A Reflection of Competency in the Wisconsin Administrator Standards

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As an educator in today’s world, it is imperative that one be able to adapt to all learning styles, to empathize with many different environments that students hail from, to stand firm in the belief that everyone can learn and deserves to learn, and to forge ahead despite the constant obstacles thrown out by the government, the school board and every other entity that feels entitled to do so. In order to do this, it is also imperative that educators have standards to strive towards. Teachers, administrators and support staff must be able to prove education is taking place, both for the sake of accountability and for and educators own peace of mind.

The standards set forth by the State of Wisconsin for educators and administrators can be reached in many ways, just as students and all learners can be. As a teacher and an administrator, I have had the rare opportunity to address these standards from both a teaching and administrative perspective.

STANDARD 1.1

Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, I took on the position of building principal. Having only two full years of teaching experience at this time, I chose to continue teaching as a part of this position. As a result, I took on the position of part time Art teacher for grades K-8.

In the weeks before school began, I laid out general lesson plans for the year. I began this process by aligning the lessons I had already found to the curriculum, and then going back and filling in the blanks with topics not yet covered. I also found a grading rubric that I thought was general enough to be used with many of the grade levels, and accessible to all ability levels. It wasn’t long after the year began that I found a need for an ongoing assessment tool that kept students on track throughout the period, whether it be a presentation period or a work period. In order to do this, I developed a very simple sliding scale based on behavior and effort during the period. This is factored into the final grade along with the final rubric grades.

Competency in Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.1, The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines she or he teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for pupils, is partially addressed by this experience. The rubric I have adapted to fit my classroom allows for adjustments based on effort and not entirely on ability, proving the teacher understands the central concepts...of the discipline he or she teaches,. It is very important in subjects such as art that all students be able to feel successful in the classroom, not just the students with talent in that particular area. This rubric gives a good indication of the student’s understanding of the lesson based on the directions and expectations, the effort put forth and the attitude with which they take on the project.

The lesson plans that I have written allow for introduction of the topic, question and answer, practice and assessment. Assessment in art is most often a final project or a group effort demonstrating what we have learned in a particular unit. All things presented can be assessed through the use of the rubric and/ or the sliding scale used for daily participation and effort, demonstrating the teacher understands the ... tools of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines she or he teaches.
This particular experience allowed me to look at learning in a different way. As school principal, I was now much more aware of curriculum and content, and the importance of following through on both, as I expected this of all my staff, and as a result, needed to set a good example. By teaching a subject such as art outside the contained classroom, when I do not see the students in different settings throughout the day and know what is going on with them at a particular time, I found that it was much more difficult to be objective when grading them. This rubric allows me to watch them more carefully and base more of their grade on effort and less on their apparent talent. As a result, I found myself planning lessons differently as well, including more opportunities for all ability levels to succeed and moving away from grading only the final product.

STANDARD 1.1 (Continued)

In order to address the latter part of standard one, it is necessary to look further into the workings of my art classroom. Each year St. Mary School sponsors an Alumni Auction and Gala as a fundraiser. Beginning several years ago, the school became a part of this fundraiser by creating and selling artwork made by the children at the live auction. The types of artwork are varied, and include such things as woodworking, oil painting, watercolor painting, furniture reupholstering, and stepping stones. The students are all a part of the process, and learn various skills that they will most likely use in the future as a part of developing these projects. They also learn to take pride in themselves and where they come from, and how to represent an organization with dignity.

This experience demonstrates my competency in the remainder of Wisconsin administrator standard 1.1, *The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines she or he teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for pupils.* These projects involve all students on some level, and allow for students of all ability and interest levels to shine. They are using everyday skills such as woodworking, staining and framing techniques, as well as some skills that may not be so “everyday,” but that they may also never otherwise find themselves exposed to.

*I created learning experiences that make … subject matter meaningful for pupils* by showing the students the importance of taking pride in their work, as well as in their school, themselves and one another. This will be the third year for the projects, and as the years have gone by, the students have become more involved in choosing the projects as well as creating them. They also do their share of “advertising” by getting the word out that they have done something very interesting and people should take notice. These activities allow students who would not normally enjoy art or feel talented in the area to choose a style or a project that they are interested in, and to feel proud of the final product. The day after the Auction and Gala, the students are informed as to how much money they were able to raise for the school, and are then involved in deciding how the money is spent. All of these opportunities make this learning experience very meaningful to students and are something that they are proud of for months and even years after the fact.

As an educator, I was able to learn a lot about student motivation through this particular experience. It began as an experimental project, and has become something that students look forward to each year. They are able to choose their projects, which gives them a feeling of ownership, and as a result, the projects are completed with more
care and pride than I could instill in them on their own. They strive to create projects that they can be proud to show off to their parents and to alumni. I learned that learning is an experience we create for ourselves and the best thing I can do as a teacher is give them the tools and let them discover where they can be used.

STANDARD 1.2

Every other school year the students in 7th and 8th grade take a class trip. My first year as principal of St. Mary's was a year for the class trip. The students indicated that they were not particularly interested in the usual trip to Chicago, as they didn't really see the “purpose.” In thinking about this and investigating cost, attractions and educational experiences, I found that Washington D.C. was a very cost effective trip and was much more in line with the curriculum of 7th and 8th grade. After discussing this possibility with parents, Education Commission and the students, it was decided to undertake the mission of fundraising and planning a class trip to Washington D.C.

Herein lies the way that I, as an educator, was able to show competency in Wisconsin administrator standard 1.2, *The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.* The planning of this trip involved many facets of the educational process. The students were responsible for fundraising for the trip, which involved planning, accounting for their monies, and scheduling workers. They were also responsible for dividing into rooms for the hotel, groups for touring, and where they wanted to go and what attractions they wanted to see based on what they were interested in. While on the trip the students had the opportunity to see museums, monuments, visit historic and ethnic attractions, and interact with people from many different parts of the country and world. They were given several assignments to research and share with the group upon returning to school.

All of these experiences allowed students to interact on many different levels. They were able to interact socially throughout the trip, as they shared a hotel room, a bus for 18 hours, and a tour guide for a week. *The personal growth* in the students was noticeable throughout the trip as they experienced things they would have likely never have experienced otherwise. They were able to share these experiences with teachers and classmates, creating a learning environment completely different from that of the classroom. Intellectually, they were able to stimulate their minds with true life images and experiences related to what they have been learning in school. They were able to connect the real Constitution of the United States with the test they would take later for graduation. They were able to stand in places they had only read about or seen on television. They were able to interact with one another in a setting that seemed a little less like learning and a little more like living, and the experience was truly remarkable for all involved.

As a teacher, I learned the importance of listening to my students. These students were honest about their feelings related to this trip, and in the end, were able to pull together and make their dream a reality. As their principal, it was refreshing for me to sit back and watch them take control of their education through their involvement in the planning and fundraising processes. In an article written by the local paper, several students stated what they’d learned in a manner much deeper than I or their classroom teacher thought possible. This trip was a learning experience for me as well as the students, as I struggled to sit back and let them make what they would make of the trip.
They surprised me with their interest to see everything and learn everything. As I read their comments to the paper, I learned that leading the proverbial horse to water might just make him drink, as long as you’ve set the right path before him and given him the tools with which to learn.

STANDARD  1.3

A student in my class when I was teaching grades 3 and 4 was struggling with grades, despite the fact that she was intellectually capable of doing very well. In talking with her parents, it was determined that they were dealing with the same struggles at home as I seemed to be dealing with in the classroom. We were struggling with helping this student to make the connection between the directions and the actual assignment. It was at this time that we decided to try some color coding techniques such as highlighting and colored paper. This continues to be beneficial to this student as she has moved on in her educational career.

Competency in Wisconsin administrator standard 1.3, *The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners* is demonstrated herein. This was a student who was not struggling to understand or comprehend the material, but rather struggling to associate the directions with the assignment, and as a result, was losing points on areas that she could answer verbally, but couldn’t necessarily follow through with on paper. In checking with the special education program, it was determined that there was no learning disability, but that some special methods of organizing thought visually may be beneficial, requiring *the teacher to understand how students differ in their approaches to learning*.

As a result of this discussion and some research, I decided to have this student try using color as a source of organization, and we began highlighting the steps in directions in different colors, as well as doing certain assignments on various colored papers. This seemed to help, *and to create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners*. The student continued to make this system fit her needs as the year progressed. The parents are happy with the results, and though we still struggle at times, this has seemed to make a difference for the particular student. The other students enjoy getting their assignments on colorful paper as well, and this does not single out any one student.

The biggest thing I took away from this experience was that the simplest change can mean a world of difference in a student, and it is the responsibility of the educator to make these adaptations a reality for their students. This particular student is now succeeding as she should have always been able to and both student and family seem less stressed when dealing with homework issues. I also learned not to be afraid of trying something new for fear of alienating a child, as it is simple enough, with a little creativity, to make something like this fun for the whole class, taking the focus away from that particular student.

I also learned that learners know what it is that frustrates them, but that they may not always be able to verbalize this. It is extremely important to be aware of what is happening in one’s classroom and be willing to make a change. This will benefit the learner in numerous ways. Also, teaching strategies that may seem intimidating could be just what a student needs, and we as teachers must be willing to try them and allow students to adapt them to meet their individual needs.

STANDARD  1.4
The ability to plan activities across content areas is very important as a teacher. During my first year teaching, I was able to create some very interesting lessons that spanned the content areas and created differentiated learning experiences for my students. A Mississippi River ecosystem that came complete with the river, animals, and sound effects, food, and so on would be elected to travel with the Grand Excursion and land several of my students on the 6:00 news; a scale recreation and comparison of the cities of Chicago and East Dubuque. Visual classroom rules created with pictures and colors, Hershey Kiss multiplication and division tables, and a vocabulary parade to name a few. Many of these activities used different intelligences and appealed to different groups of students by using different approaches including hands on projects, visual arts, writing and other strategies for instruction and evaluation.

Competency in Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.4, The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of problem solving, critical thinking and performance skills, are demonstrated within these activities as well as many not mentioned here. As a teacher, I understand and use a variety of instructional strategies to keep instruction interesting and appealing to all students. One way that I go about this as an educator is to create these learning experiences for students with the understanding that some part of the activity will strike a student’s interest, and a different part might meet another students needs, thus encouraging learning for all students.

STANDARD 1.5

In the fall of the 2006-2007 school year, St. Mary School began a departmentalized middle level structure for students in grades 5-8. With this came the issue of consistency in discipline throughout the building. At a staff in-service it was decided to develop a building-wide policy that would apply to all students regardless of the classroom and/or teacher they are with. From this suggestion and through faculty collaboration, the Code of Behavior was developed.

With the development of the Code of Behavior came a competency within Wisconsin administrator standard 1.5, The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. The Code of Behavior was developed in three stages, according to the developmental stages of the students involved, beginning with primary and proceeding through intermediate to middle level. This discipline policy is entwined with our school mission statement and is meant to provide an atmosphere of positive social interaction for all students. Having the same expectations for students despite their location in the building allows for a safe learning environment, as well as student accountability for their behavior. It also allows me, as principal, to quickly and fairly evaluate the situation should they be sent to my office for any reason.

The point system used at the middle level and the warning systems used at the primary and intermediate levels are designed to self motivate students individually. A weekly update as to their conduct points is provided, and students are able to determine their final grade. This is worked into their religion grade at 33% based on their choices and behavior throughout the quarter. I have also tied this into my classroom as a group motivator, as have many other teachers. Each quarter, we as a class set a goal for overall student behavior. If this goal is reached, some type of reward is earned. This not only
gives students the ability to self motivate, but the opportunity to encourage one another to improve the overall environment of the classroom.

The Code of Behavior demonstrates competency in standard 1.5 because it addresses motivating students to be responsible for their behaviors on a developmentally appropriate level. To effectively enact the policy an understanding of what makes a learning environment positive and socially engaging is necessary.

As a teacher, I felt much more at ease making behavior decisions after the policy was instituted knowing that they would be followed up on the same way regardless of the group that I had at the moment. Having each of the grade levels each week, I felt less time was spent transitioning as well as dealing with behavior issues and more time was being spent focusing on student learning.

As an administrator, I was able to learn what my faculty was looking for in a discipline policy and what their expectations of me were related to the policy. I was also able to observe my teachers awareness of their students and their needs, which was beneficial for me in evaluating those teachers. I saw a decrease in the amount of arguments by students, and there were far less “I don’t know why I am here” visits to my office.

A better understanding of the effect of consistency on student learning was also something that both the teachers and I learned from this experience.

STANDARD 1.6

The school newspaper was begun in 2006 for students in grades 5-8. The students are a part of the newspaper staff on a voluntary basis, and are responsible for collecting all information pertinent to the paper, interviewing for stories, layout, design and publication. The paper is edited by an 8th grade student elected editor, and finally by myself prior to publication. The paper is sent home to parents, as well as distributed to the local library, and several other small businesses in the area.

Competency in Wisconsin administrator standard 1.6, The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom is demonstrated through the implementation of this school newspaper. This shows a way in which students can acquire skills, put them to use, and achieve a final product they can be proud to distribute to the public. These students are required to work together in a collaborative manner in which all aspects of the paper are covered equally and properly. They come up with the story ideas, the layout, and what information will be included in the paper. They work together to meet deadlines and to help one another gather the required information, supporting active inquiry. Students use verbal, nonverbal and media communication techniques through such things as peer review and editing, as well as design layout and formatting. They create a final written product to be submitted for publication and they create a form of media in their own rite.

A part of teaching in this day and age is participating in co-curricular activities. Being a part of the newspaper staff allows me to share my strengths with the students and allows them to associate with me in a different setting. I learned the importance of listening to my students and creating supportive interaction in the classroom. Their interest in creating such a publication on their own time is an educators dream come true and should certainly not be stifled.
I learned not to judge too early the members of such a group of students. It is too easy to assume who will excel at something such as this, and who will be just another body. The students, however, have surprised me. Some students who have shown no past interest in language arts or English have shown great potential as comic strip writers or interviewers.

**STANDARD 1.7**

This activity was done with a first grade class. The activities in this unit were put together in collaboration with the Grand Excursion event being celebrated along the Mississippi River in 2004. The students researched the river, its wildlife, uses, historical significance, and so on. We visited the National Mississippi River Museum, and the students were featured on the Channel 9 News. The student’s project was selected to travel with the Excursion and will serve as a display along the River. This was a very in depth project for students of this age, but it came together beautifully.

Wisconsin administrator standard 1.7, *The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community and curriculum goals,* is demonstrated through the Grand Excursion. This unit involved gaining knowledge of the Mississippi River, and much research went into preparing for this project. It was woven into the curriculum through the “communities” component of the Social Studies curriculum and the habitats and ecosystems aspect of the science curriculum. The students were all able to help with parts of the project, as it involved many aspects including hands on artistic projects, research, reading, writing and so on.

The Grand Excursion was a big event for this river community during this time, and allowed the students to celebrate their river front heritage. They were able to attend the Excursion in the summer knowing a little more about what they were seeing and where they came from. They were also able to visit the River Museum in Dubuque as a culminating activity and see what they had been learning about first hand.

I learned several things as a teacher from this project. I learned that if presented properly, the highest of expectations can be reached by any ability level. The students helped one another out, and they really played off one another’s strengths. Even a child with autism in the classroom, who didn’t show much interest in the project initially, got to be on the news and show off his frog for the display.

**STANDARD 1.8**

In grades 3 and 4 I read the novel “Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key” by Jack Gantos aloud to the students. The basis of the story is how a students with behavior concerns deals with them in class, as well as how other students relate to him. The students and I used this story as a basis for discussion about how people behave in different settings, expectations for our behavior and what kind of impression we want to leave on the people we encounter in our daily lives. As a result of these discussions, we developed a set of classroom rules and personal goals for their improved behavior and/ or expectations of themselves.

Competency within Wisconsin administrator standard 1.8, *The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner* is clearly demonstrated through the activities tied in to this story. The basis of this novel was to look at social behaviors in the classroom. This was a 3rd and 4th grade classroom,
and thus the discussion was at a lower level, however the moral of the story was not lost on the students.

This set of expectations and goals made for an interesting classroom atmosphere. The students were monitoring one another and pointing out behaviors that one another could work on. I was able to both formally and informally assess their behavior and achievement by watching this interaction and how it affected the classroom atmosphere. If and when something “big” would happen, we would sit down and discuss it as a group related to our goals, and determine how to handle the situation appropriately. Overall, there was a change in the atmosphere of the classroom as students of all academic and social groups worked together.

As a classroom, we also worked on helping one another out when in need. This was not something the students in the novel were very good about, so we made that another of our goals. We were to work together as a group so that everyone felt included and understood what was expected of them. We also went over some various physical activities to “center” ourselves when we were feeling unfocused. Overall, the students developed a rapport that allowed each student to be who they were without too much judgment.

I learned a lot about expectations in this lesson. I would have never thought that 3rd and 4th graders would be as capable of empathy and understanding of a student with the problems that Joey Pigza was dealing with. I think they were more apt to feel empathetic in the end that adults would be. I also learned that sometimes the students can take care of social issues better on their own than if I were to intervene.

STANDARD 1.9

Every seven years the nonpublic schools of Illinois undergo a re-accreditation process overseen by a state board of education representative and a panel of diocesan representatives. This process involves an in-depth look at all aspects of the school’s operation, including curriculum, professional development, atmosphere, identity, mission, philosophy and goals, leadership, physical plant and the like. The school is evaluated on these aspects and based on whether or not they are all being met, accreditation is either granted or denied. This process involves a great deal of collaboration on the part of the principal, teachers, staff, parents and community members.

As both a teacher and a principal, this experience allowed me to demonstrate competency in Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.9, The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/ her actions on others (students, parents and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally. The self-evaluation process is an ongoing process of reflection. It is set up in such a way that if effectively implemented, will allow a school to grow over time, while learning to reflect and modify as needed. This process requires that all entities involved with the school look at their practices and how they relate to the school’s mission, philosophy and goals for the ultimate benefit of the students. It also requires that teachers continue to develop professionally and spiritually.

All aspects of who we are as educators and a school are looked as in detail throughout his process, and many questions, concerns, and ideas are addressed. Teachers work together to align curriculum and goals. parents offer insights as to what they see as
strengths and areas for growth, area agencies are asked to assists with the process as well. The local fire department assists with the building inspection, the local public school principal serves on the committee with the members of the diocese and the state, and the districts office sends a representative as well. This is truly a group effort, and as principal, I had the great pleasure of orchestrating this process while also taking on the role of teacher from the perspective of art teacher.

Professional development is not only a requirement of maintaining a teaching license, but is also required for accreditation. This process allowed us to share and learn as a faculty what our wants and needs were as far as professional development go, and to enact a plan that will allow us to achieve some of these goals. It also allowed for a formal presentation of need to the Education Commission, allowing us to access some monies that would not have otherwise been available.

I learned a lot about the importance of an administrator being an instructional leader, as well as a role model for such a process. What I focused on and took seriously was what the faculty focused on as well. If I found myself slacking in a particular area, I noticed this would also be overlooked by faculty. Expectations are ongoing, and without reinforcement, it is very easy to lose sight of the goal.

As a teacher, I was able to see the amount of extra work that went into this process. Reviewing curriculum, reflection and all aspects of classroom management and student learning takes time. It is easy to say we do things daily, and many of us do, but to formally process these things in writing and in a way that will be beneficial to a review committee was stressful, and as a result, I am now fully aware of the importance on ongoing review and reflection of my teaching strategies.

I learned a lot about student learning in this process simply because we as a faculty sat down and shared what we were teaching, and how we were teaching it. As a result, we would invariably begin to share who learned best in what way and this was found to be a great help to all staff. We were able to share what worked with certain students and what definitely didn’t work with others. I know that this improved us all professionally and enhanced the school’s learning environment.

STANDARD 1.10

At St. Mary School we developed a program we call the “Big Buddies” program. In this program we pair up older students with younger ones and they are “buddies” for the school year. We do many activities within this setting, including reading, tutoring, art activities and more. We also prepare parent gifts such as mother and father’s day gifts, and we do projects to send to the local nursing homes and the Villa, where the elderly Nuns reside. The students usually do several programs a year as well, including caroling for the nuns at the Villa, putting on Grandparent’s and Special Persons day, and other celebrations.

Competency in Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.10, The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students learning and well being, is demonstrated through this program and the activities therein. The Big Buddies program requires that teachers work together to plan activities for the students, as well as students working together to help one another, and ultimately, a greater good. This program works to involve all organizations that are important to our school at some point in the year. Students do an appreciation service for Volunteers and for Grandparents and Special Persons. They do holiday activities for the
local elderly and homebound. These projects are most often educational for the students in more than one way. They are learning to be compassionate and aware of their community and be grateful for where things come from. They are also learning something about whatever project we may be working on.

I have learned that it is not always easy to work closely with other faculty, and especially not to leave your students in their hands, but I do feel that it has improved the overall atmosphere of the school, and as a result, improved student learning and well-being.

STANDARD 2.0

In taking this position as principal, I had the opportunity to review the school handbooks. Though the policies laid out by the diocese must be left unaffected, there were many parts of the handbooks I felt the need to “tweak” in one or more ways, in order to make the handbooks fit the vision I had for the school. This project was taken on by myself initially, and then we looked at it as a staff over the course of several inservices and continue to make adjustments as the need arises.

In putting together these handbooks, I was able to more fully immerse myself in the principal’s duties related to Wisconsin Administrator Standard 2, the administrator leads by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by the school community.

I took the initial step in developing new handbooks by re-writing the parts of the faculty handbook to create the building atmosphere and expectations that I felt I could live with as an administrator. We then, as a staff, took the parent and student handbooks to in-service and went to work creating the building wide atmosphere that we could ALL live with. We discussed what we wanted to see in our building and what we all felt were agreeable conditions of the various parts of the school day. I then took the thoughts and ideas from these meetings and rewrote the handbooks, in order to implement them for the coming school year. Finally, I review parts of the handbook at in-services and have parts of it posted throughout the building as reminders of the school-wide vision we are striving for, as well as refer to it when a parent has a concern, or I have to speak with a teacher about an issue. We continue to adjust these handbooks annually, in order to maintain the closest atmosphere to our vision (stewardship) possible.

I learned as an administrator that it is important to make the school a place that you can live with based on your own beliefs. There are a lot of things that we just have to put up with due to state mandates, standards and the like, but there are enough things that can be made our own to allow for a vision to be created and carried out. It is also of the utmost importance as an administrator that we are a part of the entire process of creating the environment we choose to have our students learn in.

I learned that teachers are much more likely to respond to and support the learning environment as a whole if they are involved and invested in the process of developing it.

I also learned that learning changes, and we must re-evaluate often to keep the learning environment effective for all involved.

STANDARD 3.0

In our Systems II block in the Administrator preparation program at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, we were asked to develop a change plan for our building. This fell into place quite conveniently, as I had begun to work on a plan shortly before Christmas in order to address a bullying/ overall school atmosphere concern that
had developed in our building. The plan, which I entitled “St. Mary Soup for the Soul” was implemented in the months of January and February, and continues to date.

The development of this change plan allowed me to address competency in all of the aspects of Wisconsin Administrator standard 3. The administrator manages by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to pupil learning and staff professional growth.

The change plan initially addresses the advocating school culture component of Standard 3, as this plan required an assessment and development of several types of programming in which the overall school climate was assessed. It was necessary to implement a bullying program to address social issues taking place in the building as well as to develop some positive reinforcement programs to encourage a higher level of motivation in relation to homework.

Once the plan was in place, it was and is necessary to evaluate and address the various aspects of the programming, allowing the faculty and myself to nurture the school climate, melding what we feel works best for us out of the many aspects of these programs.

Finally, we are working to sustain this programming in order to continue to grow and work towards the positive school climate we envision as a staff. These programs put in place address both the overall school culture and the instructional programming, and have required students, parents and staff to participate in assemblies and programs, and buy into and overall atmosphere conducive to pupil learning and requiring staff professional growth.

As an administrator, I learned that it is imperative to keep adjusting, evaluating and revamping the programming in your building to meet the needs of the students, whether it be curricular, social or both. It is also imperative that teachers buy into the programming and that they are willing to participate in professional growth opportunities for the betterment of the building, and it is our job as administrators to help them get to this place.

Teaching is not an easy task in this day and age, and requires many individualized plans, programs and the like. It is important as a teacher that we be able to adjust to these situations and make them work for the greater good of the classroom and/ or school.

Learning is something that even the best students may find themselves struggling with if the climate of a building is allowed to spin out of control. Students must be allowed the best conditions in which to learn while feeling safe and motivated to succeed.

STANDARD 4.0

Each year I must plan and implement a budget for the basic needs of the school. The private school that I work in budgets quite differently than a public school would in that our budget is actually shared with the church. The church supports certain aspects of our yearly operation, and the school is responsible for the remaining items. Anything that is necessary outside of this budget must be obtained through grant monies, donations, or fundraisers.

Planning and implementing the annual budget and managing the school finances allows me to prove competency in certain aspects of Wisconsin Administrator Standard 4. The administrator ensures management of the organization, operations, finances, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Managing a budget requires me to look at all parts of the school, and realistically attempt to make ends meet from year to year, in order to ensure management of the organization, operations, finances and resources. The budget covers all these areas of the building’s operation, as well as the teacher’s materials, student materials, playground upkeep and so on. As a result, this budget invariably addresses safety, efficiency and effectiveness, as we must be able to keep up with the times related to textbook purchasing, keep the building and all of its components up to code, and do all of this efficiently with careful regard to the finances, the economic times and the needs of the students, parents and faculty.

Writing the budget is much more than just a wish list of things I would like to accomplish during the year. It has required me to fully understand state initiatives such as the Illinois State Textbook Loan program, the School Safety Block Grant, and the National School Lunch Program, as well as to be creative and look outside the box to private grants such as the Dubuque Racing Association Grant, the Galena Country Fair Grant and the like.

The first time budgeting for the school year was a lesson in administration in more ways than I would like to admit. It forced me to look realistically at what we could make work and not so much at what I would like to have happen. It is a tough spot to be in when you have to tell teachers they cannot have something because there just isn’t money for it. It was definitely a lesson in prudence, diplomacy and “ego check” all the way around.

I learned that teaching really does have to come from the heart, as the cost of everything in the educational realm increases and the budgets decrease, it becomes a necessity to be creative in our teaching styles in order to reach the students and meet expectations with limited resources.

As a learner, I think it is important to realize that the “real life” experiences we have can be just as beneficial, if not more so, than that expensive science lab or field trip. The important part is how the teacher is able to relate student’s experiences to the things they need to be learning in the classroom. Experience is often free, but always invaluable.

STANDARD 4.0 (continued)

As an administrator, it is important to be able to plan effective and meaningful in-services for school planning and effectiveness. There is limited time in which to convey ideas, develop strategies, team build, and so on. I found this to be the most difficult part of becoming a principal – planning for the time allowed and keeping my ideas succinct and organized.

Planning and implementing the various aspects of faculty in-services allows me to address certain parts of Wisconsin Administrator standard 4, The administrator ensures management of the organization, operations, finances, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Planning an in-service, I have found through experience, is not always an easy task. There are many things to be covered, and such limited time in which to do so. It is necessary to create a unified flow to the topics, while keeping them engaging and relevant to the teacher’s lives. The first in-service I had to plan as a new principal was intimidating and daunting. The planning process, though, allowed me to address several parts of this standard in different ways. I wanted to go with a theme based on Harry
Wong’s “First Days of School.” I was familiar and comfortable with these topics, and felt that I could model this in my school, while enforcing the expectations therein.

The planning of an in-service requires an administrator to take into consideration finances, as they must consider the budget when planning speakers or events.

The overall goal of a good in-service is to create a safe and effective learning environment overall. We need to be able to get teachers on board with our vision. It requires us to look ahead at our available resources in order to carry out our vision.

As an administrator I learned everything about planning a good in-service. I learned to care what they teachers thought, but to also be sure to cover the required material, all while trying to be efficient and mindful of resources, time and finances.

What I think I learned the most about teaching is that though it so often feels like it is dictated by the state and government and parents, and so many outside forces, that it is important to have a vision that is grounded and a support team in your school that you can turn to. As an administrator, it is our responsibility to create that environment for our teachers, and the beginning of the year in-services set the tone for the rest of the year.

Learners deserve to have the best use of resources, time and money. We must allow that as administrator, and the best time to communicate our wishes as such is at in-service.

STANDARD 5.0

Each year as an Advent project, our school and the community are invited to bring in hats, mittens and scarves that we then donate to a local facility that works with underprivileged children and mothers.

This mitten and hat drive addresses Wisconsin Administrator Standard 5. The administrator models collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Each year as I initiate the hat and mitten drive, I communicate with a local community center that works with underprivileged children and children without a place to go after school, and so on. I then collaborate with faculty and staff, families and community members, and we do our best to collect enough mittens, hats and the like to get the needy children through the cold season. As the letter attached to this reflection states, we are helping with the needs of these students, allowing for response to diverse community interests and needs, and since we also advertise in the local paper and at the church as a drop site for this project, we are also addressing the and mobilizing community resources aspect of this standard.

As an administrator, I learned the importance of initiating these community wide initiatives. This activity alone brings people into our school that would not have otherwise stepped foot into it. It brings the teachers and students together on a level other than academics. It allows the students a feeling of accomplishment and pride.

I also learned again that teaching is about more than standing in front of a classroom. This activity allows the teaching of a life skill – compassion. I feel that it is our responsibility as educators to instill these skills as well as math facts and history dates.

Learning is ongoing. It can take place anywhere. It can take place in many forms. This activity allowed the students to learn about children other than themselves, and to address their need in a selfless manner. This was a life lesson, and often these are the lessons learners remember years down the road.
STANDARD 5.0 (continued)

As a school fundraiser, we cooperated with a local eating establishment and hosted a tailgate party for the Green Bay Packers and Chicago Bears football game. We solicited donations through local businesses for raffle prizes, and coordinated with a caterer and the restaurant to get a potluck under way. The students sold tickets, a parent provided a big screen television, and there were contests, 50/50 raffles, costume prizes, and a raffle. A good time was had by all, as the community came together to support our students trip to Washington DC, and a local establishment was able to make a little money on beverages.

This fundraiser addresses competency in Wisconsin Administrator Standard 5, *The administrator models collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.*

This fundraiser was a huge undertaking, but also a very profitable fundraiser. It required *collaborating with families and community members* in order to align a site for the event, workers, donations, food, and so on. The school families worked very hard that day, as did the students. Community members were generous in their donations and support.

*Responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources* was addressed by creating an environment of fun that was also conducive to a school function. It required care to be taken in advertising and such in order to convey the proper atmosphere for the event. It allowed a business that had been suffering due to the recent smoking ban to drum up a little business in a fun way that people would remember, while supporting our student’s ambitions as well. Community resources were mobilized in a number of ways, including advertising of the event location, who donated what, soliciting donations, and on.

As an administrator I learned a lot about the “mines” we must avoid in planning such an event. There were people who objected to the event for various reasons, and as a result, I was forced to do some quick patching of relationships. This is a valuable experience for all administrators, as most of the decisions we make will have support and opposition, and how we deal with it will make or break us as administrators.

From a teacher’s perspective, this was one of those projects that could be taken on as a challenge or a nuisance. I learned that the teacher’s perspective on such a project will sway the student’s outlook on the project, so it is very important that we are careful to convey the correct messages about educational experiences.

This was a project filled with “teachable moments.” The students involved with the project learned to show gratitude in the appropriate ways to the donors, to deal with the public in taking tickets, selling raffles and the like, and the value of money. I learned that these experiences, though maybe not in the curriculum, are invaluable to a student’s educational experience.

STANDARD 6.0

Yearly teacher evaluations are required by the Diocese. Our evaluation tool consists of several aspects of the teaching filed. Though not identical, it does follow closely to the Danielson model of evaluation.

The teacher evaluation process addresses competency within Wisconsin Administrator Standard 6, *The administrator acts with integrity, fairness, and in an*
ethical manner. The evaluation process addresses all aspects of this standard, as it directly indicates my integrity as an administrator. If I do not fill out an evaluation to the best of my ability and the clearest of my professional observation, then not only am I doing myself a disservice, but also the students, faculty, and whole of the school community.

In order to properly and effectively evaluate, I must look at the observation objectively and fairly. When discussing the results of the observation with a teacher, I must be honest, yet tactful. I must make my message clear, even if it is not well liked by the individual being evaluated. I must be able to convey positive as well as areas for improvement. Above all, evaluations are handled with the utmost confidentiality; in an ethical manner.

This can be a daunting process to the new principal. There are many aspects of the evaluation that stem from the actual tool itself.

As an administrator, I learned the importance of setting the precedent for the kind of person that you are. It is important to show that we are ethical, integral and fair in order to be respected and to have our decisions supported. I learned the importance of a good evaluation early on in my career, as I had to go through the non renewal process in the first few months of my principaledge; as administrators, it is our responsibility to make sure that students are being given the prime learning opportunities, and if they are not, to deal with the problems quickly, fairly and ethically.

STANDARD 7.0

In December of 2008 I attended the AWSA legal seminar. This was a seminar that focused on the legal issues facing administrators in Wisconsin, and the most recent information relating to court decisions, just cause and other legal concerns.

Attendance at the ASWA Legal Seminar allowed me to show competency in Wisconsin Administrator Standard 7, The administrator understands, responds to, and interacts with the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context that affects schooling.

Attendance at this legal seminar allowed for an immersion into the legal world, which, understandably, is connected to many of the other aspects of the school environment. It was interesting to learn about the politics behind many legal decisions that take place in schools. It was also somewhat discouraging to hear the statistics related to the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the law and how those kids are often the ones ties up in our legal systems.

The effects of our decisions in schools are carried on for decades after they take place. The ramifications are carried out based on the previous precedent set forth, so it is imperative that we are careful and prudent in our decision making.

The law will be a forever on the forefront for us as administrators, when dealing with children, with faculty, with parents and the like. It is something that is beyond our control, and yet controlling of our daily lives and actions.
As an administrator, I learned a lot about the greater political realm that is associated with the legal world. There are so many loopholes and catches, it is almost impossible to make a completely, unquestionably correct decision at any time, as circumstances always vary.

Teaching is one of those professions that we can never be entirely confident that we are always making the right decision in the right situation. I think it is important to be aware of these legal issues as a teacher as well, in order to properly protect ourselves and minimize legal issues.

This seminar fully supported the concept of lifetime learning. This is an ever changing and evolving field, and we will never know all of the little issues that we will have to deal with. We will have to continue to keep up with the current information in law to stay up to date.

STANDARD 7.0 (continued)

In March of 2009 I attended the RtI in Green Bay, Wisconsin. This was a two day Summit in which we were exposed to the various aspects and goals of the RtI initiative. There were several keynote speakers, breakout sessions and team work time.

Attendance at the AWSA RtI Summit allowed me to address competency in certain aspects of Wisconsin Administrator Standard 7, The administrator understands, responds to, and interacts with the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context that affects schooling.

The RtI Summit was based on a new state initiative, Response to Intervention, designed to create meaningful learning opportunities for all students in the school environment. RtI is an initiative that allows for creativity and vision on the part of the school in developing their plan and how it will be implemented. Every teacher may interpret and implement RtI slightly differently, and it may even vary from student to student.

RtI requires that we, as educators, do just what this standard states. It is imperative that we understand all of the outside factors that affect schooling, and embrace the fact that we are not factories and must treat each child as an individual.

As an administrator, what I learned from this summit was both exciting and frustrating. I was excited by the fact that there are ways out there to get through to every student. The frustrating part is how to motivate teachers to take the extra time to do just this.

As an educator, this just further emphasized the importance of teaching to the student, and not to some preconceived notion of what the curriculum should be.

The obvious point about learning that I took away from this workshop was the fact that all learners are different. We are motivated by different things, coming from different backgrounds, settings, cultural and social contexts. So much factors into how we learn and what we find meaningful.

There are countless factors to address in the ever changing world of education. These are just a handful of the experiences that I have had the honor of taking part in. I feel that they most accurately define me as an educator and clearly demonstrate my competency as a teacher and an administrator.