

How Competency in the Ten Teacher Standards Improves Leadership Through the Alignment of
the Administrative Standards

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Abstract

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Kyle J. Carey

Under the Supervision of Lisa A. Emendorfer, MSE

This paper will make connections between the administrative standards and the practicum experiences that prospective administrator's encounter. It will contain multiple examples of work performed as a teacher that relate to an administrative standard, works created specifically to show the competence an administrator should possess, and include the importance of practicum hours and how they prepare an administrator for the tasks ahead. It will also describe the leadership skills and positions the practicum hours have to offer. Practicum hours give aspiring administrators field experiences that allow them to practice their abilities as an administrative candidate and leader. Practicum hours also aid an aspiring administrator's ability to be an educational leader within a school district by providing additional leadership opportunities. It is important to understand that administrators are, in many ways, the same as teachers, just with a different audience. Items of high importance in the teaching profession cross over into administration such as context, ethics, family, community relations, and instructional programming.

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Kyle J. Carey
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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This educational project addresses how competency in Wisconsin's Ten Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure facilitate leadership skills while aligning with the Seven Standards for Administrator Development and Licensure. Administrators have an obligation to understand the methods in which educators instruct pupils and to understand how being competent in the ten teacher standards aids in this understanding. The seven administrative standards provide aspiring administrators with the tools necessary to be effective administrators who, in turn, foster effective teachers.

Alignment occurs between specific teacher and administrator standards. Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure Five states, "The teacher uses understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation." This teacher standard aligns with Administrative Standard Three (Instructional Program) which states, "The administrator manages by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to pupil learning and staff professional growth." Students in the classroom work together to accomplish tasks, and this standard of teaching allows students to engage with each other and actively participate on both the individual and group level. Teachers also must work individually to teach a classroom of students and also work together within a building to accomplish greater academic achievement for all students. An

administrator must let the staff members know that they are a group of individual professionals trying to accomplish the same task for the sake of the school.

Alignment continues between teacher and administrator standards. Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure Eight states, "The teacher uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the pupil." This teacher standard aligns with Administrator Standard Three (Instructional Program) which states, "The administrator leads by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional programming conducive to pupil learning and staff professional growth." Informal assessment tends to be viewed as a helpful tool that can be used to further develop the skills that are emerging. Informal assessment gives staff a goal to reach in an effort to become better educators, providing teachers criteria that administration wishes to achieve.

An administrative leader must motivate teachers to improve. Informal assessment is a great tool for principals to use to help teachers assess their own levels of a specific topic. Informal assessment is largely ignored by some veteran teachers simply because they have not been trained in the area. Offering professional development time for teachers will help sharpen assessment skills and strategies. Principals need to be educated in the various ways to assess students and pass their knowledge on to their staff through school-wide professional development. A student who understands how he/she will be assessed is more likely to improve learning skills. This infers that a principal's ability to provide educators with professional growth in assessment methods is conducive to pupil learning. During

Individual(ized) Education/Program(IEP's) meetings with both parents and students, administrators and teachers inform all parties of how assessment will be handled in specific classrooms, which often improves overall performance.

Further alignment continues between teacher and administrator standards. Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure Ten states, "The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support pupil learning and well-being and acts with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner." This teacher standard aligns with Administrative Standard Five (Family Community Relations) which states, "The administrator models collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources." Community concerns are addressed at school board meetings, where administrators and school boards address concerns and develop ways in which to resolve them.

It also aligns with Administrator Standard Six (Ethics) which states, "The administrator acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner." Effective administrators show integrity and fairness while dealing with school related issues. Principals need to interact with many stakeholders, parents, taxpayers, unions, school board members, and most importantly the students. Interacting with these groups of people with integrity and in a fair and ethical manner is vital to ensure a smooth and productive district.

Lastly, Wisconsin Teacher Standard Ten aligns with Administrator Standard Seven (Context) which states, "The administrator understands, responds to, and interacts with the larger political, social, economical, legal, and cultural context that affects schooling." During

the practicum hours completed throughout the administrative training process, one sees that the school is a large part of the community. The principal often acts as a link between the needs of the teacher and the school board, as well as the taxpayer.

Schools have been facing budget crises, making it essential for administrators to reach out to the community in an effort to let the public know what the school is battling. Practicum hours in grant writing are a straightforward way to show the community that the school is actively attempting to alleviate some of the tax burden. A prospective administrator recognizes that the community wants to be involved and would often choose to help the school district in any way possible. Reaching out to the community demonstrates fiscal responsibility, and generally improves public relations. A bond must be made between all stakeholders of the school district. The stakeholders of a school district are, but not limited to, teachers, administration, parents, students, local businesses, and other local taxpayers. With the rising cost of property taxes, taxpayers are increasingly wary of how their money is being spent and has the school actively attempting to reduce the tax burden. Furthermore, it is important for an administrator to show the importance of the local taxpayer's contribution by attending banquets, PTA meetings, and other events.

Statement of the Problem

What knowledge, skills, and dispositions does an administrators need to posses to become an effective leader of educators?

Definition of Terms

Practicum- experience through guided training.

Delimitations of Research

The delimitations for this paper are that of a rural community practicum experience, as well as experience obtained by completing the administrative portfolio through the Educational Administration Program at UW Platteville. Even though most of the practicum hours experienced through the administration program would apply to any district regardless of its size, it should be noted that they were obtained in a rural district with less than 600 pupils. Furthermore, the practicum experience was obtained by service in a district that is primarily middle class, Caucasian families, in Southwest Wisconsin.

Method of Approach

The method of approach to this paper was a hands-on practicum experience within administrative duties. Combining teacher standards and administrative standards with practicum hours by the use of an internship type model is a good way for aspiring administrators to gain the experience and skills needed to become an effective leader.

As an educational leader one should be on top of new and innovative data based activities such as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) and Professional Learning Communities (PLC's). PLC's are a good way for administrators to reach out to their staff and keep them focused on the goals of the school.

Chapter II

Practicum Hours and Their Importance in Developing Effective Administrators

There is no substitute for hands-on training. Practicum experience should be valued highly by those seeking an administrative licensure. The chance to experience firsthand what it means to be an administrator is an experience that cannot be taken lightly. Often the experience can add to a candidate's character and disposition and sometimes even causing the candidate to face the reality that administration is not what was originally thought. This project paper contains examples of experiences performed within practicum hours during the administrator licensure process. All of the experiences have played a role in the rise of professionalism. These efforts are intended to show competency in the administrative standards. The process also describes how practicum hours and the work completed for the administrative portfolio have given the candidate the ability to be a leader among teachers, communities, and colleagues.

An administrator must be able to research and take a positive stand in programs that he or she believe can positively impact education, such as PLC's. As an administrator, PLC's should be initiated. By gaining practicum hours and being trained for PLC's, a strong leader may foster a culture for collaboration, focus on student achievement, and ensure that all students learn. The theory of PLC's is the collaborative work of staff when the objective is implementing new content for the purpose of increasing student learning. It is about thinking, planning, designing lessons, generating instructional materials, and studying student responses to these efforts. PLC's are designed to share beliefs, values, and the vision of the school.

Creating connections to the families and businesses within the community can enhance the relationship between school districts and the public. One way to connect to the community is by writing grants. Administrators need to stay focused when writing the grant and be sure to include in the proposal, how the grant will help enhance student learning. Grant writing should never be about how the grant will help the teacher, administrator or school, but rather how it will enhance pupil education. It is likely that most grants an administrator writes will be rejected. However, it is important to never give up and always strive to keep the district growing.

A technology education teacher implementing clubs and programs such as the Skills USA program adds value to both the technology education program and the school district as a whole. Administrators and teachers must learn to step back and let students choose their path. An administrator or teacher must be more of a facilitator and sounding board. Implementing the Skills USA program is a way to allow teachers and administrators to be more of a delegator than an authoritarian. The motivation for starting a Skills USA Program within a school district is to promote a higher level of trade education beyond the classroom. As a Skills USA Chapter advisor, one must lead by example and encourage each student to follow the path of his or her own choosing. Students stand out as individuals by showing educators their strengths. Administrators and teachers must trust that the students will come through for themselves in the end and that failure is a step along the path to success. They must also acknowledge that failure sometimes occurs during the process, and that failure is part of the individual growth if learning results. Often failure fosters a higher educational experience for students than success, so long as failure is the exception and not the rule.

Practicum experiences give prospective administrators the opportunity to experience what the administrator's job will entail, and the coursework in the administrative program provides them with the resources to be successful. The coursework included the readings of *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun* by Wess Roberts and *Gardening in the Minefield, A Survival Guide for School Administrators* by Laurel Schmidt. However, it is the actual experience of the practicum hours that leads to the necessary skills to become an effective leader. Practicum hours allow candidates to experience real situations, while having the opportunity to run their decisions past an administrator for ultimate approval.

Working through the Educational Administration program allows the prospective administrator to obtain a multitude of practicum hours. The administrative candidate enters the school building with the administration during many situations, while experiencing firsthand how the system works. Some prospective administrators are fortunate enough to facilitate staff meetings when the administrator is out, and are given tasks to complete which could include school climate surveys. The climate survey helps determine where the school is heading and allows administrators to come up with plans to facilitate district change. Strengths may include a high energy and devoted staff, high graduation rate, high ACT scores, while weaknesses may include a lack of technology training or too much student free time. In this instance an effective administrator would take a look at the course offered, as well as the course scheduling, to try to place course offerings during possible student study hall times. Furthermore, it would be necessary to find professional development which targets technology training for teachers. If the budget permits, this training could come from outside the district and include bringing in a professional to train teachers during professional development time.

Or as often is the case during financially hard times, the principal may send a group of teachers for training allowing them to bring back their knowledge and share it with the rest of the staff. Lack of technology is often listed as one of the school's most common weaknesses, even though a larger weakness is that teacher technology training is often less than 15% of a school's technology budget. Too often technology is purchased by a school district and not used to its fullest potential due to a lack of staff training. Effective administrators need to know that technology is only as good as the people that are using it. It is fiscally responsible for school districts to spend more money on staff training and less money on hardware and software, giving teachers the capability to use the technology to its fullest potential.

Practicum hours give the candidate experiences as an administrator to showcase strong leadership abilities. Practicum hours also aid the candidate to be an educational leader within the school district by developing additional leadership skills that the majority of educators do not possess. The administrative candidate leads by example and stands among colleagues by stepping into leadership roles whenever necessary. The candidate is able to answer questions other educators might have in regards to budget or contractual issues.

Prospective administrators experience the rigorous process of interviewing applicants for educational positions through the practicum hours experienced in their own districts. As an administrative candidate, learning how to hire effective, quality educators can have a large impact on the schools performance. It is necessary to take into account many factors before choosing a perspective new educator. Does he or she know the material he or she will be asked to teach? Having perspective educators teach a mini lesson during their interview helps gauge a teacher's competence before letting them have their own classroom. Does interviewee's

vision and beliefs fit into the mold and core beliefs of the community and school district? Many equally qualified educators would be happier in different districts so it is important to match the fit for teacher, administrator, and the community.

By completing over 300 practicum hours, it is inevitable that a strong relationship will develop between the administration and the principal candidate. This relationship allows prospective administrators to analyze questions that most educators do not have access to, as well as to see the inner workings of the administration. The candidate may often become a link between the staff and the administration.

Chapter III

Conclusions and Recommendations

The administrative practicum gives prospective administrators the opportunity to see how things work from within. Furthermore, it provides a plethora of accomplishments that will give the candidates the opportunity to promote themselves with a high level of confidence as future administrators. The administrative practicum process also gives prospective administrators the resources that aid in becoming an educational leader in a school district. School surveys help prospective administrators figure out the strengths and weaknesses of a school building or district that will help them design intervention programs that are pertinent to specific schools and students.

Aspiring administrator candidates develop the knowledge and ability to initiate educational changes when they see a district deficiency in instructional programming. Effective administrators are also able to implement new course offerings at their district to help fill gaps and meet new initiatives. As a result of working on the administrative practicum, they are able to recognize out-of-date curriculum within course offerings and determine if they are not rigorous enough or did not provide enough higher level thinking. They are able to research curriculum, create curriculum, and implement curriculum while working on the administrative practicum.

The administration must be at the forefront when implementing positive change in the district. It is crucial that administrators work with teachers to initiate positive change by actively participating in any training and policy change. One such change may include the need to make sure that teachers offer real world experiences as part of their task. Principals can

learn a lot from staff as to what positive change needs to take place, as well as the best way to implement it. Offering professional development time, department meeting time and seminars are just a few of the ways that the administration can assist their staff as they implement positive change in their program or to the district as a whole.

All school administrators should pay close attention to the curriculum that is being taught in their school district and make sure it adds value to the district, community, and most importantly, the students. Change is often an uphill battle; however, the world, community, parents, jobs, and students are constantly changing. In order to operate an effective school, curriculum needs to change with it.

The practicum hours experienced in the administrative program give candidates the opportunity to observe all sides of education. There is no substitute for experience, and practicum hours are the single most important, effective way for candidates to gain the necessary experience to become effective administrators and leaders within their district.