

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION REFLECTION PAPER

Approved

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Education Administration: A Reflective Journey

To take a journey is to see places and things that may not have been seen before. One can also take a journey to places that have all ready been visited only to find another perspective or a view that is different from the previous journey. Traveling through lesson plans, classroom management theories, research and data, and the emotional strength and energy it takes to be a good teacher, these areas have a new perspective. This perspective has been created through the many hands on activities that I engaged in during class and through assignments as well as the resources gained throughout the course of my studies.

With the creation of an electronic portfolio came the greater understanding of the Seven Administrator Standards. Choosing artifacts to support each standard was a reflective process. I read each standard and reflected on what I had been doing in my classroom, in professional development, and through graduate work that would align with each standard.

The first Administrative Standard is displaying competency in the Ten Teacher Standards. The first teacher standard deals with curriculum and concepts stating that “the teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students”. Through my work on our curriculum map that we utilize in our district, I have proven how the central concepts are understood through what is planned to be taught to the students. The map also shows how learning experiences can be created for the students through content and objectives. It clearly shows the areas of music that are going to be discussed as well as the standards and benchmarks that coincide with each specific area of learning. A curriculum map is very valuable in keeping lesson plans in line with the standards. It allows for a timeline of what to teach and gives an outline to follow for lesson planning. It is also a tool to use when sharing information with other colleagues, the administration, school board, and parents. The map gives a clear guideline of what is expected and accomplished with each grade level and demonstrates accountability. As an administrator I would recommend using the eclipse curriculum mapping program to aid teachers in having a clear scope of their curriculum. It would also allow me to see the scope of where students need to be when looking at instructional practices and standards for a particular subject area.

The second teacher standard deals with development and learning. The teacher is to understand how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development. I always have a plan in place if a student has been having behavioral issues. A daily focus that I have is classroom management. I plan where I am

going to position myself when we start class, how I am going to address students while we are learning if there is a behavioral issue, and how I am going to handle that situation to ensure that I have opportunities for every student to learn and grow. To support my competency, I chose to use a behavior contract that was created for student behavior issues. I had a particular class that was struggling as a whole to focus. It did not matter if we were engaged in a hands-on activity, listening to music while following a listening map, or composing in small groups, this particular class could not handle each situation. I created a behavior contract to aid in keeping students on task so that students would show respect and responsibility to ensure that there were learning opportunities to support their intellectual, social and personal development.

This contract demonstrates that every child learns differently, but that we all need to be sure that we are behaving in an appropriate manner in the classroom to enable each and every student to learn. By behaving appropriately in the classroom, children can have a positive learning experience that allows the teacher to provide learning opportunities to support the different areas of learning. As a prospective administrator, I learned that a behavior contract can be a valuable tool to use for certain students in a behavior situation. Not only can it serve as a form of documentation, it can be used as a plan with the school and the parents to hold the students accountable for his/her actions. It shows that the school is committed to each child and has proactive ways to address negative situations. Conversely, student behavior improved greatly and the classroom experiences were more meaningful.

The third teacher standard focuses on the need for the teacher to understand how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners. We need to provide developmentally appropriate learning situations for every student. Some students may be visual learners, others may be kinesthetic. It is my job to research different ways that pupils can learn and teach in a variety of different ways. To demonstrate this, I use a high and low staff. This is a very visual lesson for the students who are aural learners. We discuss high and low sounds, the staff (where high and low pitches are found), and we place the appropriate instruments based on how they sound on the staff. This lesson also serves as hands on experience for students to aid the kinesthetic learner. Through this standard and choosing this artifact, I believe that it is very important to have different ways of presenting a concept. By using these kinds of strategies in my teaching, when I become an administrator, I can offer ideas to the teachers to help them. It is also helpful to see what ideas actually work with specific learners and to utilize those ideas in each classroom.

Standard four, instructional strategies stresses understanding and using a variety of instructional strategies to encourage student development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance standards. To demonstrate this concept, I use the model of the Curwin hand signs. The hand signs were developed to accompany the solfege syllables developed in the 18th century by John Spencer Curwin. Kodaly then integrated these hand signs into his teaching methods. The hand signs are used as a visual for students to begin recognizing physical placement for a vocal pitch. As they move into middle school, they are introduced to naming the actual notes in the music by using the solfege syllables (as well as the actual note names) and continue with the concept into high school. This artifact is an object of critical thinking and problem solving.

Along with critical thinking and problem solving, the performance standard is mastered by being able to present the concepts through performance. This is measured through teacher evaluation, clinic evaluation, and if relevant, peer/group/team evaluation. This activity shows that there are different ways to learn pitch and can also align with standard 1.3 – *Diverse Learners* (The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners). Teaching students a concept that can be built upon and ultimately enhance their learning as they get to the secondary level is a great tool for students to have. It also makes teaching more interesting and learning more fun. It is important to teach “outside the box” and not be afraid to try new concepts. As an administrator I will need to encourage teachers to try new and different ideas and I will need to be aware of these types of concepts and find ways for teachers to implement these ideas.

The fifth teacher standard states that the teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behaviors to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. I have demonstrated my competency through a sticker competition between the kindergarten classes through fourth grade classes in elementary general music. The students have to follow the classroom expectations and if successful, they have the opportunity to earn stickers towards a reward party. The competition is used to remind students of classroom expectations and allows me to create a positive learning environment. Students need something tangible – they need instant gratification and when they see that they have earned a sticker, they desire to act appropriately so they can earn the reward. This is used to aid them in successful learning through gratifying behavior. Sometimes you have to modify your thinking or philosophy in order to create an orderly learning environment. It is my belief that students are expected to behave and that giving them an extrinsic reward for intrinsic behavior is not teaching them to be self-disciplined. The dynamics of the young learner have changed and an instant reward for something well done is effective. There are different ways of achieving the same goal. This concept is an idea that can be utilized with any classroom and even used throughout the entire elementary, sort of a shared student management plan. If behavior is an issue for a teacher, as an administrator I need to be able to offer ideas to guide that teacher and have ideas that I can use as a school leader. This concept could be shared with prospective staff members that may be struggling with classroom management.

Teaching standard six is about communication: “The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, non-verbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.” Having positive interaction with the teacher and students in each class needs to be fostered by engaging students in basic forms of communication which can then advance into more complex forms of communication. Using technology is a great way to show students how they can engage in sharing a message or knowledge. For example, students can create a power point presentation to share their research on a historical topic from a unit on the evolution of jazz music.

Asking questions and getting different perspectives on a new concept can be beneficial to different types of learners. At times if I am introducing a new concept and I get a few confused looks (non-verbal), I will ask other members of the class to explain what I had just shared with the class. Many times a different statement of the concept can be helpful. I also engage the students in small group work. They learn to work with each other, or to collaborate on a project

to reach the desired outcome. As an administrator, I will need to demonstrate these different forms of communication so as to set an example to my staff and to give them tools that they can utilize to be strong teacher leaders with our 21st century learners.

The seventh teaching standard states that the teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals. This standard deals with instructional planning. What are the teachers' strengths in their subject matter? How well do they know their students? As an administrative team, are we helping the teachers to understand what their students' needs are so they can effectively and successfully execute their lesson plans? Is the community informed of the strategic plan vision areas and action plans? Is the school supported? What are the curriculum goals? What areas are the main focuses when looking at curriculum development? Many questions go along with instructional planning but the bottom line is that we need educators to think about the whole picture as they are planning their instruction. Teachers need to strive to research their subject matter, know their students' needs, have a grasp on the community's perceptions of the school and know the goals of their curriculum. I took my students on a field trip to see the Broadway musical "Wicked" in Chicago. It was such a valuable trip for my students to take. We were able to leave our small community for a day and view first hand the diversity of a big city. They saw a fabulous performance that they would never have the opportunity to see in our community and it supported our curriculum goals.

Teaching standard eight: The teacher understands and uses formal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner. Through this standard I focused on the semester exams that our students take. As I looked through past assignments, daily lesson plans, and rehearsal recordings to create the exam, I also reflected on how we were doing based on our curriculum map (see teaching standard one). Semester exams are a great way to see the cumulative learning that has or hasn't taken place throughout the semester. It also serves as a written document to use if there is a question about student learning. By using semester exams to gauge where students are, it can help with configuring curriculum and assessment tools as well as focus on the areas that the school may need to be more successful in. Teachers also need to assess students in different ways. All students develop differently and learn differently; therefore they are going to test in different ways. Some students may be wonderful writers; others may excel at short answer, while some learners are better oral test takers. Teachers need to allow for different ways of assessing students so that all learners can be accurately and fairly assessed.

Teaching standard nine is based on reflection: The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally. Seeking out opportunities to grow professionally is imperative as an educator. Opportunities do not always fall into laps, we need to seek those opportunities to grow and be a part of the professional community. Choosing to partake in such activities is a benefit for the teacher as well as the students. My participation as a WSMA (Wisconsin School Music Association) adjudicator demonstrates this standard. In order to be an adjudicator, I have to continuously be tested on the rules of the organization and attend workshops to ensure that I am

a qualified adjudicator. This process that is set up by WSMA allows me to reflect on my professional adventure as an adjudicator. This also helps me to be a better teacher through gaining more knowledge about performance and repertoire, as well as a good marketing tool for myself professionally. I have sought out the opportunity to grow in my field through yearly reviews and testing, bi-annual workshops, and adjudicating with fine judges from across the state to gain a professional perspective on my craft. After each judging assignment, I always reflect on how I connected with the students, supported the directors, and represented WSMA, my professionalism, and ultimately my district. I review what I wrote on the rating sheets and how effective I was when working with the groups or individuals. This process is very valuable as a future administrator. I know the value of seeking out opportunity and how much it can improve an individual in his/her teaching.

The final teaching standard is collaboration: The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being. It is extremely important to foster every relationship within the school family. This certainly also means the community. In order to work effectively for the students, all school officials need to be able to collaborate in a positive manner about student needs, teacher needs, and needs of the community. When those relationships have been formed, it is important to show appreciation to the people that may have been especially helpful. My school has seven concerts per year; there is a lot of work and preparation that goes into each concert. I always make sure that I put a written thank you in the concert program or make sure to say something at the concert about the teachers, office staff, administration, parents, and custodial staff for their assistance with the concert. Showing appreciation to the people that helped make any part of the school day, school program or even school year successful is gratifying and important to the overall school climate. A positive school climate ensures positive school learning.

Understanding the ten teacher standards and being competent is imperative as a school leader. If teachers take the time to review these standards and create a list of artifacts that supports each standard, it will keep the teaching professionals on the cutting edge of being top notch educators. Understanding these ten standards is essential for administrators as it not only will help individual growth, but it will also serve as a guidance tool with evaluations.

The next six standards deal directly with competency in the Administrative Standards. These standards deal directly with the job that administrators are expected to do and will serve as a system of checks and balances. These competencies have been realized through course work in the Education Administration program and also through teaching duties and practicum hours.

Administrative standard two: The administrator leads by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by the school community. An administrator needs to drive learning within the school. Administrators need to create a learning environment that is conducive to all learners and has to create a climate that allows for all to succeed. Having policies and procedures that are in place through a strategic plan will greatly aid in creating a positive learning environment. I was elected to be a member of our District Improvement Team and I serve on this team to do research, partake in discussions, and create policy to improve our district through student performance, community engagement, facilities and grounds, and support staff.

The District Improvement Team is an effective way to create a strategic plan. I have the opportunity to engage in meaningful and productive discussions with a group of people and talk about the needs of the district through research that has been done (i.e. test scores, facility review, community needs/wants). I have participated in discussions about each area of the plan and broke out into smaller groups to specialize in that area to create the vision. Branching out from this arena have been Task Forces that were created to help implement the plan, such as scheduling, student retention, gifted and talented, and math curriculum. It has been very valuable to be a part of the process so that I can see first hand what it takes to create a district plan, get it approved, and begin the implementation. It is an ongoing process that needs to be visited every year, but once the format is in place, it can make those visits to the strategic plan much more efficient.

The administrator manages by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to pupil learning and staff professional growth is administrator standard three. Professional growth is extremely important to teachers. It is our job to encourage learning with our students, why wouldn't encourage learning amongst ourselves? Through attending a conference entitled "Failure Is Not an Option" based on the book by Alan M Blankstein, I learned the importance sending teachers to various conferences, workshops, or summits. It is important at times to step out of the classroom and hear ways that learning can be differentiated so that no student fails. It serves as a refresher, a learning tool, and can help teachers to be better educators. It is important to foster outside learning and to find ways for teachers to grow professionally so that our students can be successful. We all need to be educationally stimulated so that it can be brought to the district and individual classrooms. Thus, we can engage our students and be much more productive. By attending this type of event and utilizing the resources that can be gained from it (reading the text and purchasing and utilizing another text, "Making Standards Useful", Robert J. Marzano and Mark W. Haysteady), this experience has catapulted my belief in attending worthwhile conferences as being essential to best practice teaching methods. By receiving this information, I was able to see areas that I could integrate into my teaching and gained insight on how to be a better teacher. If I can do that for my staff, the students are not only going to benefit but teachers will be energized so that their classroom teaching is enhanced and teaching tools are acquired so that all learners can be reached.

A restatement of standard four could be; an administrator needs to manage effectively all components of the educational system throughout the district. I focused on the facility and grounds portion of the strategic plan to address safety for the students in their learning environment. In order to have a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, the building needs to be in working order. Toilets need to flush properly, water fountains need to work, roofs should not leak, and the facility needs to be clean, just to name a few. In order to aid the administration and school board in policing this situation, a facilities and grounds component to the strategic plan was created to ensure that areas in need are addressed and that the funds can be set aside for certain tasks. People have different views on what the facility should be. Some are very focused on the outside and some on the inside. This type of plan allows for the two areas to

come together and to place importance on both areas so as to reserve the funds necessary to make repairs and enhancements as needed. This area not only affects students, but it also affects the maintenance/custodial staff, the teaching and support staff, but the community as well. For a small community, the school is the “hub” of its existence and if there are things that are in disrepair, or areas around the school that aren’t aesthetically pleasing, it has an effect on the overall climate of the building and the community feeling towards the school. It is important to not only manage the organization of the building and to make sure that the daily regime goes smoothly, but to also pay attention to facility issues.

The administrator models collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources is administrator standard five. Public relations are extremely important in the administrator role. A principal needs to be able to address the public on any given topic about the school, even without warning. A principal needs to act with integrity and calmness when difficult situations arise. To display this standard, I used my work on the District Improvement Team in the area of Community Engagement goals and plans that were proposed by the vision committee assigned to this area of the strategic plan. The vision committee met various times throughout the month to come together and collaborate about what the goals should be and the actions that should be taken to reach these goals. Not only are there community members on the District Improvement Team that were asked about this area, as a committee we were in contact with community areas and local businesses to gather ideas about what they would like to see. Based upon those findings, we were able to decide what areas the district is to expand upon and implement. Through the implementation of the plan, we will mobilize our resources which will be a great public relations component to the strategic plan. I learned that it is crucial to have your community supporting the school. When speaking with the community you often times hear things that you weren’t expecting, didn’t see or know about, and can gain some interesting insight to the community perception of the school district. By building and maintaining a bridge with the community, you will have their support for activities and needs of the school and they will also feel ownership into what the students are doing.

As we look at administrative standard six, it calls for the administrator to act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. When handling personnel, albeit students, staff, or parents, I need to conduct myself in a professional manner. I need to handle each student with respect, no matter what, as well as each employee. When people come to see me, I want them to know that they will have a meeting that will be comfortable because I will treat them fairly. They will be treated with respect and the results of any meeting will be founded upon high standards and ethics. I influence people everyday, if I treat others in the way that this standard prescribes, I will be modeling those behaviors for my staff and students – that’s what I want others to walk away with.

The final administrator standard states that the administrator understands, responds to, and interacts with the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context that affects schooling. A leader must make decisions that are educationally based and at times that education may need to come in the form of knowing the law and the state statutes. Through coursework in the legal module, I created a very sound knowledge base about legal concepts in education. Through daily research on the Legal Clips website, the AWSA website, and attending the legal

conference, I learned a great deal about legal issues in education. As with all standards and trends in education, the legal parameters are always changing. Laws sometimes change, statutes are revised, key cases are decided that can effect what we do in our buildings. When dealing with legal issues, a biased or emotional opinion will not be effective – that is not what the law is based on. It is important to seek advice when needed and beneficial to have a strong background in the legal aspects of education through workshops, updates, and resources.

As an educational leader I am the person that others look up to. Not just the teachers, but the students and community as well. They will look to me to make the right decisions and to know the answers to their questions. They will need me to treat each person that comes into our school with respect, to know their child and give their child everything that I can. As an aspiring principal I am confident that I can be effective to assist others and help other teachers to be educational leaders.

My Educational Administrative cohort has inspired me to be a better teacher. I have been refreshed and renewed and I am excited about this ever changing and evolving world of education. Through the information that we acquired from our knowledgeable speakers and professors, each class that we spent together was always full of valuable information that will be utilized whether I am teaching or working as a principal. What I do in my classroom has taken on a different meaning and opened my eyes to so many aspects of student learning, instructional practices, and community engagement. I look forward to continuing the learning process of being a great principal.

The class time that I spent at UW-Platteville was invaluable. My colleagues in my cohort are very talented and educated, I am truly lucky and blessed to have them be resources.

The last two years have been spent immersed on the journey through the world of education; not only through the daily teaching within my classroom, but through the hands on learning that took place in the Education Administration program. The many areas that make up the world of educating our youth have been visited on this journey and while the destination has not yet been determined, it is with great anticipation that I ultimately see where this path will take me.