**Reflection JournalEDLS 695: Principal Internship**

Date: **Sunday,** **April 8, 2012**

**Journal Entry 5 Rachel O'Donnell**

Issue addressed:

Colorado Principal Standard addressed: **Standard V: Principals demonstrate managerial leadership**  c. Systemic communication e. Supporting policies and agreements

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| **What did I learn/observe?**  This past week I experienced my first real emergency situation that involved working with other principals, law enforcement, and district security. If you were following the news at all on Thursday, you saw that the police had summoned the bomb squad to our school to investigate and remove two devices that had been found on the HS side of our facility. We had all been trained through the crisis training offered through Homeland Security in how to interface with civil authorities as well as having been training through the district, so those interactions went rather smoothly. The difficulty came when communicating to parents before the press communicated to parents. There was a great deal of misinformation that caused much distress for our parent community during that day and then when the timeline of events was shared there was another wave of concern. Our board held a meeting this past Friday evening to talk through and answer parent questions about the week’s experiences. At the end of the meeting, principals received directives about improving our procedures and policies should something like this ever happen again.  My situation started in the morning when I was told we needed to move students from one side of the building to the opposite side of the building. We did this quickly and teachers began to work with students in this new configuration. We were never told to evacuate or to lock down. Basically, we were sheltering in place. We could be outside as long as we were on the secondary side. We could not use our playground or exit through our doors because the device had been moved next to our playground. It was not initially found there. It was found on the HS side. School carried on as well as could be expected under the circumstances. Whenever communication was sent through Alertnow we sent the same message through our communication line to be sure that parents weren’t missing anything. I knew the school and the students and staff were safe, but I didn’t want to announce things through the overhead system because I didn’t want to alarm the students. The students actually had a great day considering how strange everything was scheduled. Teachers were creative and handled themselves magnificently. I was connected to the other principals and our safety person through hand held radios and went teacher to teacher to let them know that all was well and that we were safe.  I will say that I didn’t know how tired I was until late Friday night. I’m thankful that my husband took the initiative of getting some take out that was ready for me when I got home. | **How This Will Impact My Leadership Practice?** It is going to be so important for the leadership of our school to come together and debrief from the events of last week. I can see things that I would do differently if I found myself in a similar situation. For instance, I would have smaller meetings with groups of teachers and tutors quickly instead of trying to tell each person one to one and make better use of our radios. I also would have cancelled the afternoon kindergarten class instead of meeting the parents and letting them know that we were still in session, but that if they wanted to start their weekend early, that was fine. School was still happening and we weren’t in danger, but with all the commotion, it was too much for the afternoon kinders. Most parents decided to keep their kids at home and didn’t come to school. |
| **What new knowledge did I gain through my observations/ actions?** Information is king. As soon as possible, parents need to know as much as you can reasonably share. Responsible information brings comfort in stressful situations for staff, students, and parents. | **How will this impact those I lead?** Those I lead will be able to trust that they will not be unnecessarily in the dark about any issue – even when it’s not an emergency. Sharing accurate information in a timely fashion builds trust and a shared sense of working together for a common purpose. |
| ***Critical Issues*** As an administrator it is my responsibility to know what is expected in any situation and if needed, to know where to get clarity on procedures and policies. It is also my responsibility to share accurate information with the community. | |