

COMPETENCY 1.0 UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING, ARTICULATING, AND MAINTAINING A SHARED VISION OF EDUCATION WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.**SKILL 1.1 Includes demonstrating familiarity with research on and theory of leadership**

The school principal today is recognized as a critical person for impacting instructional change and bringing to fruition the goals and objectives of a school. The kind and quality of leadership exercised by those invested with the authority to supervise school operations makes a difference in the lives of students, the community, and ultimately the nation. Hence, the role of the principal and the competencies that an individual brings to this position are key elements in creating dynamic and effective school organizations.

There are various approaches to understanding the qualities of good leaders, qualities that principals may want to emulate. The trait approach to leadership focuses on the personality traits of leaders. The situational approach postulates that leadership is a result of understanding the idiosyncrasies and characteristics of specific groups. Additionally, research from Ohio State University placed leadership in two dimensions, task and consideration. This two-factor view of leadership increased understanding of leadership behavior. Finally, another approach to understanding leadership emerged, known as the contingency approach. The contingency approach specified that the kind of leadership to be exerted depends upon a number of variables, including personality, task, group dynamics, and the situation.

Many theorists have proposed frameworks in an attempt to understand the dynamics that take place in organizations. Educational administration has borrowed extensively from organizational theorists to form a foundation. Early organizational theorists were more concerned with how well people performed given tasks in the enterprise than with the well being of the individuals in the organization.

These theories and beliefs about organizations and individuals were soon challenged by another set of theories and beliefs, which focused on the quality of relations and the importance of people in the organization. This evolutionary pattern continued, followed by critical analysis of the formal and informal structures existing in organizations. The conceptualization of organizations as a system, with internal and external influences, further contributed to the base of knowledge for educational administration and leadership.

A particularly salient view of leadership within organizations was developed by Bolman and Deal, 1997. Their view is that people within organizations operate within one (or more) of four organizational frames: structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. These authors argue that most leaders operate in the structural frame (focusing on hierarchies, rules, regulations, procedures, etc.) or the human resources frame (focusing on the needs of people; within schools, this could either be teachers, students, or both). The authors also argue that the two other frames, often ignored, are highly important for the proper running of an organization. The political frame focuses on sources of power, and the symbolic frame focuses on the symbols of organizational culture and history that are so important to employees, students, and others.

Ours is a rapidly changing world, which impacts the way organizations function. Moreover, changing situations require leaders of organizations to assess their abilities and to understand the characteristics needed to effectively lead their organizations (Lewis, 1993). It is apparent that school administration parallels that of business organizations and other enterprises in American society. The responsibilities of fiscal management, curriculum development, physical plant management, employee supervision, and personnel administration all require an administrator who possesses broad skills and knowledge (Rebore, 1998). Furthermore, within our age of school accountability, schools need leaders who know how to effectively improve the instructional quality of their schools.

SKILL 1.2 Applying goal-setting skills

Organizations have goals and objectives, which they seek to achieve. For the most part, those goals and objectives are achieved through people. The question of how to get people motivated to achieve those goals and objectives, expeditiously and effectively, is at the heart of motivational theories. Theories of motivation are grouped into the categories of *behavioral*, *cognitive*, and *humanistic*. The behavioral approach to motivation suggests that motivation depends upon the effectiveness of reinforcers. The utilization of specific reinforcers to influence behavior then becomes an important element in the behavioral approach.

Cognitive theory suggests that there are two personal factors to consider in relation to motivation (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997). Those factors are expectations and beliefs. When there is the expectation that one can succeed at a task, and value to achieving that task is attached, then a feeling of self-efficacy emerges. In organizations then, leaders may ask what can be done to help bring about emotions of self-efficacy in its members. The Humanistic perspective views motivation as attempts by people to reach their potential (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997). Motivation proceeds from internal mechanisms acting to cause individuals to achieve, grow and develop, and reach their potential.

Incentives and rewards are used by an organization to influence individuals' motivation to be productive members in the organization. Of importance in any work environment are the environmental factors present, those things that tend to make the workplace enjoyable and those things that tend to make the workplace distasteful. Administrators' attentions to the factors, (which will permeate the workplace and, subsequently, have impact on the motivation of organizations' members to accomplish tasks) have a bearing on the fulfillment of organizational goals. Because individuals have needs, desires, likes, and dislikes and these are related to their motivation, an understanding of this and how it relates to work is important for the leadership function.

SKILL 1.3 Understanding the range of considerations in developing an educational philosophy and platform

Administrators must develop an educational philosophy that deals with teaching and learning. The first consideration has to be the students and how they learn. This is important because it will directly influence how teachers teach and how the students are taught. If you believe that students are passive receptors of information, then teaching will be direct and rote instruction of knowledge. If, however, you believe that students should be active participants in their learning, your educational philosophy will be one that has the students actively engaged in the curricular content. Both classrooms are different. In the first, students sit, often quietly, absorbing the knowledge that the teachers impart. In the second, students are discussing and experimenting in the classroom, developing their own meanings as they learn.

How students learn, rather than what they learn, is the basis for an educational philosophy. This, in turn, will affect how teachers teach. When developing an educational philosophy and platform, administrators must take the learning of all children into consideration. This includes the gifted and the struggling students as well as the larger group of average children. It is important that classrooms become places where learning is related to the real world, making it relevant for the students. The focus should be on teaching students how to solve real world problems. Instead of standing in front of the class, the teacher becomes a facilitator and coach, bringing students from where they are to the next level.

Consideration must be given to recent educational research in teaching, learning and assessment. The administrator must have knowledge of all facets of the curriculum and how to integrate subjects to offer the best possible education.

Administrators should be sensitive to the needs of teachers and students. Experienced teachers may need coaching in order to change their methods. Finally, an educational philosophy and platform takes into account the needs of all stakeholders – teachers, students and parents and ensure that a plan is in place to meet these needs.

SKILL 1.4 Identifying appropriate channels and media for communicating plans, ideas, and goals

School information should be communicated in a variety of different ways. A principal communicating information to a staff of teachers should be direct, up-front, and honest. Even when it may seem that it is best to skirt around the truth or divulge only small pieces of information, being honest and direct will ultimately prove to be a better decision. Generally, organizations such as schools, communication that is not direct and honest creates a lot of gossip or mistrust. Trust is an issue that has been explored in great depth recently in the field of education. The primary finding is that trust is an extremely important facet of the operation of a school (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), primarily because there are so many groups of people, each with their own interests. When these groups of people get together, they quickly share stories and band together to get what they want. Therefore, principals do themselves a lot of good—as well as the whole school community—when they present information in a forthright manner. There is only one caution, though. Much information that principals receive is sensitive; great care should be given to not divulge information that is inappropriate outside of specific contexts.

One way to increase the transfer of appropriate information throughout a school is through professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs are groups of teachers that work together to solve classroom instructional problems. When teachers have the opportunity to discuss issues and transfer ideas, the flow of information is more effective than if information only came from a few sources. Proper communication with teachers will contribute to improved communication with all stakeholders.

Another good way for information flow to take place is through technology, particularly email, websites, blogs, and other places that all stakeholders can access. This, however, brings up the issue of information management. Systems must be developed in order to maintain the safety of information, yet be open enough to allow access to those who need it.

Communication in schools is a critical component to their proper operations. Parents need to communicate information to teachers and other school staff members; students need to communicate to teachers and administrators; administrators need to communicate to parents, community members, students, and district leaders; and teachers need to communicate to students, parents and administrators. With so many groups and so few methods of direction communication (after all, how often can a teacher leave his or her classroom to make phone calls?), it is imperative that principals find and provide stakeholder access to a variety of communication tools. Additionally, principals must utilize a wide variety of communication techniques in order to effectively convey their messages.

While email, for example, is a great communication tool, it ceases to be effective if responses are not given in a timely manner, or if responses are short or terse, lacking in emotional character. Indeed, there are a variety of techniques that can be used in person-to-person communication, small meetings, large group information sessions, electronically, or informally. The techniques are explained below:

- *Active listening.* Even when the ultimate goal for communication is to send a message from the speaker to the audience, the speaker must demonstrate that he or she is attentive to audience needs and reacts to concerns and questions. Speakers can be active listeners by re-phrasing questions, summarize stated ideas, and purposely integrate audience concerns into the message.
- *Personal.* There is nothing worse than listening to someone who has a prepared speech, no emotion, and little personality or humor. Even with a serious topic, principals can insert a sense of humanity into any speech or communicative act. It helps people feel comfortable and open.
- *Focusing on nonverbal cues.* Facial expressions, posture, gestures, and eye contact all make a huge difference in communicating ideas effectively. It is especially important that principals continuously look interested, informed, and proactive as they present information to people.
- *Balanced.* Principals who carefully consider the needs of all groups are most effective. Principals, therefore, should seek to treat each group fairly and speak about each group with respect.

Overall, communication strategies help to convey messages in formal and informal situations. New principals can pay close attention to these strategies; eventually, they will become internalized, as many experienced principals do these things naturally.

Public information management is a systematic communication process between an educational organization and its public, both within and outside the schools. It is the exchange of two-way information, designed to encourage public interest in and understanding of, education. The principal competency *concern for image* in the consensus management area specifies that a principal shows concern for the school's image through impressions created by students and staff and manages both these impressions and public information about the school by (1) advertising successes and (2) controlling the flow of negative information.

To be effective, communication between school leaders and the public must be open, honest, and unbiased. The attitudes of parents and members of the community at large have been adversely affected by reports in the decline of American education and media coverage which appears to focus on negative perceptions. Despite the general perception of poor public education, the majority of parents surveyed nationally expressed satisfaction with their children's schools and teachers. The most positive feedback resulted when parents felt that their concerns were being heard and addressed and that they were involved in the decision-making process.

Public relations must be carefully organized. Information deliverers must have accurate information, understand their roles in the disseminating of the information, and provide appropriate channels for feedback. The public must perceive that they are being given complete, timely information by officials who respect their feelings and sincerely want feedback. They must have an established frame of reference, i.e. know the schools' vision/mission statements, goals and objectives, and legislative issues that affect local education.

Public Relations Process

Public information management requires analyzing the community attitude toward educational issues. The required school improvement surveys conducted each spring in many schools provide not only feedback on the issues but priorities for addressing them. Public workshops and meetings allow community members to become involved in learning about budget, discipline, and academic issues. Information gathering should be structured to obtain the most scientific results, i.e. ensuring a representative sampling by mailing surveys rather than entrusting their delivery and return to students.

The planning phase requires setting specific goals and designing the campaign to achieve the goals. During this phase, educational leaders should determine the audiences, forums, and time frames in which their message(s) will be delivered to the public. Presentations to senior citizens concerning a tax increase may require a different slant than a presentation to people who have children in the schools. Issues that require voter decisions should be presented with ample time for study and cooperative decision-making or at least discussion.

Following the communication process is equally important whether information is delivered internally or externally. Student groups are a segment of the internal public and should be treated with the same open respect as elements of the community at large. The information campaign must be encoded with specific audiences in mind. Especially important is selection of the media (transmission methods) to convey the message. First-approach media are usually in the form of newsletters to parents, press releases, annual reports—any written document that can be distributed to the intended audiences. Follow-up transmissions include open houses, school committee or school board meetings, education fairs—any face-to-face communication that brings the public and school representatives together for a two-way exchange.

Finally, school/district officials must evaluate the results of the public relations effort. Some evaluation is immediate, as in the defeat of a candidate or the passage of a bond issue. Periodic evaluations in the form of brief questionnaires in school newsletters, telephone surveys, or written assessments at the end of public meetings can help test the public's understanding and the level of community support.

Other Considerations

Schools must establish good relationships with the media. When there are more complaints in the "Letters to the Editor" section of the newspaper than there are news articles about school events, there is obviously a poor interaction between media and the schools.

- School/district publications—newsletters, information brochures, handbooks, annual reports—may be more useful in providing a positive link with the community.
- Displays of student work in public places—malls, building lobbies, and business waiting rooms—provide visual evidence of student achievement

SKILL 1.5 Analyze strategies for leading and supporting the vision-building and vision-renewal processes with the school and community

Developing a school vision or renewing one that already exists is something that every administrator should take seriously. Even if a school vision has existed for years, it needs to be looked at on an annual basis to make sure that it is still addressing the needs of the school as determined by a thorough analysis of data. The main focus in building a school vision is that the school is a place where all children will be academically successful.

In communities where the demographics are constantly changing, strategies will include looking at the needs of the students on a yearly basis. This includes analyzing test results to determine where improvements may be made in teaching and learning, and communication with parents. Determining the school culture is a strong point in this strategy as it brings the school and the community together. When teachers and parents see that they have a voice in what happens in the school, vision building no longer becomes a boring process, but one in which they will take an active role.

The vision of a school needs to include a plan for addressing student and family conditions. Teams of teachers can deal with separate issues and then bring the results to the whole staff. In schools, where there is only a small staff, this can be a collaborative effort by all. The administrator has to let the teachers and parents know that their ideas are valued in order to build relationships and work toward consensus. Teachers need to be empowered in their classroom and be allowed to conduct action research on issues important to them and their students' learning. Collaborative dialogue allows teachers to share these individual findings and determine how they may contribute to the collective vision of the building.

A school-wide discipline or character education plan is often part of the vision creating consistency throughout the building. When the plan is imparted to parents and they have had voice in the decisions, they are more likely to support the disciplinary efforts of the school.

At the beginning of each school year, the administrator should set aside meeting time for the teachers to take a new look at the school vision and set goals for the coming year. At the same time, teachers can set their own professional development goals in relation to the main goals of the school.

If administrators approach the school vision utilizing the Understanding by Design model, they will start out with a final vision of what they want their schools to look like. Then they determine benchmarks for assessing achievement towards that goal. It may take years to achieve the final vision, but by regularly reviewing and renewing the school vision, change will occur.

SKILL 1.6 Recognize the value of reflecting on the current status of the school and using that knowledge as a basis for future goals

Teachers are encouraged to engage in self-reflection to ensure that they are helping students achieve the state standards. Self-reflection is also a necessary part of the role of the administrator. It is of no use to the school to build a vision and then forget about it for the rest of the year. The vision should be regularly used as programs and initiatives are evaluated. Administrators should engage in self-reflection as part of their role as instructional leaders and agents of change within the school setting. One learns a great deal about his/her own practice through reflection. When an administrator self-reflects on a regular basis, it is then that he/she can determine strengths and weaknesses and develop a focus for future goals and changes.

An administrator should set professional goals at the beginning of a school year and continually refer back to them making certain that school improvement is taking place. Developing relationships with teachers, staff and parents is an important part of this process. Keeping a diary or journal of dialogue with colleagues helps in the reflection process. Administrators should also stay abreast of the latest educational and school reform research in order to keep current with what is happening in the world of education.

By realizing that school reform is not just about changing how teachers teach, administrators are better able to forge a new identity in the school setting. Self-reflection can take many forms, such as:

- Setting time aside each week to reflect on the events of the week as they relate to the school goals.
- Journaling the strengths and weaknesses of individual lessons.
- Reflecting on relationships with teachers in order to better help these teachers in the classrooms.
- Reflecting on relationships with parents in order to help the students in the school.

One of the main responsibilities of an administrator is managing the budget of the school. Reflecting on the school vision can directly impact on how the monies available are spent. For example, the focus could be on sending teachers to professional development opportunities or on buying more resources for the individual classrooms.

The administrator can also self-reflect with regards to the professional goals of the teachers. Since the role of the administrator is to be visible in the classrooms, he/she can see how teachers are practicing and changing their instructional methods. Self-reflection on what is seen in the classroom will help when discussing the goals and what the teacher needs to meet them. This is also true of the evaluation of new teachers. Before any decision is made on any recommendation for the teacher, the administrator needs to engage in self-reflection about the teacher and his/her successes or failures. When failures occur, the self-reflection will help decide future help for the teacher and students. Administrators should also self-reflect on situations they experience, allowing them to continuously improve as the building leader.

SKILL 1.7 Identifying strategies for leading the school community in the adoption of challenging performance standards

There are high expectations in all content areas for students in Colorado. To ensure the students are successful in meeting the academic achievement goals, teachers must also be held to high standards of instruction. For teachers who have been in the profession for many years, change may be very difficult. Changes in the way teachers teach and the look of their classrooms may present a real challenge. Administrators need to take a principal role in effecting such change.

Some of the strategies administrators can employ include:

- Making time to be in the classroom to help the teachers.
- Setting meetings to help teachers discuss and talk about their successes in the classroom.
- Encouraging teachers to analyze the standards so that they can easily see what the students need to learn.

One method of making sure that teachers teach the curriculum without becoming overburdened is vertical planning with colleagues, or taking a close look at the standards as they progress from one grade to another. Teachers of each grade can meet in groups to look at the standards to determine which are taught in depth in an earlier grade and which are more fully covered in later grades. This will allow the teachers to develop a list of standards that are absolutely necessary for each grade and a list of those that are stressed in another grade level.

Another strategy for helping teachers to adopt challenging performance standards is to provide professional development in planning lessons and units. If teachers plan with the end in mind, they will know before they start teaching what they expect students to demonstrate that they have mastered the specific skills. By using exemplars, students can see what demonstrates mastery.