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EDLS 695

Reflection Journal #5

Leadership Skills Set

Standard I: Principals Demonstrate Strategic Leadership

a: Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals

b: School Improvement Plan

c: Leading Change

d: Distributive Leadership

**What I Observed/Learned:**

Having a principal search in the works at a school changes the dynamics of a staff. Everybody knows there’s this period of “limbo;” we know what’s leaving, but we don’t know what’s coming. Maybe out of fear or desperation, or maybe hopefulness for something new and different, people start talking about what they haven’t liked. Also, there is an assumption that the assistant principal will move into the principal position. But what if nobody is happy with the job the assistant principal has done?

**What New Knowledge Did I Gain in My Interactions/Observations:**

Of course, everybody at my school knows I’m working towards an administration position. I’m confident that while many would like to see me move up in this school, there are others who just want me to go away. While I try to be approachable, easy to talk to, and a good listener, I was still unprepared for the number of people who came to talk to me this week as well as what they had to say. The message is loud and clear: do not move the assistant principal up. There is a lack of clear vision and goals, and teachers feel unsupported with discipline and parental issues. Further, office staff feels he is unavailable and unreachable when he is needed the most, then are reprimanded when they act without him. Questions that are brought up in meetings go unanswered; a typical response is, “Those are good questions and we need to keep asking them.”

**How will this impact my leadership practice?**

First and foremost, I would be available. Staff needs a way to reach me both when I’m in the building as well as when I am outside, whether for professional meetings or personal reasons. Making clear that they should not hesitate to contact me when things “get serious,” I will know that if they call, I am needed. Before reprimanding, I need to ask myself what roll I played in the system’s not working. Also, staff should be included on goal-setting, school vision, and just determining where our weaknesses are. It doesn’t do anybody any good to be defensive about what isn’t working. Once we’ve determined where we can improve, we need to move forward in a meaningful manner that includes our end-goal and a plan of how we are going to get there. We need to remain flexible so that we can handle the unexpected that comes up along the way. Discipline is a big aspect of any administrator’s duties, and while students don’t need to be harassed or made to feel that by being sent to the principal’s office they are about to enter a torture-chamber, discipline should be clear, impacting, and dealt with swiftly. A month down the road is too late. Finally, I think it is great to ask questions (at least, I think it’s great to ask GOOD questions…), but we also need to look for and discuss solutions and answers.

**Critical Issues:**

Morale, culture, community