

Michelle Cloud, M Ed
PhD Student in the Doctoral Program for Educational Leadership
Prairie View A&M University
Assistant Principal, Strack Intermediate
Klein Independent School District

Utopia Middle School

The following excerpt allows the reader to briefly peer into an ideal school setting: For the purposes of this assignment, the fictitious school will be named Utopia Middle School or U.M.S. U.M.S embodies and exemplifies the perfect school.

At U.M.S., the campus administrators perform at a level of excellence that motivates, empowers and supports all stakeholders as the organization seeks to develop and/or maintain their goals and vision.

Students, parents, all faculty/staff and community members are encouraged to discover their individual talents and reach their full potential. Administrators are approachable and do not inhibit productive communication. All stakeholders are respected and valued as an integral component of the organization. Administrators demonstrate absolute expertise in enlisting feedback from all stakeholders and implement avenues to ensure positive dialogue is occurring. Educational leaders are masterful at consensus building and utilize honesty and fairness in decision-making. Campus leaders make well researched and informed decisions while keeping student performance at the forefront.

Educational Leaders serve as role models within the organization and lead by example. Campus leaders demonstrate a strong and committed work ethic that endears and gains the respect of all stakeholders. Campus leaders provide inspiration for students,

teachers and all stakeholders by allowing venues to help them make meaningful personal connections that meet their social, cultural, economical and emotional needs.

Administrators are the instructional leaders and facilitators in the organization. Principals take pride and pleasure in staying abreast of current research and trends regarding techniques for assisting students in ascending the levels of Bloom's taxonomy, utilizing all of the multiple intelligences and technological advances in education to ensure every student's success. Administrators act as instructional leaders and provide professional development sessions that provide educators with strategies to engage all students in learning and utilize effective classroom management procedures.

In this school setting, instructors utilize the best pedagogical practices and demonstrate a positive attitude. Teachers make full use of available technological advances to incorporate into instructional strategies. Educators assist their students in achieving the high expectations emphasized in the collaboratively established campus goals for student achievement. Students excel in countless ways and are able to develop holistically. Lessons are designed to target the multiple intelligences and each student is encouraged and supported as she discovers her individual talent. Student teacher ratio is ideal and determined by research-based standards.

Utopia Middle School, as a facility, functions as a "lighthouse" for the community and serves as a genuine resource for the community. Classes targeting literary, language acquisition, athletics, and technology are available in the ideal school for students and community members. Free and/or reduced vaccinations are available in the ideal school. Community and business partnerships are very apparent and celebrated within the ideal school.

Campus administrators would also ensure every possible available grant and resource available to compensate faculty and staff as they work above and beyond the typical call of duty. Business partnerships would be established with the faculty's and staff's needs and desires as the paramount focus.

Campus principals exhaust every effort to be proactive and maintain a safe and secure environment in the school setting. A clear and highly publicized security plan is in place on the campus with all key parties having an in depth understanding of what their specific role entails.

Finally, the campus leader is committed to providing the means for everyone on the campus to be engaged in the process of being life-long learner. Ultimately, the campus leader is confident, intelligent and possesses a clear understanding of what he/she stands for while operating with sincerity, fairness and integrity.

The previous excerpt highlighted desirable traits imagined as the author closed her eyes and physically envisioned all of the characteristics that would make the educational setting absolutely and irrefutably perfect. If the writer were given a blank canvas and endless resources, the author would strive to create the conditions for every aspect of the imagined ideal school setting.

Please follow along as the writer closes her eyes and creates the perfect school environment. The school will be developed to reflect ideal and desirable organizational theories. The school will be named Exceeding Expectations Middle School or E.E.M.S. The writer will write from the perspective of the superintendent of Exceptional Education School District (E.E.S.D.)

The philosophy of Exceptional Education School District is,

“All stakeholders of the Exceptional Education School District are valued as an integral part of the educational system. All stakeholders are empowered. All stakeholders achieve their full potential and develop their personal goals, gifts and talents as they engage in the process of being a life-long learner.”

Type of Schools in Exceptional Education School District

At Exceeding Expectations Middle School, the leader works zealously to develop a campus that is open. Administrators work to ensure that bureaucratic constructs do not impede the fulfillment of the campus’s vision by only offering an extremely narrow measure of student achievement.

All stakeholders are given avenues to acquire and possess the knowledge to think of education and instructional strategies as an innovator. Therefore, teachers, students, parents, community and business partners understand and sense their value in the campus. All stakeholders are represented when decisions are made that affect the entire campus.

Open systems celebrate and promote innovation, collaboration and flexibility. These ingredients are critical aspects of success in instructional research based programs.

Type of Management Style in Exceptional Education School District

At E.E.M.S., principals embrace the opportunity to lead by example. Principals also seek every opportunity fully utilize their role as “servant-leader.” Principals understand and act in a manner that provides the stakeholders with needed tools and most desirable work conditions. Administrators make concerted efforts each day to be visible and visit classrooms. Visibility allows principals to have familiarity and knowledge of a large array of the daily operations at the campus. Being a “hands-on” administrator

allows principals to ensure that students are receiving a proper, fair and supportive educational environment.

In this ideal educational settings principals innately possess expertise and intuitiveness. Principals are flexible and respond appropriately to all situations. Principals think “out of the box” and fully utilize the gifts and talents of all of the stakeholders in the organizations. Principals in the ideal setting do not enforce strictly defined roles onto stakeholders. Consequently, members of this organization also demonstrate flexibility and accept changes when needed.

In this perfect environment leaders execute the change process masterfully. Theory Y management is heavily utilized in the ideal school setting. Theory Y management allows for more productivity and creativity. Paradigms shifts occur with more ease and acceptance with this management style.

“Selective abandonment” occurs with dignity and respect. In the ideal school setting, stakeholders are clearly aware of the need to embrace innovative instructional strategies that target the needs of the campus. In the ideal school environment, educational leaders work tirelessly to be proactive and strive to be “ahead of the curve” in discovering strategies to engage students in meaningful learning activities.

For example, in the article, *Special Topic / Transforming High Schools*, Pedro A. Noguera asserts that steadfastness for ensuring traditional methods that are no longer effective has been a significant barrier to high school reform. As expectations increase and accountability measures become more stringent, schools led with Theory Y management styles will continue to prove successful. To meet the needs of changing

student populations and ensure best practices, the change process has to be ongoing (Aronson 2004.)

Type of Bureaucracy

At Exceeding Expectations Middle School setting bureaucratic measures are implemented only for necessity and efficiency. Stakeholders are aware of their function and how they may contribute to overall organizational structure. The roles are not so rigid that individuals feel uncomfortable when operating in other modes when needed. Relationships and dialogue are not dependent on a rigid hierarchy in the ideal school setting. Promotions are based on competence and not subject to political influence in this setting.

Necessity designates that a prescribed safety procedures must be in place with all stakeholders expertly trained.

Type of Teaching and Learning Going On Reflects the following Methodologies in E.E.S.D.: behavioral, cognitive, and constructivist

Educators at Exceeding Expectations Middle School employ the most appropriate methodologies to address the learning styles of their students. Students, parents and teachers develop individual learning plans with their students and work closely and collaboratively to help students ascend the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

In the article *The understanding pathway: A conversation with Howard Gardner*, Marge Scherer quotes Howard Gardner, “(s)tudents can become amazingly flexible when they have a teacher who cares about a subject and who cares about conveying it to them.” Gardner further states, “I certainly believe that teaching should be systematic, but that does not mean that there is only one systematic way to teach . . . “ Open educational systems are conducive to utilizing Gardner's instructional approach.

Gardner outlines an instructional methodology that encourages collaboration as well as skillful integration (Scherer 1999.)

In *Architects of the intellect*, Robin Fogarty celebrates the best present-day constructivist teaching. He mentions, Jean Piaget, Howard Gardner and Marian Diamond (Fogarty 1999.) In *Toward a more intelligent school*, Ahmet Saban shares that teachers are able to “. . . inspire (and) nurture . . .” students by implementing a curriculum that incorporates the multiple intelligences (Saban 2002.)

Ways of Motivating Teachers

Herzberg suggests that hygiene factors motivate individuals within an organization and help to increase job satisfaction. Sergiovanni suggests that individuals possess a need for achievement. Maslow suggests that fulfillment stems from ascending to the level of self-actualization succinctly established in Maslow’s Hierarchy.

Principals at Exceeding Expectations Middle School provide the circumstances for educators to achieve individual goals. In the ideal school, the principal works to establish partnerships with universities to enable faculty and staff members to easily pursue academic goals. The campus principal establishes the school as a satellite campus if needed. Stakeholders are given support to pursue grants that will enable to them do their job more effectively and receive additional compensation. Salaries are set at an ideal and competitive level to enable faculty and staff members to live comfortably.

Respect for the teacher’s autonomy is also another tool to motivate teachers. Educators are respected for their educational philosophies. Being an integral part of campus goal setting also motivates teachers. In the ideal school environment, teacher efficacy is paramount.

The school district also has business partnership that allow for stakeholders to be rewarded in a systematically as well as randomly.

The Philosophy of Underpinning the School's Activities

John Goodlad states, "Philosophy is the beginning point in curriculum decision making and is the basis for all subsequent decisions regarding curriculum." The philosophy at the ideal school will emit from the collaboratively developed vision. The philosophy at the ideal campus will focus on developing students holistically and foster students becoming life-long learners. The philosophy at the ideal campus promotes the notion that all children have the potential to learn, all students are gifted and possess innate talents and all students must be provided with the opportunity to learn.

This Utopian campus will provide the circumstances to allow student to pursue avenues for their personal success.

The Manner of Developing the School's Culture

In the ideal school, the principal drives the development and maintenance of the school's culture. The campus leader in the perfect school environment is wise. Typically school culture develops over time and forms a basis for the traditions practiced in the organization, therefore the principal ensures that the culture is established through shared meanings, helping others, negotiated over time. The principal in the ideal setting understands that he must be the mouthpiece for promoting the desired culture in the campus as the educational values of a campus are evidenced through the school culture. Educational leaders have a large influence on the definition of a school's culture. The educational leader's educational philosophy will greatly affect the school's culture

The principal works to make sure that the culture reflects a stable environment. The

campus leader recognizes the impact of the school culture on the overall effectiveness of an educational institution. The school culture greatly impacts all stakeholders at a campus because the culture determines the climate. The school culture encompasses such facets, as the vision, mission, and goals that are in place at a campus.

The ideal school promotes change through shared decision-making and collaboration. Self-efficacy stands at the forefront in this environment and functions as an essential component to employees having a sense of worth in an environment and each individual's perspective should be valued.

The principal in this environment recognizes that due to the strong culture of the environment newcomers must receive support to be viable assets in this structure. The campus leaders have practices in place to help indoctrinate new teachers. At the outset of the school year, the vision is revisited and volunteers sign up to share how she will work toward the campus vision. Newcomers are greatly encouraged to participate and their interest in encouraged and embraced.

The establishment of the culture is dependent on all stakeholders as the campus culture stems from a collective efficacy. Campus leaders recognize that the shared perception of teachers the ideal school heavily impact students. Campus leaders demonstrate trust to educators and their need to rely on each other. Administrators facilitate cooperation to positively impact student achievement.

The culture of the campus also reflects a democratic atmosphere with an emphasis on fairness and integrity. In the article, *How leaders influence the culture of schools*, the authors highlight the significance of the leaders role on shaping culture. The educational leaders' role is to, “. . . . *eloquently speak of the deeper mission of the school* . . .

celebrate the accomplishments of the staff, the students, and the community, . . .preserve the focus on students by recounting stories of success and achievement” (Peterson and Deal 1998.)

In this environment, educational leaders establish and foster a campus culture that reflects and addresses the needs of all stakeholders.

The Type of Power to be Used

In the article, ***How to build leadership capacity***, the author emphasizes the need for the leader to share power and collaborate with all stakeholders (Lambert 1998.), Administrators at Exceeding Expectations Middle School foster a sense a connectedness at the school campus. Administrators expertly and appropriately utilize reward, coercive, expert, and legitimate and referent power to help schools achieve and sustain their vision.

The superintendent of Exceptional Educational School District periodically provides training to assist administrators in appropriately utilizing the preferred types of power.

The Ways of Ensuring that the School is Effective.

Typically, school effectiveness is determined by student performance on standardized test. School effectiveness is meted out with a different measure in the ideal school. Surveys reflecting the campus climate, student health, and all stakeholders’ growth and development are measured to determine school effectiveness. Surveys are used and well as personal interviews are utilized to determine school effectiveness.

Finally, at Exceptional Education I.S.D. all principles must adhere to the correlates described in the ***Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for School Leaders***. Ultimately, the principal at Exceeding Expectations Middle School

nurtures a campus where all stakeholders are committed to being life-long learners

(<http://www.educ.ksu.edu/EDADL928/ISLLCstandards.pdf>.)

Three to Five Research Questions to Test this Framework

Research questions developed for to study the effectiveness of these theories are as follows:

1. Is there a correlation of the teacher's perceived level Theory Y Management and the level of job satisfaction experienced by the teachers?
2. Does an Open System increase the satisfaction level of students regarding instruction?
3. Does utilizing an instructional model that implements Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences improve student achievement?
4. Is there a correlation between the number of teachers with advanced degrees at campus with university partnership as opposed to campuses that do not have university partnerships?
5. Is there a correlation between the teacher's perceived level of servant-leadership management and the level of job satisfaction experienced by the teachers?
6. Is there a correlation between the teacher's salary and the level of job satisfaction experienced by the teachers?

Bibliography

1. Fogarty, R. (1999). Architects of the intellect. **Educational Leadership Alexandria**, 57(3), 76-78.
2. Lambert, L. (1998). *How to build leadership capacity*. **Educational Leadership Alexandria**, 55 (7), 17-19.
3. Noguera, P. (2004). *Special Topic/Transforming High Schools*. **Educational Leadership Alexandria**, 61 (8), 26-31.
4. Peterson, K. & Deal, T. (1998). *How leaders influence the culture of schools*. **Educational Leadership Alexandria**, 56 (1), 28-30.
5. Saban, Ahmet. (2002). Toward a more intelligent school. **Educational Leadership Alexandria**, 60 (2), 71-73.
6. Scherer, Marge 1999. *The understanding pathway: A conversation with Howard Gardner*. **Educational Leadership Alexandria**. 57 (3), 13-17.
7. [Online-<http://www.educ.ksu.edu/EDADL928/ISLLCstandards.pdf/06/24/06>]