Responses	68-70
Week 8 – The Principalship	70-72
Forum Responses	72-74
Leadership Experience Hours' Descriptions	74-77
Final Reflection	77-78
References	78-82

List of Figures

<i>Figure</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. Joe Wright: An Intro	7
2. A.J. Wilson	8
3. Parr-Intro	8
4. Einfalt – Introduction	9
5. Wilson – Week 1	11
6. Shaw-Week 1 NCLB-Public Values and School Policy	12
7. Harder-Week 2-Issues Shaping School Policy and Administration	15
8. Dolegowski- Week 2	16
9. Week 3 - Educational Administration	20
10. Why should we test for standards?	21
11. Week 4 Discussion – Vancura	24
12. Dolegowski- Week 4	25
13. Katrina Shaw – Week 4	25
14. Jannsen– Wk 5	28
15. Harder-Week 5-Development of Thought	29
16. Seltz – Week 6	29
17. Instructional Leadership and Building Manager	29
18. Vancura Week 6 Discussion	29
19. Teacher Input & Student Motivation	29
20. Spencer Martin-Week 7-Students and Teachers	29
21. Parr-Strong Sense of Purpose	29
22. Spencer Martin-Week 8-The Connected Principal	29

Weekly Assignments

Below will you find my responses to each of the weekly assignments that I was assigned for this class.

Week 1 (no assignment given this week)

Week 2 – Journal Article Review #1

EDCI 629: Journal Article #1 Review

Joseph A. Wright

Chadron State College

Submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements of EDCI 629

Summer, 2018

Article Overview

In their article, Ktok & Kryst (2017) discuss the difficulties that many principals face in trying to implement new digital technology. They carried out a case study of Keystone School District (KSD), a rural Pennsylvania school district, and the efforts as led by new district Principal Mr. Rich Snyder. Principal Snyder had been successful in his previous position, helping his former district to wisely utilize funds to pay for necessary technological training and upgrades for his school. He created an effective technology committee, which led to the creation of a new robotics course, which was wildly successful, gaining renowned recognition and serving as a success story to other schools and districts.

Principal Snyder faced many challenges; economic recession, starting many decades before, had left the area economically challenged. Once profitable coal mines had long ago closed, and in the 1990s, the local Shreyer Steel Company, once a Fortune 500 company that had hired thousands of locals, was bought out and many of the jobs outsourced. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania had authorized the creation of cyber charter schools (CCSs) in 2002, thus creating more problems for local rural schools, especially Keystone. Any student that wanted to could attend these CCSs, and if they did, then KSD was required to fund the CCSs for each former student of theirs that they took on (or even formerly homeschooled students living in KSD's borders that liked the idea of a virtual high school) and send those precious funds away. With the Great Recession of 2008, these conditions had left the Keystone School District in dire straits.

Despite these challenges, Principal Snyder set to work immediately. He gathered information from all of the different stakeholders, in order to create an informed plan. He created a volunteer outreach team that looked into the reasoning behind why these Keystone students had left to the CCSs in the first place, and asked what they might do to entice them to return. They found that the CCSs had not delivered on most of their promises. For instance, instead of having cutting-edge technological courses, in most cases, the "online classes" were simply recordings of regular lectures, and quite boring to watch, not at all what most students had envisioned when they signed up for CCSs. So KSD made significant efforts to prove they were making substantial changes back at Keystone. For instance, they created a hybrid curriculum option, to allow students to return part time, and continue to go to a CCS partially if they so chose (especially for the advanced courses, which allowed KSD's already stressed teachers to focus more on the basics). They offered popular vocational courses, like computer coding, and video editing classes. This worked, and many CCS students returned.

Snyder also worked to get the faculty and teaching staff up to date on technology integration, and created a technology committee to help organize this effort. He invited any interested staff members; some were enthused with the idea, and some he purposefully chose to invite because of their reticence with new technology. Together they created a district plan to provide autonomy to teachers and also encourage them to better incorporate technology into their curricula and classes. Teachers and students offered up many ideas on how to accomplish this on a shoestring budget, and Snyder proceeded to find more funding to allow more expensive ideas, such as a \$7,000 3-D printer.

With the superintendent, Snyder reached out to the community and alumni, and was able to raise several thousand dollars. They also got a grant for forty new tablets, and when a teacher retired, they made do with what they had, and didn't refill the position. Still, they met resistance. Many teachers were not sold on the idea of integrating technology, but Snyder and his team worked on a way. They redesigned their professional development (PD) to utilize technology to better meet their school's strategic plan. He hired an adult learning consultant to assist with new, personalized PD, which was now focused on technology implementation.

Ultimately, students benefitted from these changes. All but three of the CCS students returned to Keystone, and "many of the students that [the school counselor had] perceived as "aimless" began expressing more defined career interests and post-secondary paths" (Kotok & Kryst, 2017, p. 10). While some teachers saw the fine arts program as a casualty of these changes, most made an honest effort to implement the new vision.

Personal Reflection & Commentary

I do not envy Principal Snyder's position here. He came in to replace a principal that had resigned expressly because of financial concerns, and not only did he work within these extreme

restraints, but I dare say he overcame them. I believe his initial idea to wait to make any drastic decisions (despite the dire finances at the district) was a very smart move. He created committees and invited proponents and doubters to assist him in solving the problems they faced, such as the aforementioned technology and professional development committees. This reminded me of something Jim Knight mentioned in his book *Unmistakable Impact*: “Goals that others choose for us seldom motivate us to change” (Knight, 2011). By allowing and encouraging opportunity for involvement, Snyder was helping everyone to be invested in these decisions, and avoiding the pitfall that Knight mentioned. Miraculously, Snyder had only one outgoing position that he didn’t replace, and he did not layoff any employees. That was impressive to me, because once you start down that path, morale suffers, and that is hard to recover from.

I thought it was impressive to see how he was able to adapt to the new challenge that he faced, having come from a well-endowed school district, to one that wasn’t. Despite this, he developed rapport and relationships with his faculty and community to help make up for the shortfalls in their funding, and even got them to obtain additional technology access through grants. He also lobbied local legislators to get better broadband internet access to the more rural areas of his district. One suggestion I would have made, is as part of their new, individualized PD, he could have offered an additional “technology bonus” (assuming he could wrangle up the funds) as an incentive. Any teachers that learn new apps, programs, and so on, and also are willing to teach them to their fellow faculty (in addition to filling out a simple form that would give proof of their efforts and new knowledge) could earn the bonus. This would save them the cost of paying an expert to do such a PD, and it would encourage the faculty to further buy-in to the goal of technological integration.

This is a challenge that I do not see going away anytime soon. When “80% of school budgets [are] allocated to teacher salaries and benefits” (Kotok & Kryst, 2017, p. 12), that

doesn't leave a lot of discretionary funds available. The article mentioned that a school / district might implement a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy to save on costs. I have seen students at my own school utilize a smartphone in very positive ways. Some advantages of BYOD include no additional training (the students know their own devices already), it leverages their constant use of that device (many people seem glued to their devices these days anyway), and you don't have to worry about being responsible for the device itself (it's theirs, so it is their problem). However, there are problems with BYOD as well, and the trade off is that you cannot control what websites they can access (or get distracted on), social media, potential bullying, security of data, etc. (Kar, 2015).

Additionally, the article mentioned tablets as being a focus, and I would argue that I believe chromebooks to be a better investment. They are functionally like a laptop (allowing typing input to occur equally fast as with a computer), but much more affordable (although new voice-to-text functionality, as can be found in Google Docs, may make this a non-issue, time will tell). Though they are limited to browser access, many companies today are creating apps and programs (e.g. Kahoot, Lucidpress, Google Docs, etc.) that are free to use and fully functional online, making most software obsolete, with the exception of more memory-intensive programs like video-editing software or AutoCAD.

In our school, we have found that Chromebooks give us the most bang for our educational buck, because they on average only cost about \$150, compared with many devices, such as tablets or laptops, costing districts \$700 or more each (Kotok & Kryst, 2017, p. 12)! We utilize the growing trend of cloud apps, and have been able to continue to develop and introduce technology to our students at a modest price. I'm not sure our model would work everywhere, but it does work for us. I believe that the biggest challenge to doing the same thing at Keystone is their lack of broadband infrastructure, which would need improvement in order to make this

suggestion more feasible. Otherwise, I believe Principal Snyder has done a commendable job in such a short amount of time.

References:

Kar, S. (2015). Using BYOD in schools: Advantages and disadvantages - elearning industry.

Retrieved from <https://elearningindustry.com/using-byod-schools-advantages-disadvantages>

Knight, J. (2011). Unmistakable impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Kotok, S., & Kryst, E. L. (2017). Digital technology: A double-edged sword for a school principal in rural Pennsylvania. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 20(4), 3.
doi: 10.1177/1555458916685748

Week 3 – School Improvement Plan Summary

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

June 23th, 2018

Week 3 Assignment – School Improvement Plan Summary

Our charter school did not have a formal School Improvement Plan (SIP) for last year (and they are just beginning to create one for this upcoming school year), so I decided (with Dr. Plas' approval) to summarize one from a nearby school that did. The school I chose is Spanish Fork Junior High School (SFJHS), which I am familiar with as my wife's family attended there, and I've been to many events there myself, and they are similar in many ways to our own school.

SFJHS's plan for this past 2017-2018 school year includes six main goals (in conjunction with District, School Trust, and other such goals) as well as actions and measures to implement these goals; they are as follows:

- **Increase the frequency and quality of communication** among the **stakeholders** of Spanish Fork Junior High.
 - Use of the School Website, e-Newsletter, SIS, & Public Relations Committee will ensure communication occurs often & that improvements to it are consistently discussed & implemented.
 - Teachers establish and maintain communications and expectations with parents / students.
 - Measures include social media followers, use of reporting measures used and analyzed, etc.
- Establishing **Effective Professional Learning Communities** – in order to **benefit student achievement**.
 - Collaboration time will be wisely used (including “Pack Time”), focused on assessment and use of core curriculum. Teachers will be encouraged to attend trainings to assist in academic achievement.
 - Measures include proof of **collaboration** (meeting notes, attendance, products and application).
- Provide **effective interventions** for **struggling students** & appropriate **enrichment** for proficient students.
 - Focus on math tutoring, lowering class sizes, hiring addition para-educators, maintaining committees (i.e. Youth Support Team) to oversee support services, clubs, enrichment activities, and such.
 - Measures include attendance of clubs, activities, as well as analysis of standardized testing, diminishing the number of failing 9th graders, etc.
- Create & use a school-wide Positive Behavior Support Plan, with an explicit skill taught & reinforced each term. **Parental involvement** will be encouraged.
 - Identify skills to be taught, positively reinforce and make plans to teach these, & also involve parents.
 - Measures include tracking lessons taught, as well as skills observed and rewarded.
- Teachers will receive **professional development** in leadership, instruction, numeracy, technology, collaboration & intervention, in order to establish research based ideas & actions at our school.
 - Weekly collaborative meetings will accomplish this, along with reimbursed conference attendance.
 - Measures include tracking number of teachers attending conferences and number of hours logged.
- Maintain basic tech equipment as already established, and also provide internet & cloud access thru Chromebooks in each core class, and access in the others. (paraphrased from “Spanish fork junior, 2017).
 - All teachers will be provided with an updated teacher computer, LCD projector, audio enhancement system, a document camera for each class, with proper training & a tech specialist for maintenance.

- Chromebook purchases will occur until ultimate goal is realized (all core classes & readily available).
 - Measures include tracking of current tech units and purchases of new ones (“Spanish fork junior”, 2017).
-

Sources:

Spanish fork junior high school community council. (2017). School improvement plan. Retrieved from <http://sfjhs.nebo.edu/sites/sfjhs.nebo.edu/files/School%20Improvement%20Plan%202017-18.pdf>

Week 4 – Anthology Check (a review of this very same anthology)

Week 4 – Mid-Term Exam Scenario Response

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 1st, 2018

Week 4 Assignment – Mid-Term Scenario & Response

Scenario #1: Within the first month of his principalship in his hometown, Bill was forced to respond to parent complaints about Arnie, a friend, and former teacher colleague. Arnie expected unquestioning support from Bill, while parents were looking to their new principal to respond to their concerns about discipline. Bill was confused and torn by this situation, one that radically changed his relationship with a colleague of many years.

Advise Bill on how to monitor his emotions, how he should respond to the situation, especially analyzing Arnie’s interests and those of the students and parents. Develop an appropriate action plan. Also, what kind of support system would you recommend that Bill develop so he can find a safe environment to share these difficult problems in confidence?

There are a lot of unknowns with this situation (e.g., is “discipline” referring to Arnie’s classroom organization, or his classroom management of student behavior, or perhaps something else entirely) but we’ll do the best that we can, making assumptions as needed. Whatever the parents’ complaints may be, it is important for Bill to remember that **both relationships involved** are important (his relationship with the students & their parents, as well as students and parents in general, plus his personal & professional relationship with Arnie). It’s essential for Bill as a new administrator to realize that balancing these many different perspectives may be

difficult, but is necessary and important to maintain cultural community patterns, school morale, et cetera (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009).

Good diplomacy is key to any leadership position: Bill needs to keep the lines open, stay respectful and amenable, so that all parties involved know that he will give them each a fair hearing. I would suggest that Bill meet personally with the parents (and the student, if involved at all) and give them a chance to air their grievances. It may also be helpful to get the students' perspective on the situation independent of their parents, since it wouldn't be the first time a parent may have overreacted...

Bill also needs to quickly schedule and hold a separate meeting with his friend Arnie. In keeping with Jim Knight's idea of equality, Bill ought to quickly make sure that Arnie knows their friendship is not in jeopardy, by initially breaking the ice in a relaxed format, perhaps by sharing some positive things he's seen Arnie doing in his classroom, etc. After helping reassure Bill that he can see the many good things Arnie is doing (and treating him as an equal, not strictly as a subordinate), Bill could gently broach the concerns of the parents, and ask Arnie to share what he thinks about their thoughts (Knight, 2011).

The path forward for Bill will depend in large part on Arnie himself. If Arnie is self-reflective, honest, and compliant, then Bill can trust that Arnie is ready and willing to fix the problem(s) (real or perceived) that caused the concerns of the students and / or parents in the first place. The action plan going forward could be informal, but definite. With a few easygoing check-ins over the next little while as needed, in addition to communication with the parents regarding their conversation and plans to resolve it, I'd imagine the problem would be easily resolved. If, however Arnie is obstinate, unwilling to admit any fault, and essentially pig-headed, then more stringent action will be required, including formal reprimand if necessary. If Arnie continues in the errant belief that his friendship should excuse him from correcting his actions, he may very well have to be let go. I'm guessing 9 times out of 10, a teacher in a similar situation would lean more towards the compliant side of the spectrum rather than risk their career.

Bill could really benefit from finding a Professional Learning Community (PLC) for fellow administrators, especially considering his greenhorn status. This would also provide a "safe zone" where he can share some of his challenges with others who have had similar experiences, and get their advice as well. He could create one with fellow administrators in his district, or find one online that already exists. It could even revolve around something as simple as being a book club (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015), with administrators reading books about how to be better educational leaders and sharing their thoughts, ideas, implementations thereof, etc.

Sources:

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Minnesota Department of Education. (2015). Using principal professional learning communities to enhance principals' leadership skills. Retrieved from https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=033988&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Week 5 – Clerk / Superintendent Interview

I got less than a 100% on this assignment, and the reasoning for that was that Dr. Plas believed that I ought to have considered some more in-depth questions. I hadn't really thought much about that before, when I was doing the assignment. Upon reflection however, I realized that he was right.

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 8th, 2018

Week 5 Interviews with Director Jesse Meeks & Assistant Director Amanda Kuhnz

“What is the role of the principal / director in your district budget planning if any?”

As a charter school, we have a pretty unique situation. We are smaller (with just over 400 students, from 7th-12th grade), and have to get by with less money, so those involved often have a lot of different roles to fill. Below are all of those involved in budget planning:

Dr. Jesse Meeks – Director: he's the one that proposes a budget, based on school needs, enrollment, funds, etc. He needs approval from the School Board (currently made up of 4 parents), who make the final call at an approved board meeting (sometimes several meetings are required before a consensus is met).

Amanda Kuhnz – Assistant Director: she advises Dr. Meeks on creating a budget proposal, along with input from the department heads, teachers, etc.

Jamie Morris – Financial Secretary: she advises Dr. Meeks with his budget proposals, and is liaison between the school and Red Apple, our financial consultants.

Red Apple – Financial Contractors: They work with many different schools (most being charter schools like ourselves), and look at metadata to help consult the school in its budget and spending. They also take care of refunds, payments, etc., in conjunction with Jamie Morris.

School Board: Made up of parents who review the budget proposal, and decide if they like it and approve it. They can take several different meetings between the board and both the Director and Assistant Director, as well as Red Apple.

What are the main funding sources?

Most of our funds come from the federal and state government level. Special Education (SPED) for example is a large chunk of our funding at our school. The funding is based on SPED average numbers. Most schools have an average of 12% SPED students, and we have about 20%. So that provides extra funds, as well as extra challenges. Career and Technical Education (CTE) is another department that gets extra funds from the state, which are slated expressly for their use. And of course the department heads get to have some say in the way that money is spent, along with approval from Dr. Meeks.

We also are not a bonded school, and that is an approval that our school is working hard to accomplish, because it will give our school more financial freedom.

Ask him/her to explain the coding and budget approval and submission process:

Dr. Meeks ultimately is the biggest player in all of this. He gets advice and input from a variety of other sources (as mentioned above), and then he comes up with a budget proposal. Ultimately however, the school board gets to approve or disapprove the budget. They often spend several board meetings discussing the budget, clarifying questions, etc. It ends up being a compromise session between these two groups.

Week 6 – Journal Review #2

I found an interesting article about a case study out of Iceland, where a principal had turned the culture and success of a school around, after ten years of effort. My response is below:

EDCI 629: Journal Article #2 Review
Joseph A. Wright
Chadron State College

Submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements of EDCI 629
 Summer, 2018

Article Overview

The article that I decided to study this week was entitled “The fusion of school improvement and leadership capacity in an elementary school,” coming out of Iceland (Sigurðardóttir & Sigþórsson, 2016). It was a qualitative case study carried out over the course of a year set in an elementary school during the current principal’s tenure over the past ten years (note: neither the school or staff in question were ever named in the article, ostensibly for privacy reasons). Its goal was to determine the leadership capacity within the school and determine how this had changed in that time frame. The authors used a conceptual framework created by Linda Lambert (Harris & Lambert, 2003) to analyze and evaluate the level of leadership capacity at the school.

Figure 1. Leadership capacity of four school types; Quadrant 1 & 2

Table 1. Leadership capacity of four school types.

		Level of involvement	
Depth of leadership skills and understandings	Low skills	Quadrant 1 – Low involvement	Quadrant 2 – High involvement
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principal as autocratic manager • Limited (one-way) flow of information; no shared vision • Codependent, paternal/maternal relationships and rigidly defined roles • Norms of compliance, blame; programme coherence technical and superficial • Lack of innovation in teaching and learning • Student achievement is poor, or showing short-term improvements on standardised measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principal as ‘laissez-faire’ manager; many teachers developing unrelated programmes • Fragmentation and lack of coherence of information, and programmes’ lack of shared purpose • Norms of individualism, lack of collective responsibility • Undefined roles and responsibilities • Spotty innovation with both excellent and poor classrooms • Student achievement appears static overall (unless data are disaggregated)

Part of the framework utilized by Sigurðardóttir & Sigþórsson in their case study evaluation (2016).

The authors spent considerable time setting the context of their case. Iceland has been subject to similar trends in education just as the United States has. They too were more recently focused on national high-stakes testing, but are now turning more towards a “competence-based” approach (2016, p. 600). The authors wanted to look at one particular school that has made many changes for the better in the last ten years. They looked at the principals’ actions to build a unified vision and culture at the school, which in turn led to increased leadership capacity among the administration, community, teachers, support staff, students, and so forth.

Intending to discover how this occurred in more detail, the case study was carried out with formal permission from the principal and staff. They collected data via interviews, informal conversations, observations, focus groups, surveys and document analysis (p. 604). The principal, deputy principal, numerous teachers, students, school reports, and parents were all involved in this study. Using Lambert’s framework, they studied and reviewed what had occurred at this school, both the good and the bad, using four themes: (1) creating and realizing the vision; (2) inquiry and reflection; (3) students’ views and progress; and (4) leadership (Sigurðardóttir & Sigþórsson, 2016, p. 605).

The principal came to the school during a hectic time: several different schools had been consolidated into a new one (now under his new leadership), and the latest principal had resigned on short notice. Though the principal had his own ideas for the vision of the school community, he took his time to develop a “culture of trust, respect and collegiality” between himself and the staff and students (p. 605). He let everyone involved know that he wanted to build together with them a shared vision for the school. It occurred gradually, with input from all who cared to be involved, and he was proactive in promoting this positive vision with the school community via new morning assemblies and weekly student circle time meetings, both of which gave staff and community the sense and feeling of unity in their common vision and purpose.

As this culture developed and was strengthened, many (though not all) teachers were organized into teams to better develop their leadership and instructional abilities. Linked together with the school vision, these groups helped determine improvement projects to continue to make the school a vibrant and better place to learn at and be involved with. Though these improvement efforts (no specifics were exactly named) were considered by nearly all involved to be very demanding, most of those involved felt grateful and rewarded for having participated. Those who were not part of one of the teams did seem to believe that it was all a bit “too much” (p. 606)

While there was some disagreement, most of the teachers were more confident and had a greater job satisfaction after the changes. Some were not on board, and had to be corrected or replaced, but such is the life of an administrator. Through encouragement of self-reflection and trust, nearly all of the teachers moved in what can be summarized as a positive direction. Students were given many chances at the school to participate, and most reported feeling “ambitious” and positive about the school (p. 608). Formally, the principal was aided by a deputy principal, department heads, etc. They meet on a weekly basis, and the principal and deputy principal had clearly delineated roles and responsibilities.

However, the principal made a concerted effort to involve most everyone in the process. Students were given a voice, as well as parents, though they arguably could have been more involved. Leadership capacity was most improved for those most involved with the process. Support staff and parents seemed to be the most out of the loop, and student involvement showed room for improvement. On the Lambert framework, the school seemed to be mostly on the high end, in quadrants three and four, although in some regards it could be better. Overall the school showed marked improvement in culture and leadership abilities, yet work remains.

Personal Reflection & Commentary

The principal here has obviously invested a lot of time, thought, and care into carefully “reshap[ing] the school’s culture and significantly rais[ing] the level of leadership capacity” (Sigurðardóttir & Sigþórsson, 2016, p. 613). His school was just emerging from a tumultuous situation, yet he wisely made sure not to zealously impose his vision upon the school and community. Instead, he spent time fostering relationships, creating trust and respect, and so forth, which in turn allowed him to get honest feedback from his staff and shareholders. They shared with him about the past and present of the school, thus allowing everyone involved to together create a better, more united, vision for the future. I think it would be quite difficult to begin such a position in these circumstances, but he made the most of it.

Utilizing his burgeoning relationships and intimacy with the school and community, the principal then introduced numerous opportunities to not only continue to build those relationships, but also to pass on their vision for the school. Jim Knight mentions that one of the best ways to do this is to “commit to finding common ground”, while also avoiding common dividers. There are many things that divide us, but also many others that unite us and that we can agree on (Knight, 2011, p. 218). The principal in this case study understood that, and sought to open up avenues of dialogue. I believe this is crucial to an administrator’s success, especially if they are stepping into a volatile situation, as this initially was. He also created opportunities to create instructional changes, in order to develop and improve teacher competencies and create better outcomes for their students. Many teachers admitted that he asked a lot of them and the students, but in general it was received with willingness and enthusiasm.

At my current school, I have found myself in a similar situation. My own administrator, Dr. Meeks, has great plans and goals for our school, and expects much from us and the students.

Yet he also has taken time to develop trust and mutual respect with us (at least from my perspective), and I feel motivated to push myself and my teaching towards improvement. It isn't from fear, or deference to duty, but because I believe that he wants the best for our school, and he inspires me to want and to do the same. As mentioned in this study, I believe that we too have "a significant and competent group of teachers in the school...committed to what [we] are doing" (Sigurðardóttir & Sigbórsson, 2016, p. 606).

One interesting concern the study mentioned was the lack of cohesion that the support staff had with the rest of the faculty and school in the common vision the school had. These members of the school were noted for having "far fewer opportunities for professional development and leadership than teachers" (p. 609). While the principal did make some efforts, and this group of staff readily admitted that their situation had improved overall under the tenure of their current principal, there was room for growth. I have noticed a similar disconnect with our support staff and the rest of our faculty, and I believe we ought to rectify that as well.

It pleased me to see that the students were so engaged in their school and learning. One teacher described it as follows: "Students are listened to actively, decisions are taken in a democratic way" (p. 609), and the students seemed to agree. The students didn't have as much direct influence over curriculum and policy, though they themselves expressed little concern over that. At our school, we have a very active student population, who are always interested in getting involved and willing to provide service, which I'm happy to note. We have a very tightknit group, much as this school is, and that is a strength of ours that I'm proud of.

Parental involvement at their school was lackluster. Ironically, before the current principal's tenure, it had been greater, yet most parents admitted that was due to the many issues the school had previously had. Now that the current principal and staff had things running

smoothly, most parents were happy to let things function as is. The study authors felt like the parents might take a more prominent leadership role in the future, and I agree. We are a charter school, which was founded by parents that care passionately about educating the rising generation, and from my own experience, our parents are very involved and supportive, much more so than a traditional public school. We are still searching for ways to involve them and the community in greater ways, but we are moving in a positive direction. Anecdotal evidence from many indicates that a majority of parents want to help out their local schools, but often aren't sure where to start (Hinkle, 2017). We as educators must do all we can to encourage parental involvement. Our school is working on doing just that by hosting family nights, public performances and presentations, and forums for all to see, whether they are parents of students or simply conscientious community members. The more we do this, the more positive bonds will be forged, and that can only lead to better outcomes for all involved.

I was especially impressed with the final commentary by the authors, which stated that positive school cultures need to be nurtured often if they are going to persist. The ultimate goal of leadership capacity is "building a capability within a school such that when a key person – as this principal certainly is – leaves, it is able to continue to prosper for the benefit of the students" (p. 614). I am not positive that this school in Iceland is quite there, nor is my school currently at that point, but both are making efforts in the right direction. I hope in the coming years that we can attain such self-sufficiency, so that no matter who the leader may be, we will continue to press forward in a positive direction. I'll be doing my utmost to help achieve that goal.

References:

- Harris, A. & Lambert, L. (2003) *Building Leadership Capacity for School Improvement*. Maidenhead: Open University Press; Lambert L (2006) Lasting leadership: A study of high leadership capacity schools. *The Educational Forum* 70(3): 238–254.
- Hinkle, L. (2017). Why parent involvement is important. Retrieved from <https://www.livestrong.com/article/191766-why-parent-involvement-is-important/>
- Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Sigurðardóttir, S. & Sigþórsson, R. (2016). The fusion of school improvement and leadership capacity in an elementary school. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 44(4), 599-616. doi:10.1177/1741143214559230

Week 7 – Concept Paper: Creating & Implementing a School Improvement Plan

For this assignment, we were originally supposed to look out our schools School Improvement Plan (SIP), and then include multiple strategies to improve it. Seeing as our school only had a very informal SIP already, I asked if I might take a more basic approach, and Dr. Plas approved. Below is the result:

Creating & Implementing a School Improvement Plan
Joseph A. Wright
Chadron State College

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of EDCI 629 (Fundamentals of School Administration)
Summer, 2018

Introduction

According to Jim Knight's book *Unmistakable Impact*, "almost every school in the United States has a school improvement plan" (Knight, 2011). This begs the question: what is a

School Improvement Plan (SIP), and what is its purpose? According to Hanover Research, at its essence a SIP is “a systematic way of planning school improvement and tracking it over time” (p. 5, 2014). Thus it is basically a plan to improve a school (in some way), and to track that progress (however great or small, in the right or wrong direction), to see how successful it was. This paper will explore the SIP implementation and maintenance process, while considering its implications for the author’s school, Merit College Preparatory Academy.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

In order to make a plan to improve, as educators we must first know where we are, and then where we want to go. Otherwise, we risk ending up like Lewis Carroll’s poor lost Alice, who, questioning the Cheshire Cat, asked: ““Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?” ‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the Cat. ‘I don’t much care where—’ said Alice. ‘Then it doesn’t matter which way you walk,’ said the Cat” (Carroll, 1865, p. 89).

Obviously, we as educators *do* care where we end up, unlike the befuddled Alice. Yet first, we need to know where we currently stand, as that will inform our plan of action to get wherever it is that we wish to go. A comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) will help us do exactly that. According to many sources (ASCD, 2012; Pipkin, 2015; “The school improvement process”, 2018), CNAs are a great place to start when considering the creation & implementation of a SIP. As cited in the 2014 Hanover Research report, the U.S. Department of Education describes a CNA as “a systematic method for determining needs and examining their nature and causes” (p. 7). This analysis creates a baseline that allows the school and stakeholders to judge

how things are in the beginning, throughout, and afterwards, much like “before and after” photos accomplish.

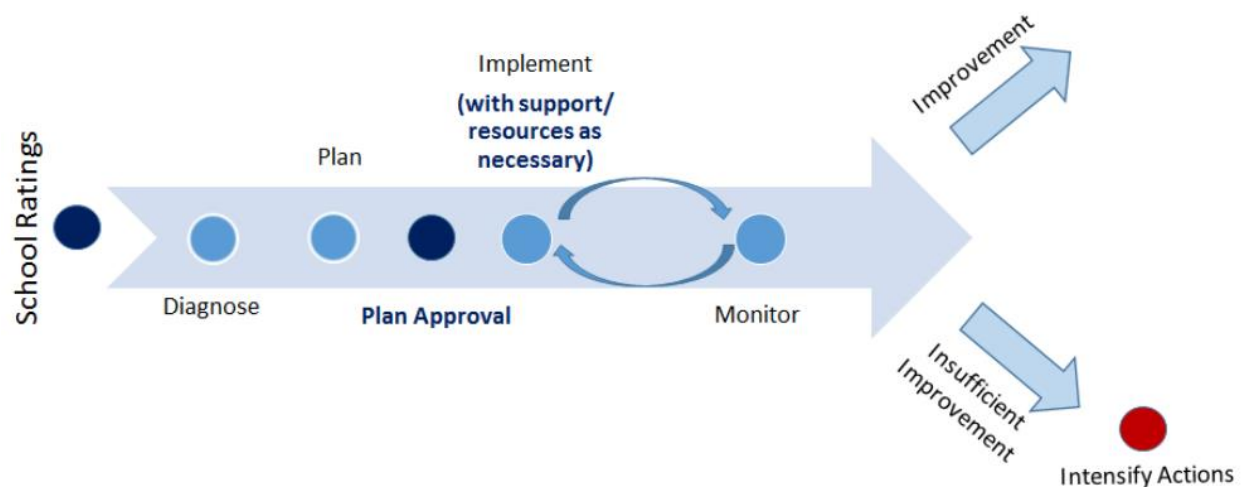
This assessment needs to accurately gauge our school’s strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Things we might analyze to reveal this information include student achievement data, classroom walkthrough information, and surveys of students, parents, teachers, and administrators (Pipkin, 2015, par. 6). The past two years that I have taught at Merit Academy, I have seen our administration conduct this information gathering process in many ways, from formal evaluations to other informal ways, including consulting parents and students in conferences and so forth.

Some have argued that a more formal, third-party review ought to be required, since many schools “are not as objective as they should be” in this process (Hanover Research, 2014, p. 8). This can end up being costly however; as a charter school we are often limited on funds, so this could be a challenge. Several popular framework models exist to help schools to conduct this comprehensive needs assessment. These include the **Cambridge Education – Comprehensive Needs Assessment Model** and also the popular **Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) – Needs Assessment Tool** (p. 9). The latter is available online (see: sitool.ascd.org) and free of charge; it allows the input of data, and then provides individualized resources depending on that input. Its metrics include looking at such factors such as: School climate / culture; Curriculum and Instruction; Leadership; Family and community engagement, and so forth (p. 10). Certainly this would be a useful and affordable tool for any school to utilize, including ours.

Creating an ISP

After this assessment / diagnostic process, we will see more clearly where the school and its students stand. The next step is to create a SIP based on the needs discovered in the CNA. So who ought to be involved in this process? How should we go about it? What structure ought to guide the process? These are important questions that require a common vision, respect, teamwork, and focus. Below are some keys points to remember as you embark on the creation of a SIP.

Figure 1. The School Improvement Process



Here is one outline for how a school can begin to make and maintain a SIP (Source: edtrust.org, 2018)

Common Vision & Partnership

The faculty (at least the majority of them) need to have the same **overall goal(s)** for the school, otherwise efforts will be exerted in multiple (and sometimes opposing) directions and any improvement effort will likely fail. Thus a common vision is crucial to coalesce and guide the exertions of the staff in creating a school that they can all support and be proud of (Pipkin,

2015, par. 4). We have several different sources guiding our school, particularly our vision statement: “At Merit we work to *inspire* young men and young women to *develop meaningful skills* and *attitudes* enabling them to *engage* in real world *challenges* and *opportunities*” (“Mission – Merit Academy”, 2018; emphasis added).

This is our overarching common goal, and while there are arguably myriad ways to achieve this, at least we can all agree on this, which guides our efforts going forward. A crucial part to maintaining cohesion and dedication to this goal is the idea of **partnership**. Jim Knight focuses heavily on how administrators ought to go about creating partnership in their schools, expressed in seven basic principles: equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity (2011, p. 28).

I agree wholeheartedly with each of these. **Equality** between staff and among students, or seeing others “as having equal value” (p. 29) is crucial to developing rapport, trust and community at a school. **Choice** is also important: teachers and students are more engaged at school when they feel they have choices in what they do, even if those choices are within proscribed limits. Jazz music is a great analogy to choice: though it can seem at times chaotic and free-flowing, there are many rules that guide it, such as tempo, key, and so forth. It is *freedom with limits*, and when we create similar environments in our schools, it too can create enduring works and products just as exciting, impressive and enduring as Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington’s 1939 “Take the ‘A’ Train”, for example.

The principle of **voice** is also important, and ties into choice. Freedom to do implies freedom to say, and in that vein, we all ought to respect the opinions of everyone in our schools, giving all a chance to share, contribute, and participate. **Reflection** ties into choice and voice, in

that with that freedom, we can reflect, adapt, and move forward better for it. Related to voice and reflection is the principle of **dialogue**, which is sorely wanting in our day and age, with “everyone [seemingly] intent on talking louder, not wiser.” Instead of shouting down each other, dialogue ought to be “thinking together” (Knight, 2011, p. 38). Dialogue only occurs when we come together in humility, faith, and mutual respect.

Praxis, or the “act of applying new ideas to our own lives” (p. 43) is crucial to making a SIP work. We all have to agree, and act, on the plan of action, otherwise it was indeed all for naught. Students have to believe their learning is meaningful to them, just as teachers need to know that training, improvement plans, and the like are useful and worthwhile. This combines with the last principle of **reciprocity**, or that each interaction at school is “an opportunity for everyone to learn” (p. 44), no matter who is involved. Students need to feel that teachers respect and listen to them. In the same way, teachers need to believe that as they discuss and work with others at the school, that their ideas will be respected and considered, no matter the difference in experience, age, position, or whatever. With these principles of **partnership** in place and respected by all involved, the groundwork has been laid for an effective SIP to be created and followed faithfully.

SIP Design Team

Next, a crack team of educators and stakeholders needs to be formed to take the results of the CNA and to then mold them into a workable, concise SIP or Target. So who ought to be on this team? The Principal (or in our case Director) is an obvious choice, but they ought not to be alone in the process. Research shows, as mentioned in a report by the Public Schools of North Carolina, that “distributed leadership...increase[s] buy-in for the SIP...[and] increases the odds

of school improvement being sustainable” (2016, p.12). Pipkin and others echo this sentiment, suggesting we develop “a process that involves all stakeholders—teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community leaders—in establishing a vision, setting goals, and outlining action steps” (2015, par. 18). Each situation is unique, but experts agree that all stakeholders ought to have a say. Research suggests that smaller groups, no larger than 15, are ideal (Hanover Research, 2014, p. 14).

One last suggestion: specific qualities among the participants can be helpful in getting people excited and responsive to the SIP. First, they ought to be **positive**, and have good humor, which will aid the process greatly. This can help when discussions get tense, and help the group remember their purpose. Second, team members need to be **credible**. A parent that is respected in their field, well-spoken, and proactive, for example, will be a much better participant in this process than a stressed single-parent who struggles to attend the meetings. Finally, the members need to be **open-minded**. If not, what needs to occur may be pushed aside by tradition, lack of understanding, or some other trivial reason. If members are flexible however, then the plan itself can be flexible too and able to accommodate a wide range of perspectives and objectives (Knight, 2011, p. 66).

Keeping it Simple

Once you have your CNA and SIP Design Team in place, you’ll be ready to create the SIP. Any such plan ought to include “concise, measurable, and achievable goals and objectives” (School Improvement Network, 2015, p. 2). One thing that I’ve heard Dr. Meeks and Ms. Kuhn mention to us teachers is based on data they’ve collected over the last two years, is that people couldn’t see what makes us unique and different, and a better choice than the local regular public

school. Students also suggested that in many classes, they were bored, and didn't see the relevance of their learning. While we haven't created a formal SIP, these past two years we have utilized that data as a school to make plans to address these concerns, by refocusing our efforts on **Project / Problem Based Learning**, as well as planning to implement **Expeditionary Learning**, which seeks to solve both of these problems at the same time.

As Merit Academy works to formalize these plans into a SIP, we will continue to build off of the efforts we have made in the past, but perhaps in a more organized, structured manner. This plan ought to be “well-developed, built on relevant data, loaded with evidence-based practices to improve learning, and focused on the school’s critical needs.” I know that we have three main goals right now (as our admins discuss the creation of our SIP), and that is good, because we need our efforts to remained concise and focused. Additionally, these goals must be easy to evaluate and measure, to see how well implementation is going, and to make course-corrections as needed (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2016, p. 12).

Figure 2. Local SIP Goal Example

School Name: Mapleton Elementary

School Year: 2018-2019

<p>Goal: Mapleton Elementary will continue to purchase technology and software that will increase instructional improvements within the classroom that support student learning and 21st century skills. Increased technology will occur on each grade level according to need.</p>
<p>Nebo Goal (Board Goal) Connection: Technology</p>
<p>Action Plan(s):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technology may be <u>purchased</u> to support and enhance classroom instruction with a goal of one to one Chromebooks in grades 3-6 and 6-8 iPads in grades K-2. 2. Outdated technology will be replaced. 3. Equipment and supplies will be <u>purchased</u> to maintain current technology (i.e. projector bulbs, mice, headsets, etc.)
<p>Measurements of Success:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers and students will be observed utilizing technology in the classroom in multiple subject areas and in a variety of ways. 2. Students in grades 3-5 will participate in district keyboarding programs.
<p>Supporting Professional Development Activities (if applicable):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers and students will be observed utilizing technology in the classroom in multiple subject areas and in a variety of ways. 2. Students in grade 3-5 will participate in district keyboarding programs.

Here is a good example of a simple, concise SIP goal for a nearby local school (Source: Mapleton Elementary School, 2018)

Maintaining the SIP

Perhaps the hardest part of all is maintaining the SIP once you've put it all together. Even though Merit Academy hasn't had a formal SIP, we have had goals and objectives over the past two years that we have been seeking to implement. We've had numerous Professional Developments (PD) to that end, as well as follow up by department heads and administrators, all in an effort to measure our fulfillment of these goals, see where we've had successes and struggles, and made plans to improve going forward.

Successful SIPs make sure they have frequent monitoring mechanisms in place, to measure the progress made towards completion of those goals. I would quickly add three final suggestions (as mentioned by Jim Knight) in order to keep our SIP alive and well: Instructional Coaching, Impactful Workshops, and Intensive Learning Teams. Teachers such as myself struggle sometimes to take the big ideas from SIP goals and then implement them faithfully in their own classes. It is stressful to feel that the main time we get feedback on these efforts is through official evaluations (at least in my experience). This is where an instructional coach would be helpful.

Instructional Coaching

I understand that having a full-time instructional coach may not be fiscally feasible, but I have a possible solution: Perhaps once a month or term, each teacher could team up with another teacher, and they could visit each other's classes during their own prep period, and act as instructional coaches to each other. This would be with the understanding that their suggestions

and ideas are non-evaluative in nature, but simply an effort to learn and help learn. This would help foster a better rapport among teachers, and also give us a unique perspective on our teaching, and ways that we can both improve our teaching and better fulfill the goals of the SIP.

Impactful PD / Workshops

As a teacher, I have thoroughly enjoyed some of our PD / Workshops that we have engaged in at our school. There have also been some that I have wondered “This doesn’t seem to apply to me; what am I doing here?” One idea that I have for this: provide options for teachers, so that we can focus on what we feel would help us most. We’ve broken up before into various groups during PD, but besides short activities, I don’t remember any PD that let me meet up with fellow teachers to work and discuss a topic that I was truly interested in, which I felt would be most useful to me. If we were to implement a PD utilizing a jigsaw-protocol style with various classes, where we might go and learn what we want to, I think this would be very helpful. It would make the PDs more engaging, and ties in with the principle of choice (within bounds), that we and our students so highly value.

Intensive Learning Teams

In Jim Knight’s book, he mentions this idea, but it is based more around the public school district, and those teachers who teach the same class across different schools (2011, p. 177). We at Merit Academy don’t quite fit that model, but I believe the idea of Intensive Learning Teams (ILTs) has been modified and implemented already at our school via our department meetings. At least in our department, I have felt like our meetings have had an ILT-esque quality to them, allowing us to meet and collaborate in smaller, sociable groups and discuss some of our difficulties, as well as collectively look for solutions in our teaching. I

personally have appreciated this, and feel that we're doing a great job in this area, and I hope we see it continue.

Conclusion

Throughout this summer, I've been in close contact with our administrators, and they are currently engaged in the process of creating our own formalized SIP. This paper in part hopes to help guide that process. From what I've seen and witnessed (as previously mentioned), our school is already partially fulfilling many of these suggestions and ideas, but just requires a bit more structure and follow-through. We have (for the most part) a common vision for the school that we buy into, and lots of community support as well. We have been carrying our CNAs in various ways, and these have already helped us identify strengths and weaknesses we should address.

Currently, our school is working on creating a formal SIP, involving our administration, school board, and teachers and I know the people involved are dedicated and want to see its success. We have already been laying down much of the foundational groundwork for a SIP in the last two years that I've been at Merit Academy and since Dr. Meeks came in as administrator, and that will continue. I am confident that we will continue in a positive direction regarding this, and I am hopeful that in some way this paper and research will aid that process.

References

- ASCD. (2012). ASCD launches free online needs assessment and school improvement tool. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/news-media/Press-Room/News-Releases/ASCD-Releases-Free-Online-School-Improvement-Tool.aspx>
- Carroll, L. (1865). *Alice's adventures in wonderland* (1st ed., p. 89). London: Macmillan & Co.
- Hanover Research. (2014). *Best practices for school improvement planning*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <https://www.hanoverresearch.com/media/Best-Practices-for-School-Improvement-Planning.pdf>
- Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Mapleton Elementary School. (2018). *School improvement plan 2018-2019*. Retrieved from <http://mapleton.nebo.edu/sites/mapleton.nebo.edu/files/School%20Improvement%20Plan%202018-2019.pdf>
- Mission – Merit Academy. (2018). Retrieved from <http://meritacademy.org/about-us/mission/>
- Pipkin, C. (2015). *How to craft an effective school improvement plan* [Blog]. Retrieved from <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2015-09-09-how-to-craft-an-effective-school-improvement-plan>
- Public Schools of North Carolina. (2016). *North carolina school improvement planning implementation guide*. Raleigh, North Carolina. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/program-monitoring/planning/sip-guide.pdf>
- School Improvement Network. (2015). *Four keys to successful school improvement*. Retrieved from <http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/414846/four-keys-to-successful-school-improvement.pdf?t=1529592650051>
- The school improvement process – The education trust. (2018). Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/students-cant-wait/school-improvement-process/>

Week 8 – School Board Meeting Summary

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 25th, 2018

Week 8 Assignment – School Board Meeting

“Attend a School Board meeting and write the "minutes" as you saw and heard the meeting unfold. Be sure to include your comments about pertinent issues (reflection is always an important aspect to your assignments). Pay particular attention to the principal's reports. If there is not an oral principal's report, please ask if there was a written one in the board packet. If possible ask to have a copy of this report.”

Merit College Preparatory Academy Minutes & Personal Reflections 7/25/18

Time:	Description	Reflections
3:00 PM	The meeting begins. The chair of the board, John Young, outlined the schedule for the meeting. The board then asked if anyone had anything they'd like to say before the board before they began with the things they had planned to discuss on their agenda.	<p>Honestly, I was glad to hear that the board, noticing the others in attendance (from what I was told by our administrators, not a lot of people attend these besides the office staff and the board themselves) was willing to hear what they had to say, so that if they didn't have much time, they could say their piece, and then leave.</p> <p>While this may not seem important or it may seem like common sense, I have been to our own city council meetings, which are similar in format, and trust me: there is a good way and a bad way to handle public comment. I had to wait nearly 2 hours with 2 squirrely children with me to speak before the city council (because they decided to wait till near the end of the meeting to allow for public comment), and that was tortuous for both me and the other poor souls sitting nearby us.</p> <p>I was glad to see that our School Board gave people that courtesy, since it is often unknown how long these meetings can go. It gave me more trust that they will and are willing to make the best choices for our school and the staff and families that attend here.</p>

Time:	Description	Reflections
3:05 PM	<p>Several people took advantage. A Mr. Griffin, a parent of several students here at Merit Academy, said that he would like to serve on the board (which is a volunteer position, unpaid, and allows anyone willing to do so to join), and would like to get some training in order to do that. The board was happy to figure that out at a later date.</p>	<p>It was refreshing to see a parent (I don't know his students personally) that was willing to get involved in their children's education. I also thought that it was neat how our board is so open, and most anyone who is willing to take the time can easily participate.</p>
3:10 PM	<p>Mrs. Young, one of the teachers who has been at our school for many years (since it nearly opened), and has several kids / students attending, asked that the board consider revising the dress code.</p> <p>One of the rules (which she mentioned) has been especially problematic, that students are not allowed to have any "unnatural" colors in their hair. She felt it is unnecessary and causes a lot of unneeded angst and anger against the school. The board thanked her for her view, and said that they would discuss it.</p>	<p>I think it is a good thing that we have an open forum to discuss differing opinions about school policies. I would have liked to have heard more discussion about it at the meeting, but at least they said they'd be willing to consider what she said.</p> <p>I personally think that "unnatural" is probably not the best term. I'd stick with something like "extreme", which implies that average hair styles are fine, and only the crazy, distracting ones ought to be singled out. I do think it is good that we have a dress code, but I'd like to see some things tweaked a bit myself, so I was glad to see that she had a voice to speak her mind.</p>
3:20 PM	<p>Red Apple, the chief financial contractors that we use at Merit Academy had a representative there named Steve, as well as another gentleman named Glenn who called in during the meeting.</p> <p>Glenn, on the phone, was the main one that spoke, discussing the very complicated financial situation regarding the school loan that Merit Academy is trying to work its way through. I'm no financial expert, and there weren't any handouts to help explain it, but basically he explained to the board how Red Apple has been working with the state to change the loan structure that we have to instead become a bond, which will give Merit Academy more flexibility and leeway to eventually pay off the massive \$12 million loan that we still owe on the school property and grounds.</p> <p>He went on for quite a while, and I didn't understand much of what he was saying, but basically it will be a good thing for Merit, and after much deliberation and working with the state, lenders, etc., they had found a way that should help the school get a lower interest rate and save some \$250k / month on the interest (ok, that's a big deal) they were paying, which is great.</p>	<p>Ok, this part of the meeting went on for a very long time...much longer than all the other parts, combined. If I were an admin, I would try to keep lots of the details on paper, so that the board or anyone else might read the nitty-gritty details, rather than have him explain them. I saw several others in attendance get a grey, far-away, glazed look in their eyes after a while, and so I knew I wasn't the only one totally lost with lots of his explanations.</p> <p>He talked for about an hour, explaining lots of details that should have been reserved for Dr. Meeks, who could have explained them himself in more layman terms, or he at least could have given people a handout with the finer details.</p> <p>I believe that he could have shared the gist of what he was saying, without losing any substance, if he had better prepared for his audience. 15 minutes was all he really needed, so I was a bit irritated at his lack of preparations / consideration of his audience. The board spent 15 minutes just getting clarifications, and it was not respectful of anyone's time. Thankfully, besides that complaint, the guy obviously is really smart, and the work they are doing will save us boatloads of money. However, I surely hope I never subject anyone to that sort of technical talk for that long. It was painful to say the least.</p>

Time:	Description	Reflections
4:00 PM	<p>Glenn continued, changing gears to talk about another good change that Red Apple is working on for Merit Academy. They have a new 401k program (versus the Simple-IRA that we had these two past years) that they suggest we join, which will offer better benefits and lower costs to the school. That was pretty straightforward.</p> <p>The board asked what I and the other several employees that normally didn't attend thought about that, and we responded. It seems like a good change, and so the board voted to approve the changes.</p>	<p>I was confused by why Glenn had such an easy time explaining this in a quick, concise way, and yet he blathered on and on about the school loan for what seemed like an eternity. I guess he must have gotten into his groove by then, but I hope Dr. Meeks has a chat with him about just how long he went on for, and how he might want to tidy up his thoughts next time before coming to the board meeting.</p> <p>I was happy that the board gave us a chance to speak up, and that was refreshing. Again, this gives me added confidence that they want what is best for us and our school.</p>
4:15 PM	<p>Glenn said by, and then the board said that they would hear from Mrs. Gilbert, who is the head of the English Department, and had a great idea to present to the board.</p> <p>Mrs. Gilbert proceeded to explain the idea that the English Department had come up with, to help make Merit a "destination school", and give us a more unique identity and culture.</p> <p>The idea was to create an annual "Renaissance Fair" that ties in with the local Shakespeare Festival in Cedar City, about 2 hours away, which is a pretty big deal around Utah. The students would work on PBL projects to give them a better connection to Shakespeare's literature, and we could create houses (like in Harry Potter) that would help unite the students in friendly competition, as they prepared for the Fair. It would help build awareness for our school (of roughly 450 students 7-12th grade), and make the learning more fun and engaging.</p> <p>The board listened, had several questions, but seemed overall to be very supportive of the idea. They gave it their full support.</p>	<p>I have heard some rumblings about this fair for several months before the school started, but I didn't know any details really. It is in part an attempt to replace a popular event known as Quiz Knight, but keeping with the Knight / Chivalry theme that our school is founded upon.</p> <p>I was very excited while listening to Mrs. Gilbert share what they will be doing. It should increase student motivation and participation, and fun competition is a great thing in my book. It keeps with our PBL goals, and helps make a topic that many consider dry and old-fashioned seem flashy, fun, and relevant. I'm very eager to see how it turns out.</p>
4:30 PM	<p>The board then looked at the fee schedule for this upcoming year, which as part of a state audit wants to make sure that we are being honest about the charges and fees that our students will be expected to pay to participate at school.</p>	<p>When I stepped in last year to help coach the JV Soccer team, we didn't even know how much we should charge the students to participate...it was a mess. This will avoid such situations in the future, so I was happy to hear about that.</p>

Time:	Description	Reflections
4:40 PM	<p>Katie, our main marketing person, spoke next. She explained how she and the school are working hard to follow leads on students that may want to come to Merit. In fact, we are over our goal (400+), at about 435 or so students signed up for this upcoming school year. The board seemed happy to hear this.</p>	<p>As a Public charter school, every child that attends our school has a direct impact on what we can and cannot offer, because of the funds that come with that student. The work that Katie is doing in getting the word out about our school is incredibly important, and I'm glad to hear that we are moving in a good direction.</p>
4:50 PM	<p>The board then asked to hear from the school counselors. Mr. Scott Jenkins spoke (one of our two counselors), explaining all the work that they do for the school, including some \$20,000 of grant money they receive from the state by meeting some requirements.</p> <p>He described the efforts they make that are mandated by the state, and some neat things that happened this past year, including qualifying again for that grant of \$20,000, as well as getting the first Regent Scholar (a prestigious scholarship) from our school. He also discussed the efforts that he and Katie make to encourage students to do concurrent enrollment so that they can graduate high school with an associate's degree.</p> <p>He was also happy to report that for the first time ever, we had 100% graduation this past year. It was a focus they worked on, and several needed some remedial summer school, but they all did it, the first time in our 10 year history that we have accomplished that, so the board was happy to hear.</p>	<p>Mr. Jenkins and Mrs. Whitmer are awesome. They are so knowledgeable, and have been at our school for many years. We are lucky to have them, and Mr. Jenkins is always offering his skills with woodwork to help create crafts, help in woodshop, etc.</p> <p>They work very hard to help all of our students, and I can attest to this since my youngest sister graduated from Merit Academy in 2017, and she owed both of these counselors a lot for their help with college applications, etc. She and the help she received from the Merit Community are the main reason I considered working here, and I am so glad that I was hired, because Merit is an amazing community, and our guidance department is a big part of that.</p>
5:00 PM	<p>We finally had our Director's Report, which was quite short, since we had covered a lot already, and most of what Dr. Jesse Meeks wanted to focus on had been discussed already. He spent a minute noting some of the accomplishments of the staff, including a fellow teacher getting a scholarship to get a Master's degree at Kent University in Great Britain, so she was taking a hiatus, as well as another teacher who just earned their master's degree. He also mentioned my efforts in my own degree program</p> <p>He and Amanda Kuhnz, the Assistant Director, then discussed some of the main changes to our graduation requirements, which they tweaked to be more in line with what local public schools had as well. He also discussed some challenges we have had with parents dropping students off and picking them up at the beginning and end of the day, and asked the board and us for suggestions, which we gave, and we came to a consensus on how to resolve the problem.</p> <p>He also noted that this was the longest board meeting we have ever had, as far as he knows. The board agreed, and concluded the meeting.</p>	<p>It was really nice to be personally recognized, and I know that Jesse truly does care about those he works with. Despite some of his flaws, that fact goes very far with many of the staff, and it helps keep our school cohesive and united.</p> <p>I liked how he was willing to ask for ideas and assistance, instead of just directing what would / should be done. This to me is a good sign of a humble leader, and I for one am grateful to work with such awesome admins, who are intelligent, yet still treat others with respect and honor their opinions as well.</p>

Week 8 – Final Exam Scenario Response

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 29th, 2018

Week 8 Assignment – Final Exam Scenario & Response

“Scenario #3: Anita could not believe it. She had always worked very hard, but she had been on top of her work, never a procrastinator, always meeting her own high standards. And now she was in a daze, working from 7 in the morning until 9 at night on weekdays and at least one weekend day. She was nagged by the paperwork to be reviewed, the meetings to be planned, and the journals to be read.

Your task is to help Anita embrace balance in her life by becoming more efficient and effective in how she deals with the never ending tasks that every administrator has to deal with. Suggest two ways she might include others in the governance structure of the school. Also, provide two concrete suggestions for her to consider in her management style.

The first thing that I would do is invite Anita (a principal, I’m assuming), to jointly complete a **Root Cause Analysis** (RCA). RCA has five basic steps, and I believe this would be an effective tool to help resolve her situation. Those steps are:

- Define the Problem
- Collect Data
- Identify Possible Causal Factors
- Identify the Root Cause(s)
- Recommend & Implement Solutions ("Root Cause Analysis", 2018)

Why don’t we walk through what an RCA might look like for Anita? Here we go down the rabbit hole:

#1. Define the Problem: So, what is Anita’s problem then? She is **overworked**, as evidenced by her long hours, and quite stressed out. She cannot seem to get all the work she has done, and is constantly playing catch up. In short, **Anita doesn’t seem to have enough time to complete her tasks.**

#2. Collect Data: Time to analyze the situation. First off, is this a **real problem**? Well, based on how stressed Anita is, her long work hours, etc., this seems to be a legitimate problem (though some “problems” end up not being that big, so this is still worth asking). Next, **how long** has the problem been going on for? The situation description doesn’t give us that info, but Anita should

be able to tell us. Knowing this ought to help us figure out the **underlying factors** to her problems.

Let's assume that Anita's problems started a few months ago, not long after starting this school year. Let's also assume that Anita is a new administrator (this situation seems to be one that a new admin might find themselves in). Anita is partway through the year, and things just seem to be getting worse. Finally, we ought to consider: what is the **impact** of the problem? Well, Anita is constantly stressed, and this is likely leading to other problems at home with her friends and family, and likely with her coworkers as well. If she doesn't rectify it soon, it could have lasting effects, lead to problems for the school, or worse, so we need to nip this in the bud.

#3. Identify Causal Factors: Next, I'd chat with Anita (and perhaps some of her coworkers too, to provide a more balanced perspective) about what she thinks might be causing the problem. We know that the problems began about a month or so into the new school year, and have worsened. Also, we know that Anita seems to always be behind on basic, daily tasks that seem to have piled up. Like many educators, Anita is "hurried, overburdened, and frustrated by [her] inability to meet expectations" (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 190). Indeed, expectations for school administrators continue to grow, with NCLB and its replacement, ESSA, school reform initiatives, and so forth. For most principals (including Anita, it would seem) however, "none of their traditional job responsibilities have been transferred to other staff or eliminated" (p. 191).

#4. Identify the Root Cause(s): One way to do this is an activity called **Five Whys**, which suggests that as you keep asking "Why?", you'll get to the root cause ("Root Cause Analysis", 2018). Not knowing all the details, we'll have to make a few more assumptions to complete this exercise. Let's see how it might play out:

- **Problem:** Anita doesn't seem to have enough time, and is overworked and stressed
- **Why?** Well, she has a lot of things she is responsible for. Emails to respond to, "fires" that need to be put out, parents that are angry and demand to see her, and so on. There doesn't seem to be enough time to handle all of it herself.
- **Why?** It seems that Anita feels that she has to follow the "Heroic Model of Leadership", by "sweep[ing] into [the] school, clear[ing] away disorder and confusion, and lead[ing] the school through sheer force of personality" (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 200). Unfortunately, this has proven to be too much for her to handle on her own; she needs some help. Yet she insists on trying to do it all. She is following the "bureaucratic-rational model" line of thinking, which reserves power to a few, rather than embracing a "distributed leadership model" which embraces "dispersed leadership" (p. 201).
- **Why?** Perhaps Anita doesn't feel she can let go of the responsibility for all of these things. Perhaps she doesn't trust her staff enough to allow them to help lessen the load.

- **Why?** I would guess that Anita feels like she needs to maintain control. If she isn't directly in charge of what is happening, she worries that it won't happen correctly.
- **Why?** Maybe Anita doesn't jive well with her Assistant Principal (if she has one), or other office staff. More likely though, I'd guess that she is a perfectionist, supported by the situation description which stated that she "always worked very hard...[always] on top of her work, never a procrastinator, always meeting her own high standards." She has a clear vision for the school, and in order for that to happen, she feels that she needs to oversee everything directly.

Ok, so based on this exercise, it would seem that the root cause of this whole problem is that Anita is a colloquial "control freak", and this obsessive desire to control and recreate the school to meet and match her own ideal is leading to her reticence to relinquish any control or delegate any of that responsibility. Sadly, this has led to her working an unwarrantable number of hours, being overly stressed, and ironically creating a situation that is far from ideal.

#5. Recommend & Implement Solutions: Yes, the best part! So how can we help Anita to relieve the stress and create or manage time better to allow her to do what she does best? Here are a few of my ideas:

I think she needs to **make a list of all of her responsibilities**. This is a variation on the Most Important Tasks (MITs) protocol that Jim Knight mentions in his book (Knight, 2011, p. 79). She shouldn't be shy...she needs **to outline it all**, so she can visualize the cold, hard truth: the fact that "No individual has all the skills—and certainly not the time—to carry out all the complex tasks of contemporary leadership" (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 201). Once she can see the immense magnitude of what she has been placing squarely upon her own shoulders, she should come to this realization.

Next, she ought to **prioritize** these tasks, perhaps on a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the things she **most** wants to keep control of, and 3 being the things she is **most satisfied with letting someone else handle**. As she looks at this breakdown, how much time with the 1s and 2s require? Will that be sufficient? If not, she needs to be willing to delegate perhaps a few more tasks away. After completing the above exercise, I would suggest that she schedule a meeting with her office staff and other trusted leaders at the school (department chairs, good friends, et cetera) and hold a "**reverse intervention**" as it were, where she opens up to them about what has been going on—though most already have at least an inkling of these issues. She then ought to show the staff members her list of responsibilities—and also verify that she hasn't missed any (oops!)—and explain which ones she believes she ought to maintain control over, while also asking for help with the others. I'm positive that her staff would be more than willing to help out, since a burnt-out principal is the last thing a school needs.

I'd also suggest that she consider some of the other ideas that Jim Knight makes in his Ch. 3 of *Unmistakable Impact*, in the "**Making it All Happen Section**" as found on pages 78-86. Besides outlining the MITs, and making sure she focuses on those, there are several other tricks to the trade that she can implement. He offers some great insight on managing email and other mail, detailed on page 80 and 81. "**Untouchable Time**" is another one that I think is crucial (Knight, 2011, p.79). My assistant director mentioned that she thinks Dr. Meeks would benefit immensely by employing this idea, because otherwise, stuff happens, and it is easy to justify putting important (but not quite as pressing) tasks on the back burner. Instead, the idea is that you set aside some time (say, a few hours on a specific day) that you are not to be interrupted, and that time is sacred. The school staff needs to know as well, so that they can deflect or not create interruptions to this time. Then, the administrator will have undivided attention to give to those MITs.

Without a doubt, Anita needs to abandon the Heroic Model of Leadership. "No man (or woman) is an island", and that is especially true of principals. In order to be effective, she needs to build and nourish "strong, lasting relationships with staff" (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 201), who in turn can alleviate much of her responsibilities. It will likely be difficult for her to give up this control, but I guarantee she (and the school) will be better for it. There will be others that can do an even better job at some tasks, and she ought to learn from their example. She won't get that opportunity if she "can't let go", and she may not be around very long if she doesn't change things soon.

Another thing that Knight suggests is that admins "keep plans written down, not in your head" (Knight, 2011, p. 81). I've had lots of great ideas, but if I don't write them down...they will lose their potency and I may never recall them well enough for utilization. Knight says that writing these down is helpful for two reasons: it helps speed up the implementation of the idea, and it also helps us realize what is conceivable (p. 82), much like Anita's list and prioritization of her responsibilities. When you can visualize something, it makes it easier to analyze and internalize. It also will make it much easier for Anita to get advice, commentary, and input from her staff if she does this.

Overall, if Anita can carry out a RCA, this will allow her to see the bigger picture. It will help her see that she needs help, and give those who can come to her aid insight into what assistance she could use. Utilizing various strategies like MITs, she can identify and delegate various responsibilities to those who can assist. Hopefully, all of these ideas and their implementation will result in a better rounded Anita, who feels comfortable distributing leadership with others at her school, thus alleviating herself and helping others improve their own abilities as well. She is in a bad place, but there is still hope, and by taking these steps, I believe she can right the ship and still be a very successful and productive administrator yet.

Sources:

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Root Cause Analysis - Tracing a Problem to Its Origins. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_80.htm

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson / Allyn & Bacon.

Forum Postings & Responses

Here you will find my weekly postings, along with my responses to other students' threads. They are organized by the week, as were the discussions in class.

Week 1, Part I – Introductions

Joe Wright – Intro

Joseph Wright (Jun 6, 2018 11:01 AM) - Read by: 7

Here's my intro, in video form (trying to fulfill the "creative" requirement, haha). If you want to make your own, see: www.biteable.com. See the video here: <https://biteable.com/watch/joe-wright-an-intro-1906409/>

Figure 1. Joe Wright: An Intro

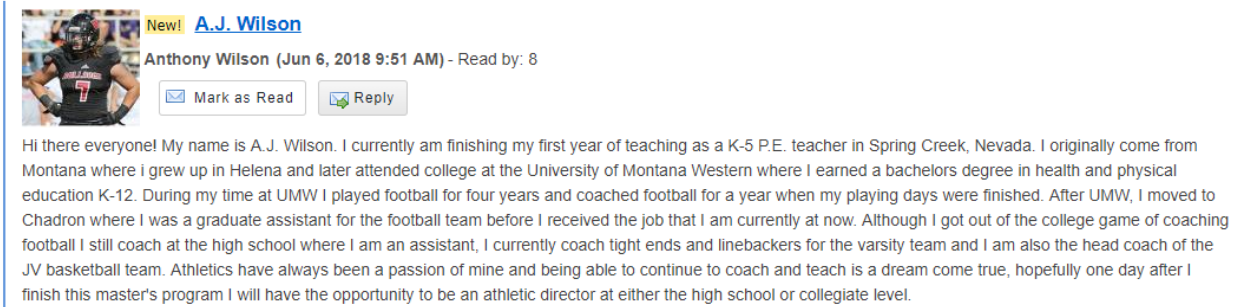


Screen grab from the video that I created to introduce myself (Source: Wright, 2018)

Week 1, Part I – Forum Responses

Below you'll see figures illustrating the postings that I directly responded to, along with what I said regarding their thread.

Figure 2. A.J. Wilson



New! [A.J. Wilson](#)
 Anthony Wilson (Jun 6, 2018 9:51 AM) - Read by: 8
 [Mark as Read] [Reply]

Hi there everyone! My name is A.J. Wilson. I currently am finishing my first year of teaching as a K-5 P.E. teacher in Spring Creek, Nevada. I originally come from Montana where i grew up in Helena and later attended college at the University of Montana Western where I earned a bachelors degree in health and physical education K-12. During my time at UMW I played football for four years and coached football for a year when my playing days were finished. After UMW, I moved to Chadron where I was a graduate assistant for the football team before I received the job that I am currently at now. Although I got out of the college game of coaching football I still coach at the high school where I am an assistant, I currently coach tight ends and linebackers for the varsity team and I am also the head coach of the JV basketball team. Athletics have always been a passion of mine and being able to continue to coach and teach is a dream come true, hopefully one day after I finish this master's program I will have the opportunity to be an athletic director at either the high school or collegiate level.

Screen grab from the first posting I responded to (Source: Wilson, 2018)

Here is my first response:

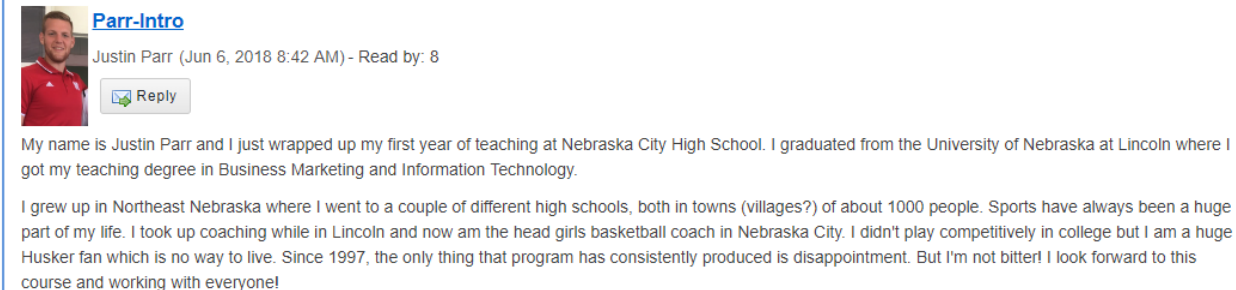
Re: A.J. Wilson

Joseph Wright (Jun 6, 2018 10:47 AM) - Read by: 6

A.J.

Thanks for sharing! Sounds like you have been quite busy, and have lots of high aspirations for yourself and to assist others. Kudos to you, and best wishes in reaching your goals! I look forward to interacting with you over the next several weeks in this class! I've never played football, but as an avid BYU football fan, I can certainly appreciate the effort that you and all others who play put into the game. Best wishes!

Figure 3. Parr-Intro



[Parr-Intro](#)
 Justin Parr (Jun 6, 2018 8:42 AM) - Read by: 8
 [Reply]

My name is Justin Parr and I just wrapped up my first year of teaching at Nebraska City High School. I graduated from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln where I got my teaching degree in Business Marketing and Information Technology.

I grew up in Northeast Nebraska where I went to a couple of different high schools, both in towns (villages?) of about 1000 people. Sports have always been a huge part of my life. I took up coaching while in Lincoln and now am the head girls basketball coach in Nebraska City. I didn't play competitively in college but I am a huge Husker fan which is no way to live. Since 1997, the only thing that program has consistently produced is disappointment. But I'm not bitter! I look forward to this course and working with everyone!

Screen grab from the next posting that I responded to (Source: Parr, 2018)

And here was my response to Mr. Parr:

Re: Parr-Intro


Joseph Wright (Jun 6, 2018 10:50 AM) - Read by: 6

Justin;

It was nice to read your intro and get to know you a bit better! I grew up mostly in Utah, spent some time in Mass. and elsewhere, but I love sports as well, playing soccer in high school and coaching it as a teacher now. I also have the honor(?) of following another college that used to be better than it is lately (BYU), and so I feel your pain in that regard. Here's to both schools turning around their recently mediocre sporting ways, and good luck in this class and your other future endeavors!

I also responded to a few more; I'll include this last one for good measure:

Figure 4. Einfalt – Introduction



Einfalt--Introduction

John Einfalt (Jun 6, 2018 8:02 PM) - Read by: 8

[Reply](#)

Hello all, my name is John Einfalt. I am a Social Studies teacher at an alternative program through ESU-13 in Scottsbluff, NE. I have been teaching for 3 years and I am enjoying every year and opportunity I get to build a relationship with these students. I am very fortunate to be in this program. Most of my career and administration experience came in the retail environment. I have spent the majority of my adult life managing people. I am a non traditional student that has loved learning how to manage students while teaching the content material. It's been an amazing experience.

My hobbies are mowing lawns in the summer for some extra cash, playing golf, and working in my landscapes and garden as they provide me the relaxation that I sometimes take for granted.

Good luck everybody

Screen grab from another posting I responded to (Source: Einfalt, 2018)

Re: Einfalt--Introduction

Joseph Wright (Jun 10, 2018 8:18 AM) - Read by: 6

Sounds awesome John! I worked retail going through college as well, so I have a taste of the work you've done pre-education. Good luck, and hopefully your unique perspective is an asset to you!

Week 1, Part II – Public Values and School Policy

We also had another forum post to respond to for Week 1, which asked us to consider the implications that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has affected our local schools.

Wright - Week 1 Public Values & School Policy Response

Joseph Wright (Jun 6, 2018 11:13 PM)- Read by: 10

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

June 6th, 2018

Week 1 Forum – Public Values and School Policy

“Looking at the development of school policy and the mandates of NCLB, in your work environment what do you consider the greatest positive and negative in the shift to efficiency and excellence? How has this impacted students, teachers and administration locally?”

Full disclosure: I was not able to read the required textbook material as both texts are still *en route* to my house. However (with Dr. Plas’ blessing), I instead did do some poking around, and based on my research, I feel that I can consider NCLB (aka No Child Left Behind) and its replacement, ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act), which went into implementation this past school year (Klein, 2018).

I’ve been teaching for about 5 years now, and so although I am a bit newer to the field of education than some others, I have seen the effects that NCLB had at the schools where I have taught. Utah also has its own testing system they use to gauge student progress, called the SAGE (“SAGE Test Information”, 2018), and in our school, it creates a lot of stress and anxiety every spring (when we are mandated to take it). Not only does it stress the students out, but we have a limited number of chromebooks (sadly, we are not yet to the point of having one device per student, but that is the goal!) that we use to allow the students access online for research, class work, etc., and during the 2 weeks we engage in SAGE testing, those resources are severely restricted, hampering the learning that ought to be occurring in class.

It’s certainly important to have goals; I was a scoutmaster with the BSA for several years, and when the scouts had clear and obvious goals, our weekly meetings were productive and worthwhile. A few times we were in between those achievements, and the aimlessness among them was practically palpable. We all (young adults or older) benefit from measured goals and schedules, and I for one understand the immense benefit that such goals, objectives, and so forth can have. It has helped guide me in my own classes, and with my own students. Reaching for something pushes us to improve and better ourselves.

However, as I reviewed the new ESSA law, I could see some positives coming out of it. For one, much of the control is being returned to the local district and state level, versus being maintained

at the federal level. I know for a fact that our local schools know better how to help address our local students and issues than some nameless bureaucrat in Washington, D.C. It still keeps many of the same indicators that we are used to (standardized testing, planning to help struggling schools, etc.), and I believe this is for the best. After over a decade of NCLB, I do believe that ESSA is a step in the right direction, but only time will tell.


Sources:

Klein, A. (2018). The Every Student Succeeds Act: An ESSA Overview. Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/every-student-succeeds-act/index.html>

SAGE Test Information. (2018). Retrieved from <http://www.utahpta.org/sage-test-information>

Week 1, Part II – Forum Responses

Figure 5. Wilson – Week 1



Wilson - Week 1

Anthony Wilson (Jun 6, 2018 8:59 PM) - Read by: 10

[Reply](#)

After learning more on the NCLB Act, it seems that there are both positives and negatives. In our text books the authors state that, “failing schools actually lose resources” (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy, and Wirt, 2009, p.17). How are those schools going to get any better if they are losing funds and teachers who are no longer there to teach them? I feel as if that is a big negative. But on the flip side we do need to keep teachers and administration accountable for our students learning and improvement in education.

Since I am in my first year of teaching and I am in the “specials” department, I have really yet to be able to see the mandates of NCLB as well as seeing any negatives or positives that come from it. Although I have not seen much, NCLB does neglect the subject in which I teach of P.E., because it doesn’t have a standardized test that can improve their funding or test scores. In the article by Jennings and Rentner (2006), they showed that over 71% of districts reduced time spent in other subject areas other than reading and math. After speaking with both of my administrators from my school, the one thing they were not big on were standardized testing. They felt that it was too much testing for the students and that sometimes we are so focused on that, rather than teaching students other things than what is going to help them prepare for those tests. They feel that if they were to take away other subject areas, that it would actually hurt our testing scores.

The book did discuss how NCLB wants the students to be taught by “highly qualified” teachers and be able to be proficient in both reading and math. Which in the state of Nevada, we have to not only take our subject area PRAXIS test’s but we also have to take the core tests as well which include reading, math, and writing.

Jennings, J., & Rentner, D. S. (2006). Ten big effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(2), 110-113.

Sergiovanni, T. J., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M. M. & Wirt, F. M. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. (6th ed). NY: Pearson.

Screen grab from Mr. Wilson’s posting that I responded to (Source: Wilson, 2018)

Here is my response:

Re: Wilson - Week 1

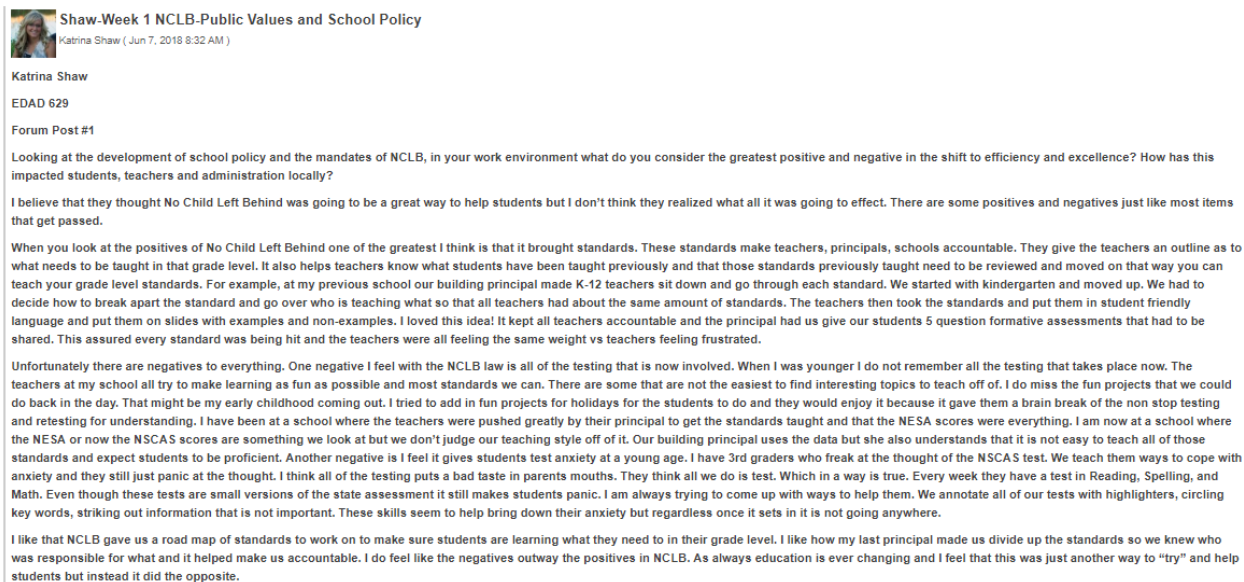
Joseph Wright (Jun 10, 2018 8:24 AM) - Read by: 7

A.J.

In my limited experience, I feel like I too have seen more negative than positive with NCLB. Schools focus on "teaching to the test", and often use it as an excuse to not spend more time / resources / etc. in other, also meaningful areas, like art, theater, humanities, etc. While I too see the need for holding schools accountable, I wonder if ESSA (NCLB's replacement) will find a better, more holistic way of doing that, or if it will end up being more of the same. Time will tell.

In Figure 6 is the next posting that I responded to, and my response follows:

Figure 6. Shaw-Week 1 NCLB-Public Values and School Policy



Shaw-Week 1 NCLB-Public Values and School Policy
Katrina Shaw (Jun 7, 2018 8:32 AM)

Katrina Shaw
EDAD 629
Forum Post #1

Looking at the development of school policy and the mandates of NCLB, in your work environment what do you consider the greatest positive and negative in the shift to efficiency and excellence? How has this impacted students, teachers and administration locally?

I believe that they thought No Child Left Behind was going to be a great way to help students but I don't think they realized what all it was going to effect. There are some positives and negatives just like most items that get passed.

When you look at the positives of No Child Left Behind one of the greatest I think is that it brought standards. These standards make teachers, principals, schools accountable. They give the teachers an outline as to what needs to be taught in that grade level. It also helps teachers know what students have been taught previously and that those standards previously taught need to be reviewed and moved on that way you can teach your grade level standards. For example, at my previous school our building principal made K-12 teachers sit down and go through each standard. We started with kindergarten and moved up. We had to decide how to break apart the standard and go over who is teaching what so that all teachers had about the same amount of standards. The teachers then took the standards and put them in student friendly language and put them on slides with examples and non-examples. I loved this idea! It kept all teachers accountable and the principal had us give our students 5 question formative assessments that had to be shared. This assured every standard was being hit and the teachers were all feeling the same weight vs teachers feeling frustrated.

Unfortunately there are negatives to everything. One negative I feel with the NCLB law is all of the testing that is now involved. When I was younger I do not remember all the testing that takes place now. The teachers at my school all try to make learning as fun as possible and most standards we can. There are some that are not the easiest to find interesting topics to teach off of. I do miss the fun projects that we could do back in the day. That might be my early childhood coming out. I tried to add in fun projects for holidays for the students to do and they would enjoy it because it gave them a brain break of the non stop testing and retesting for understanding. I have been at a school where the teachers were pushed greatly by their principal to get the standards taught and that the NESAs scores were everything. I am now at a school where the NESAs or now the NSCAS scores are something we look at but we don't judge our teaching style off of it. Our building principal uses the data but she also understands that it is not easy to teach all of those standards and expect students to be proficient. Another negative is I feel it gives students test anxiety at a young age. I have 3rd graders who freak at the thought of the NSCAS test. We teach them ways to cope with anxiety and they still just panic at the thought. I think all of the testing puts a bad taste in parents mouths. They think all we do is test. Which in a way is true. Every week they have a test in Reading, Spelling, and Math. Even though these tests are small versions of the state assessment it still makes students panic. I am always trying to come up with ways to help them. We annotate all of our tests with highlighters, circling key words, striking out information that is not important. These skills seem to help bring down their anxiety but regardless once it sets in it is not going anywhere.

I like that NCLB gave us a road map of standards to work on to make sure students are learning what they need to in their grade level. I like how my last principal made us divide up the standards so we knew who was responsible for what and it helped make us accountable. I do feel like the negatives outweigh the positives in NCLB. As always education is ever changing and I feel that this was just another way to "try" and help students but instead it did the opposite.

Screen grab from another posting that I responded to (Source: Shaw, 2018)

Re: Shaw-Week 1 NCLB-Public Values and School Policy

Joseph Wright (Jun 10, 2018 8:45 AM)- Read by: 7

Katrina:

You make some very good points, especially with the focus on standards, and how NCLB helped create outlines for teachers and grade levels. I have always had standards that I am expected to teach by in most of my classes, and when compared with my electives, I can see how standards are very helpful in creating curriculum, lesson plans, etc.

One thing you mentioned, that you "**do miss the fun projects that we could do back in the day**". At my school, we have been using **Project / Problem Based Learning** (aka **PBL**) and **Backwards Design** to take the standards, create meaningful, engaging, and relevant problems to be solved, and then using those in our classrooms to bring back that "**fun projects**" aspect you mentioned. We've been doing it for a year or so now, to great success! For

example, I created one project, for my **Utah Studies** class, that gives them about an entire month to **learn more about tourism**, which is a big part of Utah's economy, with our national parks, monuments, etc., and then **create a self-guided tour** of their own chosen hometown / community of their own format (some created **Google My Maps**, others made **Websites**, etc.), and then share that at a public event. If you want to see more info about PBL, see: www.bie.org

This project allows us to work with the **local office of tourism**, and it also gives the students the chance to **learn more about local history & the present**, and they are given the chance to **interview knowledgeable locals**, as well as create a meaningful product that meets many of the class's standards, while also having fun! Here are just a few examples of the final part of the project, the **self-guided tour**: [Provo Utah Tour](#), [BYU Tour](#), etc.

P.S.: if you or anyone else is interested in the project, and want to modify it for your own state / local community, I'm happy to share all the materials I've created for it. Just let me know!

Week 2 – Issues Shaping School Policy and Administration

The topic of discussion for Week 2 revolved around the **four key responsibilities** that our textbook mentioned we as administrator have to consider. We were supposed to name and review all four, and then pick one that we felt was the **most important**, and then defend that response. Below is my response:

Wright - Week 2 Forum Response

Joseph Wright (Jun 13, 2018 9:39 PM)- Read by: 8

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

June 13th, 2018

Week 2 Forum – Issues Shaping School Policy and Administration

“Name the four critical responsibilities of administrators and which do you feel is the most important including why you think it is the most important.”

Full disclosure: I was STILL not able to read the required textbook material to best respond to this question (I ordered it from another seller, though *Unmistakable Impact* did arrive, thank goodness). However (with Dr. Plas' permission, thank you again!), I instead referenced all of your lovely posts (that's right, give yourselves a big pat on the back), so I can at least contribute in some small way to this week's discussion.

According to all of you (and the text, indirectly), the **four most important responsibilities** of school administrators are as follows:

- **Norms** (maintaining cultural patterns)
- **Goals** (goal attainment)
- **Change** (external adaptation)
- **Morale**/coordination (internal integration)

Wow...to be honest, obviously these are all important for various reasons, as I'm sure the book discusses. To me, having well established **norms** in a school is crucial. Having such established norms aka **school culture** helps provide something that the faculty, students, parents and alumni can gather and rally around. Ours is our mascot, a Knight, and the chivalry of knighthood from the middle ages. We take those values very seriously, and it has created a positive and wholesome culture that we all can support.

A big part of those norms are the **goals** that we have for ourselves. Nearly all schools have mission or vision statements or guiding themes, and ours is as follows:

“Merit College Preparatory Academy will prepare all students to achieve their highest potential as citizens in society by developing the knowledge and skills required to excel in higher education and by developing the knowledge and skills required for community leadership and social commitment” (“Mission – Merit Academy”, 2018). Having such unifying goals that unite us are crucial for the success of any organization, but especially as schools.

Change is another challenge that can either make or break an organization. We recently have been pursuing the goal of becoming a **PBL (Problem / Project Based Learning)** focused school, in an effort to provide a more authentic and relevant learning environment for our students, and to differentiate ourselves as a charter school from traditional public schools. I believe such challenges can unite and strengthen an organization, as long as all are on board (which can be a challenge, and ties in with the last topic).

Morale is another factor that is foundational to any school. If a school has high morale and integration, it can achieve great things. However, I have been at schools torn apart by internal strife, where morale was low, and it was not fun to be there at all. I'm thankfully in a much better situation now, and I am so grateful for that. Having leaders and colleagues that are invested and involved with each other has made my experience much more pleasant and worthwhile. Before landing at my current school, I had seriously considered leaving the educational field (joining the ranks of all those who sadly leave our field in droves), and I had been teaching for a mere 3 years! Then I found Merit Academy, and in all honesty, the entire environment was different. In my personal belief, morale has been the most important in keeping me in education, and I'm sure

I'm not the only one, and so I would choose that one. However, all have their own place and value in my eyes.

Sources:

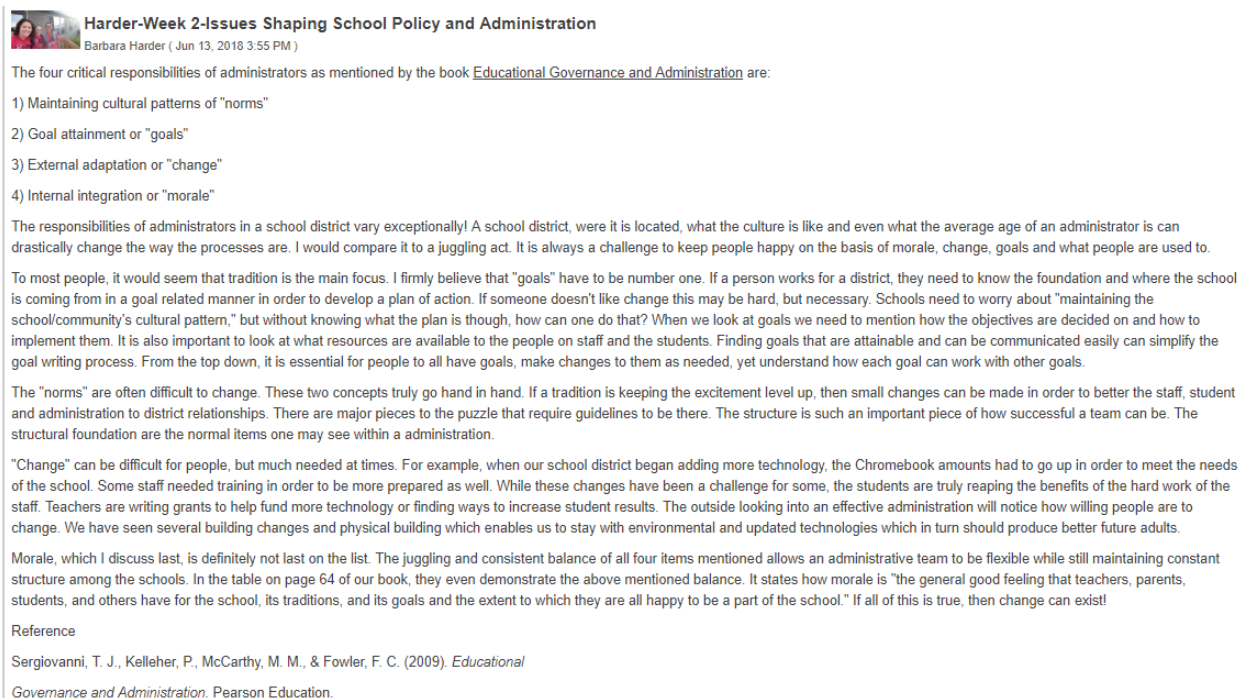
Mission – Merit Academy. (2018). Retrieved from <http://meritacademy.org/about-us/mission/>

Sergiovanni, T.J., Kelleher, P. McCarthy, M.M., & Fowler, F.C. (2009). *Educational Governance and Administration*. (6th ed.). Pearson.

Week 2 – Forum Responses

Figures 7 and 8 show several postings that I responded to. Each is followed by my responses, respectively.

Figure 7. Harder-Week 2-Issues Shaping School Policy and Administration



Harder-Week 2-Issues Shaping School Policy and Administration
Barbara Harder (Jun 13, 2018 3:55 PM)

The four critical responsibilities of administrators as mentioned by the book [Educational Governance and Administration](#) are:

- 1) Maintaining cultural patterns of "norms"
- 2) Goal attainment or "goals"
- 3) External adaptation or "change"
- 4) Internal integration or "morale"

The responsibilities of administrators in a school district vary exceptionally! A school district, were it is located, what the culture is like and even what the average age of an administrator is can drastically change the way the processes are. I would compare it to a juggling act. It is always a challenge to keep people happy on the basis of morale, change, goals and what people are used to.

To most people, it would seem that tradition is the main focus. I firmly believe that "goals" have to be number one. If a person works for a district, they need to know the foundation and where the school is coming from in a goal related manner in order to develop a plan of action. If someone doesn't like change this may be hard, but necessary. Schools need to worry about "maintaining the school/community's cultural pattern," but without knowing what the plan is though, how can one do that? When we look at goals we need to mention how the objectives are decided on and how to implement them. It is also important to look at what resources are available to the people on staff and the students. Finding goals that are attainable and can be communicated easily can simplify the goal writing process. From the top down, it is essential for people to all have goals, make changes to them as needed, yet understand how each goal can work with other goals.

The "norms" are often difficult to change. These two concepts truly go hand in hand. If a tradition is keeping the excitement level up, then small changes can be made in order to better the staff, student and administration to district relationships. There are major pieces to the puzzle that require guidelines to be there. The structure is such an important piece of how successful a team can be. The structural foundation are the normal items one may see within a administration.

"Change" can be difficult for people, but much needed at times. For example, when our school district began adding more technology, the Chromebook amounts had to go up in order to meet the needs of the school. Some staff needed training in order to be more prepared as well. While these changes have been a challenge for some, the students are truly reaping the benefits of the hard work of the staff. Teachers are writing grants to help fund more technology or finding ways to increase student results. The outside looking into an effective administration will notice how willing people are to change. We have seen several building changes and physical building which enables us to stay with environmental and updated technologies which in turn should produce better future adults.

Morale, which I discuss last, is definitely not last on the list. The juggling and consistent balance of all four items mentioned allows an administrative team to be flexible while still maintaining constant structure among the schools. In the table on page 64 of our book, they even demonstrate the above mentioned balance. It states how morale is "the general good feeling that teachers, parents, students, and others have for the school, its traditions, and its goals and the extent to which they are all happy to be a part of the school." If all of this is true, then change can exist!

Reference
Sergiovanni, T. J., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M. M., & Fowler, F. C. (2009). *Educational Governance and Administration*. Pearson Education.

Screen grab from a posting that I responded to (Source: Harder, 2018).

Re: Harder-Week 2-Issues Shaping School Policy and Administration

Joseph Wright (Jun 17, 2018 9:49 AM)- Read by: 6

Barbara;

You make some great points. In relation to goals, I'll share something I learned from a very influential book in my life (you may have seen it around, or it may even be used at one of your schools!), Sean Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. One of his seven important habits that he outlines is **Begin with the End in Mind**. It is something that almost comes naturally in many cases, like "draw[ing] up a blueprint before you build a house...[or] read[ing] a recipe before you bake a cake" (2004, p. 80).

Yet how many times do we just assume that by creating a goal, the work has been done? As you said, we need to know what the goals / objectives are, "*and how to implement them*. It is also important to look at *what resources are available...*" (emphasis added). Thanks for reminding us of that. Yes, goals are important, and they need to be simple, attainable and measurable. Yet if no guidance is given on how to **accomplish** them, then we are simply taking shots in the dark, and while some may get lucky and hit their goals, others may cause unforeseen problems in their efforts to solve another!

Thanks again for your thoughts, especially regarding goals, and how we need to consider all of the components of creating, implementing, and following up with them.

Sources:

Covey, S. (2004). *The 7 habits of highly effective teenagers* (pp. 78-79). London: Pocket Books.

Figure 8. Dolegowski- Week 2

**Dolegowski- Week 2**

Matthew Dolegowski (Jun 13, 2018 7:33 PM) - Read by: 10



The textbook explained that the four responsibilities of administrators are:

- Norms (maintaining cultural patterns)
- Goals (goal attainment)
- Change (external adaptation)
- Morale/coordination (internal integration)

All four of these responsibilities are crucial for an administrator. If an administrator is not proficient in one of these components then the whole school will suffer. However, the responsibility that I believe is the most important is goals (goal attainment). The textbook states that "part of attaining goals is defining objectives and mobilizing resources to attain them." I believe this is important to every profession and every person individually, but as an administrator there needs to be challenging, but attainable goals set for the school. These goals are typically acknowledged by the public, which should be an extra form of motivation for school administrators. Goals give the school administrators (and the school and community) an objective to focus on and it is a way to measure success. If there aren't any goals, then a school administrator wouldn't know if they were succeeding or failing. Setting goals and doing everything in your power to obtain those goals is the best way to achieve maximum results. Also, goal setting holds the school administrator accountable for their actions. As a teacher in my district, we have to set two goals for ourselves and try to attain those goals by the end of the year. It keeps me focused, holds me accountable, measures my success, and holds me accountable. I believe the same results would apply from the school administrative position. Furthermore, the responsibility of goals and goal attainment could apply to the other responsibilities; change, norms and morale.

Screen grab from another posting that I responded to (Source: Dolegowski, 2018).

Re: Dolegowski- Week 2

Joseph Wright (Jun 17, 2018 9:36 AM)- Read by: 6

Matthew;

You make some great points. I also agree that goals are very important, as a favorite author of mine, Sean Covey, has mentioned in his popular book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. My dad bought it for me, after he became obsessed with the "adult version" (as I called it, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*) of the book, ironically written by Sean's own father, Steven R. Covey, but he was right! Covey had the right idea, and the way he wrote inspired me to seek to control my own destiny, for as he said: "Control your own destiny or someone else will...you are the driver of your life, not the passenger (Covey, 2004).

Another important addition I'd like to add is something I read much more recently in *Unmistakable Impact*, where Knight is talking about **motivation**, and shares the story of two different men who read an article on the plane about a new diet. One becomes convinced that *he himself* ought to do it, and the other is convinced *his wife* ought to. You can guess who would be more successful in their attaining of said goal. I really appreciated what Knight said though on page 25: "**Goals that others choose for us seldom motivate us to change**" (2011).

My father always says "**A man convinced against his will is a man of the same opinion still.**" The point of both of these, then, is if we as budding administrators do not consider the **opinions** and **ideas** of our fellow teachers, faculty, etc., we are **setting ourselves up for failure**. As a teacher, I have seen this happen. When I first started in my own class, I set up my own rules, and **didn't involve the students in the process at all**, yet expected them all to abide by them. I got a lot of resistance from them, because they weren't *their* rules, they were *mine!* So, the next semester, after talking with other teachers, etc., I decided a much more balanced approach would be to on the very first day, share some of my expectations (including some basic ones that were non-negotiable), but then opened it up to the students, and **asked for their ideas** and thoughts. I let them know that I would be including the best and brightest ideas they all came up with into a comprehensive rule system for the class. Each class got input, and they all got a say, and it made a huge difference, because now they were **invested** in the class and the rules. Seems small, but it can make a big difference.

On the other hand, having been involved with such goals and whatnot as a teacher from my administration, I can also attest to the fact that if such ideas were simply **handed down**, without our involvement, it was **easy to feel resentful, neglected and ignored**. The school and administrators I work with now thankfully understand this principle, and we all get to share our input in major decisions involving the school and our classes, and as a result I at least feel much more inclined to go along with a program that I had some input in.

Sorry for the long "epistle", but hopefully some of my ideas resonant with you!

Sources:

Covey, S. (2004). *The 7 habits of highly effective teenagers* (pp. 78-79). London: Pocket Books.

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Week 3 – Educational Administration: An Overview

This week we answered a question regarding standards and testing, as well as accountability. Below is my response:

Week 3 - Wright Forum Response

Joseph Wright (Jun 20, 2018 4:49 PM)- Read by: 10

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

June 20th, 2018

Week 3 Forum – Testing for Standards & Accountability

“Why should we test for standards and should schools and teachers be accountable?”

Yes, we should and do test for standards, and the reason for that assessment of students, teachers, and schools is because we are all being held accountable to someone else. Most of it is all about money! There are many different programs and organizations that exist which have various educational goals in mind. Some for example want to see low-SES students have an equitable chance at succeeding in school (and by extension life afterwards); others want to encourage students to increase their math or science skills, etc.

My director and I were talking about this issue, and he mentioned (and even showed me) an outline of the funds that we here at our public charter school get. We receive roughly \$3 million dollars / year for our budget, from about 30 different sources. For example, Title I, Part A, a federal program, provides us with several thousand dollars every year. They ask in return that we “focus Title I services [and funding] on children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet State academic standards” (“Title i, part”, 2018). We are then required to “prove” that we met this goal to these groups.

In this specific case, we fill out an annual report and show where the money went, and how it benefitted low-SES / at-risk students. Sometimes however that proof comes in standardized testing, to show that the goals / standards of the group giving us the funds have been met. The state of Utah for example, has outlined standards for each class that we teach. In order to “prove” that we are meeting their goals, the state requires our administrators to verify that what I am teaching in my social studies classes for instance is meeting state standards. For instance, they ought to be able to verify that I am helping the students learn to “explain the causes and lasting

effects of the Mormon migration to Utah. (history),” or also be able to “explain how agriculture, railroads, mining, and industrialization created new communities and new economies throughout the state. (economics, geography)” (“Utah state board”, 2016).

Just like the federal government will dangle money in front of states, with strings attached (“if you accept x amount of dollars, you must then complete a, b and c.”) to get them to enact policies or do things as they wish, schools are influenced in the same way by various organizations, offering money / assistance, in exchange for compliance. In order to verify that their money is being “well spent,” these groups require “proof”, and that proof most often comes in the form of testing, specifically standardized testing.

The bigger question remains: should schools, teachers, and students be accountable for the money they receive? I believe so. Nothing in life after all is free, and if I had made an agreement, I ought to honor that. Let’s consider an analogy for instance: I make a deal with Bob’s Construction, that I will allow his company to take pictures of my finished basement, in exchange for a discount on the drywall work they did in my basement. We sign a contract, and agree to the terms. What if I decide to change my mind? Should I not be held accountable for that? Or at the least, repay him for the discount he gave me, along with a recompense for the trouble I’ve caused him by not allowing him to use my basement as a reference for his business? Most I believe would agree that yes, I owe Bob’s Construction a debt.

In that same sense, I believe that we as educators, administrators, and even students, do owe a debt to those that paid for the public education that we all benefit from (me with my salary, my students with their free, public education, etc.). In order to get those funds, we promised to accomplish certain things, and in my opinion, we are duty-bound (and I daresay legally obligated) to keep those commitments as best as we can. We owe it to the public, our state and federal governments, local community organizations, and anyone else we accepted funds from to keep any and all arrangements we made with them. Testing is one way that we help show these invested groups the progress that we have made, and prove that we have kept our word.

I do believe that relying specifically on standardized testing as such a measurement of “proof” or success is a mistake. As No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has proven, an unhealthy focus on such leads to teachers admitting themselves to “ignor[ing] important aspects of the curriculum, de-emphasiz[ing] or neglect[ing] untested topics, and focus[ing] instruction on tested subjects, probably excessively” (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 27). A more holistic, mastery-based grading type system is probably a better way to see what is going on in the classrooms and schools around the country, but that is much more subjective, and less reliable, although arguably a more valid way to verify that what you want to happen is indeed happening in schools. So I do believe that accountability is important, and that schools, educators, and students need to show that the money and funds they receive is not being wasted and is being used effectively. As to the best way to prove that, well, that’s a whole other matter.

Sources:

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

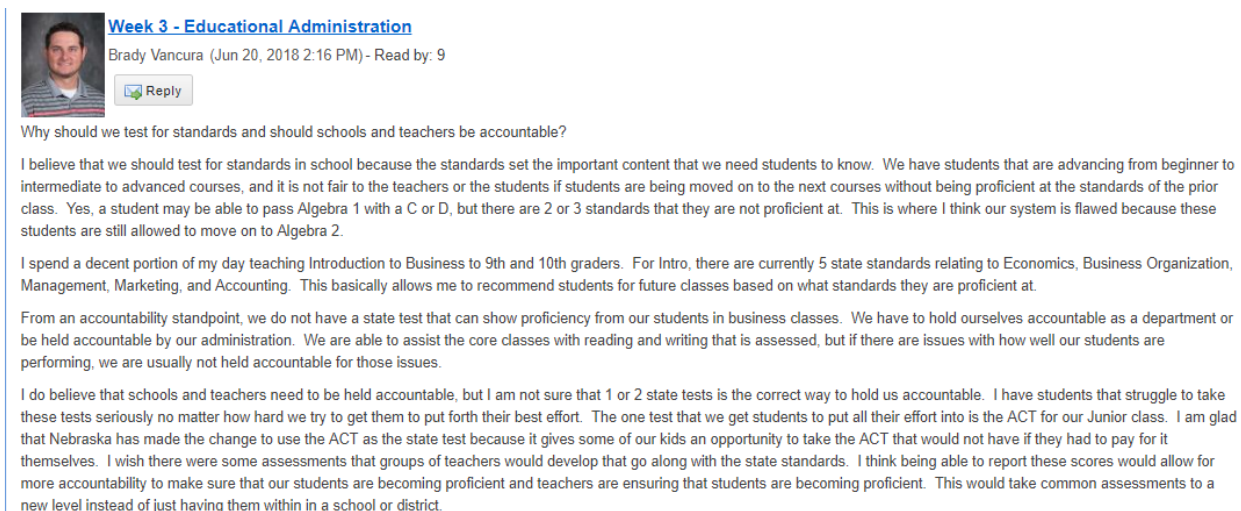
Title I, Part A Program. (2018). Retrieved from
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html?exp=0>

Utah State Board of Education. (2016). Utah State Core Standards for Social Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/4cebdcdf-f723-4b72-b67d-0c1abaefb6fc>

Week 3 – Forum Responses

The next few figures show the threads that I responded to:

Figure 9. Week 3 - Educational Administration



Week 3 - Educational Administration
 Brady Vancura (Jun 20, 2018 2:16 PM) - Read by: 9
 Reply

Why should we test for standards and should schools and teachers be accountable?

I believe that we should test for standards in school because the standards set the important content that we need students to know. We have students that are advancing from beginner to intermediate to advanced courses, and it is not fair to the teachers or the students if students are being moved on to the next courses without being proficient at the standards of the prior class. Yes, a student may be able to pass Algebra 1 with a C or D, but there are 2 or 3 standards that they are not proficient at. This is where I think our system is flawed because these students are still allowed to move on to Algebra 2.

I spend a decent portion of my day teaching Introduction to Business to 9th and 10th graders. For Intro, there are currently 5 state standards relating to Economics, Business Organization, Management, Marketing, and Accounting. This basically allows me to recommend students for future classes based on what standards they are proficient at.

From an accountability standpoint, we do not have a state test that can show proficiency from our students in business classes. We have to hold ourselves accountable as a department or be held accountable by our administration. We are able to assist the core classes with reading and writing that is assessed, but if there are issues with how well our students are performing, we are usually not held accountable for those issues.

I do believe that schools and teachers need to be held accountable, but I am not sure that 1 or 2 state tests is the correct way to hold us accountable. I have students that struggle to take these tests seriously no matter how hard we try to get them to put forth their best effort. The one test that we get students to put all their effort into is the ACT for our Junior class. I am glad that Nebraska has made the change to use the ACT as the state test because it gives some of our kids an opportunity to take the ACT that would not have if they had to pay for it themselves. I wish there were some assessments that groups of teachers would develop that go along with the state standards. I think being able to report these scores would allow for more accountability to make sure that our students are becoming proficient and teachers are ensuring that students are becoming proficient. This would take common assessments to a new level instead of just having them within in a school or district.

Screen grab from the posting that I responded to (Source: Vancura, 2018).

Re: Week 3 - Educational Administration

Joseph Wright (Jun 20, 2018 5:33 PM)- Read by: 7


Brady;

Thanks for your thoughts, I appreciate what you shared. I agree with you that a few standardized tests are perhaps not an ideal way to measure mastery of standards. Some people get really stressed with formal testing, and like you said, some just don't take tests seriously. And how many of us have missed a multiple-choice question because it was poorly worded, or we might argue that it had multiple correct answers? Despite the advantages of standardized testing, they do leave much to be desired.

I would suggest that we take a more mastery-based or holistic approach to this, perhaps with a portfolio, or some other performance-based assessment that is more authentic. We have been

attempting to do this more at our school, and it has resulted in students that are much more engaged and thoughtful about their learning. Problem / Project Based Learning has worked for us, perhaps you could check it out! See http://www.bie.org/about/why_pbl to see some of the reasons we are using this method. Here's a thought: you might host a public forum or presentation of some sort; that might be a good way to get your students more engaged (this is something we've done at our school, with success). Sounds like you have your hands full, keep up the good work! And good luck figuring out what works best for you!

Figure 10. Why should we test for standards?



Why should we test for standards?
Michael Dischner (Jun 20, 2018 5:11 PM) - Read by: 10

[Reply](#)

Why should we test for standards and should schools and teachers be accountable?

Testing for standards provides our students with a sense of accountability. As educators we are preparing students for the real world. In the real world, expectations are set whether we like it or not.

I just had dinner with a gentleman who is a crop analyst last night. His job entails survey the crops at different stages of their growth to estimate yields and harvest dates. He is supplied with data of each phase in which the crops will be and compares those to the data he collects. He is expected to make suggestions to farmers who invest in him to survey their crops and make suggestions to the best of his abilities. If he fails to meet the farmer's expectations because the crops do not meet their potential, a portion of that responsibility falls on him. He was hired to perform a job and by failing to do his job sufficiently, he may lose clients. In a small community like mine, word of mouth travels like wildfire which means if he does a poor job with one farmer, that reputation may follow him around causing him to lose even more clients. In farming, just as in education, there are variables that cannot be controlled. In farming those variables are probably taken into more consideration than we see in education. Variables such as droughts or severe weather can be compared to students with disabilities and lack of parental support. While the crop analyst may be supplied with data on what should be suggested to the farmer just like we as educators are supplied with standards that should be met variables change both of those outcomes.

I do think that we should test for standards as it provides data on where we can best meet our student needs. I do not however think that schools and teachers should be the sole accountability that those standards are met. Variables that teachers and schools cannot control affect our students ability to meet standards. Content can be covered and drilled in class but if a child goes home and hears from parents that the content is bogus, the child's mindset will likely duplicate that. By testing for standards however we can monitor and provide evident growth or regression that may serve as great value to our students and families. That data can be utilized to shift the "bogus content" mindset by presenting tangible evidence that the majority of student population is at a certain level.

Image showing the second posting that I responded to (Source: Dischner, 2018).

Re: Why should we test for standards?

Joseph Wright (Jun 20, 2018 5:22 PM)- Read by: 7

Michael;

Thanks for your insight. I love how you point out the fact that accountability is part of life. In their future lives and careers, our students will be held to expectations, and school should help prepare them for that. Totally with you on that point.

I also completely agree with your comment about the fact that "schools and teachers should [not] be the sole [source of] accountability." According to our textbook, student-level variables are responsible for ~80% of the effects on student achievement! Things like home atmosphere, prior knowledge, aptitude, student interest, and so on (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 62) We do not have a lot of impact on these student-level variables, and yet they account for a major portion of student achievement, which in turn is used to measure school success.

So what do we do about that? Perhaps we can have more outreach programs, or we can engage in more community outreach. However, like the saying goes: "You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot force him to drink." I do believe that we can make the "water" so to speak more enticing for our students, or attempt to counteract this regression, as you suggest, but ultimately they will have to decide for themselves whether they learn or not. Thanks again for your thoughts, I appreciated reading them!

Source:

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). Educational governance and administration. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Week 4 – Educational Administration As an...

The main question asked of the class this week wondered about the need for professional organizations for educational administrators. I decided however for my own response to consider the changing focus of idea / value based leadership, and how my own administrators were responding to this expectation. See below:

Wright - Week 4 Forum – Educational Administration as an Emerging Profession

Joseph Wright (Jun 27, 2018 9:46 AM)- Read by: 5

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

June 27th, 2018

Week 4 Forum – Educational Administration as an Emerging Profession

“After reading the chapter you may write a question that you have about the chapter topic content in reference to your work environment and research an answer for your self-created question. You must include at least one reference to support your response.”

My personal question: “How are my own school administrators exemplifying the recent national trend to be focused more on idea-based / value-based leadership (as opposed to bureaucratic or managerial leadership)?”

Ch. 4 in *Educational Governance and Administration* mentions a myriad of different ways that different groups and people have suggested in order to implement an educational administration that is “more idea-based and less-skill based” (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 82). Some of those ideas include directing educational administration programs away from “generic management concerns...to teaching and learning concerns and by advancing the view that school administrators should be leaders of leaders” (p.81).

We have two admins at my school, Dr. Meeks and Ms. Kuhnz. Both were previously teachers for several years, with Ms. Kuhnz having taught over 10 years, and Dr. Meeks a bit less than that. From my perspective as a teacher, in our professional developments, as well as teaching evaluations, they have illustrated their competency as leaders of leaders, or teachers leading other teachers. They frequently model best practices, and also maintain the important principle of equity with us as teachers.

Jim Knight mentions this principle when discussing the impressive Chilean poet Pablo Neruda and his interactions with a local man. Despite the vast difference in their societal station in life (one is a world-renowned intellectual, the other a humble postman) Neruda “listens with great care and empathy, encourages him, and treats him like an equal...[and in turn] is rewarded because the conversation is joyful, thought provoking, and warmhearted...[Thus afterwards], both partners are encouraged, happy, and closer to being friends” (Knight, 2011, p. 29).

I have had some very rewarding conversations with both of our admins, and this is because they followed this simple rule: treat their teachers with respect, as adults who are competent (another idea that Jim Knight discusses in his book). If they had held their status above me, there are many things I would not have shared with them, because I wouldn’t have trusted them with that confidence, and been willing to put down my guard a bit while talking with them.

It has made my experience at the school much more enjoyable. I stopped teaching at one school expressly because that difference in status was very stark and often reinforced, to the detriment of my self-confidence and attitude. It’s hard to be inspired or trusting of a leader when you constantly live in fear of being embarrassed or judged unfairly by them. Thankfully, I have experienced the exact opposite of that at my current school.

One final note: I recently found an article by Dr. Zakrzewski at UC Berkeley which also addresses the issue of equity and respect, and suggests three tips to creating a more positive relationship as an administrator with your teachers and staff: “admit[ing] your mistakes, be[ing] open to receiving feedback, and validat[ing] teacher uncertainty” (Zakrzewski, 2012). I personally feel that both Dr. Meeks and Ms. Kuhnz do a great job following these tips, and I’ve been blessed to have them as exemplars in my own professional life. I’ve really enjoyed my consulting sessions with both of them these past few weeks as part of this course, and I plan on continuing to do so afterwards. Their efforts to create an environment of respect and a healthy school culture have had a truly positive impact on our school, and I expect to continue to learn from them as well.

Sources:

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.


Zakrzewski, V. (2012). Three ways administrators can foster teachers’ growth. *Greater Good Magazine*. Retrieved from

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/3_ways_administrators_can_foster_teachers_growth

Week 4 – Forum Responses

Most everyone else addressed the question of professional organizations and their role in assisting educational administrators. I responded to two of these threads, and came to my own conclusions and reflected on what they had to say as well.

Figure 11. Week 4 Discussion - Vancura



Week 4 Discussion - Vancura

Brady Vancura (Jun 27, 2018 2:30 PM) - Read by: 7

[Reply](#)

I think that the main reason for professional organizations is to be able to gain new ideas from other administrators who are currently in the same position as you, or they have been in your shoes before. I have spent 4 out of the last 7 days with the head principal in my building (2 at an instructional model training and 2 shadowing him) and being able to pick his brain on different topics has given me a while different view on not only administration, but how I run my classroom.

During my shadowing the last two days, we had a teacher from another district who is going through the Administration program at Doane University shadowing him as well. I think that it was great for both myself and my principal to be able to pick his brain based off of his differing experiences. We were able to talk about certain policies that his district offers that we might want to implement, and we gave him some ideas in return.

I think that this class can be used in a similar fashion as a professional organization because we are able to bounce ideas off of each other to see how effective policies or procedures may be in different settings. Each school is going to have a different dynamic that is going to present different challenges that may make some policies unusable.

As an administrator, I also think that professional organizations will help keep me up to date on current legislation. One of the biggest adjustments that my administration is making this summer is going through our student handbook and adding legislative statute references to all of the policies in our student handbook. In current society, kids think that they know everything about the law and what rights they have, so our administration wanted to make sure that they had references to everything that they wanted to implement.

I think that most teachers and administrators in my district are part of our state and local education association. This professional organization doesn't necessarily provide the networking that other organizations do, but it may be the most important. I think as an administrator you need as many safety nets as possible in terms of legal support. There are going to be people in the community that are not going to like some of the policies that you implement and will try and find ways to get you in trouble. I think it is important to make sure that we are looking out for ourselves in that regard.

Here is the first post that I responded to (Source: Vancura, 2018).

Re: Week 4 Discussion - Vancura

Joseph Wright (Jun 29, 2018 8:28 AM)- Read by: 4

Brady;


I agree with your thoughts. Each school and / or district is unique, and faces different challenges. Any administrator who has survived those challenges has unique insight into the profession of educational administration, and joining groups that bring these people together is a valuable asset, especially for those of us who are just entering the profession. We ought to take full advantage of these opportunities.

As I mentioned in my own posting, I also believe it is invaluable to have a "teacher of teachers" admin, or one who has had direct experience in teaching, as that experience allows them to gain trust and rapport with fellow teachers. While those admins who have limited or no teaching

experience can have valuable insight, the cachet and trust that a fellow teacher engenders is invaluable as well. For example, let's say that a school for example had three admins, it would be good to have two that are former teachers, but also helpful to have another that has been a leader to others in a different field. Their insight and leadership could bring unique insight and help from the business world that would otherwise be lacking.

Of course, being a member of such a PLC allows you access to these unique perspectives as well, so if a school did not have such an admin, they can still get some of that access in that way. By developing solid relationships with the local community, we also give ourselves access to passionate and often successful individuals that may not be educators themselves, but still desire to help and assist their local public schools.

Figure 12. Dolegowski- Week 4



Dolegowski- Week 4
Matthew Dolegowski (Jun 27, 2018 6:15 PM) - Read by: 6

[Reply](#)

Why is there a need for professional organizations dealing with education administration? Add any other discussion points you would like to address with the class.

There are a number of professional organizations for educational administrators. A principal could join to stay contacted with other principals, as well as national leaders in the education field. This might help a principal learn new trends and new developments in education. Furthermore, certain professional organizations help advocate for education. Some professional organizations hold conferences that provide professional learning experience and help develop school leadership skills. They can help offer tips and ideas for improving schools. By the same token, some organizations advocate for academic and social development of students. Also, the International Society for Technology in Education is a professional organization that wants to "empower students by giving them powerful tools for learning." A principal in this organization could find it beneficial to help incorporate technology into the school. I believe that there are many benefits for an educational administrator to join a professional organization.

Have you joined a professional organization for teaching or know an administrator that has joined one for educational administration?

Other post I responded to during Week 4 (Source: Dolegowski, 2018)

Re: Dolegowski- Week 4


Joseph Wright (Jun 29, 2018 8:33 AM)- Read by: 4

Matthew:

I like how you turned the discussion back on us with that question at the end...your effective teaching methods are showing!

To answer your question, I am personally not a member of such an organization, but after having read and discussed it this week, I want to be! It will provide an interesting topic of discussion with my admins this coming week as well. I am intrigued by your mention of the International Science for Technology in Education organization. I have been working hard to network with local organizations that may not be strictly focused on education, yet still have lots to offer our students, and provide unique insight into careers and skills that they may not often access in a traditional school setting. Now I see that I ought to work even harder to achieve that goal. You have piqued my interest, and I thank you!

Figure 13. Katrina Shaw – Week 4



Katrina Shaw - Week 4
 Katrina Shaw (Jun 27, 2018 9:33 PM) - Read by: 6
 Reply

Why is there a need for professional organizations dealing with education administration? Add any other discussion points you would like to address with the class.

I think it is very important for administration to be part of professional organization. Education is changing by the day. Administration need to stay up to date with what is happening on the political side of education. Some of the policies that are being brought up have a drastic effect on schools especially public schools. It is important that administration stays on top of what is happening.

I have always worked in small districts with only a few administrators to make up the administrative team. My current school has one superintendent and four principals. All of these administrators are at different school so lucky enough they are still one big team but unfortunately are across town from each other. I think it is important to communicate with the other administrators on your team if you have them. They need to collaborate and listen to what each one is facing in their building and ask questions. Just having that network of administrator friends that can help with questions, vent your frustrations, or give advice.

A final post I responded to during Week 4 (Source: Shaw, 2018)

I went ahead and responded to a third thread, after reading it. Here's my response:

Re: Katrina Shaw - Week 4

Joseph Wright (Jun 29, 2018 8:38 AM)- Read by: 4

Katrina;

You make an important mention of communication and collaboration. There are indeed many smaller, more rural areas where administrators are often on their own in their school, or have just one other there to assist them. At our school, our director was alone his first year, and hired an assistant last year to help provide additional help and insight, and it has definitely been a good move. But if he hadn't had the funds to do so, what could he have done?

Well, I believe that membership in a PLC with other educational administrators would be the next best option. It would give him (or any like administrator) access to others who can offer feedback, assistance, and advice that only a fellow administrator can understand and appreciate, as you mentioned. We are in agreement that this can be very helpful and useful, especially if you as an admin are feeling alone, overwhelmed, and so forth.

Week 5 – Development of Thought

The question for this week asked us to consider how we might **build a positive school culture**. This is a goal that every good admin ought to strive for, and as I did the reading for this week I considered how I might do this. Below was my posting:

Wright - Week 5 - Development of Thought

Joseph Wright (Jul 4, 2018 9:01 PM) - Read by: 9

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 4th, 2018

Week 5 Forum Response – Development of Thought

“How do you build a positive school culture?”

First off, the question is illuminative: it implies that we “build” cultures rather than create them. The phrase “no man is an island” (originally from a 15th century poem by Englishman John Donne) illustrates this idea well. It is a work of diligence, effort, commitment and cooperation. Yes, we as budding administrators “lead the charge” (Knight, 2011, p. 78), but we do not do it alone. We must develop rapport, trust, and confidence with our fellow faculty members & school community if we are to achieve our ultimate goals and visions. The text mentioned **four important aspects** of school culture I’d like to elaborate upon: **artifacts, perspectives, values** and **assumptions**.

If we are to improve our school’s culture, we must understand what makes it unique, and what is great, and what might use some improvement. **Artifacts** help define our school cultures (such as stories, traditions, ceremonies, symbols, etc.), which make an indelible impression on all who walk our schools’ halls (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p.125). Our school for instance has always been associated with **knights** and **chivalry**, and this is represented in the symbolism throughout the school, and even the architecture. We strive to commit ourselves and our students to the higher ideals that the code of chivalry aspired to, and there are many artifacts at our school to push this positive vision within the walls of our institution.

Perspectives are intertwined with these (p. 126). These are the **rules** and **norms** we share, such as treating all others with kindness, and understanding, despite our differences. Our school has developed a positive reputation as a place that anyone can come and be accepted. My own sister, socially alienated after moving to Utah from Massachusetts, found Merit Academy to be a welcoming and warm place. Others have had similar experiences, and this is something that we foster and promote among our students and faculty, and is a draw for many to attend our school.

Values provide the basis for our common ideals and standards that we have (p. 126). We illustrate them in our mission and vision statements, and ultimately strive to prepare them “for their journey to change the world in positive and meaningful ways” (“Mission – Merit Academy”, 2018). These ideals guide our way, and making sure that they remain achievable and worthy is an important part of administration in my opinion.

Assumptions are the final aspect of school culture that can be hardest of all to nail down. These

are the understandings that we and our faculty have about our school. These are often subconscious and hard to define, but extremely important (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p.125). If we as educators have a negative or less-than-laudatory view of our school, or our place in it, we cannot achieve the grand possibilities that await those schools that have managed to unite their faculty, administrators and community in a common vision and journey.

Ideally, all of these concepts meld around that common vision and goal, and even take on a sacred quality. If people hold these ideals as hallowed, rather than simply utilitarian, and are willing to sacrifice and commit their all to the school, that can lead to some very impressive things. A dynamic leader who can lead and motivate and share that vision of dignity and respect for the school, with supportive staff and community can make a very big difference. An otherwise morose, shiftless, and indifferent atmosphere cannot hope to lead to anything else but mediocre and ordinary students and classes. The difference is determined by many factors, with the leader being an important one, but certainly not the only one.

Sources:

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.


Mission – Merit Academy. (2018). Retrieved from <http://meritacademy.org/about-us/mission/>

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson / Allyn & Bacon.

Week 5 – Forum Responses

Below are the threads answering the same question that I responded to, as well as my respective responses:

Figure 14. Janssen– Wk 5



Janssen- Wk 5
 Luke Janssen (Jul 4, 2018 6:55 PM) - Read by: 10

[Reply](#)

Chapter 5

Developing a positive school culture is one the most important jobs of a school administrator. According to the text, “Many studies of successful schools suggest that they have central zones composed of values and beliefs that take on sacred characteristics.” (Pg. 123). I think this passage highlights the importance of building culture within a school and the impact it can have in helping a school function at high levels. To build a positive school culture, I believe that it begins with the stakeholders of the school: staff, students, parents, and administrators. According to the text, “Three characteristics are central to gauging the extent to which a school measures up to being a community; the extent to which members share common interpersonal bonds; the extent to which members share an identity with a common place; and the extent to which members share a commitment to values, norms and beliefs.” (Pg. 127). Keeping these characteristics in mind, I would implement them into positive school culture with each individual stakeholder.

For the parents, I would try my best to introduce myself to every single one of them. I know realistically I may not be able to accomplish this, but I would put programs into place to have more chances of getting to meet parents face to face. One program that I think would be beneficial to meeting more parents would be lunches with the principal. Time would be set aside biweekly for around an hour where parents come to school and have lunch with me. A set number of parents would be invited so that I was able to reach every parent of my students by the end of the year at least once. During this time, I would be able to get to know parents on more of a personal level, talk to them about what is going on inside of the school, and also allow them to share concerns or comments they may have about school. It would be in a relaxed setting where we could foster healthy positive relationships, which in turn would develop a positive school culture.

The first half of a post I responded to during Week 5 (Source: Janssen, 2018)

Re: Janssen- Wk 5

Joseph Wright (Jul 7, 2018 12:12 PM)- Read by: 8

Luke;

I really enjoyed reading your post. Your idea about **setting aside time** to meet and consult with parents in a more casual setting is a great idea! We do the same at our school, they call it "**Donuts with the Directors**", and our Director and Assistant Director spend time with parents from 8:30-9:30 or so (just as school is getting started). I think the time is good too because it also allows many fathers to attend, since they can come just before work (or take an hour off before heading in, etc.). They have told me that it is a big positive, and have several "regulars" who come in, and this has led to a good rapport between our admins and the community.

Speaking of **student relationships**, we implemented some **school clubs**, with our admins popping in every so often, and that has helped create good links between us faculty and our students as well. I had an **Xbox / Gaming Club** last year, and that was useful to me as a teacher to develop a better bond with many of my students.

Anyway, it sounds like you understand well the maxim "**No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.**" Thanks for the ideas, you've given me some to ponder for my own use in my classroom and one day administrative roles as well.

Figure 15. Harder-Week 5-Development of Thought



[Harder-Week 5-Development of Thought](#)

Barbara Harder (Jul 4, 2018 8:35 PM) - Read by: 9



Defining a school culture starts with the people within it. The community, the traditions and what we see is the first sign of how a school will be. If the walls are bright and motivational, then people would expect to see engaged students. To design a plan to make the best school culture you would need to gain background knowledge of what previously existed. The staff can give a new administrator ideas of what has worked and what hasn't. I believe that slow implementation of new concepts and strategies is essential to the culture. Consistency is also a key component. If you are beginning something and do not make a regular routine with it, then it will fall through the cracks so to speak. Another detail of culture is delivered through routine. If students are not used to something, it has to become a regular routine to see what the reaction is to the students. Follow-thru and development of relationships with student to student and staff to student is crucial. Overall, the most important piece of a positive culture is buy-in by the people who lead the school. This comes from the top and filters down to a point where when someone is negative then others follow. Positive cultures exist and can be created with patience and time.

Here was the second posting that I responded to during Week 5 (Source: Harder, 2018)

Re: Harder-Week 5-Development of Thought

Joseph Wright (Jul 7, 2018 12:02 PM)- Read by: 8

Barbara;

You have some great insights. I agree that **gradual implementation** and **consistency** are key to building and improving on an existing school culture. Schools by no means exist in a vacuum, that can instantly change to the preference and whim of a new administrator. A school culture includes "values, symbols, beliefs, and shared meanings of parents, students, teachers, and...community" (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 124). Thus, your advice to "see what previously existed" is an important component as well.

After analyzing the past system, and seeing "what has worked and what hasn't", a new admin can begin to gradually implement changes they'd like to bring. Making sure to keep as much consistency (as you said) as possible, they can show the school and stakeholders that they do value the culture and past of the school, yet also have a vision for future progress and direction that is worthy as well.

Resources:

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). Educational governance and administration. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Week 6 – Administrative Work, Roles...

This week in the forums, we discussed the twin roles of instructional leadership as well as building manager, and how one deals with both. Below is my initial response.

Wright - Week 6 - Administrative Work, Roles...

Joseph Wright (Jul 9, 2018 3:54 PM) - Read by: 11

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 9th, 2018

Week 6 Forum - Administrative Work, Roles...

“How does the instructional leadership role interfere with the building manager role?”

The way this question is worded was interesting to me. It seemed to **imply** that the **managerial side** of administration was the **priority**, which I would have to **argue against**. **Leadership**, and the ability to forge consensus and connections with your faculty and support staff to me is a **more valuable skillset** (though I still admit that managerial skills are important as well).

Leadership involves a lot of **people skills**. As Jim Knight mentions in chapter two of his book *Unmistakable Impact*, there are many ways to create **positive relationships** between administrators and their support staff. He discusses **status**, and how it is crucial to give others the impression of equity and respect (Knight, 2011, p. 22), as well as allowing teachers and staff to engage in **thinking** for themselves, solving problems, and so forth (p. 25).

Chapter six of *Educational Governance and Administration* cites Henry Mintzberg's 1970 study of managerial responsibilities, where he identified **ten administrative roles**. Each of these involves engaging with others to create positive outcomes in some way or another. While they also involve managerial duties (what some might call “necessary evils”), what frequently seems to matter most is the people-centered actions of each. A few follow as examples:

- **Liaison:** administrators often act as the **face** and **connection** between a **school** and the local **community**. The networking that they engage in can be critical to providing **funding opportunities**, prospects for **field work**, chances to **make learning relevant and engaging**, among others.
- **Disturbance Handler:** frequently **conflicts** arise, between staff, parents, students, and so on, and the administrator is frequently looked to as the solver or mediator to these personal issues. Without that influence, serious functional issues might arise (E.g., teachers decide to go on strike, a large contingency of students stays home from school, etc.).
- **Entrepreneur:** good leaders analyze and study their schools, looking for things to **improve** upon, and **designing** programs / solutions for the issues that they encounter. They also **implement** these plans, with assistance from staff, and then supervise to ensure implementation is occurring, offering helpful and supportive feedback that helps faculty buy-in and keeps the project moving forward (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, pp 140-45).

Thus, it would appear that both the **instructional leadership** part as well as the **managerial** side of administration are key to keeping a school functional. Hand in hand, they work towards creating a successful school. While both are important, I'd argue that an admin that has better leadership skills and subpar managerial skills ought to be able to get by, whereas an admin with poor leadership skills but superior managerial skills wouldn't likely survive longer than a single year at a school. The ideal of course is an admin that has both skills at a superb level.

Sources:


Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson / Allyn & Bacon.

Week 6 – Forum Responses


Based on the above question, my fellow classmates also made comments. Here are several that I commented on.

Figure 16. Seltz – Week 6



Seltz - Week 6

Joshua Seltz (Jul 6, 2018 1:26 PM) - Read by: 12

 Reply

The role of instructional leader focuses on facilitating and improving student academic progress. To be an effective instructional leader the principal must set high expectations for both teachers and students, emphasize instruction, help teachers' develop professionally and use data to evaluate the student's progress. Good Instructional Leaders will frequently visit classrooms, support teachers methods and seek their feedback, and ensure teachers have the necessary resources to be successful. They will in turn evaluate student performance data and make adjustment accordingly.

A manager on the other hand relates to operations oversight. This could include an array of things from food service or maintenance to transportation and curricular instruction monitoring. A manager needs to ensure that time is managed appropriately and allocated to the right tasks at the right times. Some managerial tasks may seem of lesser importance than others. After all, a school is supposed to educate children. With the emphasis placed on student achievement, building management may be placed on the back burner.

A good administrator is able to blend these two functions and is able to manage as a leader. Page 141 of the text discusses the administrator as the individual who sets the tone for the school and using their authority to direct, guide, develop, evaluate, correct, and reward subordinates. As the school figurehead, it is the role of the principal to be the model of the building. Being a good leader will make you a better manager. For instance, you find out that the lunchroom is not set up for this afternoon's assembly, or the lunch line is moving slowly because the kitchen is short-staffed for the day. Management would correct those at fault and encourage the staff to hurry up and get the job done. A leader would step in to help get the job done and worry about correction later.

While administrators need to serve both roles, we view them more and more as leaders. This means that principals need to find ways to manage their time in order to fulfill all roles. Time needs to be given to both instructional improvements to achieve student achievement and management of day-to-day operations. At times a principal may feel like he is wearing "all of the hats" at once. It is necessary to be able to distinguish the various roles and tasks and be able to dedicate sufficient attention at the right times to each.

Sergiovanni, T.J., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M.M., & Fowler, F.C. (2009). *Educational governance and administration*. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

After reading Joshua's post, I thought I ought to respond to his (Source: Seltz, 2018)

Re: Seltz - Week 6


Joseph Wright (Jul 10, 2018 7:58 AM)- Read by: 11

Joshua;

Thanks for the great post. I agree with Michael that it would be best if someone else might be hired to help take the load off of the administrator. That is a lot of weight and responsibility to fall on just one person's shoulders. We had a similar situation at my school when I (and our admin) were hired 3 years ago. The old admin was forced out, and the head janitor left in a huff.

Our admin (without an Assistant Director, like we had this past year, mind you) was left trying to care for all of these duties. Within a month, he got a Building Maintenance Manager hired, which lessened the burden upon him considerably. And then this past year, was able to hire an Assistant Director. She complemented him very well, having strengths where he was a bit weaker, and it is a good match, at least in our case.

Some admins, as you said, manage to blend and take on all the various administrative roles well. These Renaissance Men (and Women) manage to do what many cannot. Frankly, I think it is best if possible to instead delegate some of that responsibility to another admin (or more), otherwise you run the risk of overburdening the admin and leading to burnout. Still, I do agree that it is important for all admins to expand and develop their abilities, and that can be accomplished in many ways, including hiring another admin that can alleviate some of the pressure they face.

Figure 17. Instructional Leadership and Building Manager


Instructional Leadership and Building Manager
Michael Dischner (Jul 9, 2018 6:37 PM) - Read by: 12
[Reply](#)

Within a small school district administrators are asked to wear several hats. Two of the most important include being the instructional leadership and building manager. Our principal is asked to supply teachers with curriculum and facilities to serve our student's needs. In terms of serving as an instructional leader this may mean providing ample professional development opportunities for staff in which they continue to grow and keep up with the ever changing times. An instructional leader is also called upon to motivate students to learn and master the content being delivered. Reflection upon student data is necessary when making decisions in which the school may need to go. Instructional leaders evaluate staff and provide feedback that may help promote learning within their building. A principal is asked to manage a budget and determine where funds may need to be spent in order to improve academics.

A building manager is required to take preventative actions in the protection of their students. This may mean that the building manager implements and enforces procedures for security within the building. The building manger also makes sure that the building runs effectively to where teachers are able to instruct with minimal distractions and limitations. Students are able to move throughout the building in a manner that promotes a healthy and encouraging education.

Building managers and instructional leaders both lead by example. They are willing to put in the work and lead by example if necessary to achieve buy-in from students and staff. Principals who are good building managers and instructional leaders develop relationships with all their staff and students in order to generate a positive school culture that is contagious. Individuals who can accomplish this feat, set their buildings up for success both academically and functionally.

This was the second post that I responded to this week (Source: Dischner, 2018)

Re: Instructional Leadership and Building Manager


Joseph Wright (Jul 10, 2018 8:09 AM)- Read by: 10

Michael;

I especially appreciate your last paragraph, and the emphasis you put on "lead[ing] by example", which creates "buy-in from students and staff". These two things I believe are paramount as a leader, whether in an educational setting or otherwise. The idea of leading by example ties in with Jim Knight's "reciprocity" principle, mentioned on page 53. When admins "approach teachers humbly...they are rewarded" (Knight, 2011). Leaders who are willing to "walk the talk", and lead by example, are better respected and trusted, and given the benefit of the doubt, whether they are engaging primarily in instructional leadership, managerial duties, or both.

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Figure 18. Vancura Week 6 Discussion



Vancura Week 6 Discussion
Brady Vancura (Jul 10, 2018 8:16 AM) - Read by: 12

[Reply](#)

As an administrator, instructional leadership and building management are the main two functions of the job. In my district, I feel that our head principal fills the main role of building manager. He is the one that handles all of the budget decisions and spends the majority of the day in his office. He does not get a lot of the interaction with staff and students that the assistant principals get.

In our district, the major instructional decisions are handled at the district level by the superintendent, and our two curriculum directors. They are the ones who line up our professional development days and even some of our PLC days. Our building principals are trained on the strategies that are implemented so that they can become experts to help guide the teachers in their respective buildings.

Our administrators have to wear many hats every day, so it is important to have the management skills to determine what they can do themselves and when they need to delegate duties to the assistant principals. Overall, I see the building manager role as more of an interference to instructional leadership than the other way around. Usually office duties keep our principals out of our classrooms to help teachers and students.

Above is the final post that I responded to this week (Source: Vancura, 2018)

Re: Vancura Week 6 Discussion

Joseph Wright (Jul 10, 2018 8:25 AM) - Read by: 8

Brady;

It has been fascinating to read other's posts and get an insight into the way their schools and admins function. As I have personally observed, it seems that many schools delegate many of these various roles to different administrators. As illustrated by your head principal and his assistants, he focuses on the managerial roles and duties, while allowing the assistants to focus on the instructional leadership aspects of administration.

I agree with your conclusion, that building management responsibilities seem to get in the way of allowing principals and other admins to focus on their instructional leadership roles. Delegating can help alleviate this, but I believe it is best to make sure that all administrators work on becoming more rounded, rather than exclusively focusing on just a few administrative roles, to the detriment of other skillsets and abilities.

Week 7 – Students and Teachers

The forum discussion for this week focused on the role that teachers have in the school and classroom. It also had a second question, tied to the difficulty of keeping our students motivated. Not easy to answer by any means, but below is my answer:

Wright - Week 7 Forum – Students & Teachers

Joseph Wright (Jul 18, 2018 9:05 AM)- Read by: 10

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 18th, 2018

Week 7 Forum – Students & Teachers

“Should teachers have more input into the curriculum and course sequence today? How can we get students more motivated to learn?”

I believe that teachers *do* need to have more input into the scope (i.e. the what) and sequence (i.e. the order) of their teaching today. I did my student teaching in a traditional public school, where the curriculum was somewhat scripted, and what I was allowed to do was limited. I only taught one class (U.S. History I, 8th grade), and sadly it wasn't the best preparation that I could have received.

Then, my first teaching job after graduation was worse, if that were possible. I took a job that was about a 45-minute drive away (if I didn't get stuck in traffic), and the school had completely bought into the “**bureaucratic-rational conception** [which] portrays the teacher as a **technician** who **transmits knowledge** following a **prescribed curriculum**, obeys and enforces rules and procedures **handed down from above**” (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009, p. 165) and so forth. After a few weeks there, I realized that A) my student teaching assignment wasn't perfect, but it was better than this, and B) this job was **not** the right fit for me.

After quitting that job, due to the immense stress that I experienced in such a domineering environment, I eventually found Merit Academy, and I love everything about it. It is a charter school, so though it is technically public, it is almost verbatim the same situation (even the lower salaries) that the book used to describe private schools: “Although private schools generally pay [less], their better maintained facilities, smaller classes, stronger cultural traditions, greater autonomy, and generally less formal bureaucracy [make] them more attractive to many teachers” (p. 178).

This describes our school nearly perfectly. I have smaller classes than before, as long as I follow the state core standards, I can choose what I want my curriculum to be, and I am much happier in my current teaching situation. In essence, they let me be a “autonomous moral agent who makes

independent and individualized decisions about the learning of [my] students” (p. 181), and I am so grateful for that. Many teachers do **not** have the luxuries that I have been afforded, and I wish that they did, because I am positive that such conditions are much more conducive to teacher retention (here in Utah, it is much like the textbook describes, with 50% leaving the field after just 5 years), which would lead to better, more experienced teachers, and thus also benefit our students as well.

Now, to answer the second question, I believe that we need to **make learning relevant**. We at our school are attempting to do so via the **Problem / Project Based Learning (PBL) Model**, and thus far, it has worked quite well for us. We work to solve an issue that has real relevance in our community (i.e., “**How can we make our local community attractive to potential tourists?**”), that directly relates to our curriculum (in this case, Utah Studies). Another example is our biology teacher, who is working on creating a project that is driven by the question “**What is causing dangerous algal blooms in Utah Lake, and how can we resolve it?**” Both of these are real, relevant questions that our students are working in class to solve, and they are indeed motivated. We’ve had some bumps along the way, but that is one way that we are answering this question. See www.bie.org for more info about PBL, if you think you may be interested.


Sources:

Sergiovanni, T., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M., & Fowler, F. (2009). Educational governance and administration. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson / Allyn & Bacon.

Week 7 – Forum Responses


I had a fun time exploring the responses of the others in my class this week. We all had different ideas, most of them I could agree with. Below are the two I responded to:

Figure 19. Teacher Input & Student Motivation



Teacher Input & Student Motivation

Megan Moench (Jul 18, 2018 6:44 AM) - Read by: 9

 Reply

In an attempt to balance the bureaucratic-rational and moral conceptions of teaching, teachers should follow a set of standards, AND act as “agents rather than objects of school reform”, as suggested by Johnson (as cited by Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy, & Fowler, 2009). This would ensure that students who earned credit for a course had similar foundational knowledge regardless of location. However, it would allow teachers the autonomy to plan lessons that prepare students to engage in the knowledge economy they are entering.

Working flexibly between these conceptions (having clear outcomes, but working flexibly to achieve them), also generates student motivation. Students like having a learning target. This allows them to know what is expected of them, and to self-evaluate their understanding. At the same time, they like a balance between routine (I know what to expect from class) and intrigue (What are we going to be learning/doing in class today?). Diversifying the “intrigue” part of class with activities that allow for “creativity, ingenuity, flexibility, and innovation” (Sergiovanni et al., 2009), paired with opportunities for intentional student collaboration in various group sizes, creates a dynamic that most students find motivating. This allows students to bring the assets of their diverse backgrounds to enrich the collective learning of the class. Further motivating students, particularly those reluctant to learn, requires building genuine caring relationships, often with both the student and their support network.

Resources

Sergiovanni, T. J., Kelleher, P., McCarthy, M. M., & Fowler, F. C. (2009). Educational governance and administration (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

I read Megan’s post first, and decided to respond to her thoughts (Source: Moench, 2018)

Re: Teacher Input & Student Motivation

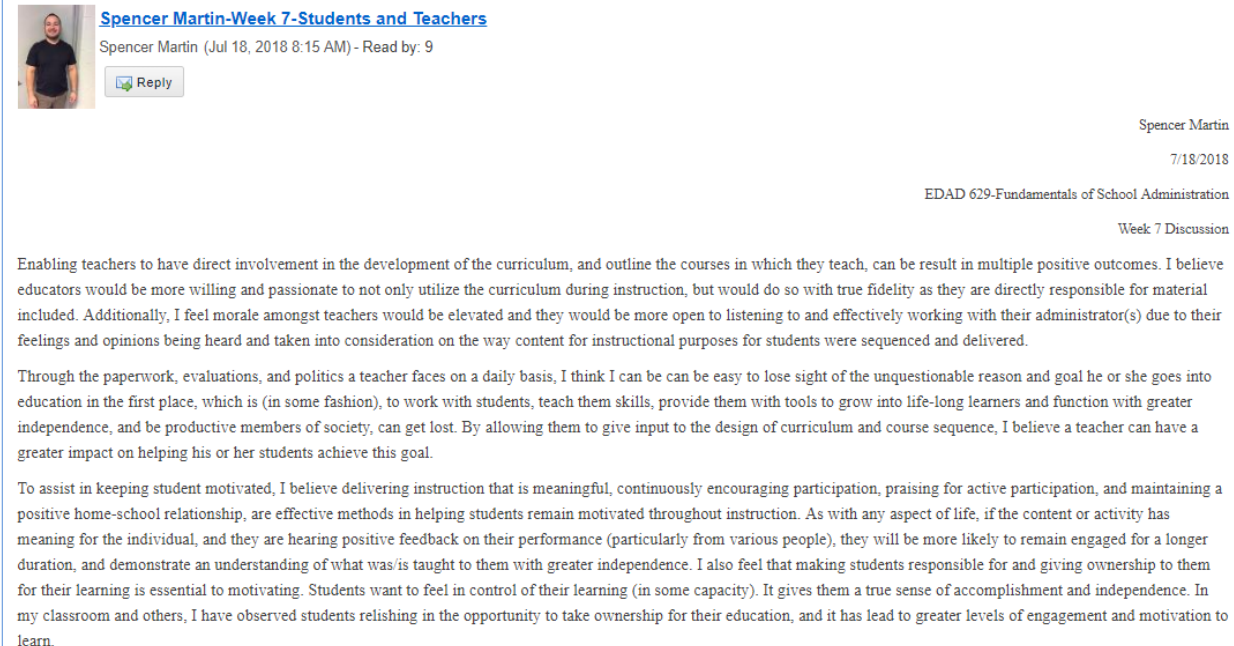
Joseph Wright (Jul 18, 2018 9:22 AM) - Read by: 7

Hey Megan;

I agree that a balance must be struck between these two opposing views of teaching. Yes, there certainly is a place for standards (can you imagine the huge variance that would exist without them?), yet being "moral agents" for our students, and being allowed the autonomy we need to advocate for our students' unique needs is incredibly important as well.

The way you describe how to create that balance is awesome, and I like it. In our own class here, for example, we have a lot of structure and order given to us, and I know that I for one appreciate having such structure and goals. I also however appreciate having some flexibility within that structure to study what is most fascinating to me, and to share what I found intriguing. You concisely summed it up well, thanks for sharing!

Figure 20. Spencer Martin-Week 7-Students and Teachers



Spencer Martin-Week 7-Students and Teachers
Spencer Martin (Jul 18, 2018 8:15 AM) - Read by: 9

Reply

Spencer Martin
7/18/2018
EDAD 629-Fundamentals of School Administration
Week 7 Discussion

Enabling teachers to have direct involvement in the development of the curriculum, and outline the courses in which they teach, can be result in multiple positive outcomes. I believe educators would be more willing and passionate to not only utilize the curriculum during instruction, but would do so with true fidelity as they are directly responsible for material included. Additionally, I feel morale amongst teachers would be elevated and they would be more open to listening to and effectively working with their administrator(s) due to their feelings and opinions being heard and taken into consideration on the way content for instructional purposes for students were sequenced and delivered.

Through the paperwork, evaluations, and politics a teacher faces on a daily basis, I think I can be can be easy to lose sight of the unquestionable reason and goal he or she goes into education in the first place, which is (in some fashion), to work with students, teach them skills, provide them with tools to grow into life-long learners and function with greater independence, and be productive members of society, can get lost. By allowing them to give input to the design of curriculum and course sequence, I believe a teacher can have a greater impact on helping his or her students achieve this goal.

To assist in keeping student motivated, I believe delivering instruction that is meaningful, continuously encouraging participation, praising for active participation, and maintaining a positive home-school relationship, are effective methods in helping students remain motivated throughout instruction. As with any aspect of life, if the content or activity has meaning for the individual, and they are hearing positive feedback on their performance (particularly from various people), they will be more likely to remain engaged for a longer duration, and demonstrate an understanding of what was/is taught to them with greater independence. I also feel that making students responsible for and giving ownership to them for their learning is essential to motivating. Students want to feel in control of their learning (in some capacity). It gives them a true sense of accomplishment and independence. In my classroom and others, I have observed students relishing in the opportunity to take ownership for their education, and it has lead to greater levels of engagement and motivation to learn.

Another great post that I responded to (Source: Martin, 2018)

Re: Spencer Martin-Week 7-Students and Teachers

Joseph Wright (Jul 18, 2018 9:15 AM) - Read by: 8

Hey Spencer;

Thanks for your thoughts! I agree that when we allow teachers more control and autonomy over what and how they teach, it results in many positive effects. I have seen this in my own

experience and school, and overall it has been very positive. I am much more motivated, so are the students, and school is something we all look forward to.

Your ideas about motivation are spot on as well. We have utilized Project Based Learning / PBL in our school to achieve all of the goals that you've mentioned: making learning meaningful; encouraging participation; developing positive school-home relationships; allowing greater independence, and so forth. We have seen the same results you mention, and it does help us remember why we got into education in the first place: creating productive and creative life-long learners. Thanks again for sharing!

Week 8 – Principalship

The last week of the class, we had to option to consider two different options. One was to visit the website www.connectedprincipals.com, and to then read several of the topics, along with the responses by my fellow classmates, and then respond to a piece myself that no one else did. The other option was to discuss the changes in the role of principal over the past 10 years or so. I decided to start with the first option, and really enjoyed seeing what other principals and admins had to say, so I went with that option. One of the guys that had several articles posted there piqued my interest; below is my response to one of his pieces:

Wright - Week 8 Forum - Don't Ask For More Until You're Willing to Risk More

Joseph Wright (Jul 25, 2018 10:24 PM)- Read by: 4

Joseph Wright

EDCI 629

Dr. Plas

July 25th, 2018

Week 8 Forum – The Connected Principal

“Visit this website <http://www.connectedprincipals.com/>. Please spend some time on this website and write a short review of one of the topic/blogs which are of interest to you. Please check other posts and do not duplicate a topic which has already been reviewed.”

After reviewing the different topics, I found one that I liked. I read through it, and it appeared that no one else had focused on it...that is, until I refreshed my page, and behold, an hour before, someone **had** in fact written about that one...darn it all.

Well, back to the drawing board. I read through a few more, and then found one that I really liked. I found a blog posting, by **David Geurin**, a principal from Missouri. I read his Thursday,

July 5th blog post entitled “***Don't Ask For More Until You're Willing to Risk More.***” Below are my summary and thoughts.

Principal Guerin discusses how we as (future) admins have great desires to make sure our schools are progressing and moving in a positive direction. However, he warns that this fervor can be a double-edged sword, and gives this sage advice: “***People must never feel diminished at the expense of the vision***” (Geurin, 2018, par. 2).

He then continues by sharing the thoughts that many teachers have, when administrators pile on the professional development, roll out higher and higher expectations, and so forth. While administrators may have the **best intentions** with such actions, the **translation** for many teachers is this: “My current work is not appreciated here. It's never *good enough*. You're always trying to squeeze more out of me. I'm doing all I can and now you're adding to my plate. *My work is not valued here...*” (par. 6).

I've seen this from two perspectives: as a teacher myself, with administrators that seem to lord over others with a Kaiser-like iron fist, and I've even recognized it in my own role as teacher of my own students. I had the best intentions, yet to my students, I appeared too much like a strict taskmaster that was never satisfied. So what balm does Geurin suggest we utilize to fix our ailment? He recommends “servant leadership”, or “serving teachers[, staff and students] and meeting their needs” (par. 7). This seems to follow the old maxim “No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

Many of these ideas reminded me of the suggestions Jim Knight espouses in his book “*Unmistakable Impact.*” He suggests **7 key principles** that good leaders follow: (1) **Equity** (i.e. treating everyone as equals); (2) **Choice** (giving others options to choose what and how they'll complete their jobs); (3) **Voice** (letting people have a forum to share their opinions / thoughts / concerns, etc); (4) **Reflection** (thinking about what we've done, and encouraging others to do the same); (5) **Dialogue** (letting honest communication exist back and forth between us and others at our school); (6) **Praxis** (applying what we've learned into practice, and walking the talk); & (7) **Reciprocity** (being willing to be a lifelong learner too, not just the teacher, and looking for chances to improve and grow) (Knight, 2011, pp. 28-45).

Geurin sums his thoughts up nicely thus: “**The vision for your school is important, but the vision is meaningless if performance is more important than people**” (Geurin, 2018, par. 16). I completely agree. I have two amazing admins that live and practice this rule, and I see it on display just about every day we work together. They have a genuine concern for those they work with, and they care about them, and our school's success. They realize that having meaningful concern and respect for people is a necessary component to what we do as educators. I am glad that this vision is not mine alone, and am grateful for the example they set, and hope that we all might follow the “better angels of our nature,” as Abraham Lincoln so eloquently put it back in 1861.

Sources:

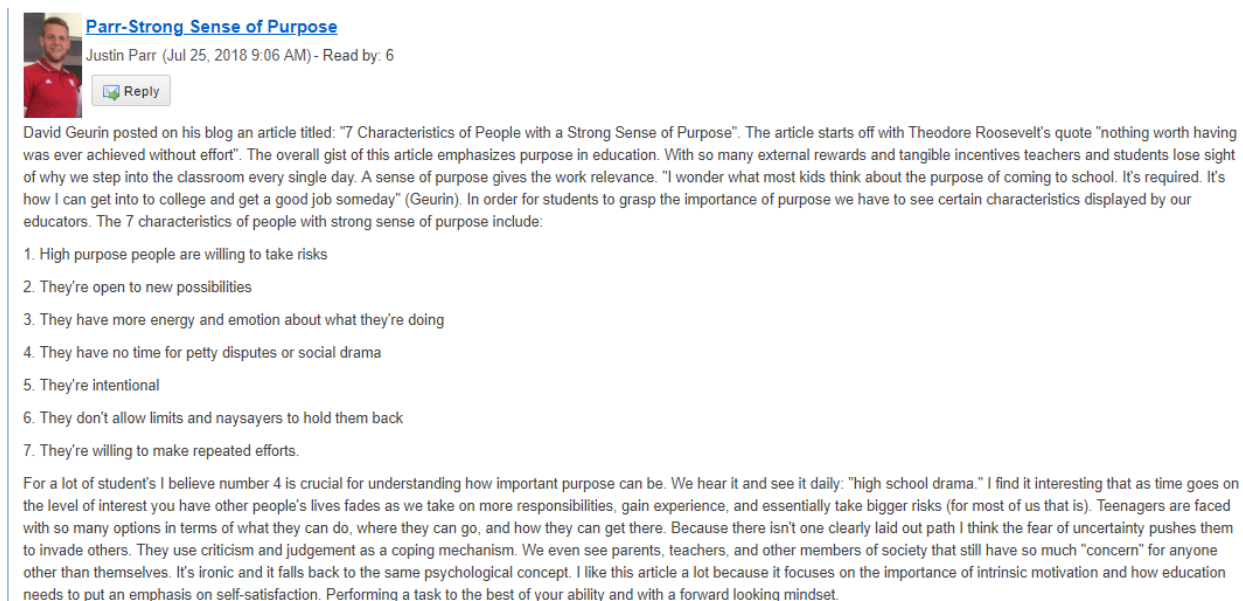
Geurin, D. (2018). Don't ask for more until you're willing to risk more [Blog]. Retrieved from <http://www.davidgeurin.com/2018/07/dont-ask-for-more-until-youre-willing.html>

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* (p. 25). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Week 8 – Forum Responses

After reviewing many of the responses, I wrote my own. I then returned to a few that I liked, reread them, and then responded as follows:

Figure 21. Parr-Strong Sense of Purpose



Parr-Strong Sense of Purpose
Justin Parr (Jul 25, 2018 9:06 AM) - Read by: 6

Reply

David Geurin posted on his blog an article titled: "7 Characteristics of People with a Strong Sense of Purpose". The article starts off with Theodore Roosevelt's quote "nothing worth having was ever achieved without effort". The overall gist of this article emphasizes purpose in education. With so many external rewards and tangible incentives teachers and students lose sight of why we step into the classroom every single day. A sense of purpose gives the work relevance. "I wonder what most kids think about the purpose of coming to school. It's required. It's how I can get into to college and get a good job someday" (Geurin). In order for students to grasp the importance of purpose we have to see certain characteristics displayed by our educators. The 7 characteristics of people with strong sense of purpose include:

1. High purpose people are willing to take risks
2. They're open to new possibilities
3. They have more energy and emotion about what they're doing
4. They have no time for petty disputes or social drama
5. They're intentional
6. They don't allow limits and naysayers to hold them back
7. They're willing to make repeated efforts.

For a lot of student's I believe number 4 is crucial for understanding how important purpose can be. We hear it and see it daily: "high school drama." I find it interesting that as time goes on the level of interest you have other people's lives fades as we take on more responsibilities, gain experience, and essentially take bigger risks (for most of us that is). Teenagers are faced with so many options in terms of what they can do, where they can go, and how they can get there. Because there isn't one clearly laid out path I think the fear of uncertainty pushes them to invade others. They use criticism and judgement as a coping mechanism. We even see parents, teachers, and other members of society that still have so much "concern" for anyone other than themselves. It's ironic and it falls back to the same psychological concept. I like this article a lot because it focuses on the importance of intrinsic motivation and how education needs to put an emphasis on self-satisfaction. Performing a task to the best of your ability and with a forward looking mindset.

Justin Parr had some great comments, so I responded to his post (Source: Parr, 2018)

Re: Parr-Strong Sense of Purpose

Joseph Wright (Jul 25, 2018 10:53 PM)- Read by: 5

Justin;


I agree with your analysis. I also responded to one of Principal Geurin's posts (hey...this guy has a lot of great thoughts, apparently), and I think that focusing on intrinsic motivation is key to success. Study after study have shown that extrinsic motivation, while perhaps effective in the short term, usually doesn't last, and is ineffective in bringing about lasting change.

After reading this article, and your response, I am going to make it a special focus of mine to remember the importance of intrinsic motivation. I'll make more of an effort to remind my students of the "big picture", and utilize all opportunities to teach, especially the times that they fail. Remember that failure is not the end, it is a beginning. Many great figures learned from failure, such as Thomas Edison, who tried thousands of different light bulb combinations before

he found the one that worked best. Or Albert Einstein, whose schoolmaster said that he would "never amount to anything." Consider Henry Ford, who ended up broke numerous times after many failures, before founding the uber-successful Ford Motor Company. The Wright Brothers spent years trying to create an airplane and engine that could achieve self-propelled flight, until one day, it actually happened, though most believed it was impossible. These are just a few of the stories of those who did not let failure defeat them, but instead took it, analyzed it, and then gradually got better.

Today, most of my students believe that if they do not succeed the first time, they are failures, and they often give up. I am going to work ever so hard to remind them that failure is not the end; it is the beginning. It is not an ultimatum; it is an invitation and an opportunity. Thanks again for that timely reminder, and best wishes going forward. I've appreciated your insight in this class; good luck and Godspeed.

Figure 22. Spencer Martin-Week 8-The Connected Principal



Spencer Martin-Week 8-The Connected Principal

Spencer Martin (Jul 25, 2018 7:48 PM) - Read by: 5

[Reply](#)

Spencer Martin
7/25/2018
EDAD 629-Fundamentals of School Administration
Week 8 Discussion-The Connected Principal

The blog, *Model the Way*, speaks to the idea of leading by example and "walking the walk." The content in the text encourage the reader to reflect on the manner which they interact with and perceive the actions of other people (George, 2018).

Whether it is a colleague we are working with in a school, the person that lives next door, or an individual(s) in another setting, at one point or another, in every facet of our lives, there are going to be traits people display that we disagree with. It is easy, and at times effortless, to have negative feelings towards these individuals, or resenting them for their behavior. Instead we need to take time to analyze our own actions and thoughts on what is bothering us, and see if there are things we can alter within ourselves to promote more desired and/or appropriate behavior. And, rather than just assume someone should be able to do an expected behavior immediately, it is important to be mindful to take adequate time to model and give an understandable rationale for teaching expected or desired behaviors, or share a personal experience as to why our way is more effective. By modeling, giving a clear rationale, and sharing personal experience, the individual(s) we are working with will be more open to instruction and trying suggested ideas.

While these steps are not necessarily easy to follow, I believe they are important for everyone to keep in mind when in a situation where they are in a disagreement of some kind with someone else. More so, I believe it is essential for an individual in a leadership role to be mindful of these notions. As a future education administrator, I will do my best to be aware of my actions and behaviors with individuals who may not share my beliefs or act differently than I would within a certain domain.

References

George. (2018, July 15). *Model the Way*. [Web log article] Retrieved from <https://georgecouros.ca/blog/archives/8368>

This was the first article I read, and then Martin beat me to the punch (Source: Martin, 2018)

Re: Spencer Martin-Week 8-The Connected Principal

Joseph Wright (Jul 25, 2018 10:36 PM)- Read by: 4

Spencer;

Thanks for the insight! I agree that this is a great idea, to be introspective about where we stand, and what we might improve, before we run off half-cocked to solve the woes of someone else. The notion that Couros mentions, citing Dale Carnegie's infamous "How To Win Friends and Influence People", seems to follow the idea that we must first look inward and spend the

majority of our efforts on improving ourselves and our own flaws, rather than pointing out the flaws and errors of others.

This concept reminds me of the following biblical verses, Matthew 7:3-5 (KJV):

³ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

⁴ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

⁵ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

I have always remembered this scripture, because it points out the hypocrisy of those that would call out the mote, or speck (or small imperfection) in others, yet ignore the beam (AKA big problem) in themselves. Thus, we must first look inward in our efforts to be better, and when we do that, and work to improve ourselves, we not only improve our own lot, but others will take notice, and follow our example. Thanks again for the insight, and the reminder to be better, and judge less.

Leadership Experience Hours' Descriptions

Date & Time:	Accompanied by:	Description of Activity:
<p>6/20/18 2:20 PM – 3:20 PM (1 hour)</p>	<p>Dr. Jesse Meeks</p>	<p>Discussed some of the basic structure of administration at our school. We also talked about the changing dynamic and vision that the school has had, and how we are attempting to guide that towards the future.</p> <p>Also spent some time discussing the importance of funding, where it comes from, how we are held accountable for it, etc.</p>

<p>6/25/18 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM (1.5 hours)</p>	<p>Ms. Amanda Kuhnz</p>	<p>Amanda shared how her experience in becoming an admin was somewhat of a struggle. She learned lots of lessons about what not to do as an admin.</p> <p>For instance, she saw the divisiveness that was created by her admin. Rather than respecting others, she demanded compliance because of her position. We discussed some of the things that make a good administrator, as well as several things to avoid.</p>
<p>7/8/18 4:30 PM – 5:30 PM (1.5 hours)</p>	<p>Dr. Jesse Meeks & Ms. Amanda Kuhnz</p>	<p>I spent about a half hour conferring with Dr. Meeks via email regarding the Week 5 assignment, and we discussed the financial operations at our school.</p> <p>That same week, I spoke personally with Ms. Kuhnz, who gave me further insight into how all of that works, and how her role is evolving since this was just her first year at Merit Academy, and the year before Dr. Meeks had been doing without an assistant director.</p>
<p>7/9/18 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM (1.25 hours)</p>	<p>Ms. Amanda Kuhnz</p>	<p>We talked about creating a school improvement plan for the school, for my Concept Paper Assignment. Since Dr. Meeks and the Board will not be ready with that by the due date of that assignment, we came up with the idea of me creating my own SIP for the Concept Paper assignment, which would be research-driven and could be a resource for them.</p> <p>We presented that idea to my professor by email. I adjusted the plan we came up with later in order to make it more useful to our situation. Then we began discussing the forum question for this week, and the dichotomy between leadership and management, which is one of the main topics we have addressed in this class.</p>

<p>7/12/18 11:00 AM – 12 PM (1 hour)</p>	<p>Ms. Amanda Kuhnz & Dr. Jesse Meeks</p>	<p>In light of recent school shootings, we have discussed gun safety and firearms training for our teachers (Utah allows educators to conceal carry, kind of a “don’t-ask-don’t-tell” policy).</p> <p>My brother uses and trains with airsoft guns, and we discussed how these might be utilized for some professional developments this year, in order to promote student safety. I like shooting myself, but it scares a lot of our staff to think about this. Still, in a day when shootings seem to occur frequently, it is best to be as prepared as possible in order to protect the safety and lives of our students.</p>
<p>7/16/18 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM (1.25 hours)</p>	<p>Ms. Amanda Kuhnz</p>	<p>We started by discussing our SIP creation that we are working on, and Amanda shared what she and Dr. Meeks are working on, which they will then be bringing to the faculty with their ideas.</p> <p>We also discussed some of my future classes, and my plans for the curriculum and scope of the classes, with Amanda offering some ideas and suggestions. Overall a good talk! She offered some good ideas for new PBL projects that I might utilize, and got me thinking.</p>
<p>7/17/18 2 PM – 3:15 PM (1.25 hours)</p>	<p>Dr. Jesse Meeks</p>	<p>We discussed the forum question for this week, regarding how much freedom we educators ought to have regarding the scope and sequence of our curriculum.</p> <p>We discussed methods to help students and teachers be motivated to learn. We also looked at some ideas for my new class, Speech and Debate. I was very grateful to see what vision Dr. Meeks had for the class, and it gave me some good ideas moving forward as I prep to teach it in a little under a month.</p>

<p>7/23/18 10:30 AM – 11:30 PM (1 hour)</p>	<p>Ms. Amanda Kuhnz</p>	<p>Amanda and I met for the last time (for this class, anyway). We discussed some of the issues that we have talked about in our class. We also chatted about her perspective as a newer admin, and the difficulties that come with such a position. She shared some insight into that, and we talked about my plans going forward, as both a teacher, and one day as an administrator.</p> <p>I was glad to have an open chat about what I may do when I graduate, and although that is still some time away, it is important to consider.</p>
<p>7/25/18 3:00 PM – 5:15 PM (2.25 hours)</p>	<p>Board Meeting</p>	<p>I attended this meeting for this week’s assignment, and my in-depth notes are included as well. Overall, I am grateful to know that we have a group of involved parents that passionately care about what our school is doing and the direction it is headed. They clearly want the best for our staff, and the administration is also clearly deeply invested in our school. The financial guys seem kind of scatterbrained, yet they obviously seem to be working hard for us too. Glad to be a part of such a great school.</p>

Final Reflection

I have thoroughly enjoyed this course. While some of the coursework might have been more easily accomplished during the school year, I like that I’ve been able to reflect and better focus on the material without teaching as a distraction, like it would be if I had not taken this during the summer. I really appreciated the reading, and thought that the texts were useful and worthwhile. I especially liked Jim Knight’s book, and I gave a copy to both of my admins as a way to encourage them to develop interest in my coursework, but also because I sincerely believe that it has many useful ideas within its pages.

One more thing: the forums were fabulous! I loved getting insight into how other teachers and admins-to-be consider things, and that was fun. Seeing insight into how other schools work is also intriguing to me, and it allowed me to reflect on the great things my own school is doing, and also the work we have to improve. Certainly it has its challenges, and it is by no means perfect, but I can see a lot of good that my administrators are doing, and also the immense effort they make to help our school be successful.

I still have a long way to go before I become an administrator myself, but this class helped me gain a bit more insight into that world. While it is no small task, I am still excited and ready to continue that journey. I've even learned a few things that will help me directly right now as a teacher, and I think that this next year will be a very productive and enlightening one. Thanks again for being so approachable and creating an open learning environment. I for one enjoyed the class immensely.

References

- Dischner, M. (2018, July 9). Instructional leadership and building manager [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Dischner, M. (2018, June 20). Why should we test for standards? [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Dolegowski, M. (2018, June 13). Dolegowski- Week 2 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Dolegowski, M. (2018, June 27). Dolegowski- Week 4 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

- Einfalt, J. (2018, June 6). Einfalt – Introduction [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Harder, B. (2018, June 13). Harder-Week 2-Issues shaping school policy and administration [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Harder, B. (2018, July 4). Harder-Week 5-Development of thought [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Janssen, L. (2018, July 4). Janssen- Wk 5 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Martin, S. (2018, July 18). Spencer martin-Week 7-Students and teachers [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Moench, M. (2018, July 18). Teacher input & student motivation [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Parr, J. (2018, June 6). Parr-Intro [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Parr, J. (2018, July 25). Parr-Strong sense of purpose [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Seltz, J. (2018, July 6). Seltz -Week 6 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Shaw, K. (2018, June 7). Shaw-Week 1 nclb-Public values and school policy [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Vancura, B. (2018, July 10). Vancura week 6 discussion [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Vancura, B. (2018, June 20). Week 3 – Educational administration [Online Discussion Group].

Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Vancura, B. (2018, June 27). Week 4 Discussion – Vancura [Online Discussion Group].

Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wilson, A. (2018, June 6). A.j. wilson [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wilson, A. (2018, June 6). Wilson – Week 1 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 6). Joe wright: An intro. [Video File]. Retrieved from

<https://biteable.com/watch/joe-wright-an-intro-1906409/>

Wright, J. (2018, June 6). Joe wright – Intro [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 6). Re: A.j. wilson [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 17). Re: Dolegowski- Week 2 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 29). Re: Dolegowski- Week 4 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 10). Re: Einfalt – Introduction [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 17). Re: Harder-Week 2-Issues shaping school policy and administration

[Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

- Wright, J. (2018, July 10). Re: Instructional leadership and building manager [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, July 7). Re: Janssen- Wk 5 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, June 6). Re: Parr-Intro [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, July 25). Re: Parr-Strong sense of purpose [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, July 10). Re: Seltz -Week 6 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, June 10). Re: Shaw-Week 1 nclb-Public values and school policy [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, July 18). Re: Spencer martin-Week 7-Students and teachers [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, July 25). Re: Spencer martin-Week 8-The connected principal [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, July 18). Re: Teacher input & student motivation [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, July 10). Re: Vancura week 6 discussion [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>
- Wright, J. (2018, June 20). Re: Week 3 - Educational administration [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 29). Re: Week 4 discussion - Vancura [Online Discussion Group].

Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 20). Re: Why should we test for standards? [Online Discussion Group].

Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 10). Re: Wilson – Week 1 [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from

<https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 20). Week 3 - Wright forum response [Online Discussion Group].

Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 6). Wright - Week 1 public values & school policy response [Online

Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 13). Wright - Week 2 forum response [Online Discussion Group].

Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, June 27). Wright - Week 4 forum – Educational administration as an emerging

profession [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, July 4). Wright - Week 5 - Development of thought [Online Discussion Group].

Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, July 9). Wright - Week 6 - Administrative work, roles... [Online Discussion

Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, July 18). Wright - Week 7 forum – Students & teachers [Online Discussion

Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>

Wright, J. (2018, July 25). Wright - Week 8 forum - Don't ask for more until you're willing to

risk more [Online Discussion Group]. Retrieved from <https://online.csc.edu>