

THE PORTFOLIO PROCESS AND THE COMPLETION OF PRACTICUM HOURS;

DEVELOPMENT OF AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER

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HOW THE PORTFOLIO PROCESS AND THE COMPLETION OF PRACTICUM HOURS
WILL MAKE THE PROSPECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR A BETTER EDUCATOR

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Abstract

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Portfolios at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville have been required to document the progress made, and strategies learned throughout educational degrees. Portfolios have provided students with a multitude of resources for future teaching endeavors. A master's of science in education in secondary education with a certification in K-12 administration gives the opportunity to document learning for future reference in a career in administration.

This master's level portfolio documents the candidate's personal philosophy of educational administration, unit plans, school policies, sample school board policies, documentation showing leadership and supervision, classroom management plans, a sample classroom syllabus, sample expectations of cooperating teachers, financial strategies for school growth, school strategies for lockdown procedures, and bullying procedures to name a few. These items will aide in personal growth as a future administrator, thus giving the references needed to build off of current school policies or the possibility of adapting such policies to meet the needs of the students in a future district.

The graduate portfolio is a form of documentation for a professional educator; it serves the purpose of showing “what works” in education. This gives documentation detailing best practices that the candidate has learned, showing preparation necessary to take on the new role of a school administrator.

Completion of the 300 required practicum hours gives a graduate student a better outlook towards what life will be like as a school administrator. It will also give more insight into a current school building and how a school runs.

Leading social events with the community, controlling discipline with students, running student individualized education plans, writing grants, leading staff meetings, addressing the school board regarding important school issues, and initiating new school programs are all beneficial opportunities that have been given to the candidate throughout the portfolio and practicum hours’ process.

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Introduction

The University of Wisconsin-Platteville Educational Administration Certification Program provides the opportunity for an educator to be a successful aspiring administrator. Aspiring principals have been given the opportunity to delve into a variety of topics in the administrative field. The opportunity to develop personal views of administration by completing well over 500 practicum hours with current school administrators enables aspiring principals to have the opportunity to really have real administrative experiences. Throughout all of the practicum experiences, the candidate has had the opportunity to develop an understanding of school personnel issues, management styles, school cultures, school board issues and policies, classroom management styles, overall school operations, district office issues, issues with diversity, budgeting and finance, policy use and development, and overall school climate.

The following pages will detail each of the seven Wisconsin Administrator Standards and the ten Wisconsin Teacher Standards. The candidate will also take time to reflect on the specific experiences obtained while completing the required practicum hours.

Methods and Procedures

By using action research through practicum hours the candidate is able to establish an administrative philosophy. The candidate is prepared to transition from a teacher to an administrator.

Statement of the Problem

Aspiring principal candidates struggle to transition from the role of a teacher to the role of an administrator. The practicum hours required throughout the administrative degree seeking process aide the candidate in achieving the proper mindset.

Chapter 1

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1

The administrator has an understanding of and demonstrates competence in the Ten Teachers Standards.

Throughout the development of an educational portfolio, the aspiring administrator has been given the opportunity to document personal philosophies of education, show areas of growth and detail teaching styles that have improved with the development of the administrative candidate. The experiences detailed in standards are just a few examples of the above opportunities. The experiences were obtained while the candidate was teaching, coaching, and completing practicum hours used for program completion.

Chapter 2

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.1

The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for pupils.

The fishing curriculum developed at Kickapoo Schools aligns with the Wisconsin physical education standards. It displays the understanding of the concepts, tools of inquiry, and the structure of physical education. The development of the fishing unit demonstrates meaningful and relevant physical education courses that students can relate to their everyday lives, thus providing the students an opportunity to enrich their lives with alternate activities.

Creating meaningful and relevant lessons for students has been very important in developing a culture for learning in the physical education program. Physical activity does not limit students to “roll out the ball” activities. Outdoor education units such as fishing make physical activity exciting for all students. Future administrators should see that these kinds of activities will provide the opportunity for a more meaningful learning experience for the students in the area of physical exercise.

As a future administrator, the realization of making lessons relevant to the students in all subject areas is very important while also realizing the importance of developing and implementing an effective curriculum for each subject area taught. The expectation will be that future staff be up to date and modern with their teaching styles (examples: Skype, twitter, outdoor education). Future administrators also should keep

current with all of the teaching concepts and offer opportunities for staff to attend professional development to keep current. Providing yearly opportunities for the staff to attend seminars and conferences for these is important.

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.2

The teacher understands how children with broad ranges of ability learn and provides instruction that supports their intellectual, social, and personal development.

A unit on cardiovascular development was introduced to physical education students, shows the understanding that children learn differently, have a broad range of abilities, how a teacher and an administrator can build off of each student's abilities. It supports each and every student's personal and social development throughout the unit by providing opportunities for comparisons and self growth.

In the creation of this lesson, it was required to obtain individual student information in order to specifically develop a cardiovascular plan for each student, thus giving each student the opportunity to grow at individual pace. By doing this there is no comparison to another student's development.

As an administrator, there needs to be an understanding that every student and staff member learns, and grows differently. It will be important as a future administrator to oversee that every teacher finds a way to make all information being taught in classrooms relevant to the students and offer the opportunity for the teacher to connect to the students individually.

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.3

The teacher understands how pupils differ in their approaches to learning and the barriers that impede learning and can adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of pupils, including those with disabilities and exceptionalities.

While collaborating with the special education department, a Special Olympics team was developed. This program meets the need for reaching students of all levels of education. Students with disabilities as well as students in the regular education classroom, all deserve the right to physical education.

The development of Special Olympics has shown the entire school that students of varying levels of cognitive learning can participate in physical activity. A lot has been learned about inclusion and modification of games throughout the development and follow through of this program. One example would be the monetary donations provided by the community for support at the local competition.

As an administrator, one needs to realize the importance of involving all students. For example, the Special Olympics provide an opportunity for students, parents, and the community to be involved in an athletic experience where students with disabilities would otherwise not be able to participate. As an administrator support will be provided through allocation of resources including space, time, and supervision. There is no limit to the way the inclusion of students with disabilities will make an impact on their lives.

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.4

The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage the student's development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

Differing instructional strategies is a key factor in maintaining a positive learning environment in a classroom. In health class, for example, instructional strategies used to teach a unit on the heart included hands on demonstration, lectures, and small group discussion. Each instructional strategy may be effective however it may not be effective for every student. Modifying instructional strategies to meet the needs of students in a classroom is crucial to a safe, effective learning environment.

As an administrator, it is important to provide the staff with the opportunities to learn new and effective teaching strategies that will lead to success in the classroom. Teachers need to be given the opportunity to attend workshops or conferences in order to learn the most up to date effective teaching strategies. Providing this opportunity to teachers is essential to maintaining a positive, successful learning environment. As a building administrator, I will prioritize resources by working with teachers to find a workshop beneficial to their individual teaching and that will benefit the school district.

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 classroom management plan gives the opportunity to design and re-design a plan that best suits a specific classroom in order to provide a safe, enjoyable learning environment for all students. Increasing knowledge on classroom management techniques allows for improvement in the learning environment for all students.

A good solid classroom management plan is necessary to ensure structure in a classroom. In a physical education classroom every student needs to be held at a higher standard in relation to attitude and following directions because of safety concerns. A classroom management plan details the policies and classroom structure and will provide a safe learning environment for all students.

As an administrator, it is necessary to know that some teachers may find that classroom management is one of the biggest struggles in teaching. In order to be a successful administrator, it is necessary to develop a building policy that requires classroom teachers to have detailed management policies on file. An administrator needs to ensure the safety of all of the students and the faculty. A good quality classroom management plan will be required by all teachers in order to provide that safe, structured, positive learning environment for all students. Yearly reflections on the classroom management policies will also be required.

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.6

The teacher uses effective verbal and nonverbal communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

There are many different ways a teacher can demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication. For example, a class syllabus is developed in order to give students and parents a detailed overview of what is expected in a class. This syllabus is given out to all students at the beginning of every semester and shows that a teacher is able to effectively communicate the requirements of a class with all students and parents. Online communication through email or blogs would be an example of effective verbal communication.

Future administrators should require an annual review of the course syllabus. An annual review provides the opportunity for additions or deletions of topics or ideas. Just as an effective teacher can relay to the students exactly what is expected from them at the beginning of the year, a prospective administrator can do the same for the teachers.

As an administrator learning to communicate with all students and staff will give the confidence to successfully lead. Administrators need to communicate with staff and students in order to maintain a positive working environment of respect. As a building administrator it will be important to communicate in many different ways, those may include: weekly email updates regarding school news, walking the hallways on a daily basis, communicating nonverbally a positive point of view.

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.7

The teacher organizes systematic instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, pupils, the community, and curriculum goals.

The development of an effective curriculum is crucial to the success of a classroom and the school building. The entire physical education and health education curriculum has been re-designed at the Kickapoo School District. In order to re-design the curriculum, many different factors needed to be addressed. As part of systematic instruction, vertical and horizontal articulations were considered along with developmental levels of children. In addition the physical education and health standards were included. The physical education and health education curriculum was designed around twenty-two different units taught in physical education yearly and 12 units taught in health education yearly. In-depth knowledge of a variety of subject matter was carefully placed into units throughout the curriculum. There was also an integration of science, math, and reading into the health curriculum.

As an administrator, overseeing the development and follow-through of classroom curriculum is necessary to ensure the best education possible for the students. Curriculum design details to the students and parents exactly what will be taught and in what order. The department of public instruction will also require a current curriculum for each class taught to ensure best practices are followed. The role of a building administrator is to serve as an instructional leader including helping lead, direct, and organize ongoing

curriculum development. Even though most building administrator's background is limited to their subject area, the role of an administrator is to provide guidance, resources, time, and local expertise available to make necessary curricular modifications.

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 pupil.

Determining what grading system will be used has been a very controversial topic over the past few years. Designing a specific rubric for the students in the classroom has become a way to make sure that there are no surprises when it comes to grading. The rubric that is designed in a physical education setting allows for proper grading when it comes to testing such as the presidential physical fitness testing. Using this grading rubric will make the students and the teacher more aware of the expectations before completing the task. Once completed the grade is easily detailed through the rubric. All classroom teachers use different forms of rubrics for grading in order to portray how specific grades are received by students.

As an administrator, supervision of testing in each and every classroom in the district is a very important duty. Test scores are a tool used to reflect the progress of a teacher and the material being taught. Allowing the teachers to build their own individual assessment tools and guidelines will be an important feature in keeping the school

climate positive. The use of both formal and informal testing practices will be an important addition to a school system. Submission of these assessment tools will be required along with lesson plans weekly.

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.9

The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effect of his or her choices and actions on pupils, parents, professionals in the learning community and others and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

Teaching evaluations are given out to the students at the end of each semester in order to share their opinions regarding classroom curriculum, classroom management, and instructional strategies. These evaluations allow the teacher to reflect on units taught, and give an opportunity to reflect on whether the students felt the classroom strategies worked for them. These evaluations provide the teacher with the opportunity to make changes necessary to best meet the needs of their students. Providing students with the opportunity to evaluate the class will give them an active role in the design of the class.

As an administrator, it is essential to realize that reflection is vital to the continuous growth of a teacher. Tools, such as evaluations, can be a great way to help teachers reflect and to see where they need to improve. An administrator's role is to take the information provided through the evaluations and then facilitate opportunities for the staff to grow professionally. Opportunities could include attending workshops on

professional development, providing examples from other successful school districts, workshops held at in-services, and book talks.

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.10

The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support pupil learning and well being and who acts with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.

Teachers in the Kickapoo School District requested a new semester exam schedule because some teachers felt that times were unfairly allocated. A new semester exam schedule has now been developed for the high school to implement into the exam rotation for the spring of 2010 school year at the Kickapoo School District. The semester exam schedule was developed in order to come up with a plan that fit all of the needs of the teachers (both middle school and high school) the kitchen staff, and the students.

As an administrator, it is important to be able to work with staff to implement schedules for multiple events throughout the year. Being fair to all teaching staff proved important. The candidate will need to be able to take staff opinions into consideration when finalizing a schedule that will affect all members of the school. In this circumstance an administrator considered the opinions of staff to develop compromises once the new exam schedule was completed it was necessary to foster relationships with the parents and community members so they were aware of how these changes would affect them.

Chapter 3

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.

It is important to constantly strive to hold students accountable for getting work completed and keeping grades up. One way to do this is with the new plan that the candidate and the administration at the Kickapoo School District put together for an incentive day activity program. Kickapoo's vision is that all students will pass all of their classes and be able to partake in three incentive days following each quarterly completion of classes. Throughout the school year, there will be opportunities provided for the students to earn incentives that may include off campus activities. Examples of activities may include Brewer games, skiing trips, bicycle rides, and fishing expeditions. In order for the student to earn the incentive day they must have no failing grades, no missing assignments, and no discipline infractions throughout the term.

As an administrator, it is necessary to make the vision of every student being successful a reality. One way to help every student succeed is to utilize techniques that work to get the students vested into school work and maintaining good grades. Offering an incentive program, gives students something to work towards that they can be excited about immediately. These incentive programs give the opportunity for the staff to show an obtainable short term goal available for all students each quarter. Providing the opportunity for the staff to attend off campus activities with the students will also give

students and staff the chance to share a common vision of positive relationships. As an administrator it will be my role to encourage the staff and students to continue to implement the incentive program.

Chapter 4

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.

Researching and keeping up to date with new trends in education is a very important component of administration. One of the practicum experiences allowed the opportunity to lead a book talk with all staff at the Kickapoo Schools. The book discussed was 16 Trends: Their Profound Impact on our Future by Gary Marx. This book developed the understanding that in order to properly educate our students, and to make sure they are getting what they need out of education, the staff must stay ahead of change. Staff and administration must embrace change because, as stated in the book “21st Century leaders will be those who stay ahead of the changing curve” (Marx, 2010).

As an administrator, it is necessary to provide opportunities to include teachers in professional growth. Book talks are a great way to involve everyone and implement change in a district. As an administrator it is important to be involved in regular meetings of the book talk to show vested interest by giving time. Encouraging professional growth can also include attending conferences with teachers, becoming trained on new initiatives and sharing new ideas and research with faculty.

Chapter 5

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 4

The administrator ensures management of the organization, operations, finances, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

While at Kickapoo School District, the candidate has maintained a school wide budget throughout the 2011 school year. Effectively managing budgets is essential to the organization, operations, and finances of a district.

Maintaining a budget within a school district is one of the most important components to keeping schools open in the coming years. Developing an understanding of how to secure additional resources such as fundraising, donations, volunteer hours, and becoming more frugal with resources available will be very important. One of the biggest expenses in a district is technology but finding resources for additional computers and software has become increasingly difficult.

As an administrator, it will be important to encourage the staff to participate in shared decision making and prioritizing resources. By including staff in decisions about the organization, operations, finances, and resources, staff can come up with efficient ways to use and conserve resources. This seems a little contradictory due to the fact that schools are supposed to be up to date with new programs and all of the technology and in order to become up to date you need to purchase the new technology. Yet the funding needed to offer these opportunities is no longer going to be available in Wisconsin schools.

Chapter 6

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 5

The administrator models collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Post prom activities are an example of collaborating with family and community members to mobilize community resources. Organizing and overseeing post prom activities for the Kickapoo Schools provided the opportunity to be responsible for planning of activities, fundraising within the community, and student involvement. This event demonstrates that an educational leader can utilize all resources in a community to make an activity successful.

The post prom activity provided students an alternative to illegal activities, such as drinking or drugs following the prom. This activity gave the community a chance to offer their support to the students in a meaningful way. It is very important to collaborate with the community in order to make a school sponsored event successful.

As an administrator it is important to understand the need for community involvement. As a building administrator it will be important to offer parents an opportunity to volunteer with activities, but at the same time stay actively engaged while offering leadership and direction. Even though being involved as a building principal is very time consuming, it is very important because it shows collaborating effectively with the community.

Chapter 7

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 6

The administrator acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Upon entrance to the Kickapoo Schools, there is an informational and motivational bulletin board that is updated monthly with school news and inspirational quotes. These inspirational saying are hung to remind parents, students, and staff to act with integrity. Such a bulletin board is a great lead into an anti bullying program that has been started. Students are taught lessons regarding ways to avoid becoming a bully and ways to recognize and avoid being bullied or cyber bullied. This program makes everyone realize that they are accountable for their own actions and also makes a statement that the school district and administration hope to see parents, and community members act with the same level of integrity that we teach to their students.

As an administrator, it is important to understand that there will be a variety of challenges faced daily. Students could have a bad interaction with a teacher, or student or possibly a parent is angry regarding an action taken in the administrative department. At all times, the best interests of the students should be kept in mind by the administrator. Having philosophies and programs to live by will give the administrator the opportunity to portray these types of views not only for the administrator to live by but for others to view. These values and beliefs should be communicated through newsletters and actions throughout the school.

Chapter 8

Wisconsin Administrator Standard 7

The administrator understands, responds to, and interacts with the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context that affects schooling.

Being an active member of the school policy committee provides the opportunity to oversee the middle school and high school policy manual. School policies and handbook changes are a part of the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of the school. School policies are part of an ongoing struggle for an administrator because they include; discipline, dress code policies, grading policies, athletic code issues, and co-curricular policies. Each of these policies are potential problem areas. These codes and policies are important to maintain a positive school culture.

As an administrator, updating, modernizing and maintaining school policies, is very important. Updating school policies must be done through staff input and yearly review. These policies will keep the school climate safe and provide a positive learning environment for the students, while also covering all of the essential components necessary to ensure that there would be no legal ramifications if a questionable situation arose at any time throughout the school year. For example computer usage policies were changed to allow students more access to the internet. This was carefully considered because it may have potential ramifications if students are on inappropriate websites because as an administrator there are discipline consequences.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Throughout the experiences of obtaining an Educational Administrative Certificate, a candidate gained insight into a future career as an administrator. The practicum hours with a mentor administrator, provided the opportunity to help lead student meetings, run programs, and lead faculty development. Much needed one on one time with a mentor was a definite way to obtain valuable lessons in administration otherwise not available to the average teacher. Practicum hours also provided documentation needed to develop a successful portfolio.

The candidate received knowledge and skills through lectures from professors, professional educators, mentors, and through classmate's experiences. Competencies gained through practicum experiences such as budgeting and curriculum designing will set the stage for a successful future as a Wisconsin school administrator. Having just completed the administrative program, the candidate feels confident in taking over as a new building principal.

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