

Preparing School Principals through Ignatian Pedagogy

Principalship-EDAD 548

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Background:

Before coming to Xavier in 2019, I worked in public education for twenty-five years. I spent most of my time in public education as a school administrator serving as an assistant principal (high and middle schools), athletic director, and principal (elementary and middle school). The Ignatian Mentoring Program (IMP) and the support of my passionate and wonderful mentor, Eileen Steinle Alexander, provided me with an invaluable framework to integrate Ignatian Pedagogy into EDAD 548-The Principalship. School leaders are paramount to the academic and social-emotional success of all children. Also, school leaders attempt to collaborate, communicate, and serve four different educational stakeholder groups, which is a challenging endeavor that necessitates the need to reflect and discern consistently (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996).

From my participation in the IMP, I realized that our Ignatian Values provided a natural and seamless framework that will benefit all future school leaders to meet the unique challenges of serving four different stakeholder groups. More importantly, our Ignatian Values will provide Educational Administration Graduate Students the foundation to recognize God's presence in school principals' daily work.

This work aims to integrate our Ignatian Values into four major capstone assignments/assessments into the Principalship Course-EDAD 548. **EDAD 548-Principalship** is a 3-credit hour course that I taught in Spring 2022. The course was designed to incorporate both administrative theory and practice, especially as it relates to the role of the principal; this course provides a special emphasis on the changes in the role of a principal as a result of demographic changes in society, state, and local regulations, and in schools.

Assignment 1: School Improvement Plan

Magis

Where is the universal good? School principals consistently reflect and create learning and social-emotional goals to foster a positive learning environment for students, faculty, and parents. In EDAD 548- Principalship Course, candidates must create and present a School Improvement Plan (SIP). A major component of the SIP plan is for principals to recognize and celebrate the "good" things that are taking place in their school while examining areas of

potential growth to continue to enhance the "good" that already exists in the school community. The Ohio Improvement Process and the action steps school principals need to take are: Identify, Research, Plan, Implement and Monitor and Examine.

Description of Assessment: **Principal candidates** select a construct at your school that needs improvement and develops a plan for improvement using the SMART goal format. Your **product is a presentation using slides to illustrate**. The presentation is a simulation of what it is like to present to a board of education. Incorporate the elements from Standard 3.0 by addressing the prompts/questions below each element.

Areas to Discuss in Presentation

- *Connect your plan for improvement to the school's vision and mission and explain how the vision and mission contribute to serving the "**universal good**" of all educational stakeholders.*
- *Explain what stakeholders you would work with and why*
- *Explain in your plan how you articulate, implement, and steward the SIP*
- *Explain the current construct and why it needs to be improved*
- *Provide and explain the evidence/data used to support the need for your SIP*
- *Explain the system(s) and process(es) you would put into place to make sure the plan was continuous and sustainable*
- *Include the method for evaluating the plan and timeline for evaluation(s)*

Assignment 2: Field Experience Interview

Reflection

"REFLECTION invites us to pause and consider the world around us and our place within it."

School principal candidates in EDAD 548 must complete a Field Experience Interview Reflection Paper. This assessment aims to provide principal candidates with an opportunity to interview a current building principal from an urban, suburban, or rural school district. In the Educational Administration Program, school principal candidates must have an experience that will provide them with insight into the role of a building administrator. This assessment will assist principal candidates in learning the art of "reflection" and reflecting on leading a school with the mindset of serving the greater "good." Furthermore, a major component of principal training is understanding the Ohio Improvement Process. On many occasions, building principals will facilitate and lead School Improvement Teams which requires leaders to reflect on using two guiding questions, "What are our Strengths as a school?" and "What are our needs?"

Field Experience Interview and Reflection Paper

Candidates will participate in an interview to gather information about the principal position. The interview may occur in any one of the three formats (face to face, Facetime, and phone). In addition, candidates will use the CTL handout to create clarifying and probing questions they will use to interview an elementary, middle, or high school principal. This is a reflection paper, and the questions you generate should spark a conversation about the role of a current school principal and connect to the Ohio Standards for Principals.

Candidates will then write a *reflection* paper (2 – 3 pages) discussing the following leadership topics:

- a. Who did they choose to interview, and why
- b. Questions should pertain to at least three of the Ohio Standards for Principal (candidates' choice)

Assignment 3: Caring Leader

Cura Personalis

CURA PERSONALIS invites us to care for others, recognizing the uniqueness and wholeness of each person.

School principal candidates in EDAD 548 must complete a Caring Leader Paper. This assessment aims to provide principal candidates with an opportunity to truly consider how we recognize and support every educational stakeholder. As Sergiovanni explains, anyone aspiring to be an effective leader needs to have a sense of what they value, something to be committed to, and a moral compass to lead the way (2006).

Caring Leader Assignment Description

Students will complete one assignment, which emphasizes their commitment to being a caring leader, based on the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards. National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards (2016) were developed by the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) to articulate the knowledge and skills expected of school leaders. One set of NELP standards for candidates preparing to become principals and the second set of standards for candidates seeking to become superintendents or district leaders.

The caring leader assignment will include the mission statement, professional plan, and reflection.

1. Part 1 - Mission Statement

Students will develop their own Professional Mission Statement, which emphasizes the leader's commitment to being a caring leader, based on the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards. The mission statement should be clear, concise, and easy to remember. It serves as a framework for leading an organization and making decisions in each person's interest. It clearly communicates a leader's purpose and passion.

2. Part 2 - Professional Plan

Once the mission is defined, the student will develop a professional plan to guide their behaviors in fulfilling their mission. The plan describes the leader's actions to demonstrate their caring disposition. The plan should be based on the NELP Standards and include:

- Action Steps the leader will take to promote their Mission Statement

- Specific behaviors/steps the caring leader will do to promote: 1) a school focus on student learning; 2) commitment to and fostering of high expectations for student achievement; and 3) their commitment to collaboration and collegial professionalism. (For example, as a caring leader, I will involve all stakeholders in decision-making to promote).

3. **Part 3 – Reflection**

The students will write a reflection on a mission statement and plan. The reflection should include the integration of course themes and discussions. In addition, it should include justification, rationale, and insight into the Mission Statement and Professional Plan. For example, why were the Mission Statement and Action Steps chosen? What do they mean to the student, how do they reflect a caring leader, and what is their relevance in the setting in which the leader will work?

Assignment 4: Crisis Plan Gap Analysis

Discernment

DISCERNMENT invites us to be open to God's spirit as we consider our feelings and rational thought to make decisions and take action to contribute good to our lives and the world around us.

School principal candidates in EDAD 548 must complete a Crisis Plan Gap Analysis. This analysis aims to provide principal candidates with the experience of evaluating two different building crisis plans. The Principalship course will spend approximately three weeks covering school crisis plans. Building principal candidates learn how ***to make decisions and take action*** during a school crisis. In Ohio, school principals must submit a school safety plan at the beginning of each school year. This plan must include creating school safety plans for fire, tornado, earthquake, active shooter, etc... Principals must have the capacity to lead their educational stakeholders in making rational decisions when acting during an actual crisis. The gap analysis paper in EDAD 548 introduces future principals with effective decision-making strategies during a crisis scenario.

Crisis Plan Assessment Activity

Candidates will collectively review a list of best practice school crisis /emergency plans based upon a review of guidelines as found in the class resources. Students will partner with another student to compare this list of best practices to their own school's crisis/emergency plan. Each student will write a two-page reflective paper suggesting improvements or enhancements to their school crisis /emergency plan and its usefulness, including suggestions for ongoing staff training. Students are to obtain a copy of your school's crisis/emergency plan (not board policy) and bring this plan to the first day of class.

Summary and Conclusion

As I reflect on the wonderful experience I had with participating in the Ignatian Mentoring Program and integrating the Ignatian Gifts into EDAD 548-The Principalship, I realize that effective school principals may naturally integrate these wonderful gifts within a school

environment. For an effective educational leader to foster a positive and caring culture (Cura Personalis) and continuously improve academic achievement among students (Magis), the implementation of Ignatian Values in the decision-making process among school principals is paramount to creating a successful school experience.

References

Hallinger, P. & Leithwood, K. (1996). Culture and educational administration. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 34(5), 98-116.

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Sergiovanni, T.J. (2006). *The Principalsip: A Reflective Practice Perspective*. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn Bacon.