

LEAD 504
Course Portfolio

3

ACCEPTABLE

LEAD 504: Section 01

Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Educational Administrators Assessment

October 18, 2010

“Is NECAP almost over? Do we have NWEA this week? Is that PLP finished yet? Do you know that student’s DRA?” These, along with many other acronyms, can be heard on a daily basis in many school systems. All of the aforementioned are different diagnostic tools used to monitor student progress. In this new era of high stakes testing administrators and teachers are constantly researching the best practices for assessing students. In the following paragraphs I will highlight and analyze some of my district’s current assessment tools. In addition, I will examine the methods one might utilize to strengthen the effectiveness of district wide assessment.

State testing in Rhode Island has changed dramatically in response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). At the beginning of every school year, the students in the Newport School District are administered an examination called NECAP. Students are assessed in Reading, Mathematics, and Writing. This examination is instructionally relevant because it provides information to school administrators, teachers, and parents to help them make informed decisions about student instructional needs. (*ISLLC Standard 2: develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress*) More importantly, these test scores are made public and can positively or negatively affect how a school is perceived at the local and state levels. Administrators place pressure on the teachers to prepare their students. Teachers, in turn, inadvertently put unnecessary pressure on the students to achieve high scores. How do you begin to alleviate this surplus of unwanted nervous tension?

One would think that the answer to this question would be found in the superintendent’s office. However, a district’s top-level administrators are not inside the classrooms on a daily basis. These “coordinators and supervisors cannot and should not be expected to know what transpires in each classroom.” (Jacobs, p.19, 1997) I suggest that the process of developing an action plan to address NECAP scores begin at the building level with the principal. I feel this way because “the principal should play an active role in working with teachers to align the written, the supported, and the assessed curricula.” (Glatthorn, p.112, 220)

The first step is collecting and utilizing the given NECAP data to identify goals. This “gap analysis” would provide clarity on the areas where students need improvement. Collaborating (*ISLLC Standard 1: collaboratively create and implement plans to achieve goals*) and distributing the leadership is paramount to a successful action plan. The principal might begin by working in partnership with the School Improvement Team because this group would contain teachers, parents, and community members. Of equal importance is how the principal might frame their ideas regarding the action plan. Using the terms “we, us, and our school” would create a shared mission and vision to improve the schools test scores. This “buy-in” will ensure that all stakeholders have a vested interest in a common goal.

A second diagnostic tool used in the Newport School District is a computer based program called NWEA. Students are administered this examination three times a year. This computer-based testing system adapts to the child in real-time as the test progresses and identifies learning achievement and readiness in the areas of Reading, Language Arts, and Mathematics. This type of assessment has advantages and disadvantages.

Students and teachers alike agree on the benefits of a computer-based program because it eliminates the need for paper, pencils, and scantron sheets. In addition, this type of assessment is useful because it provides a score immediately after the testing session. Unfortunately, in the short amount of time that the district has been utilizing this technology there have been very few professional development opportunities for staff to better understand this program. Teachers are given a password to the NWEA website and have been instructed to analyze the data themselves. Teachers have become frustrated with this process because they have not been trained in how to effectively explore the testing results. How does one involve and invest teachers in the process of looking at data to drive instruction?

As previously stated, the solution to every school's dilemma does not necessarily reside within the offices of the superintendent. Instead, the answer exists with the experts themselves. The people who are most qualified to answer questions about Reading, Language Arts, and Math are the teachers who possess decades of experience teaching these subjects. Utilizing the doctrine of shared leadership the principal would be able to approach certain teachers and ask them if they would be willing to collect and use NWEA data to identify learning gaps within their content area. Through backwards mapping these teachers would be able to distinguish the areas where there are learning deficiencies. The "maps they study will reveal missing pieces in vertical and horizontal articulation: years past, years to come, and in the current year." (Jacobs, 1997) In turn, the teachers could use this data and share their results with various content area teachers during common planning time.

The aforementioned suggestions are all predicated on establishing a school culture that would be willing to embrace change. In any given profession change is not an easy course of action. In 1995 John Kotter conducted extensive research on managing the change process. One key step to the change process is "communicate for buy-in – involve as many people as possible, communicate the essentials, and to appeal and respond to people's need." (Kotter, 1995) Kotter also stresses the importance of "creating short term wins – set aims that are easy to achieve in bite size chunks with manageable numbers of initiatives." When an administrator can create "buy-in" and set "short term wins" they can give their staff the tools to create powerful learning environments.

In summation, as an aspiring educational leader the notion of "buy-in" is not foreign to me. Unfortunately, in my six years of teaching I have not been able to surround myself with teachers who truly embrace this concept. At the end of the day I have to go back our school's mission and vision: *providing quality education that makes a difference in each student's life*. Why do teachers continue in a profession that they are not committed to? More importantly, as a future administrator how do I motivate, influence, and provide direction to people who are not dedicated to their craft? Today I do not possess the answers to these questions but I look forward to the voyage ahead.

Work cited

- Glatthorn, Allan A., and Jerry Jaihall. *The Principal as Curriculum Leader: Shaping What Is Taught and Tested*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2009. Print.
- Jacobs, Heidi Hayes. *Mapping the Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum & Assessment, K-12*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997. Print.
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Lee Russell
LEAD 504: Section 01
Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Classroom Assessment Confidence Questionnaire
October 15, 2010

“Will this assignment be graded?” I get asked this question constantly from the students that I currently teach. I am sure that during my adolescence I also asked my teachers this very same question. As a beginning teacher and aspiring educational leader I am perpetually struggling with the delicate balance of when to assess and when not to assess. In other words, how am I going to determine the most educationally sound methods to evaluate my students?

At the beginning of every school year it has always been helpful to re-examine the concept of assessment. For me, assessing my students informs me on my effectiveness as a teacher and how the students are performing as learners. A more clinical definition of assessment is the “process of obtaining information about students learning outcomes to guide educational decisions about students; to inform students, their parents, teachers, or other appropriate audiences about their progress, strengths, and weaknesses.”

(Competency Standards in Student Assessment for Educational Administrators, 1997)

Both definitions are accurate. I feel that the latter definition provides the depth and clarity that I was previously missing to better understand the many components of assessment.

For me to gain the most out of this assignment I will need to ask myself three questions: first, why do I assess? Second, what do I assess? Third, how do I assess? I will answer these questions and elaborate on class readings in the following paragraphs.

Why do I assess? In my six years of teaching I have struggled with developing a meaningful understanding of the relationship between assessment and student motivation. In my first years of teaching when I felt that students were not giving their best effort I would immediately schedule a test in order to motivate them to work harder. I now understand that I was climbing the ladder of inference. As the years have passed I have grown as a teacher. I now realize that if students are not motivated they are not entirely to blame. For me, the hard truth was learning that the problem might lie within. (*ISLLC Standard 5: model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, and transparency*) In other words, my beginning teaching and instructional methods were pedantic and thus producing unmotivated students. Today, I understand that I assess my students to evaluate my effectiveness as a teacher. Furthermore, I now realize that I assess students to compare their achievements with the standards.

What do I assess? My current teaching position is in a fifth grade classroom. This is my first year teaching in an elementary setting. My “a-ha” moment came when I realized that “elementary schools can be nurturing environments but fundamentally a collection of one room schoolhouses.” (Heidi Hayes Jacobs, 1997) I have come to understand that I am performing the duties of six different teachers. During this school year I will assess the students on a quarterly basis in the following areas: Mathematics, Language, Writing, Reading, Social Studies, and Science. At first, I was completely overwhelmed with learning six entirely new curricula. Fortunately, as the year has progressed I have found salvation from my fellow teachers.

My elementary colleagues possess more experience in these matters and have helped to alleviate the majority of my anxiety. By collaborating with these seasoned teachers (*ISLLC 4: collaborating with faculty*) I have discovered that the answers reside within pre-existing UbD's. These already written units of study focus on students gaining understanding of a "big idea". In other words, the focus for the learning is on the outcome for the students and not necessarily the individual activities. I have already begun to use these to guide my instruction. Knowing that these essential questions already exist has alleviated a tremendous amount of assessment angst.

How do I assess? For the grade five students that I currently instruct I have learned that in order to produce high-quality results I have to balance two assessment methods. I have to balance assessment *for* the students learning with assessment *of* their learning. Assessment for learning is an on going process and it is formative in its design. To begin a unit of study there are pre-assessments to determine schema. Students are constantly given feedback on their performance through daily observations, conferences, and student portfolios. As I monitor their understanding I am adjusting my instruction to keep the students on track. Conversely, assessment of learning is administering a test at the end of a unit of study to determine the amount of knowledge the students have retained over several weeks of teaching and learning. This assessment is summative in design. I have found that over the years I have decreased the frequency of this type of assessment. I strongly believe that this method is outdated and doesn't recognize that students need constant feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.

The most effective way for students to learn is analogous to a new home being built. Before a home is to be built the soil and the land require inspection to determine if a foundation can be established. Once the foundation is in place a frame needs to be built. This framing requires a thorough inspection. The newly constructed house is constantly being examined. The building inspector is an unvarying presence. They are at the construction site providing feedback to the contractors on how to meet the building codes. The same format applies to powerful learning environments. A good teacher constantly monitors their student's performance to ensure they meet their learning goals.

In summation, I have found comfort in my assessment methods within the classroom. At the same time, I have to begin to think about my future role as an educational leader. Through this coursework I now understand that the "principal should play an active role in working with teachers to align the written, the supported, and the assessed curricula." (Glatthorn, 2009) How will I be able to provide direction? How will I use this direction to influence teachers, students, parents, and community members? Today, I do not possess these answers but I look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead.

Work cited

Glatthorn, Allan A., and Jerry Jailall. *The Principal as Curriculum Leader: Shaping What Is Taught and Tested*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2009. Print.

Jacobs, Heidi Hayes. *Mapping the Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum & Assessment, K-12*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997. Print.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Classwork</u>	<u>Homework</u>
10/8/10	NECAP Review - Fractions	None- Friday
10/7/10	Review operations with +/- numbers	None - NECAP
10/6/10	Integer Multiplication/Division	None - NECAP
10/5/10	No Class - NECAP	None
10/4/10	Quiz on +/- Addition and Subtraction	None - NECAP
10/1/10	Integer Addition/Subtraction Practice	None- Friday
9/30/10	Integer Subtraction Practice	Integer Subtraction -9 to +9
9/29/10	Inv. 2.2 - Subtraction of Integers	2.2 ACE Questions (Subtraction)
9/28/10	Integer Addition Practice -99 to +99	Addition Practice (worksheet)
9/27/10	Notes on addition algorithms, Integer Addition Practice -9 to +9	Skill Adding Integers (worksheet)
9/24/10	NECAP Review-Functions/Algebra Quiz on Accentuate the Negative	None- Friday
9/23/10	Investigation 1 - Ordering positive and negative numbers, opposites, matching vocab terms with definitions	Study benchmark flashcards
9/22/10	Continue Investigation 1 Quiz Review Create benchmark flashcards(fractions, decimals, percents), start Inv 1 Quiz Review	Study for Quiz
9/21/10	NWEA Testing	Inv. 1.4 Additional Practice ACE
9/20/10		None - NWEA Testing
9/17/10	NECAP Review - Numbers/Operations	None- Friday
9/16/10	Inv. 1.4 Chip Board Addition	Inv. 1.4 ACE Questions
9/15/10	Inv. 1.3 Using a number line model	Inv. 1.3 ACE Questions
9/14/10	No School	None
9/13/10	Inv. 1.2 Comparing and Ordering Positive and Negative Numbers	Inv. 1.2 ACE Questions
9/10/10	NECAP Review-Similar Figures	None - Friday
9/9/10	Inv 1.1 Postive and Negative Numbers Unit: Accentuate the Negative: Book	Inv. 1.1 ACE Questions
9/8/10	Tour and Essential Vocabulary	"Find the difference between"
9/7/10	Set up binders; Readiness Check	Finish Readiness Check
9/6/10	NO School	None
9/3/10	Rituals & Routines	Get supplies, parent letter
9/2/10	Rituals & Routines	Get Supplies, parent letter

<u>Date</u>	<u>Classwork</u>	<u>Homework</u>
10/8/10	NECAP Review	None- Friday
10/7/10	No Class- NECAP	
10/6/10	No Class- NECAP	
	Watched Discovery Streaming Video- Adding Common Denominators- work on Lesson 4- Adding Mixed Numbers with common denominators	Finish Lesson 4
10/5/10	Adding Fractiosn with Common Denom- Lesson 1	Lesson 2 & 3
10/4/10		
10/1/10	NECAP Review	None- Friday
9/30/10	Notes on Simplifying Fractions- Start page 91	Finish page 91
9/29/10	Practice Improper to Mixed Number	Improper to Mix # 1-20
9/28/10	Improper to Mixed Number- notes and use Active Inspire Lesson	Improper to Mix, page 46 # 1-15
9/27/10	Practice Equivalent Fractions- Ed Helper Sheets A & b	Equivalent Fractions 1-24
9/24/10	NECAP Review	None- Friday
	Return Quizzes, Review it, Give out Book:	
	Unit: Bits & Pieces II	
	(Fractions) , and start Equivalent	
9/23/10	fractions- Active Inspire lesson	Mult Facts # 8
9/22/10	Quiz on Prime Time Unit- if done, 4 ACE	Mult Facts # 7
9/21/10	4.3 Prime Time- Using Prime Factorization to find the GCF	Study for Quiz
9/20/10	NWEA Testing	Mixed Review for Quiz
9/17/10	4.2 - Prime Factorization Trees	None- Friday
9/16/10	Vocabulary from Prime Time- Matching words with definitions	Vocabulary crossword puzzle, prime factorization & study vocabulary
9/15/10	1.3- Playing the Product Game	1.2 ACE Modified- Practice finding factors
9/14/10	No School	None
9/13/10	1.2 Modified-Finding factors of a number- teach how to use the multiplication chart to help - vocab: prime and composite	Mult facts 6
9/10/10	NECAP Review	
9/9/10	No Class- discipline Assembly	Mult facts 4

9/8/10	Unit: Prime Time: 1.1- Playing the factor game	Place value, page 58
9/7/10	Set up binders; Review place value; Class expectations for launch, explore, & summary	Place Value # 2
9/6/10	NO School	None
9/3/10	Rituals & Routines	Get supplies
9/2/10	Rituals & Routines	Get Supplies

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LEAD 504: Section 01
Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Evaluation of Alignment Documents
November 1, 2010

Merriam Webster's dictionary defines alignment as: *the proper positioning of parts in relation to one another*. Chiropractors help alleviate discomfort in their patients by aligning of the spine. Mechanics repair a cars alignment to ensure that the vehicle is safe to be on the roadways. The same analogy can be true for school systems.

Educators utilize alignment in order to create a conjunction between assessments and relevant standards. These alignment documents are drafted for accreditation and other reporting purposes. Given this background information one must ask the following questions. Who is responsible is it to ensure this alignment? Is the superintendent accountable for this alignment? Are the individual building principals responsible? Are the teachers within each content area the most qualified to ensure alignment? Do external consults need to be hired to offer an objective perspective to create alignment? In truth, there is not just one sole entity that can guarantee educational alignment. Instead, alignment is created when there is collaboration from all the aforementioned educational resources. Moreover, "alignment is a high-value activity for schools, and even if external consultants are used to assist, ownership and leadership are essential." (Allan A. Glatthorn, pg. 118, 2009)

In the following paragraphs I will examine one curriculum map within the Newport Public School System. This examination will focus on both vertical and horizontal alignment. Both of these perspectives are important because "data on the curriculum map can be examined both horizontally through the course of any one academic year and vertically over the student's K-12 experience." (Heidi Hayes Jacobs, pg. 4, 1997) My analysis will focus on the quality of the alignment evidence and suggests areas where these documents could be improved.

The Newport Public Schools webpage has a direct link to all the district's curricula. The one content area I have chosen to analyze is English Language Arts. The website provides the English Language Arts curricula from grades one through twelve. All of these twelve documents are nearly identical in their organization. First, each document is entitled "Curriculum Map". My coursework has taught me that a curriculum map is "like a school's manuscript. It tells the story of the operational curriculum." (Jacobs, pg.17, 1997) Second, each map begins with the following statement: "*this map is a suggested breakdown of sequence, content and skills, many of which overlap. Sequence, depth, and duration are left to teacher discretion, based on course level, students' needs and text availability.*" Third, each curriculum map has the same headings: assessment evidence, content, skills (standards), instructional strategies, and resources. Before any examination of these documents can begin, one must recognize the consistent organizational structure that has been established.

When one assesses curriculum maps the first area that needs to be analyzed in depth is academic rigor. In other words, is the curriculum map constructed to ensure that the depth of knowledge increases from grade to grade? Based on my findings I would answer this question with an emphatic "yes".

In grades one and two there is an emphasis on early reading strategies. These students are beginning readers and therefore require understanding of phonemic awareness, phonological knowledge, syllable types, and fluency. As one navigates through the curriculum maps for the higher grades there is clear evidence that the level of academic rigor increases as students matriculate. For example, in grades four and five students are expected to sound out multi syllable words and identify word patterns with prefixes and suffixes. The curriculum map has shifted the students learning to higher level thinking standards. More examples can be found in grade six where students are asked to identify words with multiple meanings and shades of meaning. By the time the students reach the high school they are expected to identify the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary through word identification and decoding strategies. It is apparent that at each grade level the students' depth of knowledge for reading is increased.

To me, it is evident that Newport students have access to a rigorous, standards based reading curriculum. (*ISLLC Standard2 – comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program*) Moreover, it is so crucial that students meet or exceed each reading standard as they progress through the grades. In this era of high stakes testing a student's reading ability provides information to school administrators, teachers, and parents to help them make informed decisions about student instructional needs.

My analysis of Newport's English Language Arts curriculum maps would not be complete without a breakdown of areas that need improvement. Beginnings in grade one students are expected to compose informational writing pieces. Each grades curriculum map states that students must group ideas logically, establish a topic, maintain a focus idea, provide a conclusion, edit, revise, etc. These are educationally sound and therefore deemed valid steps to the writing process. But, not one curriculum map clearly provides a framework that students can utilize to answer a question or prompt. Wouldn't a simple and uniformed writing strategy benefit **all** Newport students?

The ACE strategy teaches students how to incorporate text evidence to justify opinions or to improve the credibility of writing. ACE reminds students to support their thinking with evidence through the use of a simple acronym.

- **A—Answer** the question. Make sure you answer the question completely. Use key words from the question or prompt to write a topic sentence that answers the question.
- **C—Cite** evidence. Use evidence from the text and/or text features to support, prove, or explain.
- **E—Expand, Extend, Explain** your answer. Extend your response by explaining the connection between the information that you cited and the answer. Make it clear that you know the answer because of the evidence.

Unfortunately, this uncomplicated but very effective approach is only used by a handful of teachers in the district. I believe that this straightforward and uniformed approach to how students respond to a prompt or question would benefit all students in any content area. More importantly, one could infer that students' scores on the NECAP examination would increase with effective scaffolding and modeling of this strategy.

As a beginning teacher how do I begin to present my recommendation? How receptive would teachers and administrators be to modifying an existing curriculum? I have learned that is always better to start small. I might begin by approaching my fellow grade five teachers and ask them their familiarity with the ACE strategy. I would frame my question by asking "how comfortable would you be incorporating the ACE strategy into the next unit

of study?” If teachers are comfortable with this idea I might suggest a future date where the teachers could analyze student work samples that demonstrate evidence of the ACE strategy. From there, I might take this information to each grade level leader and then to the building administrators. Meeting with the curriculum steering committee to present the data that supports modifying the existing curriculum to include ACE strategy as writing standard would complete this action plan.

In conclusion, this exercise has afforded three new perspectives on the lateral and vertical nature of curriculums. First, the sequence of teaching and scaffolding reading and writing strategies is clearer to me. As a fifth grade teacher it was helpful for me to examine the standards that are taught below and above me. Second, I have discovered an area of an existing curriculum that could be improved. Without this exercise I am not sure I would have made this finding. Third, I feel that I am developing the personnel relationship building skills necessary to carry the aforementioned action plan. If I have made an informed decision based on student data, collaborated with my colleagues, and promoted the schools mission and vision with fidelity than I think I am doing a pretty effective job as an educator.

Work cited

Glatthorn, Allan A., and Jerry Jaiilall. *The Principal as Curriculum Leader: Shaping What Is Taught and Tested*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2009. Print.

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LEAD 504: Section 01
Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Final Reflection
December 1, 2010

“Lee, are you sure you want to be an administrator? Look at me. I am thirty pounds overweight, I am on high blood pressure medication, and I didn’t sleep on Tuesday night. I suggest that you teach for twenty years before you make any move out of the classroom.” This was a short exchange I recently had with my building principal. I am not sure I would call this sagely advice, but it was an attempt at guidance that was straightforward and direct. His words have made me think about what I want to do with my forthcoming administrators degree.

In this final reflection I want to address three components of my educational leadership comprehension: first, I want to self evaluate my progress throughout this course. Second, I wish to share some of the difficulties I have encountered and the conclusions I have drawn as a result. Third, I want to share certain aspects of my learning that I would do differently while explaining my rationale.

If I were to assess my progress thus far in my Educational Leadership coursework I would give myself a three out of four. In other words, I feel that I am meeting the standard in many areas of my learning, but there are areas that still need work.

I have been really pleased with my growth in the reflection assignments. In the past, I have really struggled with writing my thoughts and feelings. I think I can attribute my small success to two things. First, I have always relied on a strategy I learned from an undergraduate professor. He said in writing and in public speaking you need to do three things: tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you have already told them. Applying this framework to my reflections has allowed me to present my ideas with clarity and conviction.

The second aspect that has helped to improve my writing is the immediate feedback I receive. For me, it is really helpful to submit an assignment on Tuesday and then, in turn, receive feedback within twenty-four hours. The direct feedback is helpful and appreciated. Moreover, I feel that it has strengthened my ability to write with a purpose. In the past, I have had professors who will let several weeks pass before they return written assignments. Too much time has passed and with it the level of interest has decreased.

While certain aspects of my writing have improved, I feel that certain areas of my verbal communications are still not meeting the standard. I have always considered myself to be quiet, but attentive. Since I began the program at RIC I have found it difficult on some occasions to voice my opinion on the presented material. Three or four hours can pass and I have barely uttered a word. I still struggle with the reasons for my silence. Some of it might be attributed to the fact that often times I need time to process the ideas and concepts that are being discussed. I might not have anything to bring to the proverbial table on a Wednesday night. But give me a few days to think it over and I will have generated some ideas that I would want to share.

As I progress through the program I think I need to allow myself more time before class to frontload the materials and concepts embedded in the class readings. By doing this I think I will be more apt to verbally communicate with my professors and cohort members.

As I look back on my fifteen months of coursework I need to ask myself what I would do differently. For me, I think it would be helpful to receive coaching and mentoring from someone other than the principal and assistant principal in my building. On the one hand, I am grateful to them for being a tremendous resource during my coursework. They have been gracious with their time and I realized I needed a starting point to better understand the role of an administrator. On the other hand, I know I would be better able to understand the role of administrator by visiting other schools.

For me, I think it would have been helpful to visit other schools in order to be exposed to different leadership styles. In short, I would love to experience a condensed version of a SALT visit. I could have achieved this by taking a personal day and spending it at a cohort's school. I would like to experience their school day from start to finish. There are so many areas I would want to compare and contrast. How does the principal begin the school day? Is he or she a presence in the hallways? How does the staff feel about their leadership? How well do the students know their building leaders? Answering all of these questions will only sharpen the focus of my Educational Leadership lens.

In closing, I feel the same today as I did at the inception of LEAD 504. Right now, I really enjoy the role of classroom teacher. I do not think I have done all that I can as a middle school educator. I am not certain if I will feel differently in five or ten years. But I can say with clarity and conviction that education is my chosen field and I look forward to the decades of experiences that lay before me.

Date

Classwork

Homework

10/9/14
10/8/14
10/7/14
10/6/14
10/5/14

NECAP Review
No Class- NECAP
No Class- NECAP
NECAP Review
NECAP Review

10/2/14
10/1/14
9/30/14
9/29/14
9/28/14

NECAP Review
Math Connects Chapter 1 Place Value
Math Connects Chapter 1 Place Value
Math Connects Chapter 1 Place Value
Math Connects Chapter 1 Place Value

9/25/14
9/24/14
9/23/14
9/22/14
9/21/14

NECAP Review
NECAP Review
eleven times tables
ten times tables
NWEA Testing

9/18/14
9/17/14
9/16/14
9/15/14
9/14/14

nine times tables
eight times tables
seven times tables
No School
six times table

9/11/14
9/10/14
9/9/14
9/8/14
9/7/14

NECAP Review
five times tables
four times tables
three times tables
NO School

9/4/14
9/3/14

get to know you
get to know you

Get supplies
Get Supplies

Lee Russell
LEAD 504: Section 01
Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Mapping Project
December 1, 2010

How often have you heard this unflattering comment from a teacher? “Why don’t those teachers from the lower grades teach these kids anything? These kids are coming into my classroom with no background knowledge.” This blame game can be heard throughout elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. More often than not, these accusations are unfair and unwarranted. In this era of high stakes testing and teacher accountability it is paramount that every educator teach exactly to the prescribed curriculum.

A curriculum map can provide a teacher, parent, student, or administrator an accurate depiction of what **should** be taught during the school year. One way to gauge how accurately a curriculum was followed is through a Curriculum Map. This document is “like a school’s manuscript. With this map in hand, staff members can play the role of manuscript editors, examining the curriculum for needed revision and validation.” (Heidi Hayes Jacobs, 1997)

Heidi Hayes Jacobs is credited with bringing Curriculum Mapping into the forefront of teaching and learning. A curriculum map is not a plan, expectation, wish list, or desire. It is a “map to provide a clear picture of what is happening in their classes at specific points during the school year.” (Heidi Hayes Jacobs, 1997)

As a teacher I utilize the Newport Public Schools Grade 5 Curriculum Map to guide my instruction. This assignment has forced me to provide a reflection of how accurately I, as well as, two of my NPS colleagues covered the NPS Mathematics Curriculum. My analysis will answer the following two questions: were there content areas, skills, or assessments that I did not know my colleagues taught? To what degree does the content of the maps reflect best current practice in the content area?

Given the fact that this was my first year teaching Mathematics there was many pieces of information that came to light during my investigation of grades five through seven. The mapping picture became more apparent when I began to look at these documents backwards.

Early into my research I noticed a common mathematical thread in grades five through seven. I realized that students at Thompson Middle School develop a deeper understanding of *place value* as they matriculate from grade to grade.

I first began to look at the grade seven Math documents. In September, there is a strong focus on extending the number line in the negative direction and comparing/ordering integers. In grade six, the students begin their math instruction with a review of place value. In grade five, the first chapter in the Math textbook is entitled “Understanding Place Value”.

I was pleasantly surprised to observe that in the first weeks of school all three Math teachers delivering similar Math instruction. One would hope that the students come to this same conclusion. More importantly, “our students need us to know their experiences over the course of time. They need us to know and give credence to their work from year to year.” (Heidi Hayes Jacobs, 1997)

The second phase of my research was to analyze all three maps in order to reveal areas for improvement. It was clearly evident that all three maps showed numerous hours of class time dedicated to preparing for NECAP exams. Yet, it is up to the individual teacher to decide *how* to prepare their student for such a comprehensive assessment.

Based on this discovery I suggest an amendment to NPS Math curriculum. I feel that it is paramount that Newport students are taught a prescribed method for solving math problems. NECAP Math scores are predicated on students' ability not only to *solve the problem*, but also to *explain the process* they used for solving the problem. Too often students cannot solve word problems because they are presented with inconsistent models of problem solving.

I suggest implementing the following four step plan for solving mathematical word problems: read and identify information, choose a strategy, solve the problem, look back. If all students were taught this method for solving word problems one would assume that there would be an increase in Math scores district wide. I feel this way because all NPS students would have an approved and measured method to solve any math word problem.

In closing, this backwards-mapping exercise has benefited me in a variety of ways. as a teacher, I feel like I have been given a window into my peers classrooms. I feel it is my charge to now share these results with other colleagues and collaborate on future mapping opportunities. As a future educational leader I feel like I now possess the skills to identify gaps, repetitions, and potential areas for integration within the framework of an existing curriculum. I feel that both of these skills will better prepare me for the decades of educational experiences that lay ahead.

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Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Reflection 1
September 14, 2010

How many curriculums are in place at your school? When asked this question most teachers would state a number that aligns with all the core subjects that are taught. For example, if the students at the school were instructed in Math, Science, History, and English the teachers in turn would naturally assume that these were the agreed upon curricula. To be perfectly honest, I would come to the same conclusion. However, after being exposed to the work of Fenwick W. English I have realized that there are different types of curriculum in a school setting. In 2000, Professor English published a book entitled Deciding What to Teach and Test. English claims that there is a formal curriculum, as well as, an informal curriculum within every school system. Before reading his text I never thought of the idea of an informal curriculum. I will elaborate and reflect on these two perspectives in the following paragraphs.

I am entering my sixth year of teaching and I still consider myself a beginning teacher. Moreover, I have held four teaching positions in two different school districts. As a result, I have been exposed to a variety of curricula. In the past, when I have been assigned a new position an administrator or mentor would present me with a formal curriculum. As I matriculate through the Educational Leadership program I realize that these administrators are demonstrating evidence of *ISLLC Standard 2 – create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program*. English describes this as a document “that usually appears in curriculum guides, state regulations, or officially sanctioned scope and sequence charts.” (English, 2000) Once this document is in my hands I have felt like I have been given a starting and ending point for what I want my students to learn between September and June. In this new era of high stakes testing and teacher accountability this formal curriculum is the law and must be followed. As a future administrator I am beginning to learn the importance of a strong and well-balanced curriculum. More importantly, it is paramount that this curriculum aligns vertically between Kindergarten and Grade 12. My school district has an Executive Director of Teaching, Learning and Professional Development, as well as, a K-12 Mathematics Coordinator to ensure this alignment. However, these people are not in the classrooms and cannot make certain that **all** children will learn.

The second type of curriculum is an informal curriculum. English states that this curriculum “involves the subtle but important personality variables of the teacher and the way these interact with students positively or negatively to encourage improved pupil learning.” (English, 2000) I have never seen an author so clearly state what I have known since I first began my teaching career. There is absolutely no substitute for the time the students spend with their teachers in the classroom. When I think of the teachers I have admired I can say they all possess the same attributes. As teachers and human beings they are strong, committed, caring, and effective. Because of these character traits, or *personality variables*, teachers provide meaningful learning for their students. Moreover, parents, students, and administrators will speak at length about how these gifted teachers made learning fun for their students.

In summation, I am currently enjoying the role of classroom teacher. I strive to possess the aforementioned *important personality variables* that will generate meaningful learning. In the classroom I am becoming comfortable providing direction and influencing my students in a productive way. At the same time I am looking ahead to a future role as an administrator and wondering how I can provide direction to an entire teaching staff. Specifically, how do I influence these people to go in that direction? How will I know when I am ready to leave the classroom and apply for an administrative position? Today I cannot answer this question but I look forward to the journey ahead.

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Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Reflection 2 Tucker/Codding & Kohn
September 28, 2010

“Mr. Russell, why are you so freaked out about NECAP testing?” This was a perfectly valid question to be asked by one of my fifth grade students. They had every right to know why I have been subjecting them to a military style boot camp in preparation for the upcoming NECAP exams. I wanted to frame my response in two ways: first, I wanted them to understand what their scores actually meant. Second, I wanted to answer their question with sincerity and thoughtfulness. I informed the class that NECAP test were very important because the test determines whether or not you have met the standard on Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. I also told them that although testing was very important, the only thing that teachers want from students is give their absolute best effort.

This response seemed to satisfy the class, but it in no way diminished my anxiety for the upcoming assessment. As a beginning teacher and future educational leader I have to ask myself some difficult questions in regards to standards. If these students do not meet the standard is it because I did an inadequate job of teaching them? Do I sufficiently explain what standard they are learning through my instruction? In my new teaching position do I fully understand the standards that need to be met by the end of the school year?

Fortunately, the two readings from this week have afforded me some perspective on my insecurity with standards. The first reading I committed to was from a book entitled Standards for Our Schools written by Marc S. Tucker and Judy B. Codding. Alfie Kohn was the second author and his work is entitled The Schools Our Children Deserve. I will elaborate and reflect on these two readings in the following paragraphs.

When I finished reading the first chapter of Tucker and Codding’s book I immediately thought of the first chapter of Glatthorn’s book The Principal as Curriculum Leader. Glatthorn begins his text by describing the benefits and disadvantages of a nationally based set of standards for education. To me, Tucker and Codding outline their first chapter in a way that advocates for adopting national standards. They frame their thinking by stating “our aim has been to write a practical guide to changing the system so that the good people in our schools can do for the world what they entered teaching to do in the first place.” (Tucker & Codding, p. 19,1998) This resonates with me because I would like nothing more than to be reinvigorated with the enthusiasm and eagerness that I possessed when I first began teaching close to ten years ago. New teacher evaluations, performance based pay, and other external factors have made teaching stressful and complicated. I, as well as, Tucker and Codding have come to see that “standards based education means an obsession with results.”(Tucker & Codding, p.21) I did not begin my teaching career with an obsession for anything other than trying to make learning fun for students.

This “obsession” became transparent at a recent staff meeting at my school. Our principal has requested that students be made aware of their 2009 NECAP score before they begin their 2010 NECAP assessment. He wants the students to compete with themselves. He also wants the Newport students to compete with the scores from surrounding area schools. He is making their learning competitive. Tucker and Codding allude to this by stating, “standards should be competitive, in the sense that they should be at least as high as the

standards to which students in other countries are held in the same subjects at the same grade or age levels.” (Tucker & Coddling, p. 45) Our school is not quite ready to compete with Japan or Germany. But we can certainly compete with the affluent communities of Middletown and Portsmouth.

The second reading by Alfie Kohn alleviated many of my worries about any upcoming assessment that I will encounter either as a teacher or administrator. I think I climbed the ladder of inference too quickly when I read Tucker and Coddling’s viewpoint on standards. For me, Kohn provided clarity on the importance of standards but at the same time added a sense of kindness that I was missing. My thinking changed when I read “the result of grade by grade standards, with their willful disregard of individual differences, is that some children will be branded failures because they don’t learn as quickly as their peers.” (Kohn, p. 47, 1999) This was a profound and powerful statement that I needed to absorb. Before I read that I had never put myself in the shoes of a child who has scored lower than that their peers since kindergarten. How is this child going to feel when they continually perform lower than their peers? How does this impact their self-esteem? As a student I always did well and I need to realize that not every student was like me. Harper Lee said in her book *To Kill a Mockingbird* that “you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view--until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” This quote resonated with me when I read it twenty years ago as a high school student and it still rings true to me today as an educator.

As I kept reading Kohn I realized that I was doing some very productive and thought provoking activities in my classroom. I started to feel better about my standards angst. For example, everyday I have my students write in their journals. I give them a choice of prompts to respond to and I set three criteria. First, write the date. Second, make sure you turn the question around or include the question in your answer. Third, provide the reader with relevant details and examples to illustrate their point. At this point in the school year I am really looking at their ideas and commenting on how effectively they convey their thoughts. Grammar is important, but not as important as sending a message to the reader. Kohn says something similarly when he asks “what is most fundamental about learning to write: remembering how to spell words correctly or developing a feel for how certain words will affect a reader?” (Kohn, p.49, 1999) I am very aware that writing is a process. But with the right tools and abundant scaffolding I know I can make my students better readers and writers.

In summation, I am still committed to ensuring that all students give their very best effort to meet the standard. As I learn to grow as a teacher I have to understand that it might be okay if a student works really hard and approaches the standard. At the end of the day I have to go back our school's mission and vision: *providing quality education that makes a difference in each student's life*. Without a shadow of a doubt, I know that I am completely committed to this mission statement.

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Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Reflection 3
October 16, 2010

We are in a unique business, the business of kids. We do not work in factories. Instead, we work in schools. These schools “need leadership more than most organizations.” (Tucker & Coddling, p.107, 1998) In this work environment it is important to clarify that our business requires a strong manager, as well as, a strong leader. Moreover, it is equally important to understand that “leading and managing are not the same.” (Tucker & Coddling) As a future educational leader I am forced to consider the intrinsic worth of both leadership and management.

To me, a leader is someone who provides direction and influences people to go in that direction. An effective leader is someone who can “show the way, guide us to a higher level, exert a moral force on us, and help us clarify our collective vision.” (Tucker & Coddling) I have been fortunate to work for one of these educational leaders. This principal led by example. In the two years I worked with him it was evident that placing children as the first priority was sacrosanct. I never heard a disdainful or damaging word about his leadership. Unfortunately, this is not the case with my current principal.

To me, my building principal seems to be more of a manager. He has kept the school running and has scored what a golfer might refer to as an “even par”. The school is by no means falling apart, but there is still a toxicity embedded in the culture that has not improved during his tenure. How can this “manager” principal be more like the “leader” principal that was so adored by teachers, parents, students, and community members?

As a beginning teacher I am in no way qualified to recommend or suggest methods for a principal to improve their job performance. However, through this coursework I have developed a new educational lens that affords me a fresh perspective on my school environment. The first area that I could suggest improvement is for our principal to build stronger bonds with the students. In the years that I have worked with him I have only seen him interact with students when there is a disciplinary matter that needs to be addressed. Very rarely have I seen him be lighthearted and jovial with the student body. It is important for the kids to know that he cares about their well being. More importantly, “when young people in the school find that most of the adults they encounter in the school know them by name, know something about them, and care whether they do well or badly in school, there is a floor of care under the student upon which a house of accomplishment can be built.” (Tucker & Coddling)

There was one occasion last year where our principal demonstrated transparency with the students and staff. Our middle school boys and girls basketball team had reached the state finals. During the last period of school we were called to the gymnasium for an unannounced assembly. When we arrived at the gym we were pleasantly surprised to see both the boys and girls basketball teams in their uniforms. They were running practice drills on the gym floor while the student band provided musical accompaniment. The principal had organized an impromptu pep rally. The principal was the emcee and had each grade compete in a contest to see who could scream the loudest in support of both of the sports teams. The assembly was an absolute hit! The students and faculty both left the

gymnasium feeling a sense of school spirit that had not been felt in a long time. The gathering was simple and effective. Furthermore, the assembly did not cost the school any additional funds or resources. In essence, it was a total school effort. In my opinion, we need more of these types activities.

A good time of year to schedule another one of these assemblies would be at the beginning or conclusion of NECAP testing. These three weeks of testing are stressful for everyone. The teachers feel the stress because in the coming years their jobs might be dependent on the results of their students test scores. The kids are stressed because their future placement within the school might be predicated on how closely their scores align to the state standard. It is important for the school to get together and create synergy. Moreover, "that sense of belonging and community can make all the difference, not just for the students, but also for the faculty." (Tucker & Coddling)

In summation, I am developing a better understanding of the importance of management and leadership in a school setting. To be effective, one needs to be proficient in both. Yet, at the end of the school day which is going to be more valuable when the school encounters a crisis? Which skill set is going to help improve the bonds between teachers and staff? Today, I do not possess these answers but I look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead.

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Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Reflection 4
November 9, 2010

“OK, so we are in agreement on this? Starting tomorrow, we will all be in the hallways as students pass between their classes. Everyone sitting in this room agrees to do this to better monitor their behavior. Yes? Good, have a good night.” These were the last sentences spoken by our principal at a recent faculty meeting. Can you guess what happened the very next day? Was this new policy followed with fidelity? Did the educational leader create staff buy-in? Did the faculty really mean what they said? Regrettably, the answers to all of these questions is no.

Why is this happening? Why is the faculty at my school continually paying lip service to new initiatives? The day after the aforementioned staff meeting I was really bothered by what I saw. Instead of being a presence in the hallways, the majority of the staff were in their classrooms checking their email or readying their classrooms for the teaching day. Why are these teachers who have decades more teaching experience than me not following through on agreed upon policy? Lately I have really been struggling with how to address issues that I feel are detrimental to the school’s mission and vision.

Class readings and subsequent discussions have been helpful in alleviating some of my environmental distress. One recent reading passage by Jacqueline Austin really spoke to me. She states that the key to real leadership is “developing a strong shared vision among the staff and relentless focus on results – being clear about the results we value, constantly measuring our progress toward them, and then being very hard headed about doing what it takes to get our students to where they have to be.” (Tucker & Coddling, p.138, 1998)

I think that there would be a shift in our school culture if our building leaders were more “hard headed”. One example of this stubbornness could have been transparent on the Wednesday morning after the aforementioned staff meeting. In my opinion, our principal and vice principal had every right to roam the hallways to inspect the newly created teacher monitor positions. Would it be wrong for them to stand in a teacher’s doorway and politely remind them to monitor the hallways? Would it be so egregious for this to happen on a daily basis until the entire staff was implementing this agreed upon policy?

I think I am starting to realize that I want the leaders in my building to step up to the plate and be real leaders. I want a leader that will provide the staff with a direction, and then influence the staff to go in that direction. At this point I am not certain that these particular leaders can provide me, or the teaching staff, these essential leadership qualities. Some of this I am going to have to begin on my own.

Three weeks have passed since our faculty meeting. The faces in the hallways have not changed. I am realizing that I might have to take a different approach to changing their behavior. I want to try an experiment to get more teachers in the hallways. I will begin with the core group of teachers I currently stand with in the mornings. As we are clustered together I will suggest to them that each morning someone will be responsible for telling a clean joke. In doing this, I think we will accomplish three goals: first, we will be building essential personal relationships that serve to strengthen our collegiality. Second, the students will see us laughing and being lighthearted. Too often our school day is spent

worrying about test scores and we lose perspective on the pleasures of teaching. Third, I want to cordially invite the staff members who are not currently joining the monitor duties. I will frame my invitation by asking them if they want to join the *clean joke of the day club*. If they accept the invitation then my experiment has worked. If they do not accept I have to be “hard headed about doing what it takes”. Hopefully acting stubborn and persistent will eventually produce the results I was looking for. Moreover, I will have successfully influenced someone to go in a direction.

In closing, I know that I cannot change an entire school all by myself. But as I grow as an educator I am starting to understand that there are certain aspects of the school’s environment that I can change. For now, I want to be stubborn, hard headed, and persistent about getting my students to give their best effort everyday. Five years from now, I can see myself as an educational leader applying these same concepts to dozens of classrooms. At the end of the day my mantra is simple. Provide direction for people, and influence people to go in that direction.

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Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Reflection 5
"Phoebe Prince's Death Is A Call to Action"
by Dr. Dale Archer (attached)
December 1, 2010

"Two days before the school's big dance, Phoebe finally could take no more and she came home from school, went into her closet and hung herself." (Dr. Dale Archer, FOXNews.com, 4/6/10) The girl with the untimely end to her life was 15-year-old Phoebe Prince from South Hadley, MA. On January 14, 2010 Phoebe ended her life after months of bullying from her classmates at her high school.

When I first heard of this unsettling story my heart sank. First and foremost, I am a parent and I could not imagine losing a child in such a disturbing set of circumstances. Second, while working in a middle school I have seen countless cases of bullying that are eerily similar to Phoebe.

Thankfully, in my short teaching career none of these cases have ended the way Phoebe's did. However, I have seen firsthand how distressed young people can become when they are victims of bullying. Dr. Dale Archer feels that there are three entities partially responsible for Phoebe's death: society, school systems, and parents. I will reflect on these three entities in the following paragraphs.

Today's society is oozing with violence. It permeates our televisions, movie screens, and video game systems. It is not surprising that this high exposure to violence has a carry over affect on American culture. Dr. Archer supports this claim with clinical research. He states "there are now psychological studies that show virtual violence desensitizes young people to real violence, which can play a role in increasing all violence." (Archer, 2010) The violence Phoebe experienced was not physical. Her anguish came by the hands of her tormentors who relentlessly bullied her until she could not take one more day. Sad, disturbing, and unnecessary are just a few words to describe her final moments. It begs the question, if this happened on a school day, what kind of emotions was Phoebe experiencing as she sat in her classroom and tried to learn?

Phoebe's story forces me to analyze my school district. How does my district respond to cases of bullying? Does my district promote "social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling"?

I'm not certain I will ever be able to ascertain this information. . Administrators, parents, students, and community members need to answer a very difficult question: why are young people taking their own lives?

The last piece to this upsetting puzzle is the parents. Dr. Archer asks parents two very succinct and thought provoking questions. In my opinion, he "frames" the questions perfectly. He asks, "Parents, do you know your children well enough to know that they would not participate in acts of cruelty like this? Have you ever talked to them about bullying?" (Archer, 2010)

I have a suggestion to the parents who cannot honestly answer these questions. I feel that parents should use this deplorable case as an opportunity for a "teachable moment".

Parents do not need to spearhead this process by themselves. There is a recent work of nonfiction entitled Letters to a Bullied Girl. Two California sisters named Emily and Sarah Buder wrote the book. They heard about a girl named Olivia who lived in a neighboring town who was constantly bullied by her classmates. They did one of the bravest things a teenager can do. Instead of turning a blind eye, they took a stand and supported Olivia. Their efforts resulted in a book about bullies and how harmful it can be to be a victim of bullying. I strongly feel that parents and teenagers should read this book. The end result would be a deeper understanding of a common language and an open dialogue about bullying.

In summation, I am researching whether or not my school will support purchasing this book for all the staff in the building. My school has a strong anti-bullying policy. But is it strong enough to prevent another young person like Phoebe from ending their suffering? I want to be a part of the solution and I feel that this is a good place to start.

Opinion

Phoebe Prince's Death Is A Call to Action

By Dr. Dale Archer

Published April 06, 2010

| FOXNews.com

Phoebe Prince left Ireland for America at the age of 15, just in time to start her freshman year at South Hadley High School in Massachusetts. Her family wanted her to experience America first hand; She wanted what most 15 year olds want: to be liked and accepted, to fit in, and to make friends. She found herself instead, as a quiet newcomer, on the wrong side of a group of self-described "Mean Girls." These girls, along with a couple of their male friends, literally made Phoebe's life a living hell.

Relentless, incessant bullying marked every one of Phoebe's days. She endured threats, name calling, and exclusion – both in person, and after school by text messages and on Facebook. Day...after day...after day. Two days before the school's big dance, Phoebe finally could take no more and she came home from school, went into her closet and hung herself. Her 12-year-old sister discovered her body. After her death, her tormentors wrote "accomplished" on her Facebook wall and not one of the 9 bullies showed even a tinge of remorse. The school carried on with the dance; there was barely any mention of this poor girl's tragic end. Last week, the 9 bullies were charged with various crimes ranging from assault to human rights violations to, in an unexpected twist, statutory rape. The arraignment is today.

If you can read that story with dry eyes then you are a heck of a lot stronger than I am and I only picked the most recent bully-cide to discuss. I could have picked Carl Walker Hoover, who hung himself after non-stop threats, or Jaheem Harrera who came from the Virgin Islands and also hung himself after being repeatedly bullied, or one of dozens of other bully-cides in the last year. WHAT is going on here!? Who's to blame? Society? The student bullies? The school system? The parents? The answer is Yes, yes, yes and yes.

Society: We live in a culture that's permeated by violence. Television, the Internet, movies, video games, song lyrics. There are now psychological studies that show virtual violence desensitizes young people to real violence, which can play a role in increasing all violence. If you see enough virtual death, driving another kid to suicide just doesn't seem to be real....or a big deal. Violence in the media is glorified and out of hand. We must take a stand against it. Now is the time to write your legislators and tell them ENOUGH.

Bullies: I'm not a big fan of legally prosecuting teens for bad behavior but this case in South Hadley, Mass. must be turned into an example. A girl DIED here and the message needs to be sent to all teens, their parents and the schools that bullying can have fatal consequences and will NEVER be acceptable or tolerated. Kudos to district attorney Elizabeth Scheibel for filing charges.

School Officials: There are several accounts in this case asserting that teachers and other school officials knew what was taking place and yet made NO effort to intervene! Phoebe's

mother even went and talked to these officials TWICE but still there was no action. The D.A. who filed charges against the teens stated that the “action or inaction” of school officials was “troublesome.” I say, again, that an example must be set here and charges must be filed against school employees that should have known (or knew) what was going on. It is NEVER acceptable as a teacher, administrator or principal to bury your head in the sand and claim ignorance. We entrust our children, our most precious resources, to the school system; as parents we must demand accountability.

Parents: So do the parents of Phoebe’s bullies have any culpability here? Absolutely. In fact, this may be the biggest problem of all. The bullies’ parents all claim they didn’t know that anything more than name calling was going on. They said that is what kids do, they call names.

Here’s my question to all of you parents out there: Do you know your children well enough to know that they would never participate in acts of cruelty like this? Have you ever talked to them about bullying? The disintegration of the American family is a crucial issue in this whole mess. Many parents work, have obligations, hobbies and other commitments. Their kids are left to their own devices without any guidance or support to know what is, or is not, acceptable behavior.

Now is the time to take a stand so that Phoebe’s death will not be in vain; it must happen in the courtroom, the legislature, the schools and most importantly in your own home. So, today, don’t work late or go to Happy Hour, cancel your dinner meeting and your workout, call your kids and tell them to cancel their plans. Tell them that it’s time to have a family talk. At the meeting, tell your family about the sad case of Phoebe Prince. Talk about bullying and violence in school and how to help kids who don’t fit in or have been targeted. Encourage them to help these kids that were bullied, and to tell you if they witness it. More than anything, tell them that it is never, ever, under any circumstances, acceptable. You can make a difference. Today, you can make a difference.

Dr. Dale Archer is a psychiatrist and frequent guest on FoxNews.com's "The Strategy Room."
For more, visit his Web site: Dr.DaleArcher.com.

Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2010/04/06/dr-dale-archer-phoebe-prince-south-hadley-mass-bullying-death-da/#ixzz17fEpRcBP>

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LEAD 504: Section 01
Leading Learning I: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
Instructional Leadership
December 1, 2010

“A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.” Lao Tzu. To me, Lao Tzu is saying that a person in a leadership position can be effective without a demanding obedience from those that serve underneath them. The role of a leader is to provide direction and influence people to go in that direction. Lao Tzu and I both agree that this can be achieved in a quiet, confident, controlled, and measured manner.

This quote becomes more powerful when I begin to assess leaders in an educational environment. Effective educational leaders provide a mission and vision for their school. They present a direction for their teachers and students and they influence people to go in that direction. My task is to evaluate the principal at my school by answering three questions: first, how would I describe my principal’s leadership methods in accordance with Daniel Goleman’s Six Styles of Leadership? Second, how effective is the principal in improving and integrating the curricula? Third, what has the principal done to shape and control the climate of the school? I will elaborate on these questions in the following paragraphs.

My Educational Leadership coursework at RIC has taught me that leadership hasn’t really changed for hundreds of years. Historically speaking, the greatest leaders maintained a rigid set of standards that guided their decision making process. These standards helped them make sound and informed decision. Daniel Goleman took this concept and created a framework that describes six different styles of leadership.

I would describe my current principal as “the dictator”. Goleman describes this as “the coercive style of leadership.” Furthermore, “this is the dominant macho leadership style. It is appropriate in emergencies and severe situations, but otherwise will tend to disempower and disillusion subordinates.” A good example of this “macho” leadership became transparent at a recent staff meeting. There have been growing concerns about the amount of areas that are unsupervised by the staff as students are passing to their classes. When a staff member voiced these concerns at the staff meeting the principal answered the question with authority. He raised his voice and said “if **we** want to change the hallways then **we** have to change it. **We** have to be in the hallways as kids pass. **We** need to be more vigilant.” When he said this I was reminded of my high school basketball coach yelling at us at halftime to play better defense. To me, he was strongly voicing his opinion about “buy in”. The rest of the staff did not see things as I did. The buzz among the staff the next day was “can you believe the principal was yelling at us? What gives him the right to speak to us this way?”

Having seen the fallout from his actions I would offer him a few suggestions. First, it would help if he softened his tone with the staff. Instead of raising his voice and appearing like he was the authority he could have very easily involved the staff in the decision making process. He could have stated, “that is a great point, now that we have everyone seated here how can we begin to address this issue?” This would create buy in. Second, he might make the staff more aware that he is listening to what they have to say. Nobody wants to

feel like they are not being heard. It is important for the building leaders to continually communicate about how to properly ensure that the schools' mission and vision are followed with fidelity. By doing this, the staff would feel that are invested in providing a quality education to their students.

Having provided a background into the principal's leadership style I will now analyze how effective he is in implementing and improving the curricula. In this area I believe that he receives high marks. I feel this way for a number of reasons. First, when our school receives the results of the NECAP examinations he spends several days pouring over the results. In other words, he is conducting a "gap analysis" to see where our students are strong, and where they need improvement. After conducting this analysis he first shares his results with the curriculum liaisons. These are the experts within each content area. In my opinion, he is delegating this responsibility to them because they possess the skill set within their content area to improve teaching and learning. In other words, "as an administrator, you are in a position to spread effective teaching. The role of the principal is to bring the secret to life." (ASCD Education Update, Vol. 52, Oct. 2010) From there, the liaisons share the results within their department. Each department then develops an action plan to improve student scores. This collaboration and analysis of instructional programs is evidence of *ISLLC Standard 2 – nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration while monitoring and evaluating the impact of instructional programs.*

Now that the framework for leadership style and curriculum integration has been established, the final question can be answered: how has the schools' culture and environment been shaped by this principal's leadership style? Unfortunately, I have found that the staff does not focus on the principal's strengths in regards to curriculum analysis. Instead, the staff seems distanced from the principal because of his lack of building personal relationships.

Several years ago there was an assistant principal who struck a nice balance with the current principal. The assistant principal was more of a cheerleader. Goleman would describe his leadership style as "people person - focusing on people, teambuilding, bonding, and forging alliances." At the time, the staff felt that the combination of "coercive" and "teambuilding" leadership styles created a strong administrative team. Their partnership was predicated on their abilities to play off each other's strengths and weaknesses. The principal was more behind the scenes addressing scheduling and curriculum. The assistant principal was in the classrooms and hallways interacting with teachers and students. I think he understood the importance of "building strong relationships with the teachers, showing understanding and caring about the staff." (ASCD Education Update, Vol. 52, Oct. 2010)

This partnership only lasted one school year because the assistant principal accepted a job as principal at a different school. His position has been replaced, but his proverbial leadership shoes have not been filled. To be perfectly honest, the culture and climate in the school has not been the same since his departure.

In closing, I feel that this assignment has provided more clarity to my existing educational lens. I have seen firsthand the affect of different leadership styles. On the one hand, a "dictator" can *manage* the learning in the school but cannot effectively *lead* the learning. Conversely, a "people person" is excellent at building alliances but might not be equipped to handle an emergency or severe situation. This assignment has afforded me a deeper understanding of the balance that has to be reached between all leadership styles.