

# EDUCATION: A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

Approved by Karen Stinson August 5, 2011

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An Educational Project

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Masters of Science

in

Education

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By

Doug Siegert  
2011

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Abstract

# EDUCATION: A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

By: Doug Siegert

Under the Supervision of: Lisa A. Emendorfer, MSE

There are many opportunities a prospective administrator can take advantage of during their practicum time. The educational research project will show evidence of how the experiences of the practicum relate to the administrative standards. The education research project will discuss how the prospective administrator has stayed current on different types of technology, such as smart boards, during this practicum time. The paper will include how the development of relationships with many people in the community helped to support student learning and has created opportunities to involve ways to make student learning more meaningful, by relating the learning to personal events in the students' lives. This will be evident by connecting experiences during the practicum to the administrator standards. The practicum hours have aided in becoming an administrator candidate by creating opportunities to be in leadership roles. This paper will demonstrate how works performed as a teacher relate to the administrative standards and how the practicum establishes a leadership

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## **Introduction**

There are many opportunities along the journey to become an educational leader. On the journey to becoming a better educator, one should not miss the opportunity to be part of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Educational Administration Certification Program. This program develops better educators and future administrators. During the certification process, the practicum creates situations that put the candidate in an administrative role. The practicum hours help candidates become better critical thinkers, decision makers, and leaders.

Working with mentors is an effective way to utilize current leaders to help build strong future leaders. The mentor shares knowledge of how law relates to the school setting. Utilizing the many resources introduced during the program has helped create a greater comfort level with the critical and intensive decision making that is required of administrators. The mentor also supports by sharing knowledge about personnel, board of education, school law, and school climate. Mentors also help provide focus on the importance of collaboration and creating a vision for the school that encompasses all members. Utilizing the many resources introduced during the program has helped create a greater comfort level with the critical and intensive decision making that is required of administrators.

During the Educational Certification program, candidates are able to showcase how practicum hours have helped create potential leaders and administrators. Through the practicum hours, prospective administrators are able to utilize experiences and relate them to how they have

grown through their knowledge of seven administrative standards. This educational project will display how the experiences created by the practicum hours demonstrate the candidate's competence in these seven administrative standards.

## **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1**

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

The practicum experiences created opportunity for the candidate to think and reflect on the ten teaching standards as an administrator rather than a teacher. The candidate has gained knowledge in how to implement strategies that work effectively to improve classroom instruction, and has applied that knowledge to better understand how an administrator evaluates and reflects on good teaching practices. The future administrator has shown growth in improving knowledge of curriculum and teaching practices. For example,

### **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.1**

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

The book presentations that the prospective administrator led are perfect examples to demonstrate how developing a lesson can positively impact learning experiences. The most recent book presentation was Character Matters, by Thomas Lickona. The candidate showed

how knowledge of the curriculum can create a meaningful experience for students and staff. The presentation was part of a character education professional development session for classroom teachers at the candidate's current school. The lesson gave real-life examples of how actions can be used to create a positive environment in schools, by providing positive models for students and staff to follow. The lesson helped create a vision of the climate for the classroom.

## **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.2**

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

Every student is an individual that comes with a different background, knowledge base, and set of experiences that they bring from within and outside of school.. Educators cannot use this as a crutch to explain why students do not excel in classrooms. An effective educator will accept the challenge and create the best lesson to reach all the learners in the classroom effectively. Each learning style has to be taken into consideration while preparing lessons and delivering the plan to the learners.

There were many experiences that the candidate experienced that demonstrated the importance of accommodating different learners. Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings exemplified this standard. Each educational leader at the meeting has the student's best interest in mind, while constructing a plan that will create opportunities for the student to succeed. These educational leaders include classroom teachers, special education teachers, and the principal. The candidate realizes that the role of an administrator must be to assist in the development of goals that will provide the student an opportunity to find success. It is not a meeting to see

whose ideas are best or to create a “one size fits all” plan for students because it is easier. This process is not, and should not be easy if the student’s needs are a priority.

### **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.3**

**The teacher understands how pupils differ in their approach 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.**

The needs of students today seem to be never-ending. Some students may come to school with issues administrators, teachers, and staff may never know about, or the needs may be evident as soon as they walk through the classroom door. Prospective administrators will encounter many experiences for which there are no immediate resources on hand. The candidate chose to examine how a gifted-and-talented student was provided additional resources in mathematics when the differentiated instructional materials were not available at school. There are many modifications given to students every day in mathematics, which include: creating problems based on abilities, translation, or simply giving extra time to complete work. These modifications are for students who are struggling to complete the regular mathematics assignments. There were no options available for the student who had exceptional skills in mathematics other than moving the student to a higher level mathematics program in a different grade level. The candidate showed evidence of understanding this standard by taking advantage of a district resource called the JEDI program. This program is a virtual classroom for students. With the Jedi program, the student was able to move ahead at a challenging pace using technology.

## **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.4**

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

Developing critical thinking skills is a hard concept for students to develop. These skills may not be developed unless the teacher is asking critical thinking type questions. The candidate chose to show evidence of this standard, by using the scientific method to demonstrate student understanding of an experiment. Teaching students the scientific method is very simple. It is only a six step process. Putting those steps into practice, on the other hand, can be quite difficult. Developing a controlled experiment, then changing variables and creating a hypothesis, is a process of thinking that needs to be structured and modeled many times, in order for understanding to take place. Another difficult skill to develop is determining a conclusion to the experiment if the hypothesis was incorrect. Many students would change observations to fit their hypothesis, instead of changing their conclusion to meet their observations. The scientific method creates an opportunity for students to work in groups, on critical thinking skills and problem solving skills, through a structured, step-by-step process.

The prospective administrator encourages the development of a structured classroom where lessons are created to give learners the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills. The scientific method used with all experiments links critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and how to work with partners. This was not a process that the candidate previously knew. It became apparent through the activity that a great deal of planning and collaboration with the sixth grade science teacher on how to set up experiments, groups, and observations was needed

for the science lab experiments to operate smoothly. Administrators are finding it more difficult to create time for this type of intense lab-based teaching, but it is a method that must be utilized for quality teaching to continue.

### **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.**

Students are each individuals in the classroom, with unique talents and areas of interest that need to be encouraged to foster motivation and positive behavior. The candidate demonstrated mastery of this standard through the biographies developed during the month of February, which is Black History Month. Students were instructed to choose an African-American figure to read and then create a biography. The students were given choices during this reading and writing unit; if students enjoyed sports, they might have chosen a sports figure. During the final project, students were given another choice of how they wanted to share their presentations. Some options were PowerPoint, posters, written reports, or oral reports. This activity created an opportunity for each student to showcase their academic talents and to demonstrate their engagement in learning.

This unit of study showcases how the administrator actively engaged the students and promoted self-motivation. The candidate helped motivated by letting students make choices, take ownership for their decisions and plan the project around their presentations on African-American figures. As a teacher and coach, the candidate is continuously motivating individuals

to reach their potential. Creating positive experiences and opportunities in the classroom and in sports will help develop leaders on the playing field and in the school.

### **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.6**

**The teacher uses effective verbal and nonverbal communication techniques as well as instructional media and technology to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.**

Being part of the Educational Administration Certification Program puts prospective administrators in a position to gain knowledge of effective communication techniques including the use of technology. The candidate has used a variety of different kinds of technology on a daily basis in the classroom including smartboards. Smartboards are part of almost every lesson and has given students the chance to engage in active learning in the lesson. The candidate has also utilized common planning times to collaborate with other educators, in order to develop dynamic lessons utilizing technology to increase student achievement.

The view of technology use in school has come from a different perspective when viewed as an administrative candidate. New technology, and smart phones use among students in a school setting is creating new issues with changing laws and rules related to technology in schools. Administrators and school boards must stay ahead of issues related to technology, so these resources can be used to enhance learning, not hinder it. Language and policies throughout the district must be consistent, to better enhance learning as it relates to constantly expanding technology. Administrators must then clearly communicate the policies to teachers, staff, and students.

## **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 1.7**

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

Educators are at the center of all planning that goes into the delivery of curriculum. Educators must be able to display and convey their knowledge of subject matter to the students that are in class. An administrator must understand that teachers cannot be the experts in all the subjects that are taught. The candidate showed understanding of this standard by creating the opportunity to have a community member with knowledge of the civil war speak to the class. Bringing in this speaker showed how diverse resources could be utilized to develop better lessons for students. Even though the teacher could have been very effective in this subject area, being open-minded provided the opportunity to have a community member share knowledge with the class. The community member developed an hour long lesson, with personal pictures from trips to historical sites, and provided it at no cost to the district. Finding these diverse educational opportunities, without expending the financial resources of the district, provided enriching experiences for the students in the classroom. This kind of resourcefulness will be a necessity with limited school budgets.

## **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.**

Assessments have become a strong driver of instruction in schools. Assessments can be used to help teachers develop lessons to assist struggling students in attaining unit goals. An informal assessment can be as simple as a checklist to evaluate whether or not students understand the goals that should be achieved by the end of the unit. Teachers can then record, monitor, and reteach according to individual student needs. This is a very informal assessment that highlights the skills students need to be successful on the unit test.

Administrators must understand and use evaluation of the progress of students and assessment of the effectiveness of teachers to monitor and improve the education of the students in the building. As a prospective administrator, the candidate served as a mentor to a first year teacher, for a period of one school year. Duties expected of a mentor include answering day to day questions a first year teacher may have, as well as helping develop a classroom management plan. Other responsibilities encompass helping the new teacher strengthen areas of lessons where there is evidence of weakness, and enhancing strengths. Most of the conversations between the candidate and the first year teacher were positive, but some were not easy because these conversations were involved, constructive criticism. These practicum experiences of mentoring a new teacher provided the candidate an opportunity to build leadership skills in evaluation that are essential to an administrative role.

### **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 who actively seek out opportunities to grow professionally.**

In order to become a better educator and professional, the candidate saw that there was a need to become a stronger leader. The candidate was continually reflecting s on teaching, interactions, and ways to improve as a teacher and a coach. The candidate currently has many roles in school, which include being part of the emergency response team, report card revision team, head varsity track and field coach, and freshmen football coach. In all of these roles, there must be collaboration to help find ways to improve. Mistakes happen, but there must be respectful follow-up discussion to avoid future problems or dangerous situations, and there must be growth as a professional. The candidate must reflect and continually plan on how to create an environment that puts allows students, staff, and parents to be proud of what is going on in the district. After a personal reflection, the candidate selected the Education Administration program to better understand how schools are run and why decisions are made.

As an administrative candidate, a different, and broader point of view was needed. The administrative candidate also needed to reflect differently to show professional growth.

### **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.**

The candidate developed a freshmen football study group which put the candidate into a leadership role at the high school. Even though freshmen football eligibility is not directly affected by grades, there is a need for student athletes to create good study habits. Almost every Thursday, for the last two seasons, there has been the opportunity for athletes to come to

freshmen study group from 6:30 to 7:30 in the morning. It was great to get support from administration to supervise the high school students during this time. Parents showed great support for the program by driving their sons to school early, and some parents even cooked breakfast for the group. The freshmen football study group is a great way to help student athletes adjust to high school and be successful academically and athletically. If student-athletes are not keeping up with their grade in school, a meeting is called with the parents, students, coaches, and administrators. Action plans are developed. The goal of the meeting is to set up a plan to maintain grades that will keep them eligible and successful in the classroom.

## **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.**

The candidate chose the implementation of new math common assessment to demonstrate how a vision of learning could be developed, articulated, implemented, and supported in a school community. As a district, teachers were not at all using common assessments, strategies, or language for mathematics. Being part of the team to develop common assessments helped create a vision for the district, of what direction the curriculum needed to go. The team understood the importance of creating commonalities in the district. In order to collaborate more effectively, the curriculum must have vertical articulation throughout the grade levels. Creating the common assessments helped guide teaching and how the students would learn. This is what is best for kids.

The candidate led the conversations of common assessments, talking with the Curriculum and Instruction Director to develop and present the new assessments. In order to get vertical articulation conversations between teachers about what skills students needed mastered by the end of a particular year, what is introduced during lessons, and where students seemed to be struggling. Teamwork was needed to make this all happen. Each grade level met to discuss these issues. The initial reaction from the majority of teachers was negative; the main concern being time. The prospective administrator had to keep reiterating that it was best for kids and the assessments would create better communication with parents. Parents were very excited about the new assessments because they could see the individual unit in which children excelled or struggled. This experience as part of completing practicum hours helped increase student achievement in mathematics and create a vision of where the district is going with curriculum. This experience put the candidate into some heated discussions with peers, but it was good to know that the administrative team was supportive.

### **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 elementary building has a population of over 60% of students on free or reduced lunches and many students who do not get positive reinforcement at home. The teachers and administrators chose to investigate implementing a program to reinforce students in school. The prospective administrator chose to lead the building level meeting about character education.

The meeting was about how to model and instill good character in students at school. The portion of the meeting the candidate led was ten minutes long and gave directions on how to create character among students. Many of the ideas shared were already being done by effective teachers, but it was a good review. Teachers often need quick reminders about students and how we can model behaviors for them. The presentation helped remind teachers to offer students choices and model good character themselves. We are often the only positive influence they see during their day. The character education initiative was one way to help the teacher create a safe, positive environment.

As a prospective administrator, the candidate has observed the current building administrator implement fair consequences for students who make bad choices. Students are given choices, so that they own the mistake and consequence. During the practicum, the candidate has utilized the program, Love and Logic in classrooms and observed improved classroom management that makes a safe environment for all students. During the practicum, the candidate also has been put into the role of helping students create their own individualized discipline plans so students take ownership for their own behavior and become part of the solution.

### **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 4**

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

After school club is an intervention to help students who are struggling in school. It helps students develop organization skills, form good study habits, and it provides time for

physical activity for students. A child can be referred to the after school club if they are struggling with any habits that inhibit their success at school. These students are not identified as special education, but could use extra support to succeed in completing everyday school work. The candidate chose the after school club to demonstrate development of additional skills in the management side of a school function.

As an administrative candidate meetings were held with after school staff to develop plans to encourage students and develop skills to assist in student's success. The administrator worked with the administrative candidate to hire after school staff, locate and distribute available grant money, and identifying students who could use the after school club to become more successful. The candidate communicated with after school staff and parents about how the program is leading to greater achievement for the students.

### **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 5**

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

The candidate chose to use the updating of the crisis response plan to show the effective use of collaboration. The plan includes where to go in case of a tornado, fire, and lockdown. Each of these crisis response plans are practiced throughout the year to ensure that everybody knows what to do in the case of an emergency. The candidate worked with administration, school nurse, and local law enforcement to update the plan and to insure that each of the components met current building layouts and staffing plans. As a result of the meeting with the crisis response team, a special group was created for medical emergencies. Teachers are asked

by administrators to be on this team. In addition, the update included a new requirement for the plans to be visible for substitutes in the building. Team members also decided that additional professional development was needed for all staff on the updated plan. The teachers must be able to lead and create a calm, safe atmosphere during emergencies.

The candidate utilized previous practice of a code situation during a real life scenario that occurred while coaching. The candidate had a student athlete fall in a wet school hallway during practice. The student's head hit the ground and he was knocked unconscious for a moment. Calmly asking another student to go to the office for support was the first step in the plan of action. Having practiced the plan, helped create the safe environment needed to ensure the student would not be injured more severely. Another step in the plan was to have emergency contact information for each student on hand in case such a scenario arises. Parents were called and the student was taken to the hospital. Because a plan was in place and practiced by administration, the code team was able to effectively act in this situation.

## **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 6**

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

Athletics are often an area where integrity and fairness are debated in relation to playing time, practices, following the code of conduct, and grades. The candidate shows understanding of standard six by following the school athletic code of conduct while coaching. Communicating the school athletic code to all athletes and parents, during a mandatory meeting and having issues and questions addressed at the beginning of the season, makes it easier to deal with issues as they arise during the season. Parents that attend, sign an agreement, while parents who do not

attend cannot have their son or daughter participate in that sport until they have watched a videotaped version of the presentation. All parents know what the expectations are for their student athlete.

As a prospective administrator, the candidate has been involved in dealing with the consequences of student athletes violating the code of conduct. This is not a very common occurrence because school athletic code issues are discussed and addressed before the season starts. The candidate also has a preseason parent meeting for track and field to discuss the track and field team vision and expectations. Parents need to know what character traits are instilled in their children. Leading in this meeting and following the code of conduct demonstrate the candidate's leadership skills and how acting in an ethical manner can help a team achieve their goals whether on an athletic field or in a school building.

### **Wisconsin Administrator Standard 7**

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

During the summer of 2010, the candidate had the opportunity to show competency of standard seven by writing a paper about power and politics in the school. Politics play a very important role in the position of administrator. With becoming an administrator also comes the political powers associated with the profession. The decisions that are made in such a powerful, political position must be made with students in mind. If it is not going to benefit the students, then is it something the school should be doing? As an administrator, there will be tough

decisions that will be made and everybody is not going to agree, but every educator needs to do what is best for the students.

The candidate was involved in many situations that involved politics during the practicum and was asked by the administrator for input on some major decision making that would affect the staff. During the decision making process, the candidate took into consideration the many people the decisions would affect and the anticipated reactions of staff and parents. The candidate understands that decisions can affect not only staff and students, but a whole community. For example, being asked about what grade level teachers should be placed or interviewing new faculty and staff are very important because new configurations of staff and classrooms can greatly affect a school climate. Knowing what staff works best together and who would fit in with the current staff are very important.

## **Summary of Results**

The practicum hours are an important part of the Educational Administrative Certification Program in creating an educational leader. The experiences are a journey that helps build confidence and leadership. The journey is not only about becoming a prospective administrator, but continuing to improve as a teacher. Practicum hours help develop skills in collaboration and communication by putting the prospective administrator in situations that require input from others to understand what is best for students and the school. Practical experience also has improved teaching, leadership, and confidence. The practicum put the candidate in situations to succeed through talking with a mentor, professor, and colleagues and

helped complete the program. It has given opportunities that would not have been available without taking on such a responsibility. This has truly been a journey that continues today.

After completing the entire program, the candidate fully understands the operations of a school, the politics of a school system, and how to lead and make tough decisions. Every aspect of the program has made a difference in how to communicate, assess and understand great teaching. Over the last two years, the candidate has mastered the ten Wisconsin Teaching Standards and the Wisconsin Administrative Standards. The program was a great step forward on the journey of education. Building the confidence to lead peers, students and community will help the candidate become an effective school administrator and leader.