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Stand Up for Public Education

Research and Best Practices That Advance the Profession of Educational Administration

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Table of Contents

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A Message From the Editor

Frederick L. Dembowski
Southeastern Louisiana University

This issue contains a number of reports of field-based research, as well as an article on best practice. The first article is a thought-provoking discussion of the instructional leadership and management roles of the building principal. D. Zach Kelehear reports the results of an action research project involving 14 assistant principals who surveyed principals to determine how they spent their time. The survey revealed that although both management and instructional leadership-related tasks (the most time-consuming tasks) were important, they appeared lower on the principals' priority list. Based on their research, the assistant principals developed a model of shared administrative responsibilities delineated along management and instructional leadership lines. Upon implementation and evaluation of their model, it was determined that the split functions model did not work for a variety of reasons. It is my firm belief that leadership and management are both important roles for any educational administrator, and the skills and knowledge of both roles should be the foci of an educational administrative training program.

In the second article, also with a focus on leadership, Robin R. Dexter, William B. Berube, Suzanne M. Perry, and David L. Stader posit that the use of a "frame" is beneficial to the development of educational leaders in a professional training program. The authors discuss the use of frameworks, and then propose a "Leadership Matrix" that they use in their administration preparation program. They find that the matrix is very effective for self-assessment of leadership skills, and for the organization of their learning in the program. The matrix is also used as the basis of the portfolio that students are required to develop. It is interesting to note that while their matrix has a focus on "leadership," only one of the cells of the matrix is actually titled "leadership," while the other cells of the matrix are management, administrative, and personal-trait focused.

In the third article, Shirley A. Jackson discusses the importance of field-based research for the improvement of student achievement. Mandated and promoted by No Child Left Behind, the author argues that in the last few decades, there has been little improvement in student achievement based upon field-based research. She believes that increased collaboration between university researchers and field practitioners is needed in the conduct of field-based research. There are, of course, some obstacles that need to be overcome to achieve this goal. It is likely that the knowledge base of educational administration contains many excellent field-based research studies that would be beneficial in the improvement of instruction. But how do you separate the wheat from the chaff? Another important issue may be illustrated by a quote from a school administrator at a conference session on action research who stated "field-based research is really important and useful, but not on my students!"

The fourth article, *A Challenge for School Leaders: Gender Equity Issues Remain,* by Joyce C. Ragland, Denise L. Hatcher, and Jerald A. Thomas, discusses gender equity. They contend that gender equity remains a problem in education, despite over two decades of research on the issue. The authors report the results of a nine-year research study they conducted using their university students. An important finding of their study is that there is evidence of generational differences in the perceived incidence of gender-related bias. Public awareness and discourse, heightened attention to such issues in teacher training, and the general shift in gender-based roles and careers have likely contributed to qualitative changes in the interactions between teacher and students; however, as their study suggests, gender issues may now take new forms.

In the next article in this issue, Elizabeth K. Davenport and Yolanda K. H. Bogan report the findings of a case study regarding how teachers of a newly created public school academy attended to the needs of their community by creating a charter school. The school used an African-centered curriculum and a parental community-involvement model, while attempting to promote and sustain learning for all teachers, students, parents, and administrators. The goal of the school's African-centered model was for continuous change and learning to take place, making the school a learning organization for the entire community of teachers, students, administrators, and parents.

Finally, John G. Vanko and Raymond P. Rogina talk about a novel approach to teaching school law. Coming from different professional backgrounds, they developed a team approach to teaching that involved case briefs, mock trials, class-session visits from professionals involved with a variety of aspects of school law, and field experiences. As evidence of its success, the authors boast very high course evaluations and noticeable student enthusiasm with the course. More telling about its effectiveness is a 99% pass rate on the law section of the administrator's certification exam!

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Manager of Programs vs. Instructional Leader: Re-conceptualizing the Dual Roles of the School Principal

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Introduction

The School of Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham includes many medical programs along with a research hospital and children's hospital. With programs in dentistry, medicine, nursing, optometry, and other health-related fields, public health professors in the School of Education struggle to remain visible in their grant, research, and service activities. Interestingly, however, working within this context has offered this author an unanticipated benefit relative to his view of school leadership. Specifically, the competition with other academic programs, the participation of medical students in school leadership courses, and the frustration of 14 local assistant principals regarding supervision of teachers, have created an opportunity for action research that challenges the ways schools are managed. The prompt for this action research repeatedly revealed itself from both students in classrooms and practitioners in schools. Their lament: Is it reasonable to expect one person in the position of principal to provide effective management of school programs *and* also to provide instructional leadership to teachers? Based on a review of various job descriptions, it was clear that boards of education expect one person to provide both management and leadership. Based on observations by graduate students and feedback from the assistant principals, either management of programs or instructional leadership was happening, but not both.

Amidst the despair of the 14 assistant principals, the action research project described below emerged whereby they decided to do as Sergiovanni (2002) suggested: quit wishing for and start developing a workable administration model for effective school leadership. Given that the existing school leadership model was viewed as unworkable, the assistant principals examined the possible applications that the leadership model used in many hospitals might have for them.

In looking at medical care, the assistant principals noted that the hospital administrator managed the business of health care, while the chief of staff provided leadership to the doctors and nurses. The assistant principals then posited: Can the organization model found in many hospitals offer any insight into ways that school leadership might be re-conceptualized? In an attempt to match the hospital responsibility with the school equivalent, the assistant principals labeled the school administrator the Manager of Programs (MP).

The assistant principals titled the chief of staff in schools as the Instructional Leader (IL). The guiding question for the action research then became: In what ways might the responsibilities of the school principal be re-cast so as to have a Manager of Programs and an Instructional Leader?

Making the Case for Parallels

Before embarking on the possible contributions that hospital administration might have for schools, some consideration to its most basic structures is in order. Hospitals have a minimum of three constituencies: patients, caregivers, and administrators. Patients come to the hospital with a myriad of needs. Caregivers, including nurses, doctors, and other specialists, come to the hospital to respond to the needs of the patients. The administrators, who are often separated from the patients and caregivers both physically and metaphorically, manage the facility in matters of operations, physical plant, finances, and any other area not directly related to providing medical services.

The three groups have distinct roles and responsibilities and there is little intersection among the three groups. The hospital administrator understands the billing and money flow, the maintenance of air conditioners and elevators, and the complexities of human resources. The doctor understands the medical necessities of patients, the current research in health care, and the need for ongoing development. Patients come to the hospital seeking information from health care providers and access to specialty areas like imaging or laboratory services. Persons in these three areas have significant roles in the process of health care but those three roles remain separate from each other.

The model described above might help people think about the way schools are organized. In the early stages of the action research, the assistant principals and the author developed some parallels between the hospital constituencies and school constituencies. Below is a model of school organization that loosely parallels the organizational arrangement of a hospital. Consider some possible applications of the medical model for school organization:

- Instead of the hospital administrator ... think of a principal
- Instead of chief of staff ... think teacher-leaders and mentors
- Instead of doctors ... think teachers
- Instead of patients ... think students

Recently, while involved in staff development for assistant principals, it became clear to the participants and to the author that the systemic configuration in the schools inhibited, or prohibited, the proper application of instructional supervision. Recognizing the need for informed instructional supervision, the 14 participants in the staff development began using the medical metaphor described above as a way to re-conceptualize school leadership. As referenced in the introduction, it was out of the initial conversations among the 14 assistant principals and the author that the notion of two positions emerged. Instead of one position in charge of both management and leadership, there would be the MP for administration and the IL for instructional supervision. From this point of departure, the 14 administrators undertook the task of constructing an organizational system in which one position would be in charge of managing the school and the other position would be in charge of supervising instruction.

The Problem

Overseeing and managing today's schools continues to be a daunting task. Given the competing demands of federal mandates, state assessments, standardized-testing schedules, shrinking revenue streams, and the like, it is no small wonder that children and teaching somehow get lost in the shuffle. Listening to 14 assistant principals, reading reflections of students in leadership programs, and talking with practicing principals, the author has come to recognize that there is little time for instructional supervision, at least in the lives of these 14 novice administrators. Throughout the administrative courses, novice administrators and administrative candidates hear that instructional supervision is the most important element of a principal's job. This emphasis, regrettably, may not be adequately supported within the current organizational structure of school leadership positions. As one assistant principal stated, "I will get to the teacher's classroom after I finish everything else I am asked to do. Observations will just have to wait." Could it be that what principals believe, what they say, and what they do are not the same? Similarly, could it be that what professors say principals are to do, what they believe they are to do, and what they do are not the same?

This contradiction was presented to the author in a stark, painful realization when working with the 14 novice administrators during a summer leadership academy. As an introductory exercise the author asked the participants to identify the five most-pressing issues in their new jobs. The author then asked them to organize their list of five in order of most urgent to least urgent. Out of the 14 respondents, seven included instructional supervision as important but none of the seven listed it within the top three pressing issues. The instructional supervision the author anticipated would be important did not receive the same level of consideration by these practicing administrators. Upon further investigation through individual interviews, the author came to find that 10 of the participants thought that instructional leadership was very important but they could not find time to do it well with everything else they had to do. When asked to identify those other most-pressing areas of concern for their jobs, these novice leaders identified money management, community relations, student discipline, and Adequate Yearly Progress as more pressing or immediate. As they told the author through interviews, responses to questionnaires, and discussions in the class, instructional supervision was important but there was simply no way to get it all done; when it came time to decide between observing a class and submitting the budget, the teachers would just have to wait.

What was needed, according to the consensus of the 14, was an approach to school leadership that:

1. Acknowledged the tension between management and supervision;
2. Provided school leaders with a realistic idea of how to support teaching;
3. Constructed an organizational mechanism for removing the management responsibilities from the individual with the charge of instructional supervision.

It is clear from the literature (Fullan, 2001; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Robbins & Alvy, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1999; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Smith & Piele, 1989; Starratt, 2004) and from the anecdotal conversations among the 14 school leaders that principals are called upon to do a myriad of jobs. Among the multiple roles principals assume beyond instructional leadership are chief financial officer for the school building, student and teacher counselor for both professional and personal matters, and community contact for topics ranging from dress codes to the bus schedules. It is a challenging task for principals to offer instructional leadership and also manage the other competing responsibilities. In much the same way as a teacher must be a successful manager of classroom behavior in order to be able to teach, the school leader must be able to manage the school so that instruction can take place. But to ask one person to manage all the business of schooling while providing instructional supervision might be an unrealistic expectation. For all the reasons the 14 participants offered, the supervision of instruction was not happening in a way that truly reflected the importance they ascribed to it. Their actions were not consistent with what they said was important. In working with the 14 administrators, the author began to imagine that by separating the instructional supervision function from the principal's responsibility, then maybe another teacher leader could more effectively supervise instruction in our schools. The role of instructional supervision would rest with someone whose primary responsibility was instructional development. Managing all other affairs of schooling such as budgets, parent conferences, and discipline would reside with the principal's position. A school would have a Manager of Programs (MP) and an Instructional Leader (IL).

A Plan

In follow-up work with the 14 participants, we used the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards as a base for delineating the job responsibilities for the Manager of Programs and the Instructional Leader. The group separated a principal's responsibilities into two categories: Manager of Programs and Instructional Leader. Specifically, the group decided that the Manager of Programs was responsible for ISLLC (1996) Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- Ensuring the management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

The Instructional Leader was responsible for the ISLLC (1996) Standard 2:

- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Manager of Programs

The Manager of Programs (MP) was responsible for all matters of school governance except those issues covered by Standard 2. The leadership group collected a list of responsibilities directly from the ISLLC list of performances. After the group completed the list of responsibilities for the MP, the author was concerned that no one would likely subscribe to such a job description. When the author asked 10 principals from a different state whether they would be willing to do the above items as long as they did not have to conduct instructional supervision, nine of the principals responded, "Yes!" Upon further investigation, the nine leaders said that they were already doing these things anyway and that they would gladly give up "having to observe teachers."

Instructional Leader

The 14 school leaders, after compiling a list of job responsibilities for the MP, then set about clarifying the role of the Instructional Leader (IL). Once again returning to the ISLLC standards, the group agreed that the IL would be responsible for instructional-related tasks. The group of 14 administrators reviewed the list and determined that being an IL would be an important and difficult job. As one participant stated, “Dealing with personnel issues is always the most important and frustrating job. It would help, though, if that was all I had to do!” How to make the IL position work became the final stage of this action research. The group developed the ideas below as a way to institute this new responsibility.

Putting the IL to Work

The IL would conduct all instructional programs relative to evaluation, supervision, induction, remediation, and instructional staff development. This job would carry with it a supervisory supplement that would recognize the lead teacher’s supervisory responsibilities. The school would have an instructional committee whose responsibility it would be to select an IL who may or may not be a member of the committee. The IL’s appointment would be three years. The IL would function as a part of the instructional committee but leadership within the committee would reside with a different person. One way to imagine the organization is to imagine an elected school board with an appointed superintendent. The committee will have representatives from grade levels for elementary schools or from subject areas for high schools. Middle schools would have instructional committees drawn from teams.

For matters relative to evaluation, the IL would have the primary responsibility for making “judgments concerning the overall quality of the teacher’s performance and the teacher’s competence in carrying out assigned duties as well as provide a picture of the quality of teaching performances across the professional staff” (Nolan, 2003). These data will be collected as part of the teacher’s overall evaluation in terms of retention, tenure, and promotion. The actual process for making employment decisions is described later in this paper.

Within the context of supervision, the goal of the IL is to offer instructional support for teachers throughout their professional careers. Novice teachers might receive close-ordered coaching to help them through the stresses of being new to the profession. Tenured teachers might receive support in the form of instructional development and experimentation. End-of-career teachers might receive requests from the IL to share expertise with others or to take on staff development responsibilities. At whatever the career stage, the nature of the instructional support will be in the form of developmental supervision or mentoring.

Research on mentoring emphasizes that the direction and content of instructional development is a shared responsibility of both the novice teacher and mentor teacher (Glickman, 2002; Reiman, 1999; Reiman & Theis-Sprinthall, 1993). Through collaboration and coaching, these teachers observe each other, share reflections on experiences, and develop professional development plans. During the early stages of the professional relationship the mentor will likely assume a dominant role, but over time responsibilities will shift from the mentor to novice (Gray & Gray, 1985).

A key function of the IL is to identify, develop, and supervise a cadre of successful teachers who are trained in developmental supervision and mentoring. The IL will be the lead mentor and will offer support and guidance to the cadre and will also substitute in cadre classes when the mentor is conducting observations or conferences. Each mentor will provide reports to the IL regarding dates of mentor contacts, the nature of the observation, and any issues that the IL might need to address. Because of the need for confidentiality and trust in the mentoring relationship, care will be given not to offer specific details of the mentors’ contacts. The mentor contacts will be formative in nature. The IL will conduct summative observations and evaluations of teachers for employment decisions. The IL will offer summary reports and recommendations to the managing principal and those reports would become a part of the teacher's personnel file. The managing principal will also make recommendations, again for inclusion in the personnel file, for employment based on teachers' performance of non-instructional responsibilities (e.g., bus duty, lunchroom supervision, committee participation, and attendance). The instructional committee will receive recommendations and offer its recommendation for employment as well. In effect, employment decisions then come upon a three-vote decision: one vote from the IL, one vote from the managing principal, and one vote from the instructional committee. Based on the three reports, the MP will construct a letter to the Director of Personnel that summarizes the findings and offers a recommendation regarding the continuing employment status of the teacher. Both the MP and the IL will sign the letter. Any disputes or dissenting opinions will also be submitted, as attachments, to the Director of Personnel for inclusion in the personnel file.

Emphasis on Mentoring

The 14 assistant principals and the author imagined that the best approach for supporting instructional growth might be to subscribe to a mentoring or coaching model for supervision rather than a purely evaluation format. Although the IL would be responsible for the personnel evaluation component, the instructional committee and mentors would engage in supervision exclusively. The group based the distinctions of what constitutes evaluation vs. supervision on Nolan's (2003) work. According to Nolan, the natures of evaluation and supervision are fundamentally and critically distinct within various functions of the teaching experience.

Given a particular dimension, the distinctions between evaluation and supervision become clear (Nolan, 2003). See Table 1.

Table 1.

Dimension, Evaluation, and Supervision

Dimension	Evaluation	Supervision
Purpose	Minimal Competence	Growth
Rationale	Protect Children	Complexity of Teaching
Working Relationship	Hierarchical	Collegial
Scope	Comprehensive	Focused
Data Focus	Standardized	Individualized
Expertise	Evaluator as Expert	Shared Expertise
Perspective	Best Foot Forward	

Risk Taking

It is in the form of mentoring as a supervisory practice that some of the more powerful benefits for teacher growth and development seem to emerge (Reiman, 1999; Glickman, 2002; Pajak, 2002). Individuals who have a trained mentor are more likely to realize professional and personal growth than those who work alone (Vygotsky, 1986). This benefit is especially noticeable when teachers are in new assignments or in new settings. Whether we are speaking about new doctors, new teachers, new administrators, or new professors, a supportive colleague can help a novice move to higher levels of effectiveness. Writing about medical school novices, Rabatin et al. (2004) noted that a "mentoring model stressing safety, intimacy, honesty, setting of high standards, praxis, and detailed planning and feedback was associated with mentee excitement, personal and professional growth and development, concrete accomplishments, and a commitment to teaching" (p. 569).

For public school teachers, having a mentor is associated with professional growth and a sense of self-efficacy for both novices and experienced teachers. In working with veteran teachers, Reiman and Peace (2002) sought to "encourage new social role-taking, support new learning in effective teaching, encourage new complex performances in coaching and support conferences, and promote gains in moral and conceptual reasoning. Significant positive gains in learning, performance, and moral judgment reasoning were achieved." Mentoring had a bidirectional benefit for both novice and mentor. The best plan for supporting instruction will require a position that is wholly, and singularly, focused on the processes of teacher development.

As a benefit to school cultures, mentoring in a developmental supervision model encourages conversation among teachers. In conversation we begin creating a school community characterized by sharing, support, and caring. It has become clear through research of Noddings (2002), Palmer (1998), Starratt (1997), and others that when teachers and students work in an atmosphere of caring and support they are more likely to take risks, to experiment, and to attend to each other's needs. It is just this type of collaboration that the process of mentoring can encourage.

Conclusion

This action research project considered the roles of the MP and the IL. The impetus for the project was at the prompt of real and complex issues shared by 14 novice school administrators. It became clear that there was a need for an individual who managed the business of schools and for an individual who mentored instruction. In their most recent feedback, the 14 participants in this work report that only one school site had been able to sustain the program where the principal was the MP and IL was the teacher-leader. Based on the group's responses, the reluctance to instituting the ideas of a MP and an IL did not seem to be a reflection on the quality or applicability of the notion. Rather, the reluctance to support the notion of a MP and IL came from a lack of central administrative support and the deep resistance to change within the school culture. The lack of support might have indeed been a reasoned and practical response from central administration. Maybe the "problem" expressed by the 14 was not one at all. Maybe other districts and other school leaders do not feel such a strain between managing programs and providing instructional leadership. What seemed like a reasonable approach to the 14 assistant principals and the author has not yielded positive results thus far. Clearly, the perceived "reasonable approach" needs additional study and could benefit from a more rigorous research design that more fully addresses the question of whether there is an absence of instructional support among administrative leaders in schools outside the 14 in this action study. Future studies might consider the following questions:

1. In what ways might superintendents and boards of education become more involved in the process of changing the nature of the principal's job?
2. How might policy and regulation development support innovation in school cultures?
3. In what ways might traditional views of roles and responsibilities for the principal inhibit consideration for innovations in school-based management?
4. Can the delineation of the MP and the IL open the door to more effective management of programs? Will the MP need to be a certified position in administrative preparation programs or will it become more of a business management position?
5. How might financial incentives complicate the roles of the MP and the IL?
6. What does the nature of the MP and IL say about power and culture in school settings?
7. How might creating a MP and IL foster conflict in organizational leadership? When conflicts arise between the two positions, what process would be in place for resolving the challenge?
8. How might the organizational chart for the school system be constructed so that the MP's and the IL's immediate supervisor would be clear? Does the reorganization substitute one set of dysfunctions with another set?
9. Does separating the two positions create a dysfunctional organizational structure where no one is in charge?
10. Is there really a need to separate the two functions?

Both at the university campus and at the school sites, we expect administrators to manage the business of schools as well as supervise instructional staff. As we prepare students for instructional leadership we want to believe that nothing matters more than having leadership that supports teachers who help students learn. What we do, however, is expect effective instructional supervision amidst systemic obstacles at the school site. Consequently, our students arrive in their new jobs and give little attention to instructional supervision as they try to balance all the competing demands. It is not the leaders' fault entirely. They are working within a system that too often communicates that what really matters is the management of school, not instructional supervision. Until we recognize that what we believe, what we say, and what we do in matters of instructional supervision is inconsistent, then we will continue to prepare school leaders who are frustrated by the disconnect.

Preparation programs that offer two paths to leadership and school systems that provide for two types of leadership positions, one for Management of Schools and one for Instructional Leadership are more realistic and grounded in the realities of today's schools than programs where one individual can attain administrative licensure for any and all leadership functions in today's schools. By giving leaders clarity of purpose and the tools for performing their jobs well, we stand a better chance of retaining and developing effective leaders in the schools of the 21st century. The real beneficiaries will be teachers who have working conditions and instructional support where teaching and learning are celebrated.

In the end, it has served the author and students well to be a member of a campus where the competition for grants and prestige with the medical community has compelled professionals in our field to consider new approaches to old problems. Having the Manager of Programs function like the hospital administrator and having the Instructional Leader act as chief of staff offers us a workable paradigm where school leaders can support teaching and learning without compromising responsible business practices.

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Putting a Frame on Leadership

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Principal preparation programs across the country focus on leadership as an integral part of the process for preparing prospective principals. A review of leadership readings for the principal preparation program at the University of Wyoming over the past decade included works by leading authors such as Barth (1991), Bennis (2000), Covey (1990), Deal and Peterson (1994), Evans (1996), Fullan (1993), Glasser (1992), Glickman (1993), Hersey and Blanchard (2001), Kohn (1999), Kouzes and Posner (1987), Peters (1997), Schlechty (1997), Senge (1994), Sergiovanni (1999), and Wheatley (1992). Leadership has been and might be framed in many different ways. Kouzes and Posner (1987), for example, talked about leadership as challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart. Others have their own unique frame, including Robert Evans (1996) who wrote about the authentic leader as an individual who understands and respects the human condition, readiness levels for change, and situational leadership styles. Due to the number of leadership concepts, it can be challenging for the prospective principal to create a conceptual foundation or framework on which to think about the complexity of leadership.

Teachers are learning more about the theories that support conceptual frameworks as a learning tool. The review of literature revealed that frame theory is an accepted principle used to describe how the brain organizes experiences and new information. Frame theory supports the understanding that individuals can organize their thoughts to better understand new concepts and beliefs into a memory structure called a frame. A frame allows users to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete experiences (Goffman, 1974; Minsky, 1986). The frame helps the brain identify what would otherwise be meaningless knowledge into something meaningful for use in the future.

The Leadership Matrix used in the educational leadership program at the University of Wyoming combines knowledge from the literature and research theory to provide students with a support structure to help them organize their new knowledge and beliefs in the area of educational leadership. David Perkins (1986) supported the assumption that a frame does not define in advance the answer but that it is up to the learner to fill in the content of a frame through assimilation of experiences. No one strategy, technique, or method will always work to support the thinking process but the Leadership Matrix provides principal candidates with a structure to support organization of their new knowledge and beliefs.

Conceptualization of the University of Wyoming Leadership Beliefs Matrix

The impetus for creating the Leadership Matrix was initiated at the University of Wyoming (UW) through conversations in 1999 with undergraduate students in the UW College of Education after the faculty and instructors struggled to promote students' thinking and reflecting about teaching beliefs. As the students completed their teacher preparation program and prepared to enter the job market, they were challenged to categorize their teaching beliefs in a matrix developed by the college faculty and instructors following discussions about important teaching beliefs or categories.

The beliefs were listed in topical fashion based on concepts identified in a review of relevant literature and they represented discussion areas the students would be able to articulate. The students reported that they appreciated the reflective value of the exercise, as it allowed them to sort through beliefs and organize their thinking relative to those beliefs. The belief matrices were a source of reflection for the students as they prepared for job interviews and students referenced the matrices during the interview process. Personnel directors and principals reported that the beliefs matrix was an outstanding tool used by prospective teachers in the interview process. Many felt the beliefs matrix set the interview apart from the norm and provided a more telling description of the candidate. Also, the candidates appeared to be more confident in their answers. The beliefs matrix is a requirement of the UW College of Education Teacher Education Program in the student teaching portion of the program. Suzanne Perry, one of the authors and former Director of the UW Lab School, was instrumental in using the matrix with undergraduate students.

The Leadership Matrix as a Tool for Preparing Principals

In the first semester of the UW principal preparation program, students describe their personal and professional beliefs about leadership in the form of a matrix. This Leadership Matrix becomes a part of their professional portfolio, which also includes their personal and professional vision and mission. The Leadership Matrix is used as a component of the portfolio to provide a mental and visual framework to help aspiring principals organize their leadership beliefs. The students receive a Leadership Matrix that includes only headings representing main leadership categories. These categories were identified by the department faculty based on a review of the relevant literature in the field of educational leadership and represent the course and program outcomes reflecting and supporting the principalship.

The students complete the Leadership Matrix by listing topical leadership beliefs, just as the teacher preparation students did with beliefs about teaching. Each Leadership Matrix box encourages the student to identify topical beliefs related to categories such as: philosophy and guiding principles, organizational management, supervision, teaching, learning, and technology, leadership, communication and relationships, personal growth, school improvement, and student assessment and achievement. Students may add their own categories as well as delete categories to individualize the Leadership Matrix. The Leadership Matrix might include the authors who have influenced leadership knowledge, thinking, and reflection throughout the writings students' preparation program. These authors' may even influence the categories students select to include in their Leadership Matrix. The notion of a mental organizer assists the aspiring principal in addressing leadership beliefs in a concrete form, which may be helpful in an interview setting. Table 1 includes an example of a Leadership Matrix.

Table 1. *Leadership Matrix Example*

Philosophy & Guiding Principles Covey (1990) • Strong Faith • Love for All • Honest • Caring • Learning for All • Sense of Humor • Risk Taker • Expect Excellence • Maintain Open Communications	**Organizational Management** Senge (1994) • Site Based • Empowering Environment • Concise • Flexible • Consistent • Effective • Shared Vision • Involve All Stakeholders	**Supervision** Glatthorn (1997) • Differentiated • 80/20 Rule • Formal/Informal • Supportive • Collaborative • Action Research • Selection • Lifelong Learner • Risk Taker • Passionate • Communicates Clearly
Teaching, Learning & Technology Stronge (2002) • Student Centered • Action Research • Differentiated • Authentic • Multicultural • Inclusive • Action Research • Integrated Curriculum	**Leadership** Heifetz (2002) • Proactive • Self-motivated • Knowledgeable • Shared Decision Making • Visible • Flexible • Visionary • Student Centered • Sense of Humor • Effective Communicators	**Communication & Relationships** Sergiovanni (1999) • Honesty First • Integrity • Trusting • Safe Environment • Risk Taker • Shared Perspectives • Passionate • Communicates Clearly
Professional Growth Sparks (2002) • Ongoing • Financial Support • Research Based • Best Practices • Lifelong Learner • Collaborative • Formal/Informal	**School Improvement** Schmoker (2001) • Shared Goals • Data Driven • Safe Environment • Best Practices • Research Based • Measurable • Clear Goals • Involves All Stakeholders	**Student Assessment/Achievement** Reeves (2004) • Standards Based • Relevant Curriculum • No High-Stakes Testing • Learning for All • Culturally Sensitive • Differentiated • Promotes Self-Growth

To accommodate the range of experiences and professional expertise of the members of the class, students also use the Leadership Matrix framework to recall the theory, theorist, author, workshop, book, or other resources they used to develop each of their beliefs. Later, as a teaching strategy to prepare them for their roles as instructional and curriculum leaders, students list the references or resources they would use to provide support in helping members of their learning community translate beliefs into practice. The students then meet in groups to share and discuss their identified resources and beliefs. Due to the wealth of experiences in the class, this process quickly becomes a valuable and efficient way to promote meaningful educational dialogue. Students have provided feedback indicating their positive perception of the Leadership Matrix as a quality learning tool.

Two initial informal survey studies have produced positive findings related to the students' perception of the Leadership Matrix as a tool to support learning. Both brief surveys were administered to students involved in principal preparation programs. Students were asked to respond to three questions related to the benefits of the Leadership Matrix development as a course exercise. Initial results from the first study conducted at Southeastern Louisiana University (Stader, 2003) indicated that students benefited from the Leadership Matrix frame exercise and development. Results from the second study conducted at the University of Wyoming (Berube, Morrison, Von Krosigk, & Stader, 2002) indicated that a strong majority of students completing the Leadership Matrix found it to be a beneficial learning tool and indicated that they would continue to use the Leadership Matrix to organize their learning. Respondents in both studies reported that use of the Leadership Matrix facilitated the reflective process, increased their ability to articulate their beliefs about leadership, and resulted in a higher level of confidence during the interview process.

Benefits of the Leadership Matrix

Candidates being prepared for school leadership positions should know their beliefs about leadership as they enter the profession as a school leader. Well-prepared candidates will clearly articulate and communicate their preparation, skills, beliefs, and goals. The Leadership Matrix provides candidates a structure for the articulation of their beliefs about knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to school leadership.

The Leadership Matrix could be included in a professional portfolio and shared with an interview committee to prompt a discussion about beliefs in leadership. Local school boards and superintendents should value the reflective process that principal candidates obviously go through to generate and continue to refine their beliefs. John W. Gardner (1990) stressed the importance of continuing to grow as a leader. In addition, organization of and commitment to beliefs about leadership provide the ability to identify philosophies and strategies applicable to school leadership roles. The Leadership Matrix can be continuously refined and adjusted as school leaders progress through their preparation programs and careers.

The challenge for future school leaders in all principal preparation programs is to align leadership beliefs with practice in a manner that gives meaning and relevancy to serving as a campus leader. Although initial findings support the use of the Leadership Matrix in principal preparation programs, the value and effectiveness of the Leadership Matrix for prospective principals continues to be a work in progress.

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Randomized Field Trials: An Opportunity for Public Schools and Universities to Collaborate in the Accountability Requirements of No Child Left Behind

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With the formation of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in 2002 by the U. S. Department of Education (USDOE), the message is becoming increasingly clear that there is interest in training programs that will produce a new generation of educational researchers to guide education policy and best practices (USDOE, 2003). The need for these researchers is obvious when one looks at the evidence. Released in November 2003, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), often called the Nation's Report Card, showed in 2003 that most students in ten of America's largest cities had *below basic* in eighth-grade reading. The six lowest-scoring cities in the nation had only a small percentage of students reading at proficient levels in the 8^{th} grade; they included the following: Chicago 15%, Houston 14%, Atlanta 11%, Los Angeles 11%, District of Columbia 10%, and Cleveland 10%. On average, 88% of the students in these six cities do not read on grade level (National Assessment Governing Board [NAGB], 2003; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2004). If students in these cities as well as students in all other cities are to improve, educators need better information about what works, under which conditions, and for whom. This information may be obtained through educational research. One way to facilitate the attainment of the information needed to better ensure student achievement is for educational leadership programs to encourage an interdisciplinary approach to education research.

Under IES guidelines, universities are encouraged to take a cross-disciplinary approach to solving the most serious problems facing American education. To help fund cross-disciplinary research programs, generous federal grants are available to doctoral students in education and a variety of other disciplines such as psychology, counseling, and sociology to pursue careers in education research and therefore help transform education into an evidence-based field (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy [CEBP], 2003; IES, 2004; Training Fellowships, 2004).

Implications for Educators

According to Willinsky, (2001), experimental conditions in classroom settings are more difficult to maintain than in clinical settings. For this reason, he states that educators debate the usefulness of the design in education research. He argues that simply introducing an intervention to an experimental group ignores the complexity of teaching and learning. Teachers worry that because randomized field trials require an experimental group as well as a control group, inherent ethical issues exist and learning is too complex to be measured only by achievement tests. In addition, the experimental group and the control group must be the same, differing only in terms of the intervention. This similarity is often difficult to maintain once the intervention has begun because of the nature of schools where controlling the instructor, the instruction, the environment, and even the students themselves can be very difficult (Berliner, 2002; Willinsky, 2001). In experimental research, internal control is absolutely necessary for the researcher to determine that the difference, if any, in the outcome between groups is the result of the intervention. Furthermore, external validity can only be established after the intervention has been subjected to rigorous study across a variety of classroom settings. Without the ability to replicate the field trial, results are limited to action research and would only have application for the educators in the institution where the study was originally conducted (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

Distinctive to the No Child Left Behind law is the mandate that teaching be transformed into an evidence-based discipline and practice to ensure that only the best ideas with documented results are implemented by teachers in their classrooms (USDOE, 2002). The four key elements of this reform package include: (1) K-12 schools are held accountable for annual student progress; (2) increased flexibility and control over how federal education funds are spent at the local level; (3) expanded options for parents to choose where their children are educated; and (4) incentives to use teaching methods and curricula that have been documented to be scientifically effective (USDOE, 2002). It is this last element that has led to an increased interest in randomized field trials and provides a unique opportunity for public schools and universities to collaborate.

Just as social scientists seek to understand what interventions influence human behavior and performance, researchers in all disciplines seek to isolate the effect a particular intervention has on an outcome of interest. Often considered to be limited to large medical studies when testing the safety and efficacy of a new drug, it is important to remember that randomized field trials can be part of any research project that compares experimental and control groups that have been created through random selection. As a result, randomized trials provide an objective method for isolating the effect of a specific factor on human behavior and performance (*Implementing Randomized Field Trials in Education: Report of a Workshop,* 2004).

The demands placed on schools through NCLB, NAEP, and mandated state testing for promotion and graduation result from the belief that students are not learning as much as they should be, and or school personnel are not efficient in their educational practices (Leithwood, Aiken, & Jantzi, 2001). In addition, recent reports have described current educational practice as not resting on a solid research base (CEBP, 2003). To address these inherent problems, NCLB as well as many K-12 grant programs require educational practitioners to use scientifically-based research to guide their decision making process. Yet, many educators do not have the necessary tools to distinguish interventions supported by scientifically rigorous evidence from those which are not. The problem only increases with evidence supporting conclusions by Thernstrom & Thernstrom (2003) that while many educators pride themselves as being actively involved in school reform, “little has changed despite much activity particularly over the last quarter century” (p. 6). Thernstrom & Thernstrom also stated, “The average black and Hispanic student at the end of high school have academic skills that are about the eighth-grade level; in fact, on most of the NAEP tests, the majority of black students in twelfth grade have scores *below basic*, while those of Hispanics look only slightly better” (p. 22). In an effort to correct these problems, the objective of both the USDOE and the IES is to encourage the use of randomized field testing in education research. IES grants provide the incentive for universities to design cross-disciplinary research programs that utilize randomized field trials. For the researchers to be effective however, they need the cooperation of public schools to offer the classrooms necessary for conducting the field trials and gathering the subsequent data.

The National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE) recently joined with the USDOE and the IES to identify educational practices that are supported by rigorous evidence (CEBP, 2003). Illustrative examples that have been found to be effective in randomized controlled trials include *One-on-One Tutoring* by qualified tutors for at-risk readers in grades 1-3; *Life-Skills Training* for junior high/middle school students; and instruction for early readers in *phonemic awareness and phonics*. Because of these examples and others conducted under well-designed and implemented randomized controlled trials, the USDOE believes that randomized field trials hold the same promise for improving education as they have had for medical practices (CEBP, 2003). When research studies in education are designed using an experimental model, they are more likely to result in outcomes that can be attributed to the intervention and not to other factors enabling educational practitioners to draw effectively on rigorous evidence to close the gap for students at risk of academic failure.

The collaboration with universities on randomized field testing can assist public schools in meeting the accountability requirements of NCLB by improving both teaching and learning. Collaboration will also provide the scientifically-based research required for most federal and state grants that are specifically designed to improve mandated state testing scores by closing existing gaps for students at risk of academic failure, improving attendance and graduation rates, as well as reducing truancy and campus violence.

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A Challenge for School Leaders: Gender Equity Issues Remain

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Gender roles in North American education education remain a pertinent and dynamic source of discourse. Those who prepare teachers and school leaders must continue to examine gender issues and raise questions about diversity. When community norms conflict with program expectations, teacher candidates may provide lip service rather than change *their* deeply imbedded cultural beliefs. While many efforts to eliminate bias reference recommendations for pedagogical change, especially in mathematics and science classes, evidence of gender-related bias remains (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). As to whether different schools in geographic locales demonstrate more or less gender bias is perhaps the biggest question for further research. Furthermore, to what extent should public or private regulatory bodies address areas of resistance? Does the institution have the right or responsibility to address cultural norms if no damage to the individuals is reported? When does the public good, however defined, outweigh cultural norms? These and other questions arise from the researchers' nine-year study of student perceptions on the existence and degree of gender discrimination.

The current study's genesis is an educational philosophy class wherein the pre-service population draws from a highly selective academic climate of second- or third-generation public university students who have committed to a graduate teacher preparation program. Professor presentations and discussions about gender issues previously conducted in a regional university setting, which led to lively discussions and affirmations, were disputed in the highly-selective public university setting. Many women in the courses took issue with the

AAUW and other current conclusions of massive and widespread gender bias in public schools. Evidence cited was their own recent high school experiences where there were as many, if not more girls than boys in advanced mathematics and science classes. They provided lively, often passionate rebuttals to the evidence provided in class. To see whether the vocal refutations reflected majority views, an anonymous written survey instrument was provided to that class and other sections of the same course at the university. In 1996, preliminary analysis revealed a potential bias that favored females in suburban high school settings. To gather more data from a wider population, the question evolved into a nine-year study of several public and private university students in varying locales: suburban-urban Chicago, rural Missouri, rural Tennessee, rural Illinois, suburban and urban St. Louis, rural-suburban Tennessee, urban-suburban Tucson, and several towns and cities in the aforementioned states. The sites selected for data collection represent regional universities with which the researchers have professional association. While not necessarily generalizeable to all university student populations, attempts were made to ensure representation from universities of an array of demographic and enrollment profiles.

Perspectives

The concept of cultural education, education through paideia, is present throughout the history of humankind. It remains in formal and informal initiation rites in every culture whether a Cherokee stomp dance, a bat mitzvah, an honor society initiation, a Sunday afternoon gathering at grandma's house, a U.S. Senate committee bill discussion, or any of hundreds of other occasions. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines paideia as "training of the physical and mental faculties in such a way as to produce a broad enlightened mature outlook harmoniously combined with maximum cultural development."

Mortimer Adler's (1984) compelling definition subsumes both formal and informal educational settings, as he argues the entitlement of general learning for all human beings. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, (2004) discuss the context of paideia in their book *Education for Everyone*, adding specificity to the discussion: "… a necessary educational agenda for enculturating the members of the group, tribe, or community…." They continue, "… we, the people, however diverse we are, must live in a considerable degree of harmony with everybody and everybody's children, or else the group, the tribe, the community dissipates, disperses, or perishes" (p. 2).

When looking at recent American societal and cultural changes and specifically, gender issues, the enculturation of the members of the community shows considerable evolutionary change within various cultures and subcultures. The current study reveals cultural biases regarding gender roles and treatment by teachers that clearly reflect the community – cultural norms – as reflected in statements made by college or university women and men ranging in ages from 18 to 52. Although traditional career choices and gender roles have changed in recent U.S. history, this study population reveals areas of biases indicating females remain disadvantaged in certain areas. Areas of disadvantage are reported more often in the subjects of mathematics, the sciences, English, athletics, and in career guidance. The biases, as reported, reflect education through paideia, a general learning that "should be" in the possession of human beings not in general, but according to gender. That is, the community's cultural norm as to what knowledge should be in the possession of males and females differs.

Sometimes the biases reported are descriptive of teachers' words and actions; sometimes the biases relate to family and community traditions.

Data Sources

The survey instrument used in this research consisted of a nine forced-choice questionnaire comprising demographic and self-reported experiential items. One open-ended question asked whether they believe they had been the subject of gender-related bias in a K-12 school setting and to describe the circumstances in which they encountered a bias. The sample was drawn from students in 19 university classes. Professors allowed 15 minutes of class time for students to respond. Of the 357 respondents, seven surveys were discarded due to dual category answers or other conflicting data, yielding 350 valid cases. The stratified sample spans the academic years 1995 through 2004. Geographic range of respondents includes public and private university students in urban, suburban, and rural areas of Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, and Arizona. Frequencies among examined demographic variables indicate the subjects in this research are 76% females, 87% public school graduates, 35% rural, and 54% suburban students.

Prior to content analysis of the open-ended responses, chi-square analyses were conducted on four of the demographic questions: gender, school type (i.e., public, private), school locale (i.e., urban, suburban, rural), and age groups. Chi-square analyses yielded significant differences among age groups but not among school type or locale. Standardized residuals within the four age group categories indicate that significantly more students in the 27-34 and older age groups indicated that they had perceived gender bias in an academic setting, and significantly fewer students in the 18-21 age group indicated perceived gender bias. Those data seem to reflect positive changes in more recent school experiences, that younger women and men perceive less bias in school experiences than their older peers. Since data in the demographic section were all nominal, only non-parametric statistics (i.e., chi-square) were used in the first level of analysis.

The following frequencies describe perceived episodes of gender bias with respect to the four demographic variables cited above.

		BIAS		
		Yes	No	Total
SEX	Male	5	82	87
	Female	31	232	263
Total		36	314	350

Figure 1: Incidence of bias by gender

		BIAS		
		Yes	No	Total
SCTYPE	Public	31	272	303
	Private	5	41	46
Total		36	313	349

Figure 2: Incidence of bias by school type

		BIAS		
		Yes	No	Total
LOCALE	Rural	11	113	124
	Suburban	20	167	187
	Urban	3	13	16
	Other	2	21	23
Total		36	314	350

Figure 3: Incidence of bias by school location

		BIAS		
		Yes	No	Total
AGEGROUP	18-21	10	185	195
	22-26	10	71	81
	27-34	7	22	29
	35+	9	34	43
Total		36	312	348

Figure 4: Incidence of bias by age group

Qualitative Analysis

Consistent with Merriam's (1988) approach to qualitative data, the data were collected in the form of respondents' written answers to short questions, in structured college/university class settings where the professor asked students to describe their recollections. Focusing on the question, "Describe the circumstance in which you encountered gender bias," five recurrent themes emerged: a lack of understanding of gender bias, observed gender bias in activities, the effects of gender bias, gender bias with underlying sexual connotations, and gender bias in combination with other factors.

These responses demonstrated the confusion surrounding the idea of gender bias:

In sixth grade, I missed a day due to an illness, when I returned the teacher asked whether anyone had missed the quiz. I raised my hand and thought she acknowledged that I had missed the quiz. She started going over the quiz and then she looked at me and realized I had missed it and she blew her stack! (26-year-old female)

Not in the grand scheme of things. I think I was treated unfairly because we went to a small conservative school that did not accept thinking outside the box. In 12th grade, I was told that I could not take physics because I would fail. The entire class that year was male. Coincidence? (24-year-old female)

Each of these answers demonstrated that the survey participant did not seem to fully understand gender bias, thus leading to other related concerns. At times differences in how the two genders were treated were obvious in school activities. Even differences in activities organized and run by non-educators were observed. One 20-year-old female wrote:

I felt that the Boy Scouts got more attention than the Girl Scouts because there were pictures of their activities on the halls and not ours. I also thought it was unfair that in gym, girls had to hang on a bar while boys did push ups.

Another 20-year-old female reiterated this theme by saying:

I always wanted to join Boy Scouts because I thought that they did fun things while the Girl Scouts did boring things.

Others wrote about how they perceived athletes being treated differently from others in the classroom:

The head football coach in high school taught me history. He used to pick on the girls. He even told some girls they were "dumb as rocks" and "needed a window in their bellies to see." (19-year-old female)

In high school there were perks for jocks. We got out of discipline issues both in school and out of school.

These responses raise further questions about the effects of gender bias. Does gender bias merely affect classroom settings, athletic teams, or life choices? Clearly participants had very different views.

A 50-year-old female still seemed confused by a lack of support for her decision to attend college when she shared:

When I was a senior I applied and was accepted at a college. I needed the high school counselor's signature on some forms. Rather than signing, he tried to deter me from going to college. He said, "Wouldn't you rather be a secretary or airline stewardess?"

Another female from a small town wrote, "I was discouraged from going into the forestry field." A 42-year-old female remembered:

In junior high school I requested wood shop instead of the required semester of home economics. I was denied due to gender. The *home economics course was redundant. I had been cooking and making clothes since 5th grade.*

This lack of support based on gender did and continues to effect who the individuals become. Still, others focused on being treated differently due to gender at a young age. At times, these responses included sexual undertones.

Three individuals from very different settings and backgrounds recalled:

In second grade, girls had to kiss the teacher for each scented marker they wanted to use. [There were] only eight markers and so they were in high demand. … In high school I got pregnant at 17. I had free reign because everybody felt bad [sic] for me. (33-year-old female)

In 7th grade, Coach H., who also taught science, gave extra credit to girls if they wore dresses on test dates. (43-year-old female)

A male coach found out it was my birthday and wanted to know where his birthday kiss was!! (24-year-old female)

Some respondents linked gender bias and something more. One 25-year-old male from a small town wrote:

I can talk about being a young black boy, but I don't want to get into that now!

Reinforcing this idea of differentiated treatment of young, black males, another respondent wrote:

The middle school teacher told me to stop being so helpful in raising my hand to answer questions because my kind would never get a job or get ahead. I thought he was saying guys with a curl, later I understood him to mean black males. (33-year-old male)

For others, treatment was related to what they perceived to be popularity. A 23-year-old female wrote:

I was not treated unfairly because I was well-liked. However, I did notice that teachers and principals differentiated in discipline toward boys and certain girls for the same offense (e.g., talking, skipping, tardies).

Importance of the Study for Democratic Institutions

Many questions concerning gender bias remain. This study attempts to characterize a nine-year period of college students' recall of episodes of gender bias from their pre-college experiences. A significant finding of this study is that there is evidence of generational differences in perceived incidence of gender-related bias in school experience. Public awareness and discourse, heightened attention to such issues in teacher training, and the general shift in gender-based roles and careers have likely contributed to qualitative changes in the interactions between teacher and students but, as this survey suggests, gender issues may now take new forms.

A recent high school graduate noted that sometimes gender bias is easily dismissed by many of those who are confronted with it. This was reinforced by the response from a 28-year-old male that read, "Right at this moment, I cannot think of an unfair incident in my K – 12 school days. That doesn't mean that there wasn't one that occurred."

One 21-year-old male feels that change is not an easy thing to cause, even with something as important as gender bias. He concluded his survey instrument without providing specific examples of his own experiences but rather by stating, "Males are always favored. Good luck with your study. I hope you bring change."

The study needs continuation, in an effort to determine further actions that could be implemented to explore what constitutes gender bias, whether it is conceptually transformed, and how to eliminate it and allow equitable treatment in all educational settings. Efforts should encourage educators at all levels to be sensitive and respectful of all students; and, to increase the awareness and understanding that comments can have on the life of all who hear them.

Education through paideia is powerful; only careful examination of damage to individuals as filtered through cultural norms and mores will cause change that facilitates equity for both genders consistently in U.S. schools. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) summarize two decades of research that concludes long-term change occurs in schools by including the general population. Conversations about issues of equity, democracy, bias, and gender stereotypes should include not only pre-service candidates and their professors, but also their cooperating teachers, principals, superintendents and members of the greater community, to enact more widespread change. Efforts of schools, colleges and departments of education to inculcate their candidates with the tenets of gender equity to date, although commendable, need expansion to the wider population.

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It Takes a Village to Teach a Child: An Analysis of an African-Centered Parental Involvement Program

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Three decades of research have documented the positive effects of parental involvement in schools (Fan, 2001). These findings have remained consistent despite significant changes that families and schools have undergone during this period (Drake, 2000). Today, parental involvement remains a key factor in the academic progress of children. Parental involvement continues to be a major buzzword phrase in the educational arena of pre-K through 12th grades in the public school systems. The involvement of parents and guardians is not a new issue and has concerned educators for decades. The No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2002) lists what schools must do to involve parents, including developing a written parent involvement policy. According to this legislation, the purpose of the policy is to improve student academic achievement, school performance, build schools and improve parent capacity for strong parental involvement. The NCLB definition of parental involvement, based on the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) standards, defines parental involvement as the participation of parents as requiring regular, two-way, and meaningful communication, involving academic learning and other school activities. In looking at parent involvement in today's society, education has become more focused and streamlined, as there is an attempt to view it from the standpoint of new societal challenges.

These challenges are:

- To define parent involvement and the importance of this issue in teaching and learning.
- To obtain increased parent and guardian (family members) involvement and create strategies to include them in the educational process.

- To empower parents and guardians to assist schools in their development of a mutual vision and goals for all children in the educational environment.

- To get parents and guardians to understand the vision and become partners with teachers to accomplish the educational goals and objectives.

- To deliver an effective family involvement program.

From this perspective, parental involvement appears to be of great concern due to societal changes and national problems such as poverty, drugs, and high rates of student absenteeism, tardiness, dropout, and truancy. With so many educational woes abounding, it would seem that there would naturally be a closer connection between parents and schools, but instead, there is a wide gap in the levels of parental involvement between minority and majority schools (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001). Also, teenage pregnancy, and values of families have an impact on parent involvement in the education of their children, particularly in minority schools (Epstein, 1987). It is in these schools that we place emphases on developing the students' academic skills so that they are able to perform at grade level. Parents must realize that in addition to assessing children's abilities, it is important to maintain communication with the teacher. Even if no problem is suspected, this interaction allows the parent to assess the child's progress and the teacher's attitude through the parent observations of verbal or written communication, content, tone, and body language.

Parental involvement is an integral component in the educational environment. Student achievement and parental satisfaction requires ongoing well-planned series of activities involving parents in "home and school based activities" to assist teachers and school administrators in the accomplishment of learning objectives and goals. These strategies and activities bond or connect the home, school, and community together.

This article examines one of the findings of a case study which discussed how teachers of a newly created public school academy attended to the needs of their community by creating a charter school which utilized an African centered curriculum and parental community involvement model. From the school's inception, parental and community involvement was emphasized.

The data for this study was drawn from interviews, observations, and surveys of stakeholders at an African-centered charter school. Specifically, teachers and the administrator provided or participated in a demographic survey, teacher autobiography, four semi-structured in-depth interviews (lasting 1–2 hours), one focus group, and observations of school activities and classroom teaching and learning.

Setting

The school under consideration, Sankofa Shule, was an African-centered charter school established under Michigan Public Academies legislation[1].

> There are many definitions of Afrocentricism and African-centered knowledge. The administration and teachers of Sankofa's definition of Afrocentricism is based on Nguzo Saba, which encompasses the following principles (Karenga, 1988):
>
> 1. *Umoja* (Unity)--to strive for and maintain unity in the family and the community, nation, and race;
>
> *3.* *Kujichagulia* (Self-determination)--to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for and spoken for by others;
>
> *4.* *Ujima* (Collective work and responsibility)--to build and maintain our community together and make our sisters' and brothers' problems our own problems and to solve them together;
>
> *4.* *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics)--to build and maintain our stores, shops, and other business and to profit from them together;
>
> 5. *Nia* (Purpose)--to make our collective vocation the building and developing our community to restore our people to their greatness;
>
> *6.* *Kuumba* (Creativity)--to do always as much as we can, in the way we can, to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it; and
>
> *7.* *Imani* (Faith)--to believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

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1 In December 1993, Michigan became the ninth state in the nation to enact charter school legislation, known as the Public School Academies Legislation Act.[1] Under this Act, charter schools were designated as public schools of choice, which are legally independent public schools that operate under contract or charter to an authorized body. Simultaneously, the state also initiated a new system of financing public education, which included the creation of a per pupil foundation grant. This legislation enabled the state to fund charter schools at approximately the same operational level as traditional public schools. The educational reform package was part of market-driven reforms proposed by then-Gov. John Engler, with the purpose of improving the public and elementary schools in the State of Michigan.

African-centered education also reflects the African or Afrocentric worldview that most of the African American students and the teaching staff brought to the school environment and is grounded in the historical experiences of people of African origin. It embraces African and African American language, learning style, and behavior. It views the world from an Afrocentric perspective and not a European one. The Eurocentric perspective is based on Western European views of white, male dominance, superiority, and accumulation of wealth. In contrast, Afrocentricity is based on the heritage and the original civilizations of the people of Africa. In a sense, Afrocentricity is a tool to help African Americans to rediscover truth and self (Asante, 1980; Rivers, 1993, 1994).

The school, Sankofa Shule, was located in a remodeled, three-story, beauty school. It has since moved. The enrollment since 1995 had fluctuated between 125-150 pre-kindergarten to eighth graders. Subjects for the older students (from second grade on) were taught in classrooms separated by portable dividers. The pre-school through first grade classes were taught in the school's large, open area, multipurpose room, strategically divided to allow for the teaching and learning of three different student ability groups. The mission of Sankofa Shule is to "educate and nurture each and every child to achieve self-esteem and increase their academic achievement" (Sankofa Charter, 1995; Sankofa Shule, 1996, p. 1).

Community and Parental Involvement

According to the school's charter, the village concept of this Midwest town was the focus of the students and was represented at Sankofa analogously, but more inclusively than most school's Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO) through parents, community and school representatives, and teachers in their Harambe team. The team would suggest workshops, seminars, projects, and travel for teachers and students to ensure that all children reach their maximum potential in life. It also organized, planned, coordinated, and evaluated through empowerment sessions for parents and community participation; decisions made by the team are made by consensus building and periodic assessment (Sankofa Shule, 1996).

According to its charter, the administration placed the responsibility for its success on teachers, staff, parents, students, and community volunteers through an African-centered school-based model of accountability. The school's African-centered model allowed for direct-ownership of decisions and empowered parents to make choices for the future of their children. The administration of Sankofa's goal was to use community resources to provide the school with more resources and personnel to better promote the school's holistic ideal. This ideal was accomplished through planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating by consensus building and site-based management teams composed of teachers and administrators from the school, parent, and community teams.

Parental Involvement Effort

To ensure adequate parental involvement efforts, at the beginning of this study Sankofa Shule received a grant from GOALS 2000 (USDOE, 1992) for the planning and development of their local school improvement plan. The local plan was initiated to achieve the national educational goals and GOALS 2000.

Activities were created (Sankofa Shule,1996):

- To increase parental involvement through the rites of passage, field trips, and volunteering.
- To promote an environment free of substance abuse.
- To demonstrate competency and leadership in the core curriculum by students upon completion of grades 4, 8, and 12.
- To produce preschool students who are developmentally ready for kindergarten.
- To promote the holistic ideal of social, emotional and academic growth.
- To improve teaching techniques and strategies.

The primary focus of the parental involvement program was the Rites of Passages activities. Conducted by caring adult role models the Rites of Passage activities teach students that responsible people love themselves, support and care for their families and that they must plan each step of their lives so that they can remain on a path to success. The purpose of the activities was to teach students strategies to help them deal with the real world via a series of teaching and hands on experiences that are organized into ten areas. These rites are (Sankofa, 1994):

Personal Rite of Passage. Life is a series of problems to be solved and questions to be answered. You must equip yourself. Life is hard but you cannot quit. Men and women need a vision and a plan for living.

Spiritual Rite of Passage. Men and women often exhaust personal wisdom and knowledge needed to overcome problems. You may have to call upon a spirit, a being, and an authority bigger than yourself to help you through.

Economic Rite of Passage. Men and women know the power of money and a job. They know how to shop, to save, and to manage their earnings. They support businesses in their communities to help the community to survive.

Emotional Rite of Passage. Men and women must master their emotions and subdue unhealthy, negative urges. They manage and can communicate in positive ways about their feelings. They do not tolerate violence in a relationship.

Physical Rite of Passage. Men and women know how to live healthy. They know how to avoid the major health problems that plague minority citizens (hypertension, stroke, etc.). They strive to avoid health-endangering activities (e.g., drugs, smoking, premature sex). They act responsibly relative to sexual behaviors. They reject role stereotypes (i.e., women cook and clean; men earn money and run businesses, etc.).

Mental Rite of Passage. Men and women must acquire skills and knowledge in order to overcome life's obstacles. They must learn to read, compute, and think effectively.

Political Rite of Passage. Men and women understand the political system and how to use it for the benefit of the community. They can agitate, educate, and organize to encourage politicians to act responsibly.

Social Rite of Passage. Every man and woman needs to be of service to the community. They identify a cause, a movement, and an issue for personal involvement and work to make things happen. Men and woman plan to leave their mark on the world.

Historical Rite of Passage. Strong men and women understand their connections with the past. History provides a legacy of intellectual competence and prideful men and women who contribute mightily to the preservation of this country. Men and women endeavor to carry on the legacy by learning, teaching, building, setting trends, and being more than just consumers.

Cultural Rite of Passage. Minority men and women are often cut off or removed from their culture. Values, behaviors, patterns of excellence are missing. Men and women of strength establish connection with their cultural system and identify with cultural values, behaviors, ideas that enable men and women and their families to lead satisfying lives.

Parents were not only actively involved in the Rites of Passages, but also in other activities at the school. The administration believed that involvement was critical and encouraged academic achievement and personal and self-development. If a school is going to be transformed, "parental involvement" is necessary. Parents acted as aides, drove the school bus and were involved in every facet of the instructional day. Due to this involvement, the Sankofa teachers noted a decrease in student disciplinary problems, as well as a difference in the type of disciplinary problems as compared to the traditional teaching environments. One reason for this reduction can be found in the Sankofa Parent Contract, which each parent signed prior to a child's admission to the school in which parent's pledge to support the school teaching and learning activities. Usually students with persistent disciplinary problems at the school had their behavior corrected with one day of a parent or both parents shadowing his, her, or their child through their class day as per this agreement. This technique made the children accountable not only to his teachers, but also his or her parents. It also highlighted the interconnectedness of home and school functioning. Finally, it let the child know that his or her parents are willing to go out of their way to ensure that their child behaves appropriately and to provide immediate feedback.

The principles of Nguzo Saba were also incorporated in the school's disciplinary policy. The model says that students must respect self, others, and environment for the achievement of truth, righteousness, order, reciprocity, and justice. "At the school, students are taught to respect all things for there is an order and balance to life. They also learn three basic rules: to respect self, respect others, and respect the environment" (Rivers, 1994, p.10).

The environment, as conceived and nurtured at Sankofa, could be described as familial and caring. Teachers, teaching assistants, and other staff members were called Mama (female) and Baba (male) and the school, like most urban schools, was filled with siblings. However, at Sankofa, as Baba Julian, the Mathematics teacher at the school, noted there were also “spiritual brothers and sisters and spiritual mothers and fathers.” Nobles (1974b) stated that the African American family system could be thought of as African in nature and American in nurture. Noddings (1996) would appear to agree with this finding. She stated “ … the Black Mother – a figure of great strength in African-American communities. ‘Mother’ in this context is an honorary title, one granted to those who extend beyond their own families” (p. 266). The family and its importance in the liberation of African Americans were emphasized at Sankofa. At Sankofa, family was both nurtured and natured and that strengthened the home-school connections.

The school’s emphasis on behavioral confidence involved student participation in nonviolent conflict resolution, health, sexual, and career development. The purpose of these programs was to enhance self-concept, ethical character development, discipline, responsibility, and accountability. During the research period, the school re-emphasized its African-centered discipline approach. Upper-level students completed and graduated from the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program conducted with Michigan State Police. The Morning Affirmation period conducted by teachers included moral lessons and teachers (often using Aesop’s Fables) discussed conflict, good behavior, academics, drugs, violence, obedience, respect, etc. In addition, students read and discussed books or saw videos on drugs, violence, and peer pressure.

Overall, the student discipline statistics reported during the research period for students in K-8:

Table 1.

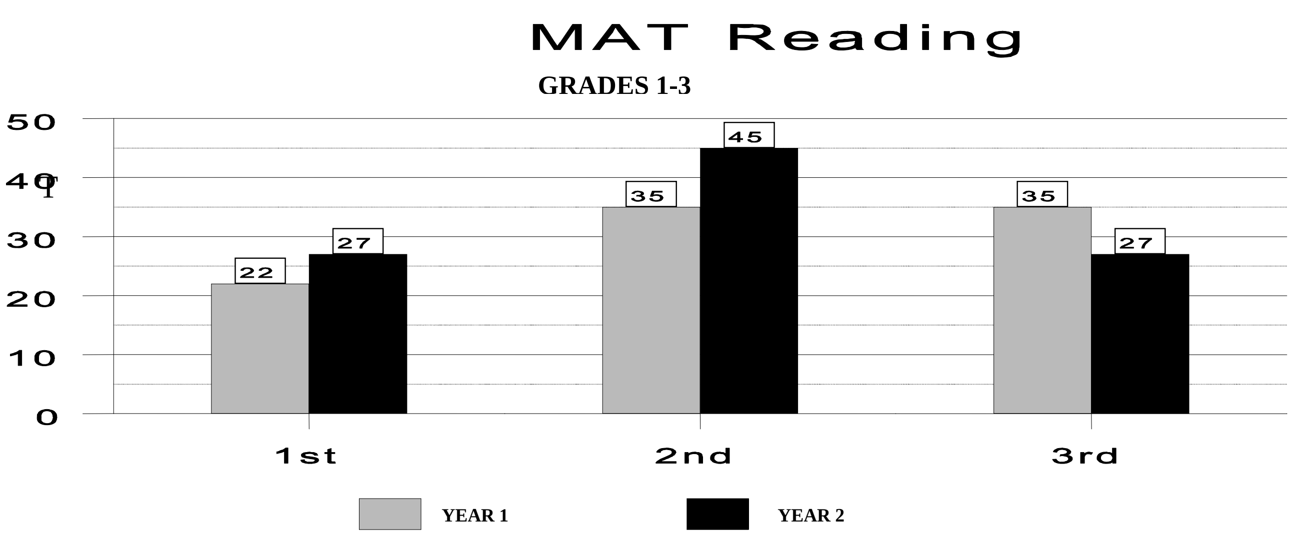
Discipline Statistics

Discipline Problems	Percentage
Drug & Alcohol Free	100%
Unwed Parenthood	0%
Sexually Transmitted Disease	0%
Criminal Involvement	0%

The Metropolitan Aptitude Test scores during the research period demonstrated that students may enter the Sankofa at one level, but show statistically significant growth thereafter (Sankofa Shule 1997, p. 3). In fact, a comparison of MAT scores during this period showed statistically significant improvement for first, second, and third grade students (See Table 2). The total reading scores for students across all grades indicated significant changes in the reading skills of Sankofa students.

Table 2.

MAT Reading Scores



* MAT scores went down during the second year during the inclusion of special education students.

The Sankofa teachers, as reflected by the following statements, noted a decrease in student disciplinary problems, as well as a difference in the type of disciplinary problems as compared to the traditional teaching environments. Pursuant to the Sankofa Parent Contract, which each parent must sign prior to a child's admission to the school; students with persistent disciplinary problems at the school had their behavior corrected with one day of a parent or both parents shadowing his, her, or their child through their class day as per this agreement.

Baba Anthony (Social Studies teacher):
I just think the school doesn't allow for much deviation outside of what's proper in behavior…..Cursing, disrespecting teachers, that kind of stuff is almost unheard of. So, I think that the philosophy and the curriculum have a lot to do with it as well.

Baba Marcus (Logic/Mathematics teacher):
I have to agree with Baba Anthony. I mean the fights that I saw when I was teaching in [another] elementary school where they had something totally different from what we would call fights here. A fight here might be a push and then the other student touches the student back, but after that it's over. At Sankofa, our problems are students who are talking too much, or students that might be talking out of turn. That, again, probably goes back to children being energetic, where public schools might call them hyperactive or whatever.

To many at the Sankofa, the school and parental connections, allowed the students at the school to make academic progress. By 1998, Sankofa's primary mathematics curriculum, *African Mathematical Genius, Giri So*, was ready for publication after being implemented at the school. With the assistance of consultants on curricula and teaching methodology, Sankofa Shule's test results from the standardized Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) rose from 70% below the 50th percentile at the beginning of the first year to 70% above the 50th percentile within three years! That same year Sankofa Shule was hailed by *U.S. News and World Report* (April 27, 1998) as "one of the educational powerhouses of charter schools" in the United States. The school was featured in *The Wall Street Journal* (February 7, 1996) and in many other articles, studies and newspapers. Recognizing the "interdependent nature of the relationship" between families and schools, Sankofa valued parents as essential partners in the education process. This approach recognized the significance of families and the contributions of schools as a necessary framework for working together in "complementary efforts toward common goals" to maximize success for students as learners (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). The Sankofa parents' common cultural experiences with the teachers, staff, and the administrator of the school helped to form a bond.

Implications

Sankofa supported involvement of African American parents through policies, programs, and practices that were effective for the teaching and learning environment. The teachers at Sankofa viewed the positive benefits of parental involvement. As a byproduct of their participation, parents benefited by taking time to observe the classroom dynamics and by becoming partners in their children's educational process. Family involvement—the involvement connection—between the school and home needs to be clearer and faster. The parents, guardians, and other family members need to know that they are welcome in school—the marketplace—for their children's education.

While there are various kinds of family involvement, taking many forms and serving different purposes, the goal at Sankofa, was to maximize potential for effective parent involvement. Parents were in the school daily, driving the school bus, and acting as teaching assistants, often tutoring their own children. Parental involvement allowed both parents and teachers to be participants in creating new academic standards, aligning curriculum and assessments with the new standards, creating environments supporting reform, holding their school accountable for results, transforming professional development, involving the parents and the community, and fostering incentives for interagency cooperation to fulfill the needs of all students in their care.

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Team Teaching School Law

Article of Best Practice

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Graduate students preparing themselves for a career in school administration are typically apprehensive about the legal issues they will face in their first administrative position. In particular, student discipline problems and the increasing prevalence of parents' willingness to support their children's bad behavior force the novice administrator to examine his or her capacity to deal with discipline problems when new to the role of supervisor, dean, assistant principal, or principal. The issue of disciplining and or releasing tenured teachers who are incompetent or marginally effective also increases apprehension for beginning administrators. They realize the teachers' union will do its best to protect its members. And they usually have some personal experiences regarding the misuse of negotiated contractual issues such as sick days, professional days, or personal leave days. When observing violations by colleagues and seeing no action taken by school administrators, students of school law become concerned about how they will be able to deal with teacher issues effectively as administrators.

After teaching school law for the first time, the author believed that there had to be a more effective way to reach these students rather than the traditional methods of didactic teaching. His public school experience brought him in contact with a high school teacher, Raymond Rogina, who taught business law and sponsored a mock court competition team. Rogina had been the teachers' union president and had chaired the Business Education Department. Vanko proposed team teaching the school law course with Rogina. Vanko's professional background included high school positions as a counselor, dean, assistant principal and principal followed by positions in a K-12 district as associate superintendent and superintendent. With their diverse backgrounds, they asked, "Why not team-teach in a graduate program for budding administrators?" They discussed the idea of team teaching school law with the dean and permission was given.

The instructors developed the syllabus to meet the Illinois Principal Standards and Illinois School Leaders Standards (which parallel the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards). Classroom activities were designed to bring "real life" administrative experiences to their Aurora University graduate students. They focused on the students' need for legal knowledge, behavioral characteristics, and situational experiences in order to meet the challenges of their first administrative positions.

Four course goals were developed. The first goal was to provide classroom experiences that demonstrated the need for teamwork through a collegial working relationship with other administrators and teachers. Second, present-day school legal issues would be thoroughly investigated along with an analysis of their historical evolution. Third, classroom activities would be related to the hard issues that new administrators face. And last, the students would be taught how to access new legal developments, emphasizing the need to become "lifelong school legal learners." Each of these goals will be explained.

Team Work/Collegial Environment

Vanko is a former school district superintendent and Rogina is a high school business education teacher and past teachers' association president; thus they were on opposite sides in negotiations on compensation and working conditions. Students are surprised and impressed that the authors, with their different backgrounds, are able to work together in discussing the sensitive issues of student discipline, teacher evaluation, and contractual grievances. While legal areas such as tort liability, the court system, board authorities, sources of law, religion, and discrimination are not so contentious, administrative/teacher differences continue to be a major struggle in administration and faculty relations. Thus, the authors' demonstration of these cooperative behaviors gives each student an opportunity to see teamwork and a collegial relationship in practice.

Case Brief

One of the course requirements used for assessment purposes is the "Case Brief." Students are expected to analyze eight school law cases in a one-page brief format consisting of *(1) Citation, (2) Level of court, (3) Facts of the case, (4) Legal issues, and (5) Significance of the case.* Leading Supreme Court decisions and recent state appellate decisions comprise the list of cases from which students choose. Students are instructed to use Internet search engines as one method of acquiring the actual court opinion and additional links designed to provide insight into the case chosen. Other websites are provided to aid and assist the students in their research. Their textbook comes with a CD that highlights case law in Illinois and significant national precedents. Instructors of the class constantly edit the list of eligible cases in an attempt to provide a balance between established precedent and emerging issues.

As cases are to be presented in class, students who briefed a particular case are asked to select and then present their analysis. Since most cases involve multiple people working on the brief, lively discussions take place among the students with the authors guiding the discussions. Students quickly learn that most cases are not always clear and concise. Difficult and complex issues that administrators deal with are best served by working cooperatively with others in arriving at the best way to solve problems.

The case method taught by the instructors differs significantly from that used traditionally by law school professors. Law schools emphasize a traditional Socratic method of teaching, particularly with first-year students, whereby professors question a particular student on the nuance of the case briefed that day. Almost always, this method of teaching diverts into a series of hypothetical questions that stretch far beyond the facts or legal issues presented by the case for which the student prepared. The goal pursued through this form of questioning and debate is to train a student to think like an attorney; that is to say, a student must be able to learn both sides of a legal issue to argue effectively for his or her client. Just as important, the student is trained through a series of pointed, and often legally complex hypothetical questions, to spot issues and think creatively. By way of contrast, the "Case Brief" method taught by the school law instructors emphasizes collegial learning and efficient problem solving. Less emphasis is placed on training a person's mind how to think and argue both sides of an issue.

Mock Trial

A time-honored method of learning and assessment in legal education is the mock trial hearing. Feedback and course evaluation implies a real desire for potential administrators to experience and comprehend the process and procedures of typical school litigation such as teacher dismissal, student expulsion, and teacher grievance. Students are required to participate in a mock hearing, and in a very real way, learn the idiosyncrasies of an ill-structured administrative problem.

Students are given directions to present the most effective case possible in advocating for the client they represent. Some class time is allotted over several sessions to develop a theory, organize evidence, draft questions, and anticipate rebuttal. Instructors are present to counsel, quiz, cajole, and play "devil's advocate" as the case is developed. A simplified "Rules of Evidence" document is distributed; students are asked to adhere to the guidelines and apply different strategies as a means of presenting an organized, cogent case.

In each of the mock trial hearings, seven students are asked to judge the case. Each must develop the critical issues of the presentation and then present his or her views to the other six. Discussion follows and a decision is rendered. This discussion takes place in full view of the entire class. Full class discussion follows on the case presented and an evaluation is given for each side by the seven student jury. There are always disagreements! Again, critical analysis of issues and the ability to listen to others are reinforced by the authors.

The mock trial concept is also popular with law school students, but again, the focus of this project in the school law class is vastly different from how law schools teach trial advocacy. In particular, law schools spend a great deal of time focusing on the nuances of the rules of evidence and methods of introducing documents and tangible exhibits before a judge or jury. Moreover, law school students are trained on how to ask questions. While this may seem like a relatively simple concept, law students are surprised at how difficult it is to question a witness in a manner that is both consistent with the rules of evidence and easy to understand. These concepts are not as important in the school law class taught by the instructors. Rather, the idea is to expose students to the advocacy process and present them with a condensed illustration of how typical legal issues they may face as an administrator may be argued and resolved.

Briefing Paper

At the end of the project, each student is required to write a 6- to 10- page briefing paper on a topical legal problem facing his or her school district. Group papers are encouraged and must reflect an expanded investigation of the topic. Typical topics involve special education, student discipline, discrimination, sexual harassment, and drug testing. A recommended solution that is legally supported is required in the conclusion of the paper.

Experts in the Field

To acquaint graduate students with the legal system and proper legal procedures, a series of experts are brought into the class as guest lecturers. A state legislator discusses: (a) the law-making process; (b) lobbyists and their impact on legislation; (c) educational issues of the day (school funding is common); and (d) the importance of school administrators sharing educational interests with politicians.

The legislative visit is followed by a visit from a representative of the County School Regional Office, which is part of the State Board of Education. Here the responsibilities that these agencies have in administrative law (a key source of school law) are discussed. Most teachers and administrators have little knowledge of the scope of responsibilities and authorities that these offices have under the law.

A practicing school attorney is brought in to discuss his or her area of expertise. The main point instructors emphasize to the students is that the attorney researches issues before giving legal advice. It is extremely important for administrators to understand that they have time to review the law and talk to an attorney before making critical decisions, or both. Students are advised to share with the attorney what the desired educational outcome will be so that the attorney may describe how to legally implement such an outcome.

Finally, because of the continual changes in special education, a local Director of Special Education presents procedures to be followed under Section 504 and state/federal rules and regulations. Due process hearing procedures are discussed thoroughly. Since there are always special education teachers in class, they are able to support the director's position on these important issues. In general, teachers usually have limited knowledge of the complexities school districts face in educating special education students.

Preparation for the Difficult Administrative Problems

First-time administrators face legal confrontations with students, teachers, and contractual issues. The instructors have developed cases in each of these areas for class participation through mock hearings.

In the teacher dismissal case, *Big Timber School v. Fred Hammond*, students advocate for either the district or Fred Hammond to determine whether a 10-year veteran teacher should be dismissed after an alleged failure of remediation. Participants assume the roles of attorneys, department chair, assistant principal, students, fellow teacher, and the respondent himself. Each side is provided with pertinent information and a series of affidavits for the witnesses in the case.

Big Timber School District v. Bobbie Friend is a student expulsion case involving a determination of whether a student violated the drug policy of the school district when caught with a controlled substance in a backpack. The student's denial of knowing that such a substance was in the bag and the fact that he was delivering the bag as a favor raises the question of how delicate an expulsion case can be. Class participants take the roles of students, teachers, the dean, parents, and lawyers in an attempt to recreate the type of hearing presented in school board rooms across America.

Laura McCloud v. Big Timber School District provides students with the opportunity to experience a typical union-management grievance that winds its way to binding arbitration. In this case, McCloud is "docked" two days' pay when she fails to return from Thanksgiving break because of a major snowstorm. Given the debatable language that compromises the emergency personal leave clause of the professional agreement, students quickly learn the necessity for clarity in contract language and consistency in its application. In this case, class participants assume the roles of grievant, union president, superintendent, and board negotiator, as well as the lawyers who must present the case.

The aforementioned cases are presented in the final sessions of the class. Lively discussion pertaining to the theories presented by both sides, the manner of presentation, and the credibility of the witnesses serves as a culmination of the mock hearing. Board policies and the teacher/board negotiated agreement are thoroughly reviewed in these cases. Students learn the importance of these two legal documents.

Future Changes and Keeping Current

Students are taught the changing dynamics of school law. There are three primary sources of legal information for practicing administrators in the field. The most common is attendance at professional meetings where these professional organizations present changes in that particular field for the benefit of the teacher or administrator.

A more thorough source of legal information is an annual law conference that is sponsored by many firms for their clients. The authors attend an annual law conference sponsored by *Klein, Thorpe, and Jenkins, Ltd.* of Chicago, Illinois. With sponsor permission, copies of the legal updates provided at the conference are copied and distributed to students to demonstrate the ever-evolving patterns in school law. These materials demonstrate the significance of the changes that take place on an annual basis.

Technology keeps improving each year as an instructional aid and the class emphasizes its continued use in the future. As students research leading school law precedent cases as part of the course requirements, the instructors blend the use of modern technology with more traditional methods of researching the law. As discussed earlier, websites and CDs are always available resources that the students have at their fingertips.

In conclusion, students are always taught to follow the law in their professional decisions. To do so, one must know the law or know where to go to find answers to legal questions. In a constantly changing environment, students need to be taught to think of themselves as “life-long school law learners.”

Course Evaluation

One area of concern for the instructors is the extreme competitiveness of the students in the mock trial. They want the decision to go their way! Throughout the preparation for the trials, the need for decorum and proper court behavior is preached.

Students find the pace of the class fast-paced and interesting. Their formal evaluations of the school law course are among the highest in the Master’s degree program. Guests remark about the interest and enthusiasm they observe in students’ questions and desire for practical solutions to the legal problems they observe in their school districts. In addition, 99% of the students in this program have passed the State of Illinois standardized administrative examinations since 1995. The state average is 94%.

From Walking the Walk to Talking the Talk: A School Superintendent Turns Assistant Professor

Commentary

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It's 6:30 a.m. and I have recently arrived at my new office. It is not the large quarters with board table and swivel leather chairs I left last week, but I do have a computer, nice cabinets, desk, and surprisingly (at least from what several friends at other universities have shared) a window. This week is different from last week in more ways than just office furnishings. Just days ago I was talking with students and school board members, reviewing schedules, putting together summer work orders, and approving invoices. Today there are no upset parents, overflowing toilets to repair, or lockers slamming in the hall. After all, as the superintendent of schools, you are where the buck stops. If it breaks, you must fix it or find someone who can, all the while monitoring instruction, finances, safety, and curriculum.

I am unsure of what to do with myself at this early of an hour, so I move to reflective journaling, an activity in which we all received instruction in our professional development courses, though few of us in the education profession have had the minutes each day to do more than scrawl a few items onto our ever-growing to-do lists.

I have moved from a job as a school administrator to one in which I will help teach the school administrators of tomorrow. I am excited about the prospect of new opportunities, but know I will miss the day-to-day challenges and joys of children, parents, teachers, and community members. I have traded them for lectures, grading, committees, and research. The work will be just as hectic, but it will involve more adults that children, something I will truly miss. It is exciting, however, to think about having a positive impact on the careers of our future school leaders, and, thus, the children they reach.

This afternoon I completed the first day of my first class at my new university. Before class I felt the same way I did that very first day teaching second grade—nauseous. The class seemed to go well—everyone was attentive and involved, and no one rushed to withdraw from the course during the break. I realized during this first class that, just like the students I have previously taught and teachers with whom I have worked, these students bring with them unique experiences that will enrich their educational careers.

As I look back over my university experiences thus far, I would like to share a few of the tips I have learned with others who, like me, will leap from the world of PK-12 education into the world of higher education. Each suggestion is followed by comments from the head of the department of which I am a new member. James Vornberg, Professor and Educational Administration Department Chair, has over 30 years of experience at the university. He shares additional information about the tips for new faculty members from the supervisory perspective.

Find Your Classrooms, the Bathroom, Vending Machines

New Assistant Professor: Several times during the first week I found myself turned around on the mid-sized campus. Thankfully, students and colleagues were helpful but, even after a tour, the brick buildings all began to look the same. Carrying a university map worked for me. I turned to it after receiving my first $30 parking ticket.

Department Chair: After being on my campus for many years, I know about many things located there and I don't give a second thought to them, yet the new faculty member joining our department family doesn't even know that many of the resources for solving problems exist. As friends and colleagues, the other faculty members and I need to anticipate the needs of new faculty members and inform them of these important resources. Some of these are as simple as the library collections available; others are more hidden, such as special training in computers or the distance learning equipment they may be using in their classes in just a few days.

Scout Out Technology

New Assistant Professor: During my first week on campus I did not check out the computer system I would be using for presentations. I learned during my first class session that several of my files would not open on the computer that was much more advanced than my home system. Thanks to a fast-working technology employee, my files were burned onto a CD and able to be opened during the second half of class. The first semester I attempted to solve future problems by saving to a disc and e-mailing presentations and materials to myself. Our chair recently purchased jump drives for all faculty members, allowing us to easily access technological resources.

Department Chair: The arrival of new faculty means that additional resources are needed for their teaching and research chores. They are normally the first on the list for a new computer purchase unless we have been fortunate enough to have a recent addition for the faculty line that is being replaced by the new professor. In a best-case scenario, we have asked the new member what he or she wants or needs in his or her technology dreams and have it ordered, delivered, and ready to install when he or she arrives.

Find Out What's Due and When

New Assistant Professor: Luckily, our department chair disbursed a semester department calendar. He e-mails us regularly and keeps us informed of decisions from higher-ups. Monthly department meetings are held with opportunities to clarify upcoming events. If you are not as fortunate, ask. People often forget that the "newbies" don't know about the history and importance of events.

Department Chair: As a new chair with three new faculty arriving several years ago, I asked myself how I could best help them start off on the right foot. Information that could be easily retrieved seemed to be the right answer, so I assembled a department faculty handbook, something we had never previously done. Part of that book included informational items that I had learned while working at the university the past years. A great deal of the information was concerned with our faculty's programs, curriculum, expected student learning outcomes, and general procedures that we followed in a number of our programs including exams, internships, distance learning, and advising. Now, with several years of experience, we have a CD that contains all curriculum documents including general outlines and syllabi examples for faculty members to consult as they set up their courses.

I have found conducting advisement training, not only with new faculty but with all faculty, beneficial. At the graduate level, students expect more than a cursory conversation in their advisement sessions, and it is important that all faculty members share similar information with students. Similarly, it is necessary to convey to new faculty members special situations in program requirements, transfer of courses, and graduate school expectations.

Once the faculty handbook was completed, I realized we also needed a similar, but less extensive, document for adjunct faculty to inform them of similar issues, teaching arrangements, and program help. This also assists them as they begin their teaching assignments with minimal disruption in their regular work schedules. We have several training sessions on-line that both regular and adjunct faculty can take advantage of in their offices or homes in preparation for future issues.

Get Ready for Discourse

New Assistant Professor: Our department had a two-day planning session before the fall semester began. I had entered from a workplace with the "Git 'er done" attitude of the obnoxious Cable Guy. We met briefly, divided tasks, and then dispersed to accomplish them. The university atmosphere is much different. Our department members sit down together and discuss. The first few hours of the planning session I almost sat on my hands. I did not know what to do with myself. I expected us to outline our to-do list, not actually talk. It has been a welcomed surprise to hear in-depth discussion about the goals, vision, and accomplishments of the department.

Another pleasant surprise has been the leadership of our department chair in having mini sessions before scheduled meetings to discuss the road to tenure. It has been helpful to hear the experiences of other faculty members a year or two further ahead on the tenure track. One session in particular has led to a collaborative research project that will hopefully benefit our vitas as well as the knowledge base.

Department Chair: One of our best solidifying departmental activities has been an annual two-day retreat, held away from the campus just prior to the start of the fall semester. By leaving the office and phones behind, we are able to focus on what needs to be accomplished. We build a camaraderie that we would not have established in an on-campus conference room. We review our mission and vision statements, discuss issues more extensively, set goals, plan for annual outcomes, participate in training, bring in outside consultants, and set our agendas. We get to know each other, especially the new faculty members who may have just joined us. We stay at a hotel overnight, allowing for a different setting that is relaxed but away from the distractions of our daily work so we can focus on what we need to accomplish. This has helped us build our department's culture, friendship, and what we are all about. Everyone takes a leadership piece of the program. It has been a fun time for our department and a way of building bonds. After the first time we held this retreat, one of my faculty members commented that we accomplished more in the two days than we had in years of department meetings.

Begin Getting to Know Your Colleagues and Others Who Share Your Subject Matter

New Assistant Professor: As a new assistant professor in a new state, many of my personal contacts have been severed by distance. Picking up the phone and calling a colleague about your former state's laws won't help you in a new state. Fortunately, my department thinks of itself much like a family. Everyone has been willing to answer questions.

Department Chair: With relocation to a different area or a different state, new contacts must be developed, especially when changing roles. In the professoriate there is also a national venue for network development. Many new faculty members need to develop those scholarly contacts and do so best by being introduced by their more-experienced colleagues at state professor conferences and national groups such as the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration or the University Council of Educational Administration. Even changing states requires one to become familiar with new superintendent or principal organizations. Attendance at workshops and meetings of these groups is extremely important for new faculty and their department head should help to find funds to support their presence at such events. New faculty are usually expected to begin their research and scholarly agendas their first year, so these contacts help to identify venues for writing and publications as well as scholarly presentations.

New Opportunities

I recently shared with the department secretary how my new opportunities are much different from the past challenges of school administration and how much I missed the students at my former school district. Today she told me the toilet broke and as she was calling someone to repair it, she thought of me. Perhaps you can never take the old school administrator out of the new assistant professor.

As I interact with new students this term, I hope I can teach them to get to know students, effectively communicate with faculty members and parents, and learn how to fix a toilet.

Author Guidelines

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