

Synthesis of Major Lessons Learned

Entering this clinical experience in the field of administration, there were a lot of lessons to be learned. These 7 projects gave me the necessary background experience I need to expose myself to the necessary learning experiences of being an effective administrator. Throughout this term, it has caused me to not only learn a lot but to reflect on my own practices and goals.

Part of the lesson I learned is the importance of being goal oriented. Thus, I now have a solid list of short and long-term goals thanks to this fantastic experience. On the short-term side, I first and foremost entered the field of administration to better my own practice. I wanted to further understand the field of education in its entirety. I wanted to develop a deeper understanding and an appreciation for how all of the actors relate to one another; including the board, administration, unions, teachers, students, staff, and community. In return, learning how all of these pieces work together has helped me to improve my instructional talents and deeply appreciate the field of education and its potential even more. Additionally, I wanted to gain a better understanding of the financial aspects of education. This clinical has allowed me to realize that public schools are a business, the students are the money invested, and the school is the bank. Simply put, without money, there is no existing bank. This is crucial as we are going through major issues of declining enrollment at Gaines Elementary. I also wanted to understand what it takes to be a better leader. This clinical has given me the strength to speak up for what I believe in and back it up with necessary understanding. I have also realized I need to be more aware and keep up with the local, state and federal news because all of these factors can influence the educational setting. My last short term goal is that I want to be able to bring everyone's uniqueness together to strengthen building morale. Through this clinical, I feel I am better suited to identify strengths and weaknesses in people and able to utilize people to their fullest potential while maximizing the success of the school.

On the long-term end, I genuinely want to make a difference in as many children's lives as possible. As a classroom teacher, I can only do so much with a certain amount of students. I have developed the desire to move beyond that and help reach more people. An administrator has those capabilities. Essentially, I would want nothing more than to reach more children in some way and help them succeed in life by promoting their ability to become lifelong learners. Again, I also have learned to be a better leader while still desiring to become even better after this clinical experience. I now feel more confident in my leadership abilities both inside the classroom and out but feel I could do even better when given the chance to be in charge of leading an entire building. Lastly, I have the long-term goal now to strengthen the community I am a part of. I want to be a part of the community and carry out or create a mission and vision of a school and/or district that betters everyone involved. As an administrator, I would have the potential and desire to do that.

When you look at the ISLLC standards, becoming goal oriented is not the only thing I took from this clinical experience. Through my Dibels analysis, I was able to analyze assessment data and identify patterns, strengths, weaknesses and trends. I was able to do the same with analyzing the SWIS data to identify behavior patterns and address building concerns. Both of these projects emphasized Standard 1 which states "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported

by the school community.” It is imperative that administrators take the time to analyze the data at hand and share it to further develop their strengths and improve their weaknesses.

Additionally, projects such as the after school program, teacher evaluation, and working with student council, have all helped me develop Standard 2. Standard 2 states, “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.” Promoting growth within your building to everyone is crucial to running an effective institution. Through developing your students, community members, and staff members, you are promoting the success of all students and making the learning environment a top-notch setting for a top-notch education for all. This is a priority for all effective administrators and certainly a priority for me.

Through attending many board meetings, job shadowing Lauren and creating the custodial evaluation tool, I have also realized the importance of ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which is what Standard 3 states. It is the number one goal of all administrators to ensure safety to everyone in the building. Ultimately, I now realize the importance of understanding all potential safety risks in the building while also remaining proactive in handling these situations. Regardless of the other tasks at hand, parents are trusting us to keep their children safe, and above all else, that is what an administrator must do.

Through my after school program project, I was also able to demonstrate Standard 4 and learn the importance of connecting the community to the school and the school to the community. It is the administrator’s responsibility to collaborate with families, community members, and respond to the community interests and needs in a proactive manner. Successfully operated institutions offer enrichment programs and events that connect the students to the community they are from. Gaines had never offered such a program before and has always been identified as an outstanding institution. I truly felt this after school program was what it was missing to take the educational facility to the next level.

Throughout the entire clinical process and working through my competencies, I was also able to recognize the importance of acting with integrity, fairness, and work in an ethical manner through my everyday practice. I am far from perfect and there were many bumps in the road this school year and more will follow. However, as an educational leader, one must be able to reflect and learn from their failures and mishaps. Doing so will only make you stronger and a more suitable leader worth following in the future.

Additionally, through my clinical experience, I have developed and continued to build on my leadership philosophies. I now feel I possess courage and character to build and establish new cultures that focus on long lasting relationships and energizing the people within the building to become self-managing bodies. Through projects such as the after school program, the teacher evaluation, and the custodian evaluation, I now feel more prepared to establish and sustain efficiently run institutions that promote student learning to its maximum potential. I also now recognize the importance of leading people who are morally bound or committed to the school and its character/values. It is my duty as the administrator through projects like the

charity basketball game and after school program to lead by example and have my staff members buy-in to what I am about as an educational leader.

Through my data analysis projects, it was also evident that although there were a lot of numbers presented, schools are more than just numbers. They possess people of various background, cultures, and character traits and each of them bring their own set of values into one building. It is my duty as an administrator through projects like the custodial evaluation and the teacher evaluation to help promote staff and student growth that betters the educational environment for all. It is my job to mesh all of the differences together and bring out the strengths in everyone. I need to be willing to look past the numbers and be willing to change some of my own theories of thinking to fit the world/community rather than think I am just in charge and everyone needs to fit my thinking. Administrators must be flexible, open minded and team oriented. I am just one member of the team, and I would want everyone to feel comfortable in sharing their voice to get things done in an effective manner.

Ultimately, I also want to be able to create new connections among people and essentially bridge the gap and connect everyone to an idea structure via binding and bonding to build followership in the school. Doing so through activities like my custodial evaluation will allow everyone to feel valued and more ownership to the school will take place that will promote higher student achievement. An effective administrator will need a staff who wants to be self-managing and willing to accept more responsibility on themselves. Everyone in the building plays a role in the successful functioning of the institution, and so they all need to step up and do their part if they are truly committed to the values of the learning community. The only way these things will happen is through an administrator who can present the building and their leadership as worth following. Only then in return will everyone become morally committed. The key here is this can take time. An administrator must be patient and not just try to change everyone and everything on day one, but to try and identify the institutions strengths and continue with them while also identifying its weaknesses and strengthening them moving forward. I will want a building of followers and not subordinates because followers will respond to ideas, ideals, values, and purposes and therefore when they do a job, it will get done well. Subordinates, however will comply with management rules and procedures but will only do enough to collect their paycheck. They do not go above and beyond which in return only hurts the students in the end. I will have patience, lead by example, and build a staff that is committed to a common purpose, has shared goals and expectations that are clearly communicated, which then will allow us to blossom our learning community through a true identify that matches our mission and vision.

In the end, I will possess time, feeling, and focus like I did with all 7 of my projects. I realize the importance in having all three of these qualities in order to lead effectively. If you do not find time, things will never get done. If you do not have feeling, the right things will never get done. Finally, if you never have focus, things will never get done correctly. I am not perfect, and this clinical proved that. I care very deeply and essentially wear my heart on a sleeve. When things do not go right, my passion can turn to outrage and frustrations. I need to recognize when it is the right time and place for my actions before responding immediately to the circumstances at hand. In the end, recognizing my own flaws will only help me as an educational leader because it demonstrates my ability to be reflective and open minded to

constructive criticism. I would want my staff members to feel comfortable enough with me to hear my expectations of them, but more importantly, share their expectations of me. I believe in exercising everyone's talents and including everyone as an important part of our successful learning community.