

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATOR

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATOR

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An Educational Project

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by

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## Abstract

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATOR

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This Educational Project centers around two things, the administrative practicum hours and the electronic portfolio, which were completed as a part of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville's Educational Administration Certification Program. The practicum hours encompass experiences from a wide range of administrative duties, from being the acting principal to creating a new master schedule. The 300+ hours spent in the administrative field has equipped candidates with the skills needed to become a successful administrator.

Among the 300 practicum hours there have been many opportunities to experience various administrative situations. Real experiences are what prepare candidates for the real life, and that is what the practicum hours have done. Candidates feel more prepared because of already experiencing things first hand. One example is an Intervention Program that a candidate helped start at Southwestern Middle School. In order to help more students succeed, they are tracking grades and meeting with students one-on-one each week. The idea is that early intervention will decrease the number of failing students. These hours correlate with standard three, which states "The administrator leads by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to pupil learning and staff professional growth." Practicum hours, such as this Intervention Program, and the electronic portfolio are proof that the candidate is not only prepared for future in administration, but also is an educational leader in their school.

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## **Introduction**

After several years in education, most teachers come to a point when they contemplate that next step in the educational ladder, becoming an administrator. Some are ready to accept the challenge and move easily into the role, while others decide to stick to teaching. Taking that leap to become an administrator requires one to complete an administration certification program. A program with the proper components is critical in developing a successful administrator.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The problem to be addressed is, how does a candidate become a successful administrator?

## **Method and Procedures**

A candidate transforms from a teacher to an administrator through the completion of the 300 practicum hours. These hours encompass experiences from a wide range of administrative duties. The practicum hours center around the administrator standards, in which the Department of Public Instruction requires that a candidate “demonstrate proficient performance in the knowledge, skills and dispositions” in each of the seven standards (DPI, 2011). By proving competency in the standards, a candidate assures that he or she is prepared to become an administrator.

## **Summary of Results**

Becoming a successful administrator takes a lot of time and a lot of hard work. A candidate must be prepared to change the way he or she views the world of education. Through the practicum hours a candidate goes from being a teacher to being an educational leader. Even if a candidate does not become an administrator, he or she will be transformed into a better educator.

## **Administrative Standard 1: The Teaching Standards**

To be a truly successful administrator, a candidate must first be proficient in teaching, which is why administrator standard 1 includes all of the teacher standards. Since there are ten teacher standards the administrative standard 1 is broken down into standard 1.1, 1.2.

Teaching standard ten (administrative standard 1.10) requires that, “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.” The candidate proves competency in this standard with *Wildcat Mania*, an online middle school newspaper created with 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts students. Students write various articles, conduct interviews, and create quizzes and contests. Students then post the articles onto the school’s webpage to be viewed by other students, teachers, parents, and community members. By being proficient in the teaching standards, an administrator will be a resource and support for teachers. Supporting this activity, an administrator is not only helping the teachers, but also the students. The fact that students are creating articles that are being read by the mass public also allows for the learning of ethics, and what is and isn’t appropriate to publish. The entire process makes students look at things from a different perspective, which will allow them to learn and grow.

As an administrator, the candidate has learned the importance of flexibility. When this activity was first started the intention was to update the newspaper each month. This became difficult, as it took up too much class time that was needed for other items, so the newspaper was scaled back and was only updated every two to three months. Another aspect that made this undertaking easier was delegating some responsibilities to the students. As an administrator, one should delegate as much as possible and fully utilize the talents/strengths of their staff. Flexibility, good relationships, and delegation will help one become a successful administrator.

## **Practicum Hours**

Among the required 300 practicum hours there have been many opportunities to experience various administrative situations. Real experiences prepare candidates for real life, and that is what the practicum hours have accomplished. Candidates feel more prepared because of already experiencing things first hand. Serving as an acting principal for a day shows the candidate what it is truly like to be an administrator. Day to day, situations are constantly changing and new problems are presented. The more experiences a candidate can take into an administrative job assignment, the better off the candidate will be. Each experience helps shape a candidate into the administrator he or she wishes to become.

## **Administrative Standard 2: Test Analysis**

State testing is going to be a large part of an administrator's life. Aside from administering the tests, time needs to be taken to analyze the results. The candidate spent time helping with the analysis of results at the middle school level. The analysis in this case involved looking at the areas where students scored low and comparing the scores with current grades, curriculum, and past year's scores. Looking at tests results can be overwhelming at first, but if one has a system set up and has many people helping, the job is a lot easier. By analyzing test results and looking for gaps in curriculum, administrators and staff can work together toward a common goal: student achievement.

Working together on this task will enable a district to create a clear vision for the school. According to administrative standard 2, "The administrator leads by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by the school community." (DPI, 2011). By leading this process of evaluating and making changes to reach various goals one would be proving competency in this standard. Using a collaborative effort and involving many minds in this task will allow for growth within the school.

As an administrator, working with all the stakeholders to develop a common vision is going to be one of the keys to success. Having everyone know the vision and goals will allow the administrator to lead a school in the direction of those goals. Creating a vision or goal that is results-orientated and uses data will make it very easy to check for success. Each year one is able to re-evaluate and monitor for any needed changes. If this is continued annually, goals are constantly being monitored. When one goal is reached, a new one can take its place.

### **Administrative Standard 3: Intervention Program**

The candidate has spent many hours working on the Intervention Program at Southwestern Middle School. This program was developed by the candidate, co-teachers, and principal in order to help struggling students who do not qualify for special education services. The idea is that meeting one-on-one with those students and tracking them closely can help them become successful. Each Friday the candidate reviews grades and checks for students who are currently receiving a D or F in a class. Grades, along with teacher referral, determine the list of students to meet with the following week. One-on-one, the candidate talks to the students about their grades, work habits, organization, and participation. Together the teacher and student fill out a sheet to be sent home, in order to keep parents up to date. Some students will stay on the list and have a meeting week after week, and some only need guidance for a week or two at a time.

Planning, implementing, and revising this program demonstrates the candidate's competency in administrative standard 3, which states, "The administrator leads by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to pupil learning and staff professional growth" (DPI, 2011). Not only does it involve nurturing the school culture, but it also is an instructional program that promotes the growth of both students and staff. It is important to constantly work at improving programs that focus on student success, because by keeping student achievement in the forefront, teachers and administrators can better serve the needs of all students. "Schools should not wait until students fall far enough behind to qualify for special education to provide them with the help they need. Instead, schools should provide targeted and systematic interventions to all students as soon as they demonstrate the need" (Buffum, Matto, and Weber, 2010).

As an administrator, it is important to form relationships with all staff members, and students. By building the necessary relationships everyone can work together toward a common goal and vision. Administrators must make decisions that they feel are right and that benefit the students and staff. Growth of both students and staff should be the administrator's focus as a leader because if these two groups feel valued in the school they will be more productive.

### **Administrative Standard 4: Mentoring Program**

Another program the candidate has been involved in is mentoring. Until very recently, there wasn't any type of program set up for new teachers in the candidate's district. This past year, one was created in order to provide teachers more support and guidance when they begin working in the candidate's district. Whether someone is starting their first teaching job, or just moving to a new district, teachers need someone to guide them through the first year or two.

When acting as a mentor to these teachers, the candidate is there to offer advice and answer questions. When one teacher was struggling with classroom management the candidate offered ideas and shared a sample classroom management plan with the teacher. What works for one teacher may not automatically work for another, but in creating individualized management plans it helps to see what others are doing so there is a guide rather than starting from scratch. Also, just meeting from time to time and talking about how things are going can be a great stress relief to a new teacher. Being there to listen, and share stories from one's own first year, a mentor can help ease the stress of a new teacher. The first year of teaching, or even just the first year teaching a new class/subject, takes a lot of time and planning. Helping the teacher understand that the stress of the first year or two is something everyone goes through can help the new teacher see that the time put in is well worth it. Not only are the mentees better off, the mentors benefit as well. Being the mentoring teacher can improve the teaching of a veteran staff member. Through meeting and discussions the mentor will be forced to do some reflecting on one's practices and possibly improve some of them.

Practicum hours spent mentoring teachers would fall under administrative standard 4, which states, "The administrator ensures management of the organization, operations, finances, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (DPI, 2011). Proper

management of the teaching staff allows an administrator to ensure that students are being taught by effective and motivated teachers. “Mentoring can impact student learning when teachers are given emotional, logistical, and communal support” (Mullen, 2011). Success in student achievement begins with the teacher. If the teacher receives the necessary support, he or she can in turn take care of and support the students.

As an administrator, providing teachers, especially those that are new to the district, with the support they need is vital to a school. Developing programs that allow teachers to collaborate and build relationships with one another will nurture the environment and culture of the school. This will, in turn, support the well-being of all involved. Also, an administrator should find someone to act as a mentor to guide him or her throughout the first year. It will be helpful to have someone to lean on for advice and be a guide through rough times.

### **Administrative Standard 5: Homework Club**

During the 2009-2010 school year, the candidate organized and managed an after-school homework club, to better serve students and their families. The homework club provided a safe place after school for students to complete homework and receive help if needed. This undertaking involved sending letters/sign-up forms home to parents and organizing teachers to supervise. Students were provided help with not only questions about their homework, but organization skills as well. If students were struggling in a particular class or in homework completion, teachers would recommend them to the homework club and the candidate would contact parents to arrange for them to join.

Homework club development proves competency in administrative 5, which states, “The administrator models collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources” (DPI, 2011). Working closely with parents and receiving their input in the development helped construct a successful club. Many parents work until after school hours and they appreciated having a place for their child to complete homework and receive help.

As an administrator, providing after school activities to keep children in the school, rather than on the streets, will benefit everyone in the community. Partnering with parents and community members to create clubs and opportunities for students, whether it be academic or not, student achievement will be positively affected. In a study/report by Joseph A. Durlak, PhD, and Roger P. Weissberg, PhD, it was found that, “Youth who participate in after-school programs improve significantly in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance” (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007, p. 5).

## **Administrative Standard 6: Acting Principal**

The most beneficial practicum hours are spent completing tasks of an actual administrator. The candidate has had several opportunities to be the acting principal while the current principal was out of the building. Principal duties entail checking in at the office at various times throughout the day to see if any issues have come up and dealing with said issues. This really gives a candidate an idea of what it would be like to be an administrator. One doesn't realize how many issues that can possibly come up any given day.

Administrative standard 6 states that, "The administrator acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (DPI, 2011). By carrying out the duties of the principal and dealing with various issues the candidate has proven that he or she has integrity and acts in a fair manner. In order to act in a fair manner, in this case, one needs to be in touch with the principal on a regular basis so that when similar issues arise they can be dealt with using similar consequences.

As an administrator, it will take a person time to show that he or she is a person of integrity and acts in a fair and ethical way. Throughout the course of the first year one needs to be sure to follow through on words with actions. It is important as a new principal to take time to survey the terrain and build some relationships before even beginning to try to change things. By understanding the workings of the school one can avoid many headaches and roadblocks on the journey to success.

### **Administrative Standard 7: IEP Involvement**

Being involved in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings for special education students has been a part of the candidate's practicum hours. It is important as a teacher and administrator to know what the IEP of each student contains. As a regular education teacher, working with the special education teacher plays a huge role in the success of the students. By knowing what is in the IEP, attending IEP meetings, and communicating with parents on a regular basis, the candidate has contributed to the success of special education students in the regular classroom.

Being a part of the IEP process, the candidate has proven competency in administrative standard 7, which states, "The administrator understands, responds to, and interacts with the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context that affects schooling" (DPI, 2011). As an IEP is a legally binding document, it is imperative to comply with the contents of the IEP as well as policies within a school. The candidate has shown through various actions that respect for all students and providing each with a positive learning environment is a priority for the administrator.

As an administrator, being aware of student needs should be high on the priority list. In order to ensure success for all, one needs to be sure that everything possible is being done for every student. Advocating for practices that promote success for all is essential. As well as knowing the students and the student's needs, an administrator needs to stay up to date on new trends in education. Gone are the days of sitting in desks and listening to lectures every day. Knowing the new trends and research will allow an administrator to be a leader of change and innovation.

## **Conclusion**

When candidates enter an administration certification program, “they enter as teachers, thinking as teachers do, and they graduate as future administrators, thinking as administrators do” (Keaster and Schlinker, 2009). This is true of the University of Wisconsin – Platteville’s Educational Administration Certification Program; a candidate enters and exits the program with very different perspectives. Many different types of candidates enter into the program; some know that they will become administrators some day, and some aren’t so sure. Even if a candidate chooses to stay in teaching, and not enter the world of administration, he or she is a better teacher because of the program. This is, in part, due to the requirements of the program: the electronic portfolio, practicum hours, and numerous in-class discussions allow a candidate to view things through the eyes of an administrator.

By involving experienced professionals from various aspects of the administrative world, a program can produce well-rounded administrators. For example, the University of Wisconsin – Platteville’s program includes experienced administrators, as well as a school lawyer. Encompassing all aspects of an administrator’s job is critical to transforming candidates into successful administrators. By the end of the program candidates have experience in budgeting, law issues, relationships, and technology. A candidate will be an educational leader, whether one becomes an administrator or not.

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