**Electronic Anthology**

EDAD 633

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**Lets Get Acquainted**

Hello Fellow Classmates,

                  My name is Jason Harmon.  I am originally from southwest Wyoming, and attended BYU for degrees in k-12 art education and Illustration.  Right now I am getting my masters in educational administration like many you.  I’ve completed 21 credit hours, and after this class will be 2/3rds of the way done.  I have enjoyed the journey, and learned a lot along the way.  Currently I am a 2nd – 12th grade art teacher in Guernsey, WY.  I love my job, and also serve on our schools Common Core team, curriculum team.  I oversee the school yearbook and art club, and I am the assistant high school boys basketball coach this year.

            I have been married 6 ½ years and have a 5-year-old daughter that just started kindergarten, a 2-year-old son, and a daughter coming in a few weeks.  I love spending time with my family.  When I have free time I love to read, paint, garden, and learn new things.  We bought an old home in Guernsey and it seems like I never lack for home improvement projects (but usually they are enjoyable).

            Anyway, I am excited to take this course so I can get a better practical grasp on what it means to be an excellent administrator.  I am excited about the case studies and learning what I should and would do in certain situations to lead an effective school.  At this time I want to have the opportunity to be a school administrator, but I enjoy having summers off as a teacher, so I feel like I am still trying to decide what I want to do and be when I grow up!  I love challenges and education though, and think that part of an administrators role would be exciting, and an area where I could make a difference.

            As I have read the articles by Sergiovanni I continually find myself agreeing full heartedly with what he says.  If makes sense that a school system and school community needs to be treated more as a family.  It makes sense that leaders need to lead by helping everyone buy into the visions, goals, and directions of the school, and allowing everyone to take part in making the school better.  In Guernsey our administrators have done a great job of making sure that every teacher is given a role on a committee where they can use their talents, and make a difference in planning how to change our school and make it more effective.  As a newer teacher it has helped me buy in to what they/we are doing, because it helps me feel important, and gives me a voice in the directions we take.  Obviously administrators don’t know everything, and I truly believe that the best ones realize this and really listen to others.  It also makes sense to me that a principle needs to be involved in the school greeting students, getting to know teachers, and letting everyone know they care.  Lastly, I really believe in the principal’s role as coach and cheerleader.  Principals must lead in setting goals for instructional improvement and give specific praise as often as possible to let teachers and students know where they are doing well.  This facilitates an effective work environment, and promotes success.

**Unit 1 Forum**

  For me education is an exciting realm.  As a student in high school and college I was overwhelmed with excitement knowing that I could take so many exciting courses and learn so many new things.  I remember looking at the course offerings in high school and wishing I had time to take every class offered.  I excelled in choir and art, but wished I had time to take cooking, sewing, woodshop, welding, and many other classes.  I love to learn, and get excited about education.  When I was in college I had a hard time not taking 18 credit hours each semester and ended up with over 213 credit hours before graduating.  This love for education led me to become a teacher.  My first year teaching I was exposed heavily to the changes occurring in education.  I feel like this is an exciting and challenging time to be a leader in elementary and secondary education.  Although I have much to learn, I look forward to leading and guiding schools and helping our precious children prepare for a bright future.

            Alvy and Robbins  (1998) say that when one enters the principalship there are several factors and phenomena already in place that will affect ones performance.  They are referring to how each persons background and education affect the type of administrator one will be.  Growing up I had the experience of being teased and picked on all through middle school.  It helps me understand what some kids go through at school and what they might be feeling.  Students need administrators that understand them and help them to succeed in the face of challenges.  I grew up in a large but loving family with limited resources.  Neither of my parents finished college.  This helped me appreciate my education, and I knew that if I wanted to go to college I would need scholarships.  It is possible that for this reason I was a very good student, a hard worker, and dedicated in my schoolwork and extracurricular activities.

            More recently I have experienced administration on a more personal basis.  As I have interviewed superintendents and principles and read about being an administrator I have reflected much upon my motivations and what scares me.  I want to lead to make a difference and help schools succeed by helping children learn effectively.  At first I know I was motivated by an increase in pay, but now I know that the choice to be an administrator must come from my heart.  The difference in pay barely makes up for the extra time a principal must put into his or her job.  Now one of my big concerns is making sure that my future jobs as an administrator don’t put a damper on my family life.  My family is so important to me, so I will need to plan wisely, and make sure I make it home to wife and kids each night.  My goals must be specific and allow for success in work and other areas of my life.

 Alvy, H. B., & Robbins, P. (1998). If I Only Knew...Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

**Unit 2 Forum**

  A culture of learning is key to a school.  Why do we even have schools anyway?  “Principles who make a habit of visiting classrooms, not just for supervising but also to support the classroom experience, send a strong message that they are interested in teaching and learning and that the classroom- not the principles office – is the center of the school”, (Alvy & Robbings, pg. 38).  In other words, it is vitally important that administrators make life-long learning a focus in their school, and one important strategy is to support teachers in their classrooms, and get involved with the education of the students.  One way this has been modeled to me is by a principal who enters classrooms and engages students in their learning by asking them about what they are doing and what they are learning.  Principles engage teachers in this by making them accountable to provide lesson plans and through the teacher evaluation process such as expecting teachers to have lofty goals.

          Secondly, a culture of life long learning and problem solving is enhanced by schools and administrators that value professional development.  Simple things such as out visits where a teacher observes and learns from other teachers in their subject area and attending conferences and summer workshops allow teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills.  It gives them the ability to experiment with new and exciting things in the classroom.  I believe that a stagnant teacher is a sad teacher.  There is always more to learn, and a principle must show passion for trying new things, and model what they learn at their conferences.  A school should make it easy for teachers to get time off for professional development, and have funds available to help pay for teacher training.

         In my opinion schools should place more pride and value on teacher development, and could in a small way function like a university in asking teachers to spend time each week developing themselves professionally.  University professors are usually required to publish articles, artwork, or other scholarly work that relates to their field.  Why not at least recognize teachers who go out of their way to use their talents outside of the classroom, and honor them in some way.  I know that teachers who are excited about learning are exciting.  I loved my art professors in college who were producing professional work while teaching.  We need schools that promote life long learning among all students and staff.

 Alvy, H.B., & Robbins, P.  (1998). If I Only Knew…Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press/Sage.

**Unit 3 Forum**

  “The leader who is a successful communicator takes a giant step toward success” (Alvy & Robbins, pg. 84-85).  In order to solve the problems occurring in case study # 8 communication will be key.  To start off, it is good that the school already has documented evidence of the improvements they need to see in the teacher.  She was willing to visit other teachers and work with the mentor teacher.  Also, She is aware of some of the criticism, and the desire that the principle has for her to improve her teaching practice.  What needs to happen is more transparency on what is occurring, so all parties involved understand.

         Ideally, Mrs. Elliot will improve, be less resistant to change, and become an even better teacher.  On the flip side, she will loose her job.  Alby and Robbing (pg. 87) talk about how important it is for all teacher to feel that the principal treats them with respect, and honors their role.  I would set up an appointment with Mrs. Elliot, and take time to communicate how grateful we are for all she does and all she has done throughout her years of service.  I would let her know that she is a valuable part of our school.  We would clearly discuss what is happening with 44 percent of the incoming third graders requesting the other teacher, and ask her why she thinks this is occurring?  Then I would discuss with her how education is changing, and that we need her to implement what she has been learning or we will be forced to find someone else.  I would give her one more year to prove that she will improve.  We would set specific goals, and have her study books such as those written by Marzano on improving instruction.  Let her know that feedback will be received from students, parents, her mentor teacher, and from periodic visits you will make to her classroom.  Lastly, I would assure her that you will be there to support her, and to help answer her concerns and questions, but that you will need to see improvement.

          I would then set up a meeting with the two third grade teachers, and talk about the feasibility of having each of them teach some of the content areas, sharing students, and working more collaboratively the upcoming year.  I would ask them which subjects are their favorites, and talk about what it could look like.  We would also discuss how great of an opportunity it would be for each of them to learn from each other so they continue to improve their teaching practice.

  With the parents, I would communicate about our plan to have their students be taught by both teachers in a program that we are piloting.  I would let them know that both teachers are excited to work together, and make their children’s educational experience a success.  If the shared teacher idea isn’t feasible, I would let the parents know that we are drawing names to see who gets the teacher of their choice.  I would also reassure them that Mrs. Elliot will be doing all she can to become a better teacher, and ask let them know that she is open to feedback during the process, so she can understand where she can improve.

         It would be my hope that this communication would avoid any hurt feelings, and help all parties to understand that they are important to the school and its administrators.  It will give Mrs. Elliot specific understanding of what we are looking for, and where she needs to improve, and knowledge that her job is possibly on the line.

 Alvy, H.B. & Robbins, P. (1998). If Only I Knew Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship. Corwin Press/Sage, Thousand Oaks,CA.

**Unit 4: Forum**

Management Issues

            There are several things that will be challenging as I begin my time as an administrator.  First it will be challenging to successfully manage my time.  Often I find myself focusing on things that are important, but not always the most important and critical.  I will need to not only create to do lists, but each day and week I must prioritize my time, and focus on critical things.  “Gaining control of time is a challenge” (Alvy & Robbins, pg. 101).  According to our text it is important to block out time on my schedule to make sure I get out amongst the students (pg. 101).  It will also be important to realize that things will come up, and my schedule must be flexible.  As I get the most important things done first the less important things will fall into place and get done as time allows.

            Another area I foresee as being a challenge is seeing the school year as a linear experience, and planning for major periods through the year.  It is easy for me to see the year as one continuous whole, but Alvy and Robbins describe the importance of breaking the year into small seasons of time, and taking time to reflect on how each season goes, so improvements can be made for the upcoming year (pg. 102).  In order to improve in this area I plan on taking an elective class for my masters degree in organizational leadership.  I will need to take time often to reflect on how the school year is going.  I will also need to make sure a master calendar is created, posted where I can see it, and make if available to my staff.

            The last management issue the book brought up that sounded challenging is getting students and parents involved in facility maintenance.  On the one hand I can see how it will help students, parents, and community members to take pride in the school.  The challenge for me seems like it would be enlisting this help.  In order to make this less of a burden I would ask the parent groups, and vice principal to oversee efforts to get the parents and the community involved in helping maintain and beautify our school.  I would give suggestions and ideas, and have them work with the head maintenance and grounds personnel to plan several days of service throughout each school year.  We would also form a committee of parents who would solicit local businesses for donations such as paint, flowers, or other things to help beautify our school.   All these ideas would take some of the burden off of me, but allow us to excel in this important management issue.

Alvy, H.B., & Robbins, P.  (1998). If I Only Knew…Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press/Sage

**Unit 6 Forum**

 As you reflect on the some of the tenets for being a lifelong learner, which do you feel is most important and why? Which ones do you already do and which ones do you feel that you need to develop further and how will you strive to do this?

  “ The significance of becoming successfully acculturated through a desire to observe and learn each day cannot be overemphasized” (Alvy & Robbins, 1998, pg. 73).  Although I totally agree with this statement, I feel the most important attribute of a lifelong learner is to broaden ones horizons through networking and learning from other professionals.  As one continually does this, their daily observations and reflections will be soundly based.  Administrators need to remember that many problems have already been faced and many problems have already been solved.  We must look to the experienced professionals in our field, and make a habit of networking with those we trust who can offer us advice, and give us suggestions on how to more effectively manage our schools.   Also, as humans we are very prone to get too caught up in our own issues, concerns, and problems, and we forget to take a step back and look at the whole picture.  I believe that networking and learning from other professionals allows us to take a step, and more clearly focus on the problems at hand.

            One of my strengths with being a life long learner is that I love to learn and enjoy new situations.  I love understanding new cultures, and feel it will be easy for me to be open about understanding how things have been done in a school in order to understand what will need to change.  I feel like these qualities will make the socialization process and the transition stage into the principalship a lot easier for me than for most people.  Also, asking questions of how I can improve is something that comes easily for me.  I know there is so much to learn, and that often ones mistakes or shortcoming are so much easier for others to see.  “Leading chief executive officers are great askers of questions” (Alvy & Robbins, pg. 75).  The thing I will need to watch out for will be making sure I am still asking questions, and trying to improve 10 years into my job.  One must avoid complacency, and be careful about believing that all is well.  There will always be plenty to do, plenty to learn, and changes to be made.

            One of my weaknesses is being patient through the change process, and being open to how change effects others.  I need to seek to understand my staff, and their concerns as change efforts begin in my school.  Those concerns will need to be addressed, and overcome.  Secondly, I will need to create realistic timelines and goals, so I don’t get discouraged if drastic changes don’t occur quickly enough.  Major and lasting change usually takes 3 to 5 years (Alvy & Robbins, pg. 77).  I am the kind of person that likes to stick to the task until it is complete, but I must remember, that often small steps, and being consistent is what wins the race.

 Alvy, H.B., & Robbins, P.  (1998). If I Only Knew…Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press/Sage.

**Unit 7 Forum**

Abilene Paradox

  The Abilene Paradox is an interesting symptom that can easily plague an organization, school, family, or group.  From the story, the main communication failure was that nobody saw willing to step up and say they actually didn’t want to go, because they thought everyone else actually wanted to go to Abilene.  The key to dealing with the paradox is controlling agreement (Wilner, 1997).  As an administrator it will be super important to encourage teachers and school personnel to be upfront and honest about their opinions on maters that will effect the school.  There are a lot of decisions that are made by school boards, administrators, and groups or committees within a school.  Every participant in the group must feel safe to share their true viewpoints and feelings about issues so good decisions are made.  This will help the organization to more directly meet their goals and avoid frustration, anger, and a loss of time and money on pursuits that them away from their true vision and goals.

            There are several things that administrators can do to help avoid falling into the paradox.  It is so important that administrators show great respect and consideration to the adults they work with on a daily basis.  One way to do this is to respect teacher’s time with their family, and show support during times of crisis (Alby & Robbins, pg. 171).  My wife has had a baby twice in the last two and a half years, and we have really felt a lot of support from the administration and our school.  They encourage me to take time off, and when other emergencies have come up they always say, go and take care of your family, we will cover things for you.  It is also important to understand that teachers have teaching on their mind.  An administrator must be careful about expectations they have for teachers during non-contract time.  Too many extra demands would be un-wise, and show a lack of respect for what a teacher does.  As teachers know that administrators care they will feel like they can be open when they don’t agree on an issue that is going on in the school.

            I really believe in the importance of moral leadership.  Although I can’t remember ever learning about it before this in a textbook, I have always believed that an organization, people, family, or nation, will never rise higher than their leader.  What I mean by this is that a leaders example of honesty, integrity, and fairness are so important, and will rub off on everyone else in the organization.  Many civilizations and kingdoms have fallen due to morally corrupt leaders and kings.  I liked the idea of treating student’s parents the way one hopes to be treated by the administrators of ones own child’s principal.  Lastly, I really liked this quote, “It is the moral responsibility of all principals to do their part in helping each child in their schools reach his or her potential” (Alvy & Robbings, 179).  A moral principal will be able to manage agreement, and guide a school in the right direction.

 Alvy, H. B., & Robbins, P. (1998). If I Only Knew…Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press/Sage.

Wilner, F. N. (1997). A trip to Abilene? Just say no. Railway Age, 19892.

**Unit 8 Forum**

Honoring Veteran Faculty

  As Alvy and Robbins describe (1998, p. 93), “it is the seasoned veterans…who can provide the principal with important information to succeed during that first year.”  There are several things that a new principal should do to honor and validate the veterans so they will be open to accepting positive change within the school.  The strategies that I would apply at my school are first building strong professional relationships with them, then determining who really cares about students, teaching and learning, and lastly asking the good veteran teachers to become mentors to the new and at-risk teachers.

            Early, and hopefully before school starts, a new principal should meet with veteran teachers and staff so they can learn how things are done in their school.  As they meet with the veterans they will get the message that the newcomer respects them and values their opinions (Alvy & Robbins, p. 94).  It is important to let them know that you appreciate and value their dedication to the school, and their accomplishments.  As you meet with them it is important to listen to their ideas.  This helps a principal understand the school culture, and the direction that others believe the school should go.

            As I am meeting with the veteran staff members, I would be certain to note who really cares, and who doesn’t.  Inevitably there are people just biding their time before they retire.  This step will help me know who to trust.  In Guernsey I know who works hard and really cares, but meeting with the teachers will help me solidify my opinions.

            The last thing I would do is involve the good veteran faculty members in a mentor program.  Since there isn’t a buddy program or mentor program in Guernsey the veteran teachers would be able to use their knowledge and expertise to serve and teach the new and at-risk teachers.  This is a great way to affirm that I respect the veteran teachers and recognize them as leaders in the school (p. 96).

 Alvy, H.B., & Robbins, P. (1998). If I Only Knew... Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship. Corwin Press/Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA

**Forum #9 – Puzzlers**

  From my understanding gained during this and other courses, managers takes care of the important day to day tasks and make sure things are done correctly.  What seems to distinguish leaders is that they guide by example, and help instill a vision in everyone they lead.  Our textbook (Alvy & Robbins, pg. 99) states, “management and leadership responsibilities go hand in hand.”  Although it isn’t always necessary to distinguish between ones roles as a manager and leader, it can be an important skill in helping a leader understand what his/her most critical responsibilities are.  In each puzzle there are management issues, but what each school needs is a leader who will guide the school to greater heights.

       Having a complete course schedule should be a management issue.  It isn’t a task the principal does alone, but in collaboration with the teachers and school councilor.  Although it can be a mundane task it is critical to the success of the school.  A good manager will make sure it gets done well, and is complete in time.  Leaders take a role in the course schedule by having a vision of new and improved course offerings that will benefit the students’ lives and futures.

       The misallocation of supply funds, and lack of stocking the supply room appropriately are also management issues.  I know in my school the basic supply room is stocked by the high school secretary.  She oversees that part of the school and reports to the principal.  If funds aren’t allocated correctly or we forget to allocate supply funds, that is also a management issue.  A true leader would notice a lack of vision, and guide their school to good resources including the building of relationships with businesses that can give discounts on computers, and seeking out grants that will help buy needed supplies and materials for the classrooms (Alvy & Robbins pg. 113)

       Lastly, if the schoolyard was in disrepair and the grass was weedy and dry there is definitely a problem with management and leadership.  The leader would inspire the grounds manager to take pride in his/her work.  The leader would also take opportunities to get the community involved in the school.  The manager isn’t succeeding either because the work obviously isn’t getting done well.  The school employees aren’t doing their jobs, and this cycle will best be reversed by a good leader who instills in everyone the understanding of why it is important to keep the school looking nice.

Alvy, H. B., & Robbins, P. (1998). *If I Only Knew... Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

**Unit 10 Forum**

  Alvy and Robbins (1998, pg. 120) say that due process is important regardless of grade level, and that “students have a right to be heard regarding a disciplinary matter.”  We want to end problems right away, but it is important to allow both parties involved in a dispute or problem to express their side of the story.

            In my limited teaching experience I was thinking, boy, I don’t have any experiences to share, but as I thought about it things really do come up, and almost on a daily basis.  My mom would always say it takes two to fight, and I have learned that there is always more than one side to a story.  Today I had a student come up to me at the end of my third grade art class and say that another student had kneed them really hard in the back.  I wanted to get mad at the student and give her an immediate consequence, but decided to ask her about the incident first.  She felt justified in what she did because according to her the kid kept being annoying (this didn’t seem like a good excuse), and she said that after she kneed the boy in the back he tried ripping out her earring, punched her, and kneed her in the back.  I didn’t see any of this happen because I was helping another student, but I was able to talk to them both, and help them understand what went wrong, and how they can act differently in the future.  There wasn’t time to send them to the principal, but I reported the incident to their teacher.

Although there are a lot of silly court cases and people who sue over strange things, I know that due process is very important in a school setting.  It allows students to protect themselves against unjust rulings and punishments.  I rarely have to send students to the principles office, and luckily haven’t been involved in any cases where lawyers are involved, but understand the importance of due process.

 Alvy, H. B., & Robbins, P. (1998). *If I only knew…Success strategies for navigating the principalship.*

 Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

**Forum Unit #12**

  The discipline and behavior plan that my school currently uses is the Boys Town Social Skills Model.  Boys town has a whole Well Managed Schools workshop that our school sends teachers to when they first start out in our school (I didn’t actually get sent until the middle of my third year).  In our staff handbook it actually states, “In most situations, teachers are expected to handle their own discipline.”  The Boys Town Model is based on the premise that students act up because they haven’t learned how to behave appropriately.  We as teachers, and as a school are to help teach these life skills to students so they can be successful in many environments.  There is a whole system of praise, corrective teaching, and ways to deal with emotionally intense situations.  Only when an incident really expands out of control and/or is causing harm to others will a student be referred to the office.

            I believe that the Boys Town Model really is effective and gives teachers the skills they need to help build students capacity.  Students are given opportunities to pin point their skill deficiencies and work specifically to improve.  I observed this model in practice when I attended the training in Boys Town Nebraska in Omaha.  It really does embody the key questions principles should ask that Alvy and Robbins (1998) discuss.  They say that if a behavioral/disciplinary strategy prepares students to behave without constant supervision and to take ownership of their behavior than it is a good strategy.  Overall, this is an amazing system, but I don’t feel I have received sufficient support in fully implementing it in my classroom.  I was sent to training, but feel our staff needs practice and more training and guidance to become proficient in using the system correctly. I do feel that my school is good about avoiding zero tolerance policies, and supports our students in their school environment.  We are also improving supervision during passing periods, and at lunch to ensure our school is a safe environment for our kids.

 Alvy, H.B. & Robbins, P. (1998).  *If Only I Knew...Success Strategies for Navigating the Principalship.*  Corwin Press/Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA  ISBN 978-0-80-396644-4

**Unit 13 Forum – Vision Statement**

  The past few days I have sat in on 4 interviews for k-12 principal candidates for my school.  It has been so neat to reflect on what is really important in education.  As education goes through many tides of change, what is really important?  Why are we really here?  What do I want for my children?  After each interview I leave thinking, wow, we must focus on the students.  While principals have so many roles, they lead through passion, genuine concern, example, and intentional purpose.

Principal Vision Statement

     I am a growth and student-centered principal who makes a difference in students’ lives by empowering all stakeholders to step up to the plate and make positive contributions to the lifelong growth of each and every student.  I foster a culture of caring and lifelong learning by creating a fun and exciting school environment where everyone is a learner, and learning is cool. I guide our school in establishing expectations of excellence and rigor.  I seek continual personal and school improvement, build on the strengths of others, communicate effectively, lead teaching and learning, and act purposefully and intentionally so all students succeed.

            "Good, better, best.  Never let it rest.  Until your good is better, and your better is best."

                                                                 -Tim Duncan-

Personal Life Vision Statement

     I Jason Harmon, am an honest, hardworking, and positive individual who never gives up.  I continually work to improve myself so I can focus on serving others and building them up.  My life is dedicated to my Heavenly Father, my family, my community, and the world.  I know that although my sphere of influence is small, I can affect the one.  I love everyone, and express that love and concern often through specific praise and feedback.  My life legacy is built on the lives I have touched, the memories I have shared with others, and the selfless service I have given.

**Case Study #1**

One Bill, One Budget – Case #42

Case Summary

Tercer Verde School District in southern California with seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school is struggling with a state bill mandating class sizes in kindergarten through third grade be no larger than 21 students. Due to the bill, there is a large teacher shortage, and the superintendent put me, the high school principal in charge of a meeting with one teacher from each school. My job is to discuss questions and concerns with the committee, and help decide what should be done to solve the issues at hand. The concerns brought up at the meeting include concerns over too many older level teachers wanting to teach the lower age levels where they will have less students to deal with, teacher at the higher levels expecting more pay, worries about the lack of cohesion that used to exist in the district, the need for an in-service for new teachers to help them understand the culture, mores, and customs of that area of California, and some high school teachers certified to teach elementary school who want to go back to teaching the lower age groups. Our district and students have always excelled, and we need to keep it that way.

Problem

The bill is creating a lot of stress and discord in the district, especially as many feel it will be unfair for so many teachers in the younger grades who will now deal with only 21 students instead of 30 to 40 in each class.

Specific Information

People

* The superintendent - who puts you in charge of the committee
* You- the High School Principal put in charge of the committee
* Mr. Borten – Elementary teacher who warns teachers at his school want to teach the younger grades now
* Ms. Valdez – Who says teachers at her school feel they should get paid more than a teacher with only 21 students.
* Ms. Chen – represents another elementary school, and feels we shouldn’t loose focus on our main purpose, that we are here for the children.
* Ms. Berstine – represents the middle school, and says we need to make sure our new teachers understand our culture, and preserve what has been created in the last 50 years.
* Mr. Aiken – high school teacher who says several high school teacher now want to teach in the elementary schools.

Place

* This whole case takes place in southern California, ten miles past the Mexico border.
* The community is full of rich farmland, and some industry focused on technology.
* There is a nice blend of cultures, and a very nice country club.
* The case takes place at a committee meeting at one of the schools.

Program

* District has 7 elementary schools, 2 middle level schools, and 1 high school
* District serves 8,300 students.
* Parent teacher organization and art auctions help subsidize extracurricular programs.
* Many students from the district have received national recognition for their contributions to the fields of art and science.

Review and Prioritize Data

In this case the category people includes the most important data. Although we need to understand the dynamics of the program, and where this all takes place, it is real people we are dealing with, and they bring real concerns to the table that need to be solved so we can best follow the state bill that is being mandated for next school year.

Solve the Problem – (answers to questions)

1. I would share all of the concerns with the superintendent, but give him my ideas on which ones are reasonable, so he can have a second opinion.
2. I would say the most important concerns are the logistics of so many teachers wanting to move into teaching the lower grade levels. If we are going to allow movement, we would need to open it up soon, and put a deadline so we can know what vacancies we will need to fill.
3. I believe we will have a few openings among the secondary teachers, and that overall most of the lower grade level positions will be filled in-district. That will create many openings for the upper level elementary positions.
4. I wouldn’t foresee many secondary teachers moving down, but it appears that a lot of 4th, 5th, and 6th grade teachers will want to move down.
5. The only issue the union would be concerned about is if we decided to pay our kindergarten to third grade teachers less. I don’t think they could get too angry if wee deemed it necessary to offer an extra stipend of say $1000 for elementary teachers who are willing to teach the higher grade levels. I know middle school teachers get paid more in Utah for instance, because they have a harder time filling those positions.
6. I don’t think it would be necessary to share the high school teachers concerns with the rest of the teachers. I would let the staff know though if the district was allowing all teacher apply for the elementary jobs, but encourage them to stay (especially if they were great teachers).
7. I would look for teachers who are passionate about education, excited to live in southern California, and who have good character and academic backgrounds.
8. In this case I would invite Ms. Berstine to accompany me when I talk with the superintendent so she can present her ideas of what we can to to keep our districts culture intact as we hire so many new teachers. She also is very level headed, and can help comment on some of the other issues that were discussed.
9. I fully support the reduction of class size for the younger elementary grades because this is such a critical time in their education. Children’s brains are developing very quickly during kindergarten through third grades, and it is important that they get the best education during that time as possible. Smaller class sizes during those years will allow them more teacher interaction, and allow them to get more help when they aren’t understanding critical subjects and information. Wyoming has mandated class sizes of 16 or under for younger elementary grades. It has been a good thing.
10. In such a large district I would guess that elementary teachers retire every year, so that would protect our budget somewhat from future changes in student-teacher ratios. To be even more prepared I would put a clause in the teachers’ contracts that allows the district to move teachers to other areas where they are certified when demands from the state require it. This would allow teachers that move down from higher grades to replace other teachers, and protect the district from having too many teachers in a certain grade or level, just because state mandates change.

**Case Study #1 Reflection**

Contemplating this case study really helped me understand how real the issues of staff turnover and change can be. It is very important for an administrator to plan for staff turnover, and hire new staff and teachers as soon as possible so they can choose candidates that are highly qualified. Last year our school had to hire an English teacher the week before school started, and that is a difficult task. Our school councilor died of cancer, and one of our English teachers took over that position leaving a vacancy in our English department. Luckily we found a great teacher who was still looking for a job.

I also enjoyed gaining a deeper appreciation for teachers who wish to change their teaching assignment. I believe that districts should allow in district movement before higher outside of the district. Even if is as simple as allowing a high school music teacher to fill an elementary vacancy, if the teachers are more content somewhere else the school and students will benefit greatly.

**Case Study #2**

Reclaiming Rose Place – Case #16

Case Summary

Rose place is a community made up of middle class white people. It is full of influential white supremacists. This case mostly deals with an elementary school just north of the center of town. The school district has just adopted a voluntary busing program that encourages underrepresented students to enroll in the school. The school district is doing this in response to a state mandate that all schools be integrated by the end of the decade. Many people in the community feel that “If you aren’t white, you aren’t right”, and are vocal about their dislike of the policy.

The new principal in the school is of the same ethnicity as the bused in students. One hundred percent of the staff at Smith-Jackson Elementary is Caucasian. The bused in students wish there were teachers of their same ethnicity. For this case I am put into the shoes of the new principal, and must solve the discord that is going on in the school and community over the bused in students.

Problem

The bused in students are having disciplinary and academic problems in the school. Teachers are glad to have a principal who can understand the new students. A concern is raised at a school meeting where parents have been invited, that the school will most likely loose funds next school year because 75% of the bused in students aren’t planning on coming back to Smith Jackson. At the meeting a prominent parent says the school was better off without the voluntary busing program. He feels the non-white students are just troublemakers, and that the school was much better off before the government stepped in and tried to integrate the school. The next day I run into that parent, and he says to me, “I don’t have to talk to you, you know. This is a free country, and I wish you and your kind would just go back where you came from. Why don’t you leave and take the students who look like you with you?” This is where the case ends.

Specific Information

People

* New Principal – non-white, experienced, and successful
* Staff – all white teachers
* White Father and parents – Angry about the integration of the school
* Non-white students – They aren’t doing too well academically, and are causing some problems.
* Non-white parents – Look to the principal to help their children succeed.

Place

* This whole case takes place in Rose Place, a middle class community full of white supremacists.
* The community has just started a low-income housing project.
* Smith Jackson Elementary is 40 years old.
* The problem of the case comes up at a school meeting.

Program

* Smith Jackson has an enrollment of 600 students, 20 of whom are special-needs students requiring special accommodations.
* Many parents are proud of their school, and volunteer regularly.
* They just started busing in students from other ethnic groups to integrate the school.

Review and Prioritize Data

In this case I believe that all of the data is critical. No one category is more important. Due to the people involved, and the history of the town, many people are racist. The community doesn’t want to be overrun by other groups of people, and are worried about their elementary school. The program is good, and helping to achieve integration as mandated by the state, but it is because of the mandate and the bus program that we are having the issue in the first place.

Solve the Problem – (answers to questions)

1. My initial reaction to the parent is one of disbelief that he would say such a thing to my face. I would tell him that I know it is hard to trust people that are different than you, but that he must know that all people are Gods children. All people have great potential, and can do great things. I would ask him to look for the good in the students that are being bused in, and to be more understanding of the sacrifices of time that they are making to become a part of our school.
2. The meeting helps me as a principle gain a lot of insight as to parent’s feelings about the voluntary busing program. They don’t like it, and would rather their school loose funding, then support something that will bring other children with different ethnicities into the school.
3. My role and responsibility to the students of the community is to treat them fairly, and help them gain the best education possible. My role with the students who are bused in is to help them understand that although they come from a different part of town, that they are important to our school. I must help them believe in themselves, and understand that through hard work they can learn anything. I would need to have a school meeting, and talk about how important it is that we work together as a team to have a successful school.
4. We could hold an open house for the parents of the new bused in students, and welcome them and their children to the school. We could warn them of the communities concerns, and ask them for their opinions and feelings about the whole thing. It will be critical to get them involved, so they feel like their roles in their children’s education are important. They must not be left in the dark, and see what you are doing to help their students, so they will continue to send their students to Smith-Jackson Elementary.
5. I would monitor race and human relations by training each staff member in multicultural education, and giving them activities to use in their classrooms to forge friendships and understanding among their students. At the conclusion of this training I would ask teachers and staff to be on the look out for an problems that are occurring, and to report them immediately. I would also have teachers report on how their classroom environments are changing as they ask for student cooperation and teamwork amidst ethnic differences.
6. I wouldn’t notify the superintendent of the encounter with the parent unless he had asked me to report how things are going. If I did report it, I would do so in order to help him understand how strong some of the feelings of prejudice are in the community.
7. I would say that yes, the parent does have a legitimate concern. If students are more endangered by the new “troublemakers”, and classes go more slowly because the new students are behind academically then there is a real problem. The trick will be to help the transition go smoothly, and help each student grow, regardless of where they are at when they come to Smith-Jackson Elementary.
8. I will address concerns, but telling them about my experiences in other schools. I will also call a parent/community meeting where all the parents will get the opportunity to go through some exercises and questions that really help them understand just how little difference there is among them. (At BYU I took a multicultural education class where the teacher showed us a video of a school with similar problems. The school leader had the white people stand on one side of the room, and the black people on the other. She put a line of tape down the middle of the room. Then she made statements such as, “step up to the line if you or any one you know has been killed by cancer…ect.” The questions went on for a while, and tears were shed. The whole group changed as they realized that they both have problems, and need to learn to work together).
9. Yes, I should plan a race development day for my staff. My ideas are in question 5.
10. My district does not allow any sort of hate crimes. They aren’t allowed, and will result in immediate expulsion from school.

**Case Study #2 Reflection**

This case reminded me that racism still exists in families, communities, and people. Also, change is hard, and people are likely to dislike big or drastic changes. As an administrator it is important to be level headed, and seek to understand different groups opinions. Even if their beliefs are morally incorrect, one must lend a listening ear, and work to find good solutions to problems that arise. In this case the principal needs to address the concerns from both ethnic groups.

**Case Study #3**

Golden Oldies – Case #8

Case Summary

Vermillion is a small community in the Midwest. It was once semirural and agricultural, but now is a popular family community. This case takes place at Seven Oaks Elementary School. It has a population of 950 students, and is on a four-track, year round schedule. Due to the schedule there aren’t many teachers to teach certain grades. Nobody is guaranteed the teacher they want, but administrators allow parents to submit requests for specific teachers. The district policy says that parent requests are honored as long as administrators are able to create classes that are balanced according to academic ability, ethnicity, and gender of students at each grade level. In this case I am to be the principal.

In this case there are two 4th grade teachers involved, Mrs. Elliot, and Mrs. Donaldson. Mrs. Elliot has been teaching for 28 years at the school, and most parents don’t want her to teach their children. In fact, 44 of the 55 incoming third graders have requested Mrs. Donaldson, and none of them have requested Mrs. Elliot. Mrs. Elliot has also been very resistant to improvement plans, and changing her teaching to better meet the needs of students. She has recently been placed on a yearly evaluation schedule, and is fairly upset about it. She feels picked on but feels like she is a successful teacher.

Problem

The main problem in this case is knowing what to do to help Mrs. Elliot improve so all the fourth grade students can get a good education. The other issue is knowing what to do with the parent requests that their children have Mrs. Donaldson. Not all of them can have the same teacher.

Specific Information

People

* Ruby Elliot – She has been teaching for 28 years, and is very set in her ways. Students and parents feel she is loud and overbearing as a teacher, and she isn’t implementing any new strategies that are taught at in-service meetings.
* Mrs. Donaldson – She is the other fourth grade teacher, and has a good reputation.
* Principal – That is that part that I play in this case.

Place

* This whole case takes place in Vermillion, a family community in the Midwest.
* Seven Oaks Elementary School is the school where the case takes place. It serves 950 students, and was built in 1959. It is scheduled for a major renovation the coming year.

Program

* Seven Oaks Elementary serves a student population of 950 students
* The school is on a four-track year-round schedule.
* Teachers are allowed to request the teacher they want their children to have, and the requests are honored as long as possible while still regarding academic ability, ethnicity, and gender of students in each grade.

Review and Prioritize Data

In this case I believe that the most critical data is the data about Mrs. Elliot. We need to know of her history as a teacher, and the complaints that parents have about her so we can understand how severe her case is. We also have information as to what has been done to help her, and that she has been resistant to change. It is important to know about the program in that it is a year round program, but where it takes place is less important in this case.

Solve the Problem – (answers to questions)

1. There are two main issues in this case. First, what are you to do as an administrator with Mrs. Elliot? Will you be able to help her change, and become a better teacher, or will you have to let her go or ask her to retire early? Second, how do you keep parents happy and respond to their complaints? A bunch of students won’t get Mrs. Donaldson. Even if all 11 students that didn’t make a request get Mrs. Elliot as their teacher, there will still be at least 16 students who get Mrs. Elliot that didn’t want her.
2. The issue that needs to be resolved first is how to clearly communicate with all parties involved, and especially with Mrs. Elliot so she can know where she stands, and what she must do to change. It’s important for all teachers to feel that the principal treats them with respect, and honors their role.  I would set up an appointment with Mrs. Elliot, and take time to communicate how grateful we are for all she does and all she has done throughout her years of service.  I would let her know that she is a valuable part of our school (Alvy & Robbins, 87). Secondly, I would deal with parents complaints, and help resolve them by letting them know that Mrs. Elliot will continue to do her best, and is working to be the best teacher she can be. Then I would assign students to classes and personally call parents whose kids don’t get their teacher of choice.
3. I would definitely let the person in charge of personnel at the district office know of the situation. I would need to council with him as to exactly what the district would have me do to document the teachers change or resistance to change so she could be fired if she won’t do her job correctly. He will be a critical resource and help as things come up along the way.
4. The district already gives me criteria that must be reached in placing students in classes. I must balance gender, academic ability, and ethnicity. To avoid being accused of favoritism, I would put the 44 students who requested Mrs. Donaldson’s names into a hat, and draw names for who would make it into her class. As I go I would make sure the criteria are being met, and put the remainder of the students with Mrs. Elliot.
5. Although the policy can be difficult to deal with, I think it is important to honor parents’ requests as to who will teach their children. Parents should feel some ownership in their children’s education.
6. I would definitely review all of Mrs. Elliots formal evaluations before deciding what action to take because it could be that there is already enough evidence to ask her to leave. There could also be other promising things that you normally don’t hear about. I would really like to understand what good things she does, and where she needs improvement so I can help her in the future.
7. I would clearly tell Mrs. Elliot that 44 percent of the incoming third graders have requested the other teacher, and ask her why she thinks this is occurring?  Then I would discuss with her how education is changing, and that we need her to implement what she has been learning or we will be forced to find someone else.  I would give her one more year to prove that she will improve.  We would set specific goals, and have her study books such as those written by Marzano on improving instruction.  I will let her know that feedback received from students, parents, her mentor teacher, and from periodic visits to her classroom will be filed and placed in her record, and that if improvement isn’t reached, she will be replaced. Lastly, I would assure her that you will be there to support her, and to help answer her concerns and questions, but that you will need to see improvement right away.
8. My recourses would be my assistant principal and instructional leaders as we gather data and record her lack of improvement as a teacher. I would also have support from my superintendent and personnel at the district offices, especially if there is someone who oversees personnel.
9. If Mrs. Elliot continues to ignore my recommendations I would recommend to the board that they let her go, and replace her with someone who will do a better job. I would need to keep a good record of what has been done to help her, and how badly things have gone or how resistant she has been to change in order to satisfy the teachers union that she should no longer be teaching.
10. I would monitor Mrs. Elliot very closely in the future. I would visit her classroom often, and help her understand exactly what she needs to change in her teaching. I would have her set specific goals, and work with a mentor teacher in achieving them. I would also ask her to work closely with Mrs. Donaldson in planning and carrying out a successful school year. It will be important for her to work alongside the other 4th grade teacher who is having success so she can see glimpses of how things can improve. I will also seek feedback from students and parents more often and personally make sure she is doing her job well.

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**Case Study #3 Reflection**

This case was really beneficial to me because it helped me gain an appreciation and greater understanding of the role a principal has as an instructional leader. A principal has a great responsibility to lead teaching, and it was great to think of what I would do in the case of a teacher who is very resistant to change and the help provided her to succeed and meet the schools standards of excellence. I imagine the most important role of the administrator in this case is to assure students are getting a quality education, and in some cases this means firing inadequate teachers. In these cases I must respect teachers agency, but give them specific improvement plans and opportunities so they are guided to growth.

**Reflection Paper**

The Role of Hope in Effective School Leaders

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Reflection Paper

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The Role of Hope in Effective School Leaders

Leadership is “an imperfect art practiced by those who lead in which the leader defines reality for his or her followers while creating and nurturing a vision of a new, better reality to come” (DeSpain, 2000). Bolman and Deal (1995) have said, “Heart, hope, and faith, rooted in soul and spirit, are necessary for today’s managers to become tomorrow’s leaders.” Sergiovanni (2004) believes that hope needs to be at the center or core of our “school community” because it will “encourage and promote clear thinking and informed action, giving us the leverage we need to close the achievement gap and solve other intractable problems”. This essay will examine the leadership trait of hope and how it helps a school’s overall effectiveness.

It is sad when what one says and does do not match up. When “word and deed are one” virtue and leadership are working together (Sergiovanni, 2005). Walton (1998) put it this way:

The question is not whether virtue can be taught but how it may be taught. Example, not exhortation, and practice, not principle, take priority:

Carpenters become carpenters by building houses; pianists become pianists by playing the piano: managers become leaders by leading. The same is true of character: people become virtuous by practicing virtue and by living with moral mentors. If for any reason an organization becomes sidetracked, only managers of sound character can restore a sense of direction. Disciplined organizations reflect disciplined leaders whose honed abilities lead them to behave consistently, almost instinctively, in moral ways.

Such leaders understand what is important; they really care, learn from their mistakes, take risks, and are dependable and honest.

One of the most important and often overlooked leadership values is hope. Hope is one of four virtues of leadership examined by Sergiovanni (2005) in his article “The Virtues of Leadership”, and when practiced will help vastly improve struggling schools. This hope will extend a principals’ vision from a wish and turn it into a reality. Hope is a virtue that is almost imperceptibly distinguished from faith. Together faith and hope lead to action and can move mountains.

Management theories often overlook hope because they say we are to look at the evidence. A leader must rise above merely accepting reality and face it in order to change reality. We must be able to “calculate the odds” of a situation with an “optimistic eye” (2005). Each unfortunate situation can be changed as we believe and have hope.

Evidence has been found that hope can change events for the better. Many people believe that support groups such as prayer groups can help a sick person. We believe in encouragement and support, and have possibly seen evidence in our own lives of the difference it can make. Roset (1999) reviewed the literature on hope and health and found evidence that the two correlate strongly: “Findings in the health sciences show a positive relationship between biochemical reactions, attributed to hopefulness, and its effect upon illness.” An Oncologist, Carl Simonton, (Carter, 1996) found that when cancer patients respond to their challenges with hope biological processes occur in their bodies that restore balance to their immune systems. Also, medical researchers have found that “hopefulness, from an increased sense of control” is linked to bodily changes that improve physical and mental health (Roset, 1999).

One misconception of hope is that it is similar to wishing. Hope is supported in reality (Sergiovanni, 2005). Menninger, Mayman, and Pruyser’s (1963) termed it “realistic hope”, and said:

Realistic hope…is based on the attempt to understand the concrete conditions of reality, to see one’s own role in it realistically, and to engage in such efforts of thoughtful action as might be expected to bring about the hoped-for change. The affect of hope, in this case, has an activating effect. It helps mobilize the energies needed for activity. By activity I mean not only motor activity but also the activity of thought or of relating oneself to another person.

So, what is the difference between hope and a wish? A true leader activates hope. While a wishful leader takes no action to make things happen, a hopeful leader “deliberately strives to turn hopefulness into reality” (Sergiovanni, 2005).

Hope is very closely related to faith. Actually, they are so closely related that they blend into one (2005). Faith is believing in what we can’t see. According to the Bible (Hebrews 11:1), “Faith is the substance of things hope for.” An example of this that I like to use is a child or adult who is learning to play the piano. If they have faith or a strong belief that they can learn, it will lead them to practice. Strong faith and hope always lead to action. Just think of the last time you set the goal to exercise more. If you really had faith you could get back into shape, and hoped for it, your faith and hope would turn into action.

So why is hope so important for effective schools? It is because faith and hope provide what is needed to avoid wishful thinking. We could assume that most school leaders really care and want change to occur. They want their school and their students to succeed. Faith and hope will turn our wishes into a reality. Faith needs to be based on a set of true assumptions of what can occur in a school. As these assumptions become shared ideas, a community of hope is established within a school that fuels change and effectiveness (Sergiovanni, 2005). No longer will the school and its leaders be all talk, but action will occur and lead to beautiful results.

**Guidelines for Implementation**

Hope is the difference between a wishful leader and a leader who acts. Leaders are often too caught up in meetings, emails, and day-to-day business that their hopes turn into wishes that never become a reality. Hope has been described as, “a cognitive set comprised of goals, pathways, and agency. Individuals with high hope possess goals, find pathways to these goals, navigate around obstacles, and develop agency to reach their goals” (McDermott et al., 1991).

The first step in building hope within a school is for leaders to establish “articles of faith” (Sergiovanni, 2005). These articles of faith will be statements of their belief in what their school and/or organization can and will become. These articles of faith will shape their decisions, how they use their time, and their directions for the future. These articles of faith will provide focus and drive, as a leader understands what needs to be accomplished on a day-to-day basis.

Secondly, for hope to become a reality, it must be transformed into goals.

What do we hope for? What do we want to accomplish? What direction does our school need to go? What do we want to see as evidence that we are helping our students learn and be successful? These hopes turned into goals must be written down, written clearly, and be broken down into small steps. Just as the child in the above example won’t learn to play the piano in one day, a school grows, develops, and changes gradually.

Next, these goals need to be developed into “practical pathways” (2005). This step will answer the question, “What routes will we take to realize our hopes?” This is the step in goal setting where we break down the process. How will we know we are growing and going the right direction? A leader must research best practices by studying publications, staying abreast of current research, and networking with other professionals who can help guide one’s decisions.

A leader must be determined to travel the path no matter the obstacles that arise. A good question to ask is, “What obstacles do we face?” The true leader will continue on until hope yields fruit and stay committed until the end.

I will liken the exceptional hopeful leader to a gardener. When a gardener first gets to a plot of new ground it is likely full of weeds and grass. The gardener must carefully till and clear the soil in preparation for planting. Before planting occurs the effective gardener plans exactly what he will plant, and where it will go so he can have a productive and bountiful harvest. The gardener will wait until the dangers of the frost are over and carefully plant the seeds. He will make sure the plants are nourished by sunshine and watered regularly. If trees are blocking the sun they will be taken down. As unwanted weeds and grasses come and try to take over the plants by stealing their vital nutrition and sunlight, the gardener will pull them out. The gardener knows which plants are good, and which are weeds. He knows where to spend his time and energy for a productive harvest. He also understands that if the plants in the garden die because of neglect it isn’t because the plants were bad, he just didn’t give them correct or sufficient care. The gardener will also beware of giving plants too much of a good thing. He knows that too much water, or too much fertilizer will kill the plants. He will anxiously await the day of harvest. His faith and hope for a bountiful garden has become a reality because he turned it into action. Even weeks before the harvest he keeps his eye out for predators such as insects, rabbits, deer, and an early freeze. His nurturing is born of hope, and ennobles him to do everything needed to see his goals accomplished

Even when a gardener had done everything, obstacles can arise. Fire or hail can come and destroy a garden. Regardless of this a true gardener knows the principles on which to build a strong healthy garden, which seeds are good, how to grow healthy plants, the warning signs to watch out for, when to harvest, and what to do with the harvest so it nourishes and benefits many.

Just as the gardener, the hopeful leader will take note of the new school or organization they are arriving at. They will survey the school, and take care of immediate problems. They will open sources of communication to allow growth of staff and students. The new leader will come up with a plan, vision, and goals for their school, and plant the seeds of that plan in the hearts of all. Part of this planting will be to create and sustain “faculty-student relationships around a shared sense of purpose and accountability for the whole” (Bowman, 2005). The leaders hope, vision, and action will nurture the growth of the school, and protect it from predators. As the school grows, and success is achieved, the leader will watch to assure there is a balance between the good such as academic growth, focus, engagement, fun, celebrations of success, etc., and pull out the bad, such as wasted time on cell phones, class disruptions, laziness, lack of purpose, etc. Teachers that won’t go the extra mile will be given opportunities to improve or be removed from the team. This kind of leader knows what a successful school looks like, and nurtures it each day. Although catastrophes occur, success can be replicated, and obstacles or barriers can be overcome.

There are a few more questions a hopeful leader must ask as he/she builds a community of hope. How committed are we to actually doing something to realize our hopes? Do we have a strong enough belief that we can make a difference? If our belief is low, how can we strengthen that belief (Sergiovanni, 2004)? One answer that I have found to answer those questions lies in a new approach to leadership called servant leadership.

Just as hope is critical in a leader, so is moral and ethical leadership. An effective moral and ethical leader is a “servant leader” (Bowman, 2005). A servant leader bases their leadership on the principles of universal ethics such as humility, honesty, trust, empathy, healing, and community. To test a true servant leader one must ask, “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants” (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant leaders “seek to restore sight to organizations and communities threatened by the myopia of private interest” (Bowman, 2005). They realize that the cure to selfishness is interdependence and generosity. They “unleash the strengths, talents, and passions of those they serve”, “establish high standards of performance for those served”, they “address your weakness, build on your strengths”, and put “oneself at the bottom of the pyramid so that one can focus on unleashing the energy, excitement, and talents of those being served” (Jennings & Stahl-Wert, 2003).

**Examples in Action – Schools built around Hope**

In 1995 Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas had the lowest test scores in the state, and were given one last chance before being shut down. In fact, most students and parents wanted their children out of the school. Their school district adopted a framework of reform called First Things First, which was key to helping them build a new community of hope. The framework identified “seven crucial conditions for school improvement” (Stewart, 2004). As efforts to align with the framework increased, staff members were more committed to aligning their practice with the framework. A lot of other changes occurred at the school including learning communities, a greater sense of community, teacher study groups, peer coaching, and a strong collaborative culture. Although there is a lot of evidence that their school improved dramatically, perhaps the clearest sign of the improvement is that, “families used to stand in line to have their child transferred from Wyandotte. Now families are asking to transfer their child to Wyandotte” (2004).

Samuel Gompers Elementary School has 350 students, 90% of which live at or below the poverty level. Many of them worry about their basic needs such as food, clothes, and shelter. School leaders and staff set an ambitious goal to make sure their students had the skills to “become contributing members of a global society” (Sergiovanni, 2000). In their words, to achieve that goal:

Our school will successfully educate all students in a clean, safe, and healthy learning environment. We will meet the needs of the whole child through the developmental pathways: cognitive-intellectual, physical, social-interactive, speech and language, moral, and psycho-emotional.

Gompers turned their hope into a reality by using components of the Comer process, more officially known as the School Development Program. The Comer process rejects the idea that low-income parents can’t prepare their students to do well in school (Comer, 1980). They started believing that teachers, principals, and other community members could make sure students succeed. “It (the Comer process) also assumes that schools are concerned with the whole child, that fulfilling students needs and providing a supportive climate create the essential conditions for academic learning” (1980). Gompers Elementary staff turned their faith into action and helped students to achieve some of the highest test scores in the state (Sergiovanni, 2000).

Hope at schools such as Gompers doesn’t just occur. “The school staff nurtures hope through a carefully planned, sustained school improvement effort” (Sergiovanni, 2004). As a staff is given practical pathways to address problems and achieve success, they have faith in the underlying assumptions and work to make hope a reality.

**Conclusion**

Leadership is “an imperfect art practiced by those who lead in which the leader defines reality for his or her followers while creating and nurturing a vision of a new, better reality to come” (DeSpain, 2000). “Heart, hope, and faith, rooted in soul and spirit, are necessary for today’s managers to become tomorrow’s leaders” (Bolman & Deal, 1995). I personally know how important hope is in ones life, for a student, for a school, community, nation, and the world. Research has proven its effectiveness on health and schools. Principals everywhere must avoid pessimism and turn talk and wishes into action. Only then can we close the achievement gap and solve other problems that will continue to plague the realm of education.

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**Logged Hours**

**Feb. 19th – ½ hour with Assistant Principal**

We discussed a variety of topics, and here I will share some of the interesting points.

* Making time with students as an administrator is very critical
* Having teacher leaders, and being all on the same page is a big struggle with small schools.
* Juggling time – It is easy to get stuck at your desk. You have to decide what is important.
* Administrators must be learning coaches, not seen as evaluators. This way they can help teachers learn to reflect.
* A growth mindset is huge – Encourage hard work – grading system needs to reflect importance of hard work.
* Look for research based strategies that work.
* Ask – what do you want students to learn, and how will I know they have learned it?
* Students need to learn to read, and read to learn. Learning must be relevant to the kids. As an art teacher it is like learning to draw, and drawing to learn.

Communication:

* Find out what is the best way to communicate within the community, and with each person. For some that might be email, texts, by phone, or in person.
* Make sure everyone understands your communication
* Almost have to remove the word teach and create learning experiences
* Make students responsible for learning and effort.

**March 18th – ½ hour with Assistant Principal**

We discussed a bunch of things from this class, and I asked him other questions that have been on my mind. Below is what I learned.

* A principals vision should drive everything a he does. He should express it and share it.
* It is important to know the line of authority in small schools, because in Guernsey, the superintendent takes care of managing the maintenance and grounds managers.
* It is really important to support and encourage non-certified personnel. He said that often janitors and cooks have a greater impact on students than many teachers.
* We discussed the firing of teachers, and he counted to me some stories of when he had to deal with teachers who weren’t doing their jobs.
* He told me about a legal issue that happened while he was the principal when they had a mandated reduction in force. They instigated a last in first out scenario, but were forced to make difficult decisions when certain new teachers were the only teacher in their area, so they had to justify all of their decisions.
* We talked about how important it is to celebrate and honor staff face to face. He found that many teachers don’t like public recognition, and that teacher of the month, and teacher of the year awards can get really political, so the most meaningful way to praise is to make a point of seeing the good and describing it to the teacher or employee so they know you appreciate all they do.
* When discussing the balance between management and leadership I was told that the key is a good secretary. I should ask myself, do I need an advanced degree to do this? If the answer is no I should let others do it. He reminded me of the importance to be out and about, and to meet often with non-certified staff. He said to be on the offensive instead of the defensive. When the whole school is working as a team and lead well problems will be addressed as soon as they arise and before they become major problems. He also said it is important to do walk-abouts with the custodians every week or two to point out what is going well, and what can improve.
* I asked him advice on hiring, and was told to make a lot of phone calls. He also said to measure who they are and what they have done to the local culture. A big city kid might not like the lifestyle of living in small town Wyoming, for example.
* I asked him about school law, and he said to constantly think about due process. The main issue that came up during his years as principal was the school dress code. A student who eventually became my high school principal in Mountain View, WY and is now the superintendent there petitioned to allow boys to wear shots in school back in the 80’s. Because there wasn’t any big reason as to why shorts should be banned, they changed the school dress code, but made sure to ban the showing of underwear including bra straps.
* My last question was for him to give me advice in working with the school board. He said it is important to give them a good report every month not only on what you are doing, but on what you and the school is accomplishing. They also need to know test scores. Lastly he told me to find out what they want, and where they hope the school will improve. Open communication is critical.

March 21st – ½ hour Meeting with Principal

* In this meeting we were discussing what it takes to be a good teacher. I learned a lot about what he observes when he does his observations, and what good teaching entails according to our school.
* Our principal stepped down recently, and I asked him about that. He said that the board was split 2-2 on whether to extend his contract, and that he felt it would be best to give someone else the opportunity to lead our school since he didn’t have the boards whole support.
* One neat thing is that I was given the opportunity to be on the committee that will choose who our new principal will be.

March 27th – 1 hour

* Meeting with Superintendent and interview committee
* We discussed what we are looking for in our new k-12 principal in Guernsey, and we were given 16 applications to read through.

March 24th – 27th – 6 hours

* Reading through all of the applicants and ranking them on who would be the best fit for the job.
* We were al so given 2 or 3 other applications that came in late.
* I learned a ton about what sounds and looks good on a resume, cover letter, letter of recommendations, etc.

March 28th – 1 hour

* We met again with the committee that consists of the school board chair, 3 teachers, 1 old school board chair, a mother, and our superintendent to discuss our top 5 candidates, and come to a consensus as to who we would interview.
* This was a fairly quick process because I we pretty much all agreed on the bottom 10 or so applications.

April 7th – 6 hours

* We interviewed two candidates today, and I learned so much. Personality really matters, and those that really are up to date on their research shine through. One man was pretty stern, and came across as really self-centered.
* The other man has a plethora of experience, communicated clearly, and helped us to feel confident that he would do the job well.

April 8th – 6 hours

* We interviewed 2 more candidates, and learned some more important things. For one, a passion for students, and a love of education is a hard to hide.
* The other main lesson I learned is how difficult it is to get to know someone’s personality over Skype. Our second interview today was with a man who is currently a principal in Alaska, and his interview was just ok. He is knowledgeable and experienced, but didn’t quite have what we are looking for. Mostly we learned some things from our superintendent calling references that we were worried about.

April 9th – 6 hours

* We interviewed the last 2 candidates today. There were two that we really liked, and it was really hard deciding which one to hire.
* Overall I learned so much from this interview process. It was neat seeking to understand what our school really needs. We decided that the most critical thing we needed was to build our culture and increase our rigor in the classroom so our students can succeed.
* We ended up choosing the person who seemed less authoritative, and most energetic in putting the kids first. He is very student centered, and we are excited to see what he brings to our district.
* Total hours to date – 27.5 hours

**Course Reflection**

I feel that this course has been very beneficial to my progress as a professional educator and future educational leader. Each topic was really helpful. I also feel the book was written clearly helped me understand what trials I can expect in my first years as an administrator. The other book with the case studies was beneficial in that it helped me reflect on specific examples of issues I might face. It was fun working through the cases and reflecting on what decisions I would make. Lastly, I would say that the research paper was beneficial in that it helped me practice finding specific information and gave me an opportunity to practice my professional writing skills.

If I were to give specific suggestions for the course I would say that I still often feel isolated from my fellow students. I know this is a hard thing to overcome in an online course, but the collaboration piece of responding to others forum posts is good but superficial. The only other idea I can think of is finding a way to create a project within the course where we as students can put in practice something we have learned in a real life situation. I know the real life leadership opportunities will come with time, but it is always nice to practice what one is learning. I like theorizing and thinking about what I would do, but nothing beats real life experience. I know that is why we were expected to talk to administrators for 10 hours, but maybe we could collaborate with the administrators within our schools and work to implement something we feel our school lacks.

Thanks Dr. Brown for prompt feedback and responding quickly to emails. Thanks for caring about our progress, growth and learning, and for expecting my writing improve. I really have worked hard on that during this class, and feel as if I have improved a lot.