

THE KEYSTONE TO MY FUTURE

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Abstract

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The candidate's Educational Project paper demonstrates how the Master's of Science in Education with a certification in Educational Administration at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville has aided in developing leadership skills. This paper will focus on the candidate's growth through the practicum hours and the creation of a professional portfolio.

This paper will explain how the curriculum in the Educational Administration program has helped cultivate leadership abilities in the administrative candidate. The educational project will show personal growth of the candidate and will exhibit the actual daily duties of a principal. In addition, practicum hours accumulated over the past several years will validate his growth as a teacher and future principal. The practicum hours put in as athletic director, principal for the day, at board meetings, observing and informally evaluating teachers has provided valuable experience and knowledge that can be used as a future administrator. The combination of practicum hours and professional portfolio will demonstrate the personal growth of the administrative candidate. The artifacts provided in the portfolio connect the standards and individual classes to create an outcome based administrative certification program. During the program, the candidate was required to reflect on teaching and administrative duties; these reflections helped to better clarify the need for self-evaluation and constant growth. The reflections reinforced the importance of holding everyone to high levels of achievement. Through the creation of a portfolio and the accumulation of practicum hours, the candidate realized the importance of not only reflection but also the necessity to constantly grow and improve.

The Master of Science in Education – Educational Administration Certification has developed leadership skills and enhanced the determination of the aspiring principal to pursue a career in school administration. By reading the educational project, you will gain an understanding of the content the University of Wisconsin-Platteville has provided and the direct benefit the practicum hours, professional portfolio and curriculum has had on the candidates teaching and leadership knowledge.

Thank you

The candidate would like to personally thank the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and Lisa Emendorfer for helping build a future administrator. The university provided a well thought out and outcome based curriculum that built the candidates portfolio and provided opportunities to allow the candidate to grow and mature as a leader. Lisa guided the candidate through this process and without her help on this educational project forward progress would be lost. Lisa has been the positive force that was needed for the candidate to continue down the path to graduation. It cannot be understated the help that has been provided to the future administrator and the light that was provided to help guide the candidate to become a well-rounded leader. Words cannot be written to fully express the gratitude. Thank you!

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Chapter I

Introduction

The University of Wisconsin-Platteville's curriculum in the Masters of Science in Education with a certification in Educational Administration has aided this administrative candidate in improving as a teacher and in developing and cultivating leadership abilities. The practicum hours and portfolio will demonstrate the personal growth of the candidate and illustrate the effectiveness of the outcome-based administrative certification program. This paper will list the practicum hours accumulated from the past two years and explain how it created a well-rounded administrator and teacher. Through this paper, the candidate will explain the experiences and demonstrate growth in such things as trust, transparency, focus, emotional intelligence and keeping a positive attitude.

The administrative candidate has had great experiences being an athletic director and acting as a principal for the day. The candidate has also informally evaluated teachers, attended school board meetings, acted as a supervising teacher, attended Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.) meetings, helped in staff mediation and interviewed coaches and teachers. All of these activities helped transform a physical education teacher into a well-rounded administrative leader. By reading the education project, the reader will gain an understanding of the content that the University of Wisconsin-Platteville has provided and the direct connection to becoming a great leader.

Statement of the Problem

- 1) Has the curriculum in the Educational Administration program helped cultivate leadership abilities in the administrative candidate?
- 2) Did the educational project show personal growth of the candidate and exhibit the actual daily duties of a principal?
- 3) Has the practicum hours accumulated over the past several years validated the candidate's growth as a teacher and future principal?

Methods and Procedures

The candidate cultivated leadership abilities and showed personal growth as a teacher and future administrator through the practicum experiences at the University of Wisconsin Platteville. The practicum hours provided the opportunity to experience a variety of leadership duties. The practicum experience created a well-rounded candidate in connection with the Wisconsin Administrative standards. Through this process, the candidate listened to many principals, interviewed instructional leaders, took on new leadership responsibilities, evaluated teachers and took part in many curricular assignments to meet the criteria of the administrative standards. These activities cultivated the confidence, abilities and growth of the candidate by providing valuable leadership experience.

Summary of the Results

The education received at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in the administrative field has been a great learning experience. The opportunities provided to the candidate created the keystone that will be used to become a great future administrator. The candidate has furthered a career as a teacher and potential administrator through the knowledge and experience gained through the practicum hours, portfolio and curriculum. The outcome-based curriculum gave the future administrator many opportunities to mature as a teacher and leader. It gave the candidate experiences where the value of trust, respect, integrity, transparency, communication, leadership and time management was learned.

Chapter II

Athletic Director

As an athletic director, the candidate has gained a grasp of the many things that have to be accomplished in order to be a great leader. Transparency and trust are two important goals that one needs to achieve. The candidate learned quickly that administrators, parents and students all want to know what and when things are occurring and for what reason. Through rewriting the athletic code, organizing and running parent and student meetings, interviewing candidates for coaching positions, setting goals and standards for coaches and performing exit interviews the candidate also realized the importance of organizational skills. This led to a greater understanding of ordering supplies, taking care of the athletic budget, hiring officials, setting up and running pep rallies and dealing with code violations involving students and their parents. These activities reinforce for me the importance of organization, time management and communication. In order for events to run smoothly, the candidate had to make sure that all parties involved felt comfortable and understood the expectations put forth. The future administrator accomplished this by keeping all people informed by using the internet, the school newsletter and phone calls.

The administrative candidate also understood that trust was a valuable asset to have. In System Teaching 7370 Educational Administration Systems I, candidates had the opportunity to read a book called “The Speed of Trust” by Stephen M.R. Covey. In this book, Mr. Covey says that a person cannot assume that everyone knows a person’s reputation and automatically has faith. In a new situation, a person has to build trust by being transparent, hard working, positive, focused and dependable. By being up-front,

honest and sincere with the students, parents and community, the candidate can build a relationship where parents and students may ask questions but fully understand that the candidate is there to do what is best for the children. This could be seen during a pep rally organized by the candidate to celebrate the 2010 state volleyball championship and the Division One signing of one of the volleyball players. The candidate invited the whole community to come celebrate and made sure that not only the students but the whole school district was promoted. The future administrator also thanked the media, parents, community, staff, secretaries and administration for all of their hard work in such a great accomplishment.

As an administrator, it is important to have great communication and leadership skills. Working as the athletic director, the administrative candidate developed these two vital attributes and built a level of trust among the students, parents, teachers, staff members and community that will pay dividends for years to come. The candidate realizes that trust, leadership and transparency are traits that all administrators have to keep working to maintain.

The candidate's experience with the athletic budget has helped prepare for the obstacles faced when tackling a building budget. By being in charge of a budget of \$90,000, the future candidate gained a great experience with budgeting money and taking care of the overall resources of the program. Managing the budget has required the candidate to be conscious of all purchases so that the well-being of all programs is met. Principals need to be able to use the amount budgeted for the building and make the most out of resources to ensure the least amount of interruption in the educational process.

Dealing with personnel as an athletic director has given the candidate an opportunity to learn what it is like to hire, lead and fire. Managing and leading staff is a major responsibility of any administrator; therefore hiring a good staff is critical in a future district and is a key factor in running an effective school district.

The candidate has been able to become a better teacher because of these administrative learning experiences. Time invested learning to be a leader not only shows up in the classroom, but will also help the candidate become a great principal. The candidate has become a better leader in the classroom because there is a greater understanding of setting high but reachable expectations. Now the candidate sees the necessity to make every child expect the most out of himself or herself. As an athletic director, the candidate has increased the ability to delegate. By delegating power to students, the candidate creates leadership abilities in the individual as well as the group of students. For example, the candidate has created units in health class where the students have to research the chapters, create lesson plans, teach and test for comprehension to their peers. The opportunity to practice delegating was created by the University of Wisconsin-Platteville requiring practicum hours of the candidate. Without this guidance, the candidate would not have taken on such a task and not had the opportunity to gain valuable experiences.

Chapter III

Principal for the Day

Serving as principal for the day gave the candidate a great experience to increase maturity, knowledge and to anchor the keystone to a future career. The candidate has been given the opportunity to be the principal for the day on numerous occasions. This provided the opportunity to deal with such things as student and staff conflicts, tardiness, pep rallies, parent concerns, lunch and recess supervision, fire and tornado drills and school lock-down procedures during a potential parent conflict. These opportunities aided in the development of the candidate's portfolio on one hand but more importantly gave the candidate great experiences for a future job.

The experience that was gained initiating a lock down of the facility, making teachers aware of the pending issue, contacting authorities, and organizing the leadership team was a valuable learning event. The candidate had to do all of the aforementioned leadership duties when a non-custodial parent tried to pick up a child from school. In the end the parent did not show up, but the candidate's calm demeanor and quick leadership skills kept the situation and learning environment under control. As a teacher, the candidate saw the importance of great communication from the administration. As a future administrator, it was noticed that communication was critical with the leadership team, the teachers and also the authorities. The importance of being the calming force within the district was an important learning factor that the candidate still looks back and reflects on how everything was handled and how smoothly things went. The importance of having everyone in the district prepared for as many situations as possible is so

valuable. The candidate could tell the trust and confidence the staff had in the administration to make the correct decisions and lead them to a safe outcome.

The future administrator recognized the type of culture implemented by the administration in the building and the importance of creating this same culture in a future district. The candidate gained great experiences by investigating, documenting, and then creating solutions to problems of students and staff. Sitting down with students, having them tell their side of the story, finding the whole truth and coming up with solutions were wonderful practicum experiences that shaped leadership skills. Going through student's lockers with them and finding homework they swear was handed in, talking with parents to get their input on the situation, and talking with teachers to gain a bigger picture are all circumstances that create growth in the abilities of the candidate. The candidate realizes by dealing with these conflicts that no one is always going to make everyone happy.

The future administrator must act with respect, trust, transparency and integrity in making decisions and do what is best for the students every day. The everyday school events the candidate has had the opportunity to be part of, has provided the opportunity to see the situations that every principal deals with that often go unnoticed. Giving students detentions and helping teachers create alternative work for students are all part of a principal's duties. The principal's day can be crammed one day and less hectic the next. All of the events experienced by the candidate as principal for the day have strengthened the future administrator's resolve to be a great leader and future administrator.

Chapter IV

Supervision

It is fascinating what skills can be attained by supervising lunch and recess. The candidate realizes that this is a great environment to learn more about students and interact in a less formal manner than the classroom or office. The conversations the candidate has with students of all ages helps build that bond between administration and students and helps transfer the vision for the district. This learning experience made the candidate understand the importance of being around the students and communicating with them in a variety of different environments. The future administrator knows that principals assume many different roles as leaders of a school district. Dealing with staff and student conflicts helps build the candidate's leadership abilities. Reaching conclusions where there is no right or good answer requires compromise.

Chapter V

Meetings

The candidate has grown in maturity and knowledge by attending school board, I.E.P. and truancy meetings, in which there were many opportunities to participate and provide information. On several occasions, the candidate reported to the board on subjects like athletic code, attendance and sports and had to research and rewrite parts of the athletic code with the help of the superintendent and the school lawyer. After this process, the candidate presented the new code, explained and then offered further detail on why certain parts were changed. As part of the explanation process, codes of other schools were distributed and then explained. This experience confirmed that it is critical to be prepared and have all the facts to make sure that there are as few surprises as possible for the board. Being prepared will help show the board the professionalism and the preparation taken when presenting subjects for discussion and will help build trust.

This candidate also values the experience and knowledge gained by attending these I.E.P. meetings. As a future administrator, much information can be learned about students that may not be available anywhere else. Knowing about every student in the school will help create the best and safest learning environment possible for the school district. For example, the candidate has had many positive meetings for a student with a behavior modification. Knowing the steps in the behavioral plan and developing a close relationship with the student, is why the candidate was one of the first two people contacted anytime this student had a behavior outburst. On one occasion, the candidate helped calm a situation when the authorities had been called. The candidate

accomplished this because of increased knowledge of the student and the many hours spent interacting with the student in and out of the school setting.

The time spent in several truancy meetings gave the candidate very valuable experience dealing with social services and the law that governs the students and district. Few teachers realize the process, paperwork and the cooperation from social services and the court needed to follow through on truancy. Understanding the legal rights of the school and student is important to building principals because it can help foster strong relationships with the district attorney and social services. In a case last year, the district followed through with all the paper work and procedures needed but got upended by the court system stating there was no benefit in prosecuting a student who was going to be eighteen in the next several months.

The candidate realized that sometimes students “slip through the cracks” and this is something that is not acceptable. The candidate must fight to keep all students in the classrooms where productive learning can happen. Resources must be exhausted to keep all students in the school and in the least restrictive environment possible. Resources can include the guidance counselor, teachers and parents and outside services. Attending I.E.P. meetings improved the candidate’s ability to lead and teach. Increased knowledge in instructional strategies was gained in I.E.P. meetings, and a foundation of trust, respect and integrity was built. The meetings also gave opportunities to show students and the community that the principal is very concerned about the education and well- being of the students. An important part of the educational keystone is putting students first and doing what is best for them each day.

Chapter VI

Curricular Experiences

In the curriculum of the student learning module taught by Dave Allen, the candidate was required to informally observe teachers using Madeline Hunter's lesson plan design and Charlotte Danielson's framework design. These two opportunities gave the candidate valuable practicum experiences that will help in future endeavors as a principal. The future candidate studied both methods and understands a building principal must use a good tool to evaluate teachers. The future administrator benefited from the breakdown of domains in Danielson's model and would recommend this type of evaluation tool for a future district.

In looking at the evaluation tools in the current district, the candidate sees that it is an insufficient measuring tool to properly assess teachers. In Danielson's model, the candidate can reflect with the teacher on the growth in planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction and professional growth. The future administrator had a much easier time evaluating and giving feedback to a teacher with this method than when following the district's or Hunter's lesson plan design. The experience and knowledge gained through these experiences will help the candidate develop procedures for evaluating teacher instruction in a future district. Teacher evaluation instruments will have to be approved by the teachers' union, but the candidate believes that an evaluation model following Danielson's example is the most beneficial for the teacher and the students. Danielson's model provides an ongoing evaluation and one that requires time and effort to follow through for optimal success.

Another great tool that the candidate wants to implement and use for evaluations was taught in Module I with Dave Chellevoid and Wally Iselin. Part of the curriculum included bringing in principals from surrounding districts. Kim Kaukl from River Valley provided the candidate with a valuable observation tool to use with future staff. Mr. Kaukl had teachers video record themselves and then self-evaluate. After self-evaluating, Mr. Kaukl would then evaluate the video and then the two would reflect on what was seen on the video. This method is a great professional learning tool and one that would fit well in Danielson's model. Through the time spent informally evaluating teachers, the candidate understands that a great teacher always wants to do better. Evaluating and critiquing provides valuable feedback that great teachers crave to become better. Teachers report that this method of evaluation makes them feel noticed and appreciated. Danielson's model sets up a classroom and school environment where high expectations are required from teachers and this will create a great learning environment for the students. By asking teachers to constantly be aware of the domains in Danielson's model and collect artifacts that demonstrate the parts of the domain, the candidate can help support a teacher that is always self-reflecting and trying to get better.

By looking at Danielson's model, the candidate understood what should be done to ensure the most learning from all students. The four domains are broken down into separate categories. Video-taping and self-evaluating lets the candidate mature as a teacher and become aware of teaching techniques that are currently being used. A teacher is often more self critical than sometimes an administrator and this use of reflection is beneficial to mature and advance in the profession.

Chapter VII

Mentoring

During the past fall semester, the candidate had the opportunity to mentor a student teacher. This opportunity taught the candidate the importance of constant leadership and mentoring of young teachers. The importance of hiring good candidates is supported by the mentoring of young teachers. Many times, these new teachers will be just beginning in their educational careers. The administrator has to make sure the new or prospective teacher get the opportunities necessary to develop into great educators which can be done through constant mentoring from the principal and master teachers. Using the districts' master teachers to mentor new teachers is a great resource. Master teachers can not only demonstrate the proper teaching techniques but also proper class management. The candidate, however, could also use workshops, staff development and books to help supplement these resources.

Through the curriculum at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, the candidate became aware of Rick Smith who presents workshops on classroom management. These seminars would be beneficial for all teachers to attend. New teachers could be encouraged to read Rick's book, "Conscious Classroom Management". This book gives valuable insights on what to expect in the classroom and how to handle problems as they arise. The candidate read the book and benefited from it as a future administrator and as a teacher. For example, the candidate now places pictures of being tardy, on time, prepared, or being disruptive in the 7th grade health classroom. The pictures demonstrate to the students what is expected of them. The teacher has only to point to a picture to remind students of what they need to be doing. The candidate also now posts class rules

where they are visible to all, as a constant reminder to the students. Students are tested on the information and the rules are then reviewed on a regular basis. This process helps create procedures that are a big teaching point in Rick Smith's book.

Chapter VIII

Conclusions

Through the outcome based curriculum taught at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, the candidate has grown professionally as a leader and teacher. The hours gained through the practicum along with the experiences provided through the curriculum has created a well-rounded and prepared leader. The administrative program has provided opportunities to fulfill the obligations of the administrative standards and because of the curriculum the future administrator is ready and confident to lead a school district. The experiences gained through class and the hours put in as athletic director, as student teacher mentor, at meetings, as principal for the day and supervising district functions provided the opportunities needed to ensure that the candidate leaves the University of Wisconsin-Platteville as prepared as possible to be a great leader. In the end, the keystone to the candidate's career was developed at the university where the candidate was able to experience and demonstrate the values of trust, respect, integrity, transparency, communication, leadership and time management.

Chapter IX

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