

Administrative Internship Portfolio

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October 2011 through March 2012

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EDUCATION:

2001: CABRINI COLLEGE, Radnor, PA

Master of Education

Grade Point Average: 4.0 – Graduated with Distinction

1993: CABRINI COLLEGE, Radnor, PA

Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood & Elementary Education

Grade Point Average: 3.743 – Graduated Magna Cum Laude

CERTIFICATION:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – K-12 Administrative Certification (pending)

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – Elementary K-6, Instructional II (2001)

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – Early Childhood N-3, Instructional II (2001)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

➤ September 1998 to Present

**CYNWYD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Lower Merion School District, Ardmore, PA
ELEMENTARY MATH SPECIALIST & CLASSROOM TEACHER**

- Elementary Mathematics Specialist, K-5 – 2008 to Present
- Classroom Teacher – Grades 2, 3, 4, & 5 – 1998 to 2008
- Pennsylvania Keystone Technology Integrator - 2007
- Responsive Classroom Training – 2010
- Elementary School Master Schedule Builder
- Elementary Technology Curriculum Facilitator & District Technology Mentor
- District Technology Advisory Council Member
- District Cultural Proficiency Cadre Member
- Cynwyd Human Relations, Assemblies and Facilities Committees Member
- Cynwyd Computer Club Co-sponsor
- Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation International Video-conference Host School

➤ September 1995 to January 1998

**GLADWYNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Lower Merion School District, Ardmore, PA
CLASSROOM TEACHER & INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT**

- Classroom Teacher (LTS) – Grade 5
- Instructional Assistant to a Special Education Teacher – Grades 3, 4, & 5

➤ September 1994 to August 1995

**LAUNFAL SCHOOL, Villanova, PA
CLASSROOM TEACHER**

➤ September 1993 to August 1994

**GARRETT'S WAY PRE-SCHOOL, Newtown Square, PA
CLASSROOM TEACHER**

Instructional Leadership Philosophy

True leaders inspire others to lead. Their vision, passion and dedication flow freely and ignite those qualities in others. Instructional leaders are truly life-long learners, always expanding their horizons to lead others to new heights. Motivated by exemplary leadership, new leaders rise to take the reins and guide their schools and the students they serve to new levels of achievement.

The role of an instructional leader is multi-faceted. Building administrators are tasked with many responsibilities. However, the greatest of their responsibilities is to the students they serve. Students are the reason schools exist and providing students with equitable access to learning opportunities must remain at the forefront of an instructional leader's vision. School leaders must work diligently to challenge expectations and change beliefs so that all students, regardless of race, economic status or culture background can access the curriculum and reach their potential.

Instructional leaders must foster an environment of safety and belonging for each child. Their leadership must ensure that students can succeed in all areas of education including academics, social skills and character development. Developing a positive climate and culture in a school is paramount to the success of each learner. Instructional leaders must model and foster the development of positive, respectful relationships among the staff and students in order to ensure that all students can meet the high expectations that have been set for them.

Administrators must also provide each child with great teachers and must provide great teachers with every opportunity to participate as true collaborators in the creation of the caring community of learners. It is effective teaching that is the best strategy for increasing student achievement. Therefore, instructional leaders must ensure that the every child has access to the highest quality of instruction. Ongoing, purposeful, reflective professional development practices must be a cornerstone of an instructional leader's plan to provide the best teacher for every student. When teachers feel supported and empowered by their administrator and the quality of professional development they experience, then they will rise to the challenges of providing all learners with the quality education to which they are entitled.

And to complete the circle of learning partnerships, the instructional leader must involve the families and community in the educational journey of the students. Collaboration and communication are keys to successful learning environments. Fostering an environment where parents and guardians are valued, welcomed and encouraged to participate as partners is another essential component to the success of the students, and in turn, the success of the administrator.

By creating a community that fosters a collaborative, caring climate that includes and values all learners, teachers and community members, a school administrator can affect change and increase student achievement. And, maybe along the way, they will inspire others to lead.

Entry Plan

Principal Entry Plan

Goals

- To ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all
- To increase student growth and achievement
- To foster collaborative partnerships among all stakeholders

The First Three Months

- Become familiar with school culture, climate and traditions
- Be highly visible in the building as well as at school and district events
- Begin formal and informal meetings with staff, parents and students
- Meet with district, school and community leadership
- Inspect building and grounds with facilities director
- Attend School Board meetings
- Build mentor relationship with an existing administrator
- Review district and school documents including, but not limited to:
 - Mission and vision statements
 - Strategic Plan
 - District and school handbooks (staff & student)
 - Emergency procedures (lock-down, evacuation, etc.)
 - Budget
 - Teacher/support staff contract(s)
 - Discipline, grading and attendance policies
 - Personnel files
 - Technology plan and policies
 - District Calendar
 - School schedule
 - Curriculum guides
 - School Board meeting minutes
 - Home & School Association meeting minutes
 - School assessment data including but not limited to PSSA's, DIBELS, DRP, ERB and Benchmarks
 - Student IEP's and 504's

The First Six Months

- Be highly visible in the building and at school & district events
- Continue formal and informal meetings with staff, parents and students, including monthly meetings with:
 - Teacher association leadership
 - Student leadership
 - Guidance counselors
 - Department chairpersons
 - Home and School Association
- Establish a Principal Advisory Committee that includes parents, staff and students, if allowed by the district
- Establish weekly electronic communication with staff and parents
- Attend parent meetings, both regular education and special education
- Attend School Board meetings
- Monitor budget
- Begin formal observation process for staff
- Begin scheduling process for upcoming year
- Monitor staff development activities and assess long term goals
- Continue to analyze and respond to assessment data from PSSA's, DIBELS, DRP's, ERB's, Benchmarks and other assessments
- Perform security and safety drills regularly

The First Year

- Be highly visible in the building and at school and district events
- Identify areas of school strength and growth opportunities
- Finalize budget, calendar and master schedule
- Attend to staffing needs
- Obtain feedback on staff development and ongoing needs
- Continue to analyze and respond to assessment data
- Review the year and assess areas of strength and need through meetings with the following:
 - Staff
 - Teacher association leadership
 - Student leadership
 - Guidance counselors
 - Department chairpersons
 - Home and School Association
- Prepare for my own evaluation

The Second Year

- Continue to be highly visible in the building and at school & district events
- Review school vision and mission statements to determine strengths and needs
- Address facilities issues
- Monitor culture and climate and address concerns
- Refine goals of staff development based on strengths and needs assessment
- Continue to analyze and respond to assessment data from PSSA's, DIBELS, DRP's, ERB's, Benchmarks and other assessments
- Perform security and safety drills regularly
- Explore and plan for staff development options to extend the implementation of the Responsive Classroom Model to include other components such as: Positive Teacher Language, Rule Creation, Interactive Modeling, Collaborative Problem-solving and Increased Parental Involvement
- Explore the alternative technology options for classroom use such as:
 - iPads or other tablet devices
 - Increase use of web-based resources such as Skype to connect students with experts as well as other learners
 - Increase use of interactive media tools like SMARTBoards to enhance instruction

Administrative Internship Log

Internship Log:

Administration

Category	Activity	Date(s)	Total Hours Logged
Administration	Fire, Security and Emergency Drill Execution	1/4/11 3/31/11 10/7/11 11/9/11 12/13/11 1/30/12	5
Administration	Faculty Meetings-Led Staff Through Agenda	12/1/10 1/25/11 4/12/11 5/12/11 6/1/11	10
Administration	PSSA Planning, Staff Development & Scheduling	1/21/11 1/25/11 1/31/11 2/2/11 2/9/11 2/23/11	25
Administration	District Level Academic Council Meeting	3/21/11 3/22/11	5
Administration	Special Event Scheduling Meeting	3/25/11	1
Administration	Master Schedule Development-Created Master Schedule for All Core Academic Subjects as well as Specials and Special Education Support Services; Also Created Lunch and Recess Schedules	4/7/11 4/8/11 4/11/11 7/27/11 7/28/11 8/3/11 8/8/11 8/9/11 8/11/11 8/14/11 8/18/11 8/19/11	40
Administration	District Level Elementary Principals' Meetings	4/11/11 7/27/11	8
Administration	School Board Meeting	6/15/11 2/12/12	4
Administration	High School Visitation at Penncrest High School-Shadowed Principal and Assistant Principal	9/30/11	8
Administration	Alternate Scheduling for Special Events-Halloween, Winter Concert, Assemblies, Trips	10/31/11 12/16/11 1/10/11	5
Administration	iPad Technology Planning-Pilot Program in Kindergarten and First Grade	11/1/11 1/24/12	5
Administration	Middle School Interviews with Principal	12/15/11	2
Administration	Middle School Principals' Meeting	12/6/11 12/7/11	3
Administration	Middle School Faculty Meeting-Data Analysis-Planning and Attendance	11/10/11	2
Administration	Placement-Meetings with Grade Level Teachers, Counselor, Special Education Teachers; Created Heterogeneous Class Lists for 2011-2012 School Year	4/13/11 4/28/11 4/29/11 5/3/11 5/4/11 5/16/11 5/25/11 6/2/11 6/9/11	25
Subtotal			148

Internship Log:

Curriculum and Instruction

Category	Activity	Date(s)	Hours Logged
Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development-Responsive Classroom and Recess Before Lunch Training and Implementation	5/10/11 5/12/11 8/3/11 8/4/11 8/9/11 8/10/11 12/1/11 1/11/12 2/21/12 2/23/12	30
Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development: <u>Teach Like a Champion</u> Book Club	11/10/10 11/11/10 11/17/10 11/23/10 12/21/10 1/18/11 2/22/11 3/22/11 4/26/11 5/23/11 5/24/11 6/6/11	20
Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development: <u>Raising Black Students' Achievement Through Culturally Responsive Teaching</u> Book Club	10/12/11 10/14/11 10/18/11 10/24/11 10/27/11 10/28/11 11/1/11 11/2/11 11/9/11 1/10/12	20
Curriculum and Instruction	Planning and Staff Development for Black History Month Celebration	1/12/12 1/13/12 1/24/12	5
Curriculum and Instruction	Building Level Cultural Proficiency / CARE Meetings	11/10/10 1/5/11 2/9/11 4/6/11 5/12/11 6/9/11 10/14/11 10/18/11 11/22/11 12/14/11 1/9/12	20
Curriculum and Instruction	PSSA Assembly Preparation and Implementation	2/28/11 3/1/11 3/3/11 3/4/11 3/10/11 3/11/11 3/14/11	20
Curriculum and Instruction	High School ELL Meeting and Lesson Observation	9/30/11	1.5
Curriculum and Instruction	District Level Cultural Proficiency / CARE Meetings	9/13/11 10/11/11 11/10/11 12/13/11 1/10/12 2/21/12	15
Curriculum and Instruction	Elementary Achievement Team Meetings: (Regular Education, Special Education and Gifted Support)	Weekly Meetings	35
Curriculum and Instruction	Fact Fluency Project Development, Data Analysis and Presentation at Faculty Meeting	8/20/11 8/22/11 8/26/11 10/19/10 10/21/10/ 11/9/10	15
Subtotal			181.5

Internship Log:

Supervision

Category	Activity	Date(s)	Hours Logged
Supervision	iObservation Research and Webinar Attendance	3/4/11 3/5/11 3/19/11 3/20/11 3/21/11 4/4/11	15
Supervision	Observation Process-Elementary Teachers	11/10/11 1/5/10 5/20/11 5/23/11 5/24/11 6/2/11 6/3/11	15
Supervision	Observation Process-Middle School Gifted Support Student Teacher	12/8/11 12/9/11	5
Supervision	Observation Process-Middle School Science Teacher	12/14/11 12/15/11	5
Supervision	Staffing Issues-Lack of Substitutes; Reallocation of Staff Resources; Coverage	1/7/11 3/29/11 12/4/11 3/1/12	10
Supervision	Coaching: Responsive Classroom Implementation	1/17/12 1/19/12 2/21/12/2/23/12	10
Supervision	Olweus Bullying Program	12/6/11 12/9/11 12/10/11 12/12/11	10
Supervision	Student Discipline	11/10/10 12/5/10 2/11/11 9/30/11 10/12/11 11/12/11 12/12/11 12/15/11	10
Supervision	Assemblies, Concerts, Plays	10/6/2010 3/14/11 11/12/11 1/10/12 1/12/12	10
Subtotal			90

Internship Log:

Communication

Category	Activity	Date(s)	Hours Logged
Communication	Newsletter and District Website Information	10/6/2010 1/18/11 2/3/11 3/2/11 6/8/11 1/25/12 1/30/12 3/5/12	5
Communication	Creation and Maintenance of Responsive Classroom Wiki and eBoard	1/7/11 1/10/11 1/15/11 8/8/11	10
Communication	Responsive Classroom Parent Meeting	12/17/10	2
Communication	Parent Math Nights: Planning & Implementation	2/7/11 2/8/11 2/14/11 2/23/11 10/19/11 11/7/11	15
Communication	Math Placement Parent Meetings-Met with Parents about Math Placement Concerns (Accelerated vs Grade Level Placement in Grade 5)	9/9/11 9/16/11 9/19/11 9/21/11 9/22/11 9/23/11 9/26/11 9/27/11 10/3/11 10/5/11 10/7/11 10/12/11 10/13/11 10/14/11 10/20/11	15
Communication	School Board Meeting: Math Presentation and Video Creation	1/25/12 2/2/12 2/6/12 2/7/12 2/12/12	5
Communication	Faculty Meetings: Recess Before Lunch	5/10/11 5/12/11	5
Communication	Faculty Meetings: Responsive Classroom	9/28/11 11/15/11 12/1/11	5
Subtotal			62

Internship Log:

Overview

Category	Hours Logged		Percent (of 250)
Administration	146		58%
Supervision	90		36%
riculum & Instruc	181.5		73%
Communications	62		25%
Total	479.5		192%

Administrative Internship Narrative

Preface

While this narrative will attempt to detail the experiences I had and the knowledge gained from those experiences during my administrative internships, I want to be clear that the breadth and depth to which I can document those two concepts is limited. Although mandated to complete 250 hours of administrative intern experiences, I was fortunate to experience a significant number of hours beyond the mandate. I had leadership opportunities in each of the four broad administrative categories as well as in each of the corollaries associated with the domains of leadership. The following narrative focuses on the categories of Administration, Supervision, Curriculum & Instruction and Communication. Many of the experiences overlap and knowledge gained from them can be applied to multiple categories.

I. Administration

Scheduling/Calendars

During my administrative internship I was responsible for building the elementary school's master schedule. The complex master schedule was comprised of many facets of the school day for staff and students, including recess, lunch, core academic subjects, as well as FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools), music, art, physical education and library. Regular education support schedules, as well as special education support schedules, were also created. The school's master schedule was built upon a five-day letter rotation, instead of the traditional "Monday to Friday" schedule.

In addition to the intricacies that already resided in the school's schedule, this year marked the first year of a district mandate to allocate thirty minutes, daily, for the implementation of the Northeast Foundation for Children's Responsive Classroom's Morning Meeting structure. Responsive Classroom emphasizes the need for a consistent, structured start to each school day. The Morning Meeting structure is comprised of 4 components: Greeting, Sharing, Activity and Morning Message. Each component works to build social skills, common experiences and a sense of community in the classroom. Morning Meeting requires twenty to thirty minutes at the start of each morning for proper implementation and every classroom in the six elementary schools was to implement it fully beginning this year.

The district's commitment to fully implementing Morning Meeting impacted the schedule tremendously. Since the first thirty minutes of every school day were now dedicated to Morning Meeting, no pullout support services or extra-curricular instruction could occur prior to the conclusion of Morning Meeting. In addition, FLES, music, art, physical education and library classes could not commence until 9:30, instead of the traditional start time of 9:15. While fifteen minutes may

not seem like a significant amount of time, the implementation of Morning Meeting greatly altered the scheduling template used in previous years.

By building the master schedule, I learned that there are complexities and intricacies that are inherent and unique to an elementary school schedule. Meeting the needs of the learners is paramount, however, there are resource limitations, time limitations and physical space limitations that greatly impact the construction of the schedule. Until a person actually attempts to build an elementary school master schedule, it is very difficult to comprehend the magnitude of the task and the inter-relatedness of each facet of the school day.

During my internship with the administrative staffs at the secondary level, I was able to meet with the assistant principals assigned to build the master schedules. The meetings allowed me to learn about the process and procedures that are in place to allow for course selection. At both schools, the scheduling process began much earlier than at the elementary level, because of the students' ability to self-select courses to varying degrees. As early as November or December, students were asked to complete online course selection for the following year. Based on the selection information, staffing needs were addressed and a schedule could be built utilizing software programs. This use of software to facilitate the building of the schedule is very different from the way that I build the elementary schedule. At both the middle and high school levels, the majority of students could be scheduled easily using the software. However, there was often a small percentage of students that must be hand-scheduled so that their individual academic and elective needs could be met.

Through my meetings with the assistant principals in charge of scheduling, I was able to learn a great deal about the differences between scheduling at the elementary and secondary levels. Of course, the numbers of students could vary greatly at each level, but also the amount of choices varied, too. The use of the software programs to facilitate the construction of the schedules appeared to

make it easier. However, the intricacies of meeting student needs, while adhering to time, staffing and physical space restraints continued to make the scheduling process a complicated endeavor at any level.

Another aspect of scheduling that I was able to examine during my internship was the scheduling of building-based special events. I was able to meet with teachers of FLES, music, art, physical education, library and instrumental music to create a draft of special event dates for the district's master calendar. There were a multitude of events such as concerts, plays, festivals and art shows that were to be scheduled throughout the year in such a way as to allow students and their families an opportunity to participate in as many as possible. Knowing that many of our families had students in elementary, middle and/or high school necessitated a careful look at each building's plans. Also, the schedule must allow an opportunity for each event's participants to have their own time to shine and not be overshadowed by another event. Through my participation in this process, I learned that flexibility is an important characteristic to have when working with a committee to create such a schedule. In addition, I became more aware of just how much occurs beyond the school day and how important those opportunities were for our students. Our students are given the opportunity to showcase not only their academic talents, but also their artistic, performance and athletic talents throughout the school year.

Testing Coordination

During my internship, I was part of a small group in charge of the coordination and the administration of the PSSA's in my building. I created the testing schedule, as well as created the altered schedule for specials, like gym and art, in order to accommodate morning testing for all third, fourth and fifth graders. In collaboration with the school counselor and the intermediate reading specialist, I also arranged proctors and room assignments for small group accommodations. After attending training sessions sponsored by the district and viewing webinars sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, I compiled the

important information and developed a presentation to share with the staff prior to the start of the testing window. During a faculty meeting involving the entire staff, I shared the testing schedule and the altered specials schedule. Since the normal schedule has third and fourth grades' specials at the beginning of the day, I needed to switch their blocks with the first and second graders who normally have specials at the end of the day. After the staff was informed of the dates and the alterations to the master schedule, the staff members not directly involved in the testing were excused. The presentation continued for the proctors. Specific instructions were given for maintaining test security as well as creating an environment conducive for testing. Information about preparing the room and preparing the students was shared, as well. Time was built into the presentation to address questions and concerns raised by the staff. The important lessons learned through this experience include the need for careful planning and training to insure the test security and validity. Logistics, attention to details and protocol were important throughout the planning, presentation and administration.

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Beyond scheduling, a focus of my internship was the safety and emergency procedures of the building. I was able to facilitate many fire drills in addition to severe weather and lock-down drills. A great deal of time was spent reviewing the policies and procedures to be used during emergency situations. I learned more about the importance of having effective and well-rehearsed plans in place should emergency situations arise. Insuring that the staff and students are trained in the appropriate actions to take in an emergency is a key responsibility of administrators.

Interviews

During my secondary school internship at Bala Cynwyd Middle School, I was able to participate in the last round of interviews for a pair of long-term substitute positions. Prior to the interviews, the building principal and I discussed the needs

of the students in each classroom and also the teaching styles of the teachers who would be leaving. Since the two assistant principals were attending a training session and were not in the building, I was able to sit with the building administrator during both interviews. I was able to ask questions from a list generated by the building leadership team. The questions provided an opportunity for each candidate to reveal their philosophy of education, information about their teaching style and also their personality. It was interesting to see how each candidate differed in their answers and how each interview led to a clear decision about which position would be right for which candidate. Each opening required a certain type of teacher and it appeared that we had just the right candidate for each of the positions. There had been other candidates interviewed prior to these final two, but none of them appeared to match the needs of the learners and the style of the teacher. I learned that while it seemed easy to decide this time, not all interviews lead to a definitive answer. I also learned that in this middle school setting, decisions about personnel matters were made jointly. After the interviews, the building principal and I participated in a conference call with her two assistant principals. All of those involved were able to voice their opinions and concerns and a decision was reached only after all had their say. Having a collaborative team, with good communication skills, made the hiring process much more efficient and effective.

Placement

Each spring, staff members in my building spend a great deal of time and effort creating the best possible learning environment for each child through the placement process. Classroom teachers, along with the building principal, the school counselor, special education teachers, regular education interventionists and others, meet multiple times to ensure that students are placed into classrooms for the following year that match the holistic needs of the each learner. Careful attention is paid to place each child into the class that will complement their learning style and meet their academic as well as behavioral, social and emotional needs. During my internship, I was given the opportunity to

take on a leadership role in these meetings to facilitate discussion and to ensure that our focus remained on meeting the needs of each learner. I learned that while other schools may take a different approach to placement, this approach, although time-consuming, helps our school to secure the best placement for each of our students. Using a collaborative approach, we guaranteed that someone at the table knew each child and could advocate for them. After each student is placed, we also looked at the group dynamics and decided whether or not adjustments needed to be made in order to increase the likelihood of creating a caring learning community.

II. Supervision

Teacher Observations

During my internship I had the opportunity to explore trends in the supervision process. While research shows that there are a multitude of factors that influence student learning, research also shows that the single most important factor within a school's control in promoting student learning is the quality of instruction. Therefore, I learned that it is important that schools be equipped with leaders that can identify strengths and needs in their staff and that those leaders can facilitate action plans to improve the quality of instruction being provided to their students through meaningful reflection and staff development.

There are promising trends in 21st century supervision, trends that can strengthen the process and make it a more reliable and meaningful experience for both administrators and teachers. My district was exploring some of these trends in order to improve our observations and professional development programs. One such program was created when ASCD partnered with Charlotte Danielson, Douglas Reeves and Robert Marzano to create a suite of products known as iObservation. iObservation is a web-based platform that provides administrators and teachers with an impressive array of tools to collect data and to design individualized professional development plans for teachers. During my internship, I had the opportunity to explore this new tool through research and webinars because it was a product being considered by my district. While iObservation is just one product, it is clear that technology has the ability to change the landscape of teacher supervision, evaluation and professional development for all educators. With instant access to forms and reports, instant feedback and instant access to powerful professional development resources, iObservation and similar products could help educators reach the goals of evaluation: to ensure teacher quality and to promote professional development.

During my internship I had the opportunity to be involved in the clinical supervision process of one fifth-grade teacher, one first-grade teacher, and one middle school science teacher. I also participated in the observation of one student teacher placed in a gifted support classroom at the middle school. The process for all included a pre-observation conference, a classroom observation and a post-observation conference. One thing I learned through these experiences was to be very specific in the feedback given to the teacher. Comments must be targeted and useful to inform future lessons. Concrete examples should be used to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the observation. Comments need to be specific and opportunities for growth need to be clearly articulated. It is also important to focus on providing positive comments in addition to pointing out areas of concern or areas that need improvement. During one particular observation, it was quite difficult to focus on the positive aspects because there were so many negative aspects to the lesson. Students were disengaged; they were staring off into space, fiddling with small objects and not focused on the discussion. The teacher was so focused on containing the disruptive behavior of one student that the other students in the class were neglected. The teacher also over-planned the lesson and attempted to cover many disjointed topics. Feedback to this teacher included identifying a narrower scope for future lessons and developing ways to manage calling-out behaviors without isolating the rest of the students.

In another observation, it was very difficult to look for things that needed improvement because the lesson and the teacher were both extremely good. Every student was engaged in the lesson. The goals of the lesson and the topics to be explored were focused and specific. The teacher did an excellent job of drawing the students in, connecting previous knowledge and assessing students' progress through questioning techniques and formative assessments. Individual assistance was provided when students needed it; it was clear that a climate of support had been established in the classroom.

I also found the pre- and post- observation conferences to be important in developing an open dialogue between the administrator and the teacher. In my internship, I felt as though this was carried out more effectively at the elementary level. At the secondary level, there was much less of an emphasis placed on the pre-conference dialogue. However the post-observation meetings were well done at both levels. Each administrator was able to provide concrete feedback that highlighted the strengths of each teacher as well as offered specific suggestions to improve instructional techniques, classroom climate and professional learning.

Student Discipline

From bullying to weapons offenses, to physical altercations, discipline at any grade level required the administrator to wear many hats. There was a great deal of investigative work done when a situation was reported. Students and staff were interviewed and leads were tracked down. From there, the role of the administrator switched to that of judge and jury. There was a need to determine what the offense was, what the intent was and what the consequences were to be. There was often a point where the administrator became a counselor, offering strategies and advice to avoid the same mistakes from being made in the future. The administrator also focused on the accuser as well as the accused, insuring that the needs of both students were met appropriately.

At the elementary level, discipline issues more frequently occurred during recess and lunch, when students were in a less-structured situation. Often the offenses were limited to mean words and hurt feelings, but occasionally they escalated to physical conflicts involving pushing or hitting. I learned that, in the elementary school, our social skills lessons from the program "Second Step," Recess Before Lunch and our Responsive Classroom approach have decreased the amount of conflicts that were brought to the level of administrator involvement. Students were able to better avoid or resolve conflicts as a result of the programs and lessons we have in place.

My experiences at the high school provided me with the opportunity to participate in meetings with students for infractions that ranged from cutting class, to dress code violations, to physical altercations. I also had the opportunity to investigate a locker room theft. The lessons learned during these meetings with administrators, students and parents emphasized the need for administrators to know not only the code of conduct and the penalties for infractions, but to also know the students and teachers involved in the situations. Considering the circumstances of each case individually was important, but of utmost importance was being firm, fair and consistent.

Bullying, at all levels, is a huge concern and one that can have far-reaching effects. During my internship hours at the middle school, I had the opportunity to learn about an anti-bullying program based on the work of Dan Olweus. Olweus is a researcher from Norway who has spent decades researching bullying and developing ways to keep students safe in schools and other settings. Goals of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program include reducing the bullying that exists in schools, preventing new bullying problems from occurring and improving peer relationships. In the middle school Class Meetings occur once in every six-day cycle. Each class meeting is lead by two-staff members. The purpose of the meeting is to teach students what bullying is, what the anti-bullying rules are and how to respond if bullying occurs. The meetings also provide an opportunity to teach students about feelings and reactions, as well as to build a sense of community in the school. Beyond what is provided for students, there has also been professional development training for staff that has given staff members specific intervention methods to use when they encounter bullying. Through my discussion with staff members and administrators, it was clear that there was a commitment to implementing this program effectively to reduce or eliminate bullying. While student response to the program often led to comments like "it's boring," or "it's all we ever talk about," there were students who, having been victims of bullying, felt that the program was beginning to make a difference.

Two students, encouraged and supported by the administrators and two teachers, were planning to create a day for students to rally together to help stop bullying. The day would focus on sharing the stories of those who were bullied to raise awareness to show that even though it is being talked about, talking isn't enough. The students were going to encourage students to act: to stand up for each other and to let the bullies know that their actions wouldn't be tolerated. It was inspiring to see the administration supporting the valiant efforts of these two students.

III. Curriculum and Instruction

Professional Development: Eliminating the Achievement Gap

Much effort has been put forth to eliminate the achievement gap that exists in my district. A key component of the district's efforts continues to be professional development that emphasizes methods for attaining cultural proficiency and an understanding of "best practices" that are effective in reducing and eliminating the gaps between African-American students and their white counterparts.

Beyond the district-mandated workshops that all staff were required to attend, the staff at my elementary school chose to delve deeper into strategies that have proven effective in increasing achievement. During the past two school years, we created a learning community focused on reading, sharing and implementing ideas from two powerful books. The first book, Teach Like A Champion by Doug Lemov, illustrated 49 strategies that increase student achievement. The second book, Raising Black Students' Achievement Through Culturally Responsive Teaching, by Johnnie McKinley, chronicles the practices of a group of teachers referred to as "Proving the Possible Teachers," and their successful efforts to narrow the gap in a large, urban, public school system.

I was able to take on a leadership role in both book clubs, which allowed me to collaborate to plan the format and the organization for each of the monthly meetings. I was also responsible for running multiple sessions and disseminating information to the staff members involved in the book club. During these sessions, I worked to strengthen my communication skills as well as time-management skills and utilizing effective techniques for educating educators. Modeling became a more prominent method for providing instruction. Ongoing formative assessment was used to facilitate the pace of the workshop and exit slips aided in the planning for future sessions.

Through my work with the book clubs, I was able to learn a great deal about effective strategies for increasing student achievement and increasing cultural proficiency. In Teach Like A Champion, one effective strategy that is now a part of my classroom repertoire is “No Opt Out.” If a student is called upon and the student doesn’t know the answer to the question simply saying “I don’t know” isn’t an option. If the student cannot respond correctly, even with teacher prompting or scaffolding, they are not off the hook. Another student is called upon to give the correct answer. Then, the original student is asked to repeat the correct answer. If they didn’t know it, they are held responsible for learning the information and being able to participate in the class discussion. They can no longer choose to opt out.

Beyond the ideas applicable for the classroom, I was also able to learn about the benefits of creating small learning communities for staff. Providing time for teachers to collaborate with other staff from various grade levels and various backgrounds helped to increase the sense of community and aided in building bridges to connect those with different responsibilities and viewpoints. Also, developing a common language to use when we talk about teaching strategies was crucial to moving the staff forward towards the common goal of increasing the achievement of all students.

In addition to the building-based work that focused on cultural proficiency, I was also able to participate in staff development at the district level. Participating in one of the cadres led by Dr. Barbara Moore Williams, a consultant hired by the district to help close the achievement gap and increase cultural proficiency, has been enlightening. Through my participation in this district cadre, I have learned about racism and institutional racism, about white privilege and about how to engage in the uncomfortable conversations that arise when these topics are examined. Through readings and discussions of books such as Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide For Achieving Equity in Schools by Glen Singleton and Curtis Linton, and Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School

Leaders by Randall Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins and Raymond Terrell, as well as viewing videos from the likes of Tim Wise, the group's work has provided the group members with an opportunity to explore our own values and beliefs as well as the values and beliefs of others. It is important that one know where they came from before they can begin to understand from where someone else has come. Being able to think and reflect on my own experiences has given me a new perspective when asked to consider someone else's experiences and why their reaction to a situation may be very different than my own. I also learned about strategies to increase reflective practices and improve the difficult dialogues that are necessary if we are to bring about any real change for our students. Reflective practices like "3P's and an A," help the listener to Pause, Paraphrase, Probe and Affirm the person who is speaking. Practicing this skill has helped me to be more focused on what someone else is saying, rather than focusing solely on what I am going to say in response.

An extension of the work being done focusing on our African American students and their families is our celebration of Black History Month. In my building we have moved beyond studying only those like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. During the past two school years, our students have created museum-like displays that highlight famous, and not so famous, African Americans that include inventors, entrepreneurs, entertainers, athletes, artists and writers. Each classroom selects a person, or group of people, to research. Then the class works together to create a display that showcases the contributions of the African Americans. The products are displayed in a common area and each class visits the "museum" to learn about the variety of people who have contributed to America, and to the world, through their talents. As a member of the committee that organized the month-long celebration, I was again able to take a leadership role in the development of the project as well as to lead staff development and support the creation of a curriculum structure to help students learn more about the impact and influence of African Americans.

One thing I learned through participation in both the building-based and district level work on cultural proficiency and eliminating the achievement gap is that there is a real danger in knowing a single story. Chimamanda Adichie's TED Talk video, used in both school and district meetings, clearly articulates the risk we take when we only know about a person or a situation from one perspective. As a teacher, and as an aspiring school leader, that may have been the most powerful lesson I learned. There is always more to the story. When viewing data that shows a student's performance is below-basic despite interventions, or when meeting with a parent angry about their child's math placement, it is important to know that there is more to the story. When speaking about neighborhoods or the people that live there, it is important to know that there is more to their stories. And knowing that there is more to their stories means that there is more that must be done to learn about each other and the best ways to support each other in our work to close the achievement gap.

Professional Development: Morning Meeting and Recess Before Lunch

As mentioned previously in this narrative, the school district mandated that the first thirty minutes of every school day would be spent implementing the Northeast Foundation for Children's Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting. I participated in a weeklong training session to become certified in the Responsive Classroom model. I then led workshops in my building, as well as in other buildings, to train staff members in the principles behind Morning Meeting and the techniques and activities to be used in the classroom.

In conjunction with the implementation of Morning Meeting, during the past school year, all six elementary schools in the district moved to the Recess Before Lunch (RBL) model. Although tradition says recess follows lunch like four follows three, research shows that students who have recess before lunch demonstrate a decrease in visits to the school nurse, a decrease in discipline issues, and an enhanced cafeteria atmosphere. Students are calmer while eating and are not rushing to get outside. Students who have recess before lunch also demonstrate

an increase in time on task, which increases instructional time and student achievement. As with Morning Meeting, I led faculty meetings in my building and in other buildings within the district, to share the principles behind the practice of RBL as well as strategies to facilitate the change.

Within my building, I led mid-year meetings with grade level groups to discuss the implementation of both Morning Meeting and RBL. These meetings provided the teachers with an opportunity to share their thoughts about the implementation of each program and the impact the programs had on their students. Teachers were encouraged to share what was working and what still needed to be worked out. The feelings expressed were overwhelmingly positive for both Morning Meeting and RBL.

I learned that when implementing significant changes to common practices and routines, it is important to plan carefully and to be prepared to provide the rationale for the changes. The administrator must be able to clearly articulate why the changes are necessary and how they will improve the school day for students. Without an understanding of the benefits, staff members are likely to resist the change.

Cynwyd Achievement Team

The Cynwyd Achievement Team (CAT) is a group of staff members who meet weekly to brainstorm and collaborate with classroom teachers who have students who are not reaching the desired achievement levels academically, behaviorally or socially. The team is comprised of the building principal, the school counselor, the primary and intermediate reading specialists, the math specialist, the school psychologist, the speech and language therapist, the instructional support teacher, a special education teacher and the nurse. Parents are often included in the meetings as well. When not discussing specific student concerns, the team often reviews the vast amount of data collected through district and state

assessments. The ongoing review of the data helps the team to identify areas of student strength and need, as well as curriculum and instruction.

Through my work on the team I have learned that while analyzing the data is important, one must not forget that the data tells only one part of the story and that the story is about a child...not a number or an achievement level, but a person with feelings and needs and, often times, a complex history beyond their control that impacts their learning on a daily basis. The team must work to address the holistic needs of the child if there is any hope of increasing the child's achievement.

Another important lesson is summed up in the phrase "it takes a village." Educating a child and meeting their needs isn't the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher. While the classroom teacher's influence is significant, it isn't the only thing impacting the education of the child. The entire school community is responsible for ensuring the creation of an environment that supports the learner, the teachers and the parents or guardians.

Fact Fluency Project Development and Data Analysis

One concern that is often shared during the team meeting is that students struggle with memorizing basic math facts, like $2+2$, $12-5$ or 8×6 . As a result of this ongoing concern, I researched best practices and analyzed brain research in order to develop a plan that teachers could implement to increase fact fluency. I created a handbook that clearly and concisely summarized the findings and provided the teachers with dozens of activities to implement fact fluency practice into their daily routines. All students took a pre- and post-assessment and I analyzed the results. The program was most effective in those classrooms where teachers regularly implemented the approaches. It was also most effective with many of those students who had the lowest scores on the pre-assessment.

ELL Interventions

Having worked with students identified as ELL in the elementary setting, it was important that I have an opportunity to experience an ELL program at the secondary level. During one portion of my internship at the high school, I was able to observe a lesson in an ELL classroom. The teacher worked one-on one with a student to complete a task for a social studies course. The teacher prompted and encouraged the student along the way and reminded him of the strategies and resources that were available to assist him in the task completion. It was clear from observing their interactions that the teacher had worked to develop a rapport with the student that facilitated the student's academic growth. By the end of the class period, the assignment was finished and the student was proud of the product he was able to produce.

After the observation, the teacher and I met to discuss the role of the ELL teacher in the classroom, in the school and within the community. One of the first things we discussed was the obvious rapport that she had and the ease with which she worked with the student. It is important for ELL teachers to develop a connection and to build a sense of trust with students who are learning a new language in a new setting. Beyond being an ally for the learner, the teacher must also be able to communicate and work effectively with the various classroom teachers that meet with the child each day. ELL teachers must be able to balance the needs of the learner with the requirements for the coursework, working as an advocate for their students.

The ELL teacher also has a commitment to serve the community of ELL learners by providing not only the child, but also the family, with opportunities to make connections and build bonds within the greater school community. Both at the elementary level and the secondary level, food plays a huge role in building these connections. Evening gatherings that focus on sharing foods from the various cultures represented within the ELL population provide parents and students with the opportunity to come together and learn more about each other.

At one high school, the annual Thanksgiving Feast is a highly anticipated event that provides ELL students with a chance to learn more about the traditional customs and foods shared by Americans. It was clear that being able to make connections and build relationships with the English Language Learner and their families is as important as teaching the language itself.

IV. Communication

Throughout my internship, I had many opportunities to communicate with staff, parents, students and the community through written and oral means. I've discussed many of the professional development opportunities I've led in previous sections of this narrative. Beyond those experiences, I also presented information at school board meetings, parent meetings and school assemblies.

My professional development experiences, taught me the importance of tailoring the presentation to meet the needs of each audience and that interactive presentations worked well, no matter who the audience was. Technology was used to enhance the audiences' experiences during each workshop. Careful attention was paid to interactive modeling, a technique that is used effectively in the Responsive Classroom model used with students. For example, in a session about scaffolding Responsive Classroom greetings to a class, I would model for my teachers exactly what they would do with their students. So, if I was introducing a ball toss greeting, I would model how to participate in the activity with one ball. After showing how to toss the ball, I would stop to ask the class (in this case, my teachers) what they noticed about how I tossed the ball. We would share observations and discuss why we would need to pay attention to such details (to make sure we are safe, to show respect to our classmates, etc.). We would play the activity together and after, I would again ask them what they noticed. To scaffold the activity, I would then introduce a variation, perhaps using two balls or instituting a time limit, to build on skills they have already mastered. This modeling helped the staff members to see the Responsive Classroom activities both from the teachers' point of view as well as from the students' point of view.

I also learned that it was important for the participants to have time to reflect on their learning as well as to have time to collaborate and plan with colleagues for successful implementation of new initiatives. Time was often built into my

presentations to allow participants to reflect on what they learned and to plan for implementation when they returned to their classrooms.

In addition to face-to-face meetings as a means to communicate, I also utilized additional electronic means of communication, like eBoards and Wikis. I created a Wiki to help staff and parents learn more about Responsive Classroom and the implementation of Morning Meeting. Utilizing video clips and Glogster (a web-based multi-media tool), I was able to not only provide information about our new program, but I was also able to provide authentic video clips to illustrate the use of Morning Meeting in various classrooms in the school. The information from the Wiki was linked to a district created eBoard so that staff across the district could access and add to the information, too.

Information was also shared electronically through our school's weekly electronic newsletter, *Who's Talking*. This newsletter is a wonderful tool to provide parents and guardians with updates about events. It is also used to communicate reminders about safety, policies and procedures. The newsletter helps to keep stakeholders informed and helps to foster a sense of community and shared experiences among our staff, our students and their families. This ongoing electronic communication is important not only because of the ease with which information can be shared to increase the communication between home and school, but also because it helps to support our efforts to reduce paper usage and our impact on the environment.

During my internship I had the opportunity to present information on the implementation of a new mathematics resource, *Investigations*. One presentation was made to the Board of School Directors and several similar presentations were made to parents. These presentations made me consider the best ways to share information about what goes on in the classroom with those who are not in a classroom everyday. I needed to be able provide more background knowledge and a more careful explanation of terms and strategies. For example, if I were discussing subtraction strategies beyond the traditional

algorithm with teachers, I would not need to explain concepts like partial differences, base-ten pictorials, compensation or landmark numbers. But to parents, school board members and the larger audience viewing the school board meeting online or on TV, I needed to be able to clearly explain these strategies and show examples of students' work. I needed to be able to clearly illustrate the concepts and to demonstrate and explain why these strategies better prepare children to become competent mathematicians.

Through my parental communications in meetings, workshops, emails and phone conversations, I learned that it is important to listen. Often, parents just want to be heard. They want an opportunity to advocate for their child. For the most part, once they feel they have been heard, they can begin to work with the school to meet the needs of their child. Another lesson learned is that anticipating the questions or concerns and being prepared to respond to them is important. Being able to support the school's position with data, policies or past practices is essential to ensuring that as an administrator you can communicate effectively on behalf of the district. Providing ongoing, transparent communication with parents is a key to building strong home and school connections.

The one group that I have not addressed so far in my discussion of communication is the students. Often during my internship experience, I had the opportunity to meet with students individually, in small groups or as the whole student body. The lesson learned about communicating with students is sincerity. Like the parents, they often want to be heard, but they also want to hear that you truly care. They want to know that you are someone they can count on, someone who will stand up for them, and who will do right by them. For example, when meeting with a student who had just come from recess and lunch, I noticed that the student was upset about something. He wasn't ready to share what had happened, so I needed to respect that and told him to take some time to calm down, get a drink, etc. I let him know that I expected him to be ready to work in a few minutes but that I also understood he needed a few

minutes to get ready. Sure enough, in less than 5 minutes, he had gotten a drink and gotten himself ready to work. We completed the tasks. Then, when he was ready, he shared what had happened at lunch and we brainstormed strategies to handle similar situations when they occurred in the future. He knew that he was going to be held accountable for his learning, but he also knew that I was there for him, ready to help with things beyond the academic subject were addressing.

My experiences have taught me that creating an ongoing, open dialogue that provides all stakeholders with access to accurate, transparent information is the key to fostering a successful relationship between staff, students, parents and the larger school community. Ensuring that all stakeholders feel as they their voices are heard as well as fostering a caring climate of productive, respectful dialogue provides administrators with a fundamental basis on which to build a partnership to meet the needs of all learners.

Conclusion

My internship experience was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had. I learned a great deal about education, collaboration and leadership while I explored administration, supervision, communication, curriculum and instruction. The insight gained by observing and working with veteran administrators was invaluable. I am grateful for their willingness to share their knowledge and their time with me as I discovered the intricacies of being an instructional leader.