

## Competency X: Leadership

**Related Task:** Job Shadowing

- **Specific Task:**
  - o Spend a minimum of one entire day (including after school and evening responsibilities, if any) shadowing the cooperating administrator, Lauren Hunter.
- **Narrative Description:**
  - o Job shadow and assist administrator, when appropriate, in accomplishing responsibilities. Maintain a journal of activities and prepare a thoughtful analysis of the number, nature and focus of activities, and with whom the administrator interacted. Describe and assess the decision making process and style used by the administrator in responding to various categories of demands or problems. Identify several crucial lessons the day taught about the art of administration and school leadership.

**Smart Goal:** By April of 2016, I will job shadow Lauren Hunter as she performs duties throughout the course of the day. I will create a chart that reflects how she spends her time.

Specific:	Actively participate and shadow Lauren Hunter as she leads and performs duties throughout the course of a school day including but not limited to 8 or more administrative tasks that she has to perform throughout the day.
Measurable:	I will job shadow for one day and document a minimum of 8 tasks that she has to accomplish throughout the course of one school day.
Attainable:	The job shadow will be completed by April 2016.
Relevant:	Understanding all of the day to day duties that administrators perform in addition to all of the unplanned events that occur throughout the course of one school day will allow awareness of how an administrator reacts to unplanned events and how they spend their time.
Timely:	By April 2016 I will have shadowed Lauren for a minimum of 1 school day and have observed at least 8 tasks.

**Description and Rationale of Project:**

Getting a glimpse of only certain parts of the day when watching an administrator perform their duties does not give you a clear enough picture when trying to imagine what a typical day is like in their shoes. I had always heard how administrators wear many hats, take on many tasks, and tackle many challenges every day, but had never received the chance to witness it firsthand. Thus, on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, I job shadowed Lauren Hunter, the principal of Gaines Elementary. Since I am also a fourth grade teacher, I had to complete substitute teacher plans and try not to disrupt the learning already taking place at, what I consider, the best

learning time of the year. Once the substitute plans were set, all that was left was to take in the events of the day and truly see what goes into the day of an administrator.

Lauren and I first arrived around 7:50 AM. From 7:50 to 8:30 AM, Lauren dealt with an abundant amount of parent concerns, students with missing work, and communication issues between teachers, students and parents. It was right off the bat that I realized administrators wear so many hats, but none are more important than addressing behavioral issues and communication concerns. Promoting positive behavior will allow for a smoother school year because there will be less major disruptions to the learning environment. Meanwhile, handling communication concerns will also allow for a smoother school year because all major parties will be on the same page all year long. It is imperative that the teachers, students, and parents all remain on the same page in regards to the learning environment. When communication errors do arise, it is the administrator's job to address these concerns in a proactive manner in an effort to not allow them to snowball into larger issues down the road.

By 8:15 AM, a guest teacher had arrived as they were filling in for a teacher who was out for the day. At this point, Lauren introduced herself and shared a little bit about the school which allowed the guest teacher to feel more comfortable. It was at this point that it clicked, and I realized administrators are the face of the building. Being the face of an organization, it is their job to be sure to introduce yourself to all newcomers and provide a warm welcome which will help allow these people to feel more comfortable. The goal again is to not disrupt the flow of the learning environment. By being sure our guests are comfortable, we are closer to guarantying a smooth day and limited learning disrupted.

At 8:40 AM, the school bells had rung and it was time for pledge leaders, announcements and birthdays. Lauren goes on the PA system every morning with class representatives from a classroom and does the Pledge of Allegiance, shares the important announcements for the day, and goes over any student birthdays for the day. Just as administrators are the face of the building, they are also the voice of the building. Morning announcements are a good way to make your voice heard in all classrooms on a daily basis without using too much time of your day since there are so many other responsibilities facing you for the day.

Once the day was underway, one would think the day would slow down, but it was just the opposite. It was at this point where the other responsibility hats came into play. Lauren is also the McKinney Vento Homeless Program coordinator for the district. Because of this, she is in charge of seeking to make sure that all students are provided shelter and given a chance to attend the school district. Swartz Creek had recently just had a house fire where a little boy who lived in Swartz Creek and used to attend the district had passed away. Lauren then contacted Syring Elementary, where the boy's family attended in the district, to be sure everything was being taken care of and seeing if there was anything they needed for the family. It was through this conversation that I realized that administrators not only have building level responsibilities, but they are tasked with many district level responsibilities. When I had asked Lauren how she does it all, she mentioned that prioritizing and staying organized are crucial to your success.

I also learned that Lauren is the WIDA testing coordinator for the district. This is the testing that takes place this time of the year with students who are identified as English

Language Learners. At 8:57, Stephanie Sortor entered Lauren's office and introduced herself as the WIDA testing administrator. She was a certified school teacher who had taught for 7 years and was licensed to administer language diverse students. Lauren was tasked with finding Stephanie and hiring her for the school year to administer this test to the ELL students in the district. Lauren admitted that this was a very difficult task because the state requires that the person administering the test must be a licensed teacher, yet much of the best qualified teachers are already in classrooms and thus are not available to administer this test. Not only does Lauren have to find a testing administrator every year, she has to go through the entire district rosters and see which kids are required to be tested, set the testing schedule by building, and then communicate all of the details to each building and central office. Some of the biggest issues with this that she mentioned was that the Flint Schools were coding kids as EL, thus those kids require testing, even though those students truly are not ELL students. She said the process for getting them off of the testing schedule as required by the state is a tedious process and one that can take forever. As mentioned, she also sets the testing schedule for the entire district. This can be a difficult process because of unknown building plans. Therefore, a lot of drafting takes place and constant communication through other building administrators and teachers. Once the testing schedule is finally set, but always able to be tweaked, it was time for her and Stephanie to sort through all of the WIDA testing materials which was delivered by the state. It was Lauren's job to be sure all of the proper materials were sent. Thankfully, none of the necessary materials were missing. Once all of the materials were sorted, they were then repacked and prepared to be delivered. When I asked if she was inner-school mailing them, she replied with a quick no. She is also responsible to be sure that all materials get to their necessary building safe and sound. The best way to do that is through personal delivery and so she personally delivers each package to each of the building administrators. Again, this entire process proves how important organization is, but also how important flexibility is in order to continue redrafting the testing schedule and personally delivering all materials. This meeting and test preparation was concluded by 10:00 AM.

Once Stephanie had left, it was back to the drawing board and Lauren had to, yet again, amend the testing schedule based on other administrator feedback. By 10:30, she had finalized a schedule and then sent it to Sandy, the building secretary, to formally type out and send to all other building administrators and central office. At this point, I realized the importance of not only delegating some of the work but the relationship with your office secretary. There is only so much time in the day, and a lot of times it truly pays to have an office secretary who can help you accomplish some of the daily daunting tasks.

By 10:30, the hat of ensuring school safety, which is probably the number one goal of all administrators, came into action. Julie, the school librarian entered her office to address some safety concerns in her classroom library based on the arrangement of the room. Lauren provided some room arrangement suggestions which Julie was very receptive about. It was at this point where I truly realized it is the administrator's number one goal to keep all students and staff safe on a daily basis. All safety concerns should be addressed with the administrator, and the administrator should know of all concerns in the building at all times, regardless of how busy they may be.

From 10:30 to 11:30, Lauren was then back at her computer and emailing all classroom teachers, secretaries, and administrators the finalized WIDA testing schedule. Communication is

vital to building and district success. Whether through email, telephone, or in person, the higher you go in education, the more you are responsible to communicate with a higher volume of people, and doing so effectively.

At 11:30, Lauren received a phone call from a teacher in the building regarding a student issue. At this point, Lauren was preparing to leave for a meeting at central office. Once she found out the student issue was not time sensitive, she ensured that they would meet to talk more about it the next day. Once she was done with this phone call, she then took one last look at the WIDA testing schedule and district feedback based on the communication that took place all day. She requested Sandy to take one last look at it and formally type it all out one last time based on the most recent updated modifications. Again, delegating is key to administrator success. There is just simply too much to do on your own. A good leader will have those who follow and take on responsibilities themselves. Finally, by 11:40, Lauren was preparing to leave for her central office meeting, she took a look at her to do lists and updated them based on the communications that took place this morning. She noted that only one thing truly got done and a few more were added. Again, this proves how important organization and prioritizing is in administration.

It was now time to head to the central office for the monthly MTSS meeting in which Lauren is a building representative. She arrived at central office around noon. Thankfully they provided a light lunch, otherwise she noted she sometimes does not have time to eat during the day. The MTSS committee is compiled of district staff personnel from all educational institutions. The goal of the committee is to try and improve academic and behavioral achievement in the district through identified consistent best practices between buildings in the district. This entire committee and Lauren's involvement shows how it is important to be proactive in handling behavioral and academic issues on a district level. It also proves that the principal should be an active player in representing your building and bringing back best practices to better improve the schoolwide success.

A lot of things were discussed at this meeting which went from 12:00 PM until 3:00 PM. Topics included identifying challenges all buildings are facing this year, having a positive attitude and mindset, building celebrations and accomplishments, building and district demographics, and building tactics to tackle identified challenges. One of the most unique parts of this meeting took place from 12:45 to 1:15 where each building was able to share its celebrations. Lauren was able to share what Gaines was proud of which included very high Dibels scores, very low statistical behavioral issues, being a Blue Ribbon Nominee, and outstanding Star Math scores. When an administrator is able to have pride in its building's accomplishments, it helps to develop pride within the entire district as the building is only a piece to the bigger picture. By sharing things we do well, Lauren is allowing for others to gain ideas and give them the chance to do equally well.

From 1:15 to 2:00 PM, it was on to discussions regarding district and building demographics. This was an interesting topic because Gaines has relative limited diversity. However, that is not the case with the other schools in Swartz Creek, nor is it the case in many schools nationwide. During this time we discussed concerns regarding the demographic data, the correlations between the SWIS data and academic data at each building, and any issues we see

within the identified data. This was a great opportunity to see how diversity and demographics can play a huge role in not only building success, but district success. It is the administrator's job to identify demographic concerns and tackle them proactively in order to limit their hindering on academic achievement.

Finally, from 2:00 to 3:00 PM, we wrapped up the meeting by discussing building tactics and how we tackle our own demographic issues. We analyzed assessment scores, Free and Reduced lunches, and discussed why we haven't met our goal of 80% being benchmark in literacy and math. This discussion was very interesting as I had no idea we had set this 80% benchmark goal six years ago (before I came to the district). When addressing why our district has not met the identified goal, the committee began to discuss fidelity issues with the assessments we are using, along with the demographic concerns previously discussed (at home challenges), lack of resources needed, and transiency. It was at this point in the day where I realized how imperative it is to be goal oriented. As an administrator, it is necessary to always set goals and make plans to reach them. If they are not reached, it is then crucial to discuss why it has not yet been met and the plan needs to be amended or a new goal needs to be set. An effective administrator will always have goals set, it is the best way to promote building growth and the best way to long-term success.

### **Project Outcomes:**

All in all, it was a very productive day where Lauren had to wear many hats. Even this one day does not do the field of administration justice because I know she has even more hats that did not even come out during this day. Yet, she remained productive, focused, organized, flexible, and proactive and goal oriented throughout the day. It is administrative habits like these I will need to possess that will pave the way to not only a successful career, but a successful building and district.

### **Reflection:**

Many lessons have been learned through the job shadow process. One of the first lessons I learned was that just as teachers wear many hats in the classroom, administrators wear even more hats. Out of all of those hats, some of the most important ones are the addressing of behavioral issues and communication concerns. An excellent administrator will demonstrate proactive behavior in handling behavioral issues as well as handle any communication concerns in an effort to now allow them to become even larger building problems which could hinder the academic achievement of the entire school. No matter how busy an administrator can be with office related tasks, they always will make time to address behaviors and communication errors.

Another lesson that was learned was the simple fact that administrators are the face and voice of the building. Therefore, a good quality administrator will be sure to introduce themselves and their school to all newcomers in the building with a warm welcome, while also taking part in things like morning announcements, assemblies and classroom walkthroughs to be sure their presence is heard by all on a daily basis. This is imperative as everyone in the building needs to feel guided, nurtured, and supported on a consistent basis and the best way to do this is to simply be there.

Additionally, administrators do not just have building level responsibilities, but district level responsibilities. With so many responsibilities piling up at all levels, prioritizing, flexibility and organization become key skills to develop. Without these skills, an administrator will not be successful in their tasks at hand. If an administrator is not completing their tasks diligently and responsibly, the rest of the building and district will feel the consequences. Thus, it is crucial to always prioritize and organize your tasks by their deadlines and remain flexible to the needs and changes that take place around you.

Above all else, the number one goal for all administrators should be to keep all students and staff safe. Therefore, a responsible and efficient administrator will have all safety concerns addressed with them, and they will remain knowledgeable about everything going on in their building. One small mishap in regards to safety concerns could not only be detrimental to the principal, but to a student, staff member, or entire school and district. Families are trusting the administrator with their loved ones, and so it is their duty to return them safely on a daily basis.

At the district-wide MTSS meeting, many more lessons were also learned. One of those lessons included that communication is vital to building and district success. The higher you go in education, the more you are responsible to communicate with a higher volume of people. As an administrator, you are daily communicating with teachers, secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, parents, students, the state, other principals and school staff, community members, and more. A good leader will take priority in communicating with all valid parties within the educational system as it is vital to building and district success. However, there are times where there simply is just too much to do. Thus, delegating comes into play. A high quality administrator will have the ability to have those who follow and take on responsibilities themselves, alleviating the everyday pressures you face as an administrator.

Lastly, administrators should be an active player in representing their buildings. They should represent and show pride within their building to the rest of the district, not by making it a competition, but by sharing things they do well in an effort to help other schools in the district to just as well, if not better.

All in all, an administrator has a lot of responsibilities, but through proactive behaviors such as organization, communication, and flexibility, the jobs will get done, and they will be done efficiently while promoting growth amongst students, staff, and the community.