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ED 486 Independent Study

Issues in Educational Technology

Final Leadership Paper

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As I read through the different documents regarding leadership that were outlined on the class website, I learned many different aspects that make up a leader. There were different leadership styles that seemed to fit with the way I like to run the school that I work at and some that I did not agree with as an effective leadership style. In the document titled “Six Styles of Leadership” there were six different leadership styles described. I have had some exposure to these different styles of leadership in the past through professional development events that have been offered for early childhood directors. I find that I relate my own leadership characteristics to most of these leadership styles depending on the situation I am put in to handle.

The six different leadership styles are visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and commanding. A visionary leader has the ability to have a long-term goal, or vision, and share that vision with others that work under them. The coaching style of leadership is when the leader delegates certain tasks to those that work for them and play off of the staff’s strengths in different areas, while giving the staff ownership over the project. The affiliative style of leadership focuses on the emotional environment and creates a warm and welcoming place for staff to work. The democratic style of leadership is one of shared decision making. Pacesetting is another style of leadership. This style is one that creates goals that are worked towards. When one goal is achieved, more goals are set for the staff to accomplish. The final of the six leadership styles is the commanding style. In the commanding leadership style instruction is given from the management without input from the staff.

I see myself as a leader that will utilize all types of the leadership styles depending on the situation. Every project, team, or situation has different needs in the area of leadership. I prefer to be the visionary or coaching leader. I usually have a good idea of the goals, or vision, that I am working towards. I am also good at finding the strengths in my team and letting the team take over certain areas of a task. I feel it is very important for the group to feel ownership over any project for it to be successful. I do not find very much use for the commanding leadership style. I have had to use this style in situations that have inflexible, clear-cut guidelines and the group cannot agree on how to best execute the project. However, this style does not come naturally to me and I do not find a lot of employee satisfaction when the commanding style is overused.

Technology is changing the face of education. As an educational administrator, it is extremely important to stay informed about the changes in technology that affect the age group in which you specialize. The challenge is to stay knowledgeable about the different technologies that are available, how to use the technologies, and have the budget to update and maintain the technology plan that is utilized by the school.

The biggest issues that are faced by the administration are the time, money, and training involved with increasing technology in the classroom curriculum. Most technology is expensive to purchase. Once purchased, it is equally expensive to maintain and keep updated. When putting new technologies in the classroom, the administration has to make sure the staff is all trained on how to use the technology appropriately for the age group in the school. They also must understand the safety issues and ethical responsibilities that go along with using technology with students. All of the training takes time and money that must be allotted for throughout the school year and within the confines of the budget. Unfortunately, schools’ budgets are always taking financial hits and that makes it difficult for the school curriculum to stay up to date with the technological trends. While technology can make a school run more efficiently and engage the children in the learning process, the time and money are not always realistic within the schools budgeted items

Administrators and teachers that want to become leaders in the technology age of education have to become creative. There are many libraries and programs that have purchased these technologies for the schools to use within their curriculum. There are fundraisers that can be done to raise funds and parents willing to donate money towards their children’s education. Schools can start with small goals for technology integration and work towards larger goals in the future. Change doesn’t take place at fast rates, so keep it simple. As a leader, have a technology integration plan and break it down into small, attainable goals that can realistically be done within the time and budget that is available in your specific program. After one of the small goals are reached, then build on that goal to reach larger ones.

As an effective leader, it is important to share these goals with all of the staff at the school. Show the staff how the goals relate to their area of teaching, how they can benefit through the use of the technology integration and how their students will benefit from the technology as well. Leaders are able to share their vision with others in a way that allows them to buy into that vision. One of the leadership styles outlines the visionary leader. That is exactly what it takes to make technology integration work within a school. Everyone has to share in the vision of the technology plan. After the vision is shared and understood by the entire group, then the coaching leadership style must take over. This is not a task that can be accomplished by just one or two staff members. It is important for the leader of the school, or project, to delegate tasks and play off of the group’s strengths. Teachers want to be involved in projects that can engage the learning of their students and make their lessons more effective. Allow them to share in the changes of the school and do their part to make the changes go smoothly for the families in the program.

Lastly, I feel that it is increasingly difficult to get the parents and teachers in the early childhood education field to buy into technology use in the classroom. Studies have been done that link television viewing and other non-interactive uses of technology in young children to the increase in disorders such as attention deficit disorder. Unfortunately, this makes technology in the early childhood curriculum a controversial topic. In my opinion, the controversy is stemmed from the ignorance of parents as to what technology integration within the classroom means in early childhood. Developmentally appropriate technology that can be used in the early childhood classroom is technology that is interactive for the children. Digital cameras and video cameras are used to give children real-life learning experiences. Interactive educational learning games can be used on the computer, Internet, and gaming systems to enhance the current educational activities that are done in the classroom. Music can be added to the curriculum to increase the retention rate of the concepts being taught to the children. The possibilities for the early childhood years are endless. Teachers need to learn to think outside of the box and tap into their creative side. Doing this will allow them to come up with new and innovative ideas that will engage the children’s learning, provide effective differentiate instruction for the varying levels of development that early childhood educators deal with in the classroom, and allow the children to enjoy building the foundation of academic success that they will utilize for years. Parents need to become aware of the technology trends that affect children of all ages, beginning in the early childhood classroom. Parents have to make it a priority to inform themselves about technology use in the classroom and how it can benefit their children. As a leader in the early childhood field, I personally feel it is my goal to facilitate the teacher and parent awareness that has to take place to make technology implementation in the classroom successful. Even if the implementation takes place in my own little area of education, every goal has to begin with a small step in the right direction.