

The Principal Shadow Study
The Principalship - EDLD 625 - Fall 2009
Department of Educational Leadership
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The following publication reflects an action research study conducted by graduate students in the Master's Degree programs in Educational Leadership and Curriculum and Instruction at New Mexico Highlands University campuses in Las Vegas, Rio Rancho, and Farmington, New Mexico in the Fall of 2009.

The students spent a school day shadowing a principal, school director, or similar school administrator, recording data on the school leaders work tasks at 3-5 minute intervals. Through a series of writing steps, identifying themes and categories of leader's work tasks, their final qualitative analyses were reduced to one-page.

The sites in which they conducted their studies were as different as New Mexico Highlands University's highly diverse student population. School leaders were shadowed in public, private, alternative, charter, and parochial schools.

The Graduate Program at NMHU would like to express its appreciation to the numerous school leaders who willingly shared their day to benefit the preparation of a coming generation of school leaders.

This study took place on a Tuesday during the second quarter of the school year in a medium sized high school in a small community. I shadowed a newly hired assistant principal for eight hours through a day dedicated to compiling and analyzing the results of short-cycle testing, the results of which were delivered to the school via the Internet. The school has not replaced the librarian, who was promoted within the district, further complicating the assistant principal's schedule as providing access to the library and its resources were assigned to her office. There were six interruptions during the day requesting access to the library, each requiring the principal to stop her work to provide access.

The day started with a staff gathering to inform the staff of the untimely death of an alumnus, leaving the staff in a somber mood and, when announced to the students, left a noticeable pall over the day.

Compiling, sorting, and analyzing data was quickly relegated to second priority as truancy issues and the need to complete associated paperwork dominated the morning. The principal spent nearly 20 percent of her day preparing for a meeting with the district's truancy officer. She prepared truancy packages for over a dozen students. These packages included attendance reports, teacher referrals, letters to parents, and documentation of meetings for each student.

Forty-percent of the day ultimately was spent on the short-cycle assessment data. Most of that time was spent downloading and sorting data to a usable form. Glitches in software were frustrating and carved about an hour out of the day. By the time the data was sorted by class and subject, little time remained of the day for analysis.

Student discipline added minor distraction throughout the morning. Each was reviewed and adjudicated fairly and dispatched accordingly. The afternoon brought a more serious diversion when the principal was required to mediate a situation between two groups of students who were at odds. This took another 20 percent of her day away from her primary goal.

The last major investment of time was to student supervision. About one hour was dedicated to lunch duty and bus duty. These duties are daily and while routine in nature, they provided an opportunity to get out of the office and mix with the students and staff. They were uneventful this day but can provide opportunity for students to create issues requiring administrative intervention.

The day was uneventful. I expected the administrative nature of the position would require attention to required state reports. Also, the more traditional requirements of student discipline and truancy were not surprising. What was remarkable was the noted absence of calls from parents and the community. Only one parent called and that addressed a library issue that would have been handed off to the librarian at any other school. There was no excitement or thrill to interrupt the tedium and isolation of this assistant principal's normal duty day.

The Pre-Internship Shadow Study provided me with some insights into the daily life and labors of an assistant principal at the high school level. I had many expectations about this process and was surprised by what I discovered. The daily life of a principal I observed is more about managing paper, data and interacting with people than leading a school to success. The requirements of being a principal are so defined and set by the state and school district it appears difficult to work toward goals that an administrator might have for school improvement. In short, to step out of the box and push for innovative reform is difficult in this position because of the time demands in other areas.

The day began with a review of the tasks that were on the agenda. My administrator was primarily working on attendance issues. This was the first day of the year that the school has started to “crack-down” on attendance violations on those students who missed seven or more days. The state of New Mexico requires that the school keep copious records of attendance and interventions to keep kids in school. My shadow administrator has special paperwork in the form of contract and other documentation to show the state he was working to meet their requirements. Much of his day was spent either talking with parents on the phone or students in his office about attendance.

Many of the students my administrator talked with did not want to be in school and were looking for a way out. My administrator carefully weighed their options (not many) when he talked with them and sincerely tried to help the students. One pattern I did see (and he mentioned) regarding attendance was that he spent much of his day on about 10% of the school population (habitual truants, IEP’s and discipline issues).

My administrator told me that the day I observed him was not a completely accurate day. He does not work on attendance everyday. I would add that the level of state control of our school means that he is spending similar amounts of time with IEP’s, discipline and other “paper” related issues on a regular basis. He also noted that towards the end of each semester he would spend up to eight or nine hours a day working on attendance issues.

The other issues he dealt with during my observation were small in comparison. On the day I observed my administrator only spent a very small amount of time on professional development issues. He did spend a little time on building maintenance and discipline. The rest of the day was focused on attendance (~70% of the time observed).

Before starting this study I thought that my administrator would have a wider variety of interactions. The nature of the day did not allow for me to see those interactions. I knew that the life of an administrator was full of interruptions and he did experience many of those during the day. For a more accurate picture I would need to follow my administrator over a week period of time.

In conclusion, the administrator I followed spent most of his day dealing with attendance issues. This was a different day than I had anticipated. I wanted to see more interaction on a professional level with staff and other administrators. (In fact, during the entire day he only talked with two teachers out of a staff of 90.) The paperwork requirements of this job means that he spends a great deal of time moving data and paper around to meet legal requirements rather than improving the overall educational environment of the entire school.

Today I shadowed Ms. H, school director “principal” at a charter school in a low-income rural town that follows Expeditionary Learning with grades 1-8. As I observed this administrator from 7:45-4:00, she did very little paper work or “technical” aspect of Thomas Sergiovanni’s Leadership hierarchy. She instead focused on the Human and Educational aspects of the pyramid during this time. It was evident that her day demonstrates the five domains of the New Mexico Administrator competencies.

She arrived and greeted students then gathered a rug to place at the door due to the weather and safety. Then she began to prepare for her 2nd grade reading and writing class. The day began by traveling to the upper campus for a meeting with the 8th grade class which was to resolve issues and address needs for the students and teachers in the 8th grade class. It was also an open discussion to replace a school laptop, which was broken due to behaviors in the class. Following this she met with the 6th grade teacher, a meeting initiated by the teacher, asking for help with lesson plans and Expeditionary Learning (EL) protocols. This meeting was held during the teacher prep time and was very beneficial and productive for her in her planning and clarifying lessons. As we returned to the lower campus, we encountered a student conflict in the 1st and 2nd grade class. Ms. H immediately sat down in the hall with both students and went through a mediation that ended in a one day suspension of a student. Continuing on, we stopped briefly in the office to gather materials for the 2nd grade reading and writing class which Ms. H teaches. She was focused on only this task, with no interruptions from other school business. After this she told me each day she has decided to take a 15 minute walk and organize her thoughts, taking care of herself so she can take care of the school.

During lunch she ate with the 1st through 4th grade students outside. The Student Assessment Team (SAT) organizer sought her out and told her that a SAT meeting was set up this morning for a 4th grade student and they needed her in 10 minutes. So off again to gather documents, check in on phone messages, and to redirect to the SAT meeting for the 4th grade student. Student conflict arrived once again as the 4th grade class returned from Dance two of the 4th graders sat down with Ms. H and the school counselor in the hall and conducted conflict mediation. Following this we tried to head back to the office, to return phone calls, check emails from staff and parents, and set up staff training for an in-service. Just as that begins to flow she checks the clock and off to a meeting with the Art and Dance teachers about Professional Development Plans and lesson plans with EL protocols. Back to the office to continue paper work and return phone calls. Then the dance teacher needs assistance with students who are misbehaving so we participated in dance and helped manage student behavior.

In short the day was focused on staff support in EL protocols, staff lesson plans, conflicts involving student behavior, and meetings for student needs. Not much time was spent on technical aspects of the school, but I was told after 4:00 PM is usually when she can focus on the rest of the schools needs so that it continues to run smoothly and students succeed.

“What would this day be like?” “What could I learn from this experience?” “What could be the extent of my Assistant Principal’s jobs and responsibilities?” These are just a few of the questions that lingered through my mind as I walked through the hallways going to the office of our school. I went into this Pre-Internship Shadow Study with a fixed notion that I will just be observing a regular day job of my administrator just like what an office manager does. Little did I know that it will serve as an eye-opener for me to learn the scope of our administrators’ responsibilities.

The first thing that I’ve learned as I followed and observed my Assistant Principal go through her usual day was that they follow their agenda for that day, but it is always flexible since they already expect interruptions, delays, and change of schedules due to the daily unexpected incidents in school that arise from the students, parents, teachers, and supervisors. For instance, as she was going to the scheduled Monday meeting with the Department Heads where she was able to voice her concerns about student tardiness, she was held up for a little while by the teachers and staff that needed some confirmation, opinion, and information from her. When she got back in her office, there were students and security personnel that were waiting for her to straighten out some disciplinary situation. After that incident, she was able to visit with the teachers and their tardy students. In between meetings with fellow administrators, quick conferences with teachers, doing the Classroom Walkthroughs, and checking and coaxing students to go to class on time in the commons and hallways, she was bombarded with discipline referrals and issues with the students. So there could never be a structured time for doing every duty and responsibility that they have to fulfill.

Another essential knowledge that I’ve gained from this experience was that it doesn’t matter how many discipline issues and situations they have to deal with in a day - and she informed me that they have to keep the school, the students, and staff safe - they have to have some time to work on their instructional leadership to help the teachers enforce the curriculum and to make sure that students are learning. She did this duty by doing her Classroom Walkthrough. She also attended meetings that concern the operational management and professional development of the staff and the school in general with her fellow administrators, guidance counselors, and department heads. Part of the facts that I’ve gathered was that an administrator has to keep the communication open to all staff and teachers by engaging in some quick conferences with them. In so doing, some issues were cleared and being taken care of through these small talks with staff members. As I analyzed the time allotted with each of the categories that I’ve mentioned, I’ve noticed that 20% of the day was dedicated on instructional leadership; another 20% was spent on communication with staff members and students; 10% was assigned to operations management; another 10% was for professional development; and the big chunk of the day which was 40% was given to discipline referrals and issues. This is how my administrator’s day went by.

By the end of my shadow study, as I’ve contemplated on my administrator’s duties and responsibilities, I became aware of the many hats that she has to wear in her job. I’ve discovered that as a principal, you need to be a school manager, a mediator, counselor, security, advocate for the students and staff, investigator, and a school judge that hands down consequences as a disciplinary measure. I’ve concluded that being a principal is not an easy job but it is a noble profession that only fits the kind of person that is visionary, patient, caring, and intelligent. From what I’ve learned in this project, I am hoping that when I take the path to principalship, I would be worthy to this profession.

School motto: “Enter to Learn and Leave to Serve”

The students are dressed in their uniform tan pants and blue or white polo shirts. Unannounced visits to every classroom in the sixth grade wing proudly reveal that each student is on task. The poverty and violence that have branded this school for the past decade are not visible today. The principal reports that today’s classroom visits look quite different from the visits when he arrived last spring. “The teachers and students had no boundaries, no data, no collaboration, and no standards. Teaching and learning were not going on in the classroom.” Signs of the school’s past linger in the fresh graffiti and the toilet paper spindles, which have been strategically affixed in the hallway outside of the student restrooms. The principal reports this was necessary to reduce the toilet paper art and follies that would otherwise adorn these restrooms.

Rather than reveling in this phenomenal success and the significant increase in campus safety, the principal seems preoccupied with the daunting task of replacing the school culture of hatred and violence with academics and achievement. The principal reports that he received a call from the coach of another school stating that his players were afraid of being jumped at tonight’s basketball game. There are a total of nineteen gangs; twelve of which are female and seven of which are male. The school has one of the highest rates of rape of all NM middle schools. A deep rivalry brews between the Hispanic and Chicano populations.

Later in the day the principal meets with his janitorial staff to review lock-down procedures. During the school’s full lockdown the previous week, the outer doors to the building remained open. This lock-down was not a drill.

The first meeting of the day was with a parent regarding her son’s involvement with gangs and the recent deadly drive-by shooting. After validating the mother’s concerns, the principal calls the boy in. The boy enters the office. His small frame does not fill the office chair. His shoulders sag accentuating his lack of development. This is a child who has yet to blossom physically or emotionally.

The conversation begins, “be afraid when you start liking the gang activity”, the principal warns. “If you need my help Mi hijito, I will protect you. I will defend you. I am going to track you and make sure you succeed. How are you doing in science? Language arts? Math?” The student is doing poorly in LA due to failure to turn in his reading logs that must be signed by a parent. The principal quickly turns to the mother, “Have you seen his reading logs?” then to the student “You have to go to Mrs. H. and ask her for help. I will give her a directive to help you make up your grades.” We return to the gang issue, “What are you going to do when they ask you to try marijuana? Meth? The boy replies with a painfully honest, “I don’t know.” “Don’t tell me you don’t know”, the principal responds, clearly distressed.

The principal’s time is spent as follows; 40% communications, 20% operations management, 16% instructional leadership, 14% walking the grounds, 3% fiscal, 3% staffing. The principal is refreshingly unaware of the magnitude of his accomplishments.

The following school has been in R-2 status (redesign) for seven years for failure to make adequate yearly progress. The school serves 690 students. The student ethnicity based on 2008-09 AYP data was 94% Hispanic, 4% Caucasian, 2% African American, and less than 1% Native American. 100% of the student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch. The Education Plan for Student Success goal for the current school year (2009-2010) is to raise the percentage of students proficient in math from 19% to 48% and to raise the students proficient in reading from 28% to 33%. Seven of the eighth grade boys and one seventh grade boy have fathered children. ¹

Principal D arrives to her school everyday around 7:15 a.m.; she has for the past 21 years. Always energetic, she greets everyone (staff, teachers, parents, students, custodians, cafeteria personnel) she encounters on her way to the administrative office. Principal D begins her day checking e-mail, stopping every so often to speak with teachers, students, parents, who stop by her office through out the morning before school officially begins (8:00 a.m.). On the day of my shadowing Principal D she along with other staff members were preparing for the *La Cosecha* Dual Language Conference visitors that would be visiting classrooms the following day. Throughout the day she helped the Spanish literacy teacher responsible for organizing the visit with preparing packets, handouts, and bags all the while taking care of the business of running an elementary school.

Principal D is always in constant communication (personnel contact, via e-mail, and/or hand written notes) with all her staff regarding curriculum, instruction, district mandates, professional development, students, parents and any other issues/concerns impacting the school. During the school day she is also in communication with district personal regarding a variety of questions or concerns she might have regarding, budget, human resources, attendance, work orders, Special Education, Title I. Her open door policy allows parents, volunteers, and district personnel, teachers, staff, and students to feel comfortable to stop by at their convenience for a conversation with Principal D.

In addition, Principal D during the day can be found visiting classrooms, answering phones, assisting parents, substitute teachers and volunteers, checking on students in the nurses' office, writing school memos to parents, making phone calls to parents and making morning and afternoon announcements. She also participates in the bi-weekly Student Assistance Team (SAT) meetings and the Dual language program study group and grade level meetings. Throughout the day Principal D maintains close communication with her office staff, the instructional coach, administrative intern, counselor, office clerk, secretary, head custodian, and family coordinator. Since Principal D values visiting classrooms and the conversations with her staff, teachers, parents, and students throughout the day, she usually works until 5 p.m. catching up on the district paperwork.

Principal D is a rare gem that even on the toughest days whether it be dealing with a student discipline problem or an impolite staff member and/or a parent always finds something to make you laugh about. Her dedication and loyalty to the staff, students, parents and community are evident in her longevity as a principal at the school.

This Principal Shadow Study was conducted on Wednesday, November 4, 2009 with Ms. ABC Principal of XYZ Elementary School, a grades 2-5 school in small, rural northern New Mexico community. The majority of the day was spent in “Collaboration” groups that meet 1 day per week for approximately 2-2.5 hours per session for planning, professional development, support, and the like...The day ended after a friendly “debriefing” between the principal and me. It is true that being a “privileged observer” into the life of a principal brings with it a view into the personal life and daily issues that they face---good, bad or otherwise...Based on the morning’s main topic of conversation, I quickly learned that staff and students at XYZ are being relocated for one year for renovations to the existing structures. Planning the details of a major move in the middle of the school year appeared to be foremost on the minds of all concerned...*no less than a logistical nightmare!*

After settling into the day, appropriate staff gathered at 9am for “Collaboration”. Each session began with a presentation of the NM English Language Development Standards as presented by the district’s testing coordinator. Following, Ms. ABC distributed appropriate documents relating to the day’s topics. An easel stood close by which was used for illustration purposes throughout the meeting. Near the beginning of each of the two sessions, I felt compelled, out of respect for my fellow educators, to briefly explain my presence there and to reassure all concerned that I respected the confidentiality of their work and that whatever was said or discussed would not leave the room and I thanked them for allowing me to be there...People seemed generally kind and carried on. The principal was guided by her agenda and facilitated discussion around reading and math data and short cycle assessment data. She emphasized the importance of knowing each student, analyzing the curricula to determine what must be covered by when, the actual number of instructional days needed, who must be served, etc. Why? To use the data to inform specific levels of support; i.e. who needs it, how much instructional time will be required, and what types of “differentiation of instruction” is needed in order to see improvement; particularly for those students who are closer to achieving “benchmark” or “proficiency”

I most respect the “backbone” of this principal and her ability to demonstrate leadership and integrity in the face of obstacles and challenges that are influenced by social and political pressure. I was very impressed by her attention to important details with the appropriate personnel as partners, her focus on student data, and the expectation that teachers (all teachers) be accountable for knowing their students; at the data level, at the individual need level, and how instruction should be guided with this information in mind. The need for the “backbone” cited above, had to be exercised during a session when a teacher confronted Ms. ABC accusing her of harassment for requiring that she guide her instruction by the data. The teacher rationalized that she should simply be *trusted* to do her job without being “forced” to look at and use the data. This teacher also made no effort to conceal her anger, resentment, and dislike for her principal...This helped to confirm for me that building professional standards by which all staff will be held may be one of the most difficult aspects of a principal’s job...When leaders have the freedom to expect high performance on the part of staff and get that performance from them regardless of who those individuals are or who they’re connected/related to, only then can any school system hope to cultivate the kind of effectiveness, professionalism, commitment and expertise we read about ...

I am somewhat hopeful that there might be a few “true leaders” in our local midst who can truly affect positive change, but I am not at all certain of whether that is possible given the social, traditional, and political climate which exists in communities like these---even with all the richness they offer. Principals like Ms. ABC are sorely needed. I fear, though, that individuals with such frankness, honesty and integrity threaten to “rock the boat” more than is comfortable for those in positions of decision-making power. In as much as strong leaders are needed to challenge familiarity and ineffective processes, which is essential to transactional change, they may very well have no place in systems where familiarity, territoriality, loyalty and fear of change hold stronger than the need for reform and progress for students’ sake. Unfortunately, some communities/people will not change unless almost forced to do so...and in that circumstance, how much sustainability can that genuinely translate into? A very thought-provoking, confirming, a little depressing, yet somewhat of a hopeful day...

My shadow study observation took place at a middle school with approximately 925 students in a large city within New Mexico. I went into this experience very excited, as I thought I would now be part of the “Secret Society” of an administrator. I thought the day would be full of great adventures and I was not disappointed.

The day began at 7:30 by checking voice mail/e-mail and checking in with the admin/staff office; the calmest part of the day. I noticed that there is a lot of multitasking as an administrator and organization is a critical part of running a school successfully; without organization, the job would be almost impossible.

There are many unexpected challenges throughout the day as an administrator outside of the everyday expectations at the school and district level. Needless to say, the day does not end when the last bell has rung. The day is filled with duties, meetings, communication, colleague and parent interactions, paperwork, disruptions, and of course, discipline. Actually, half of the day ended up being consumed with discipline issues; one incident in particular that involved the police. The day ended at 4:30, and that was just the business part of the day. Phone calls, e-mails and paperwork still needed to be taken care of before the administrator could leave for the day.

I realized how hard the job of an administrator was as I saw how many different ways an administrator is pulled in at any given time. Whether it is the tasks required of the district, school, parents or discipline, the job is never dull or mundane. There is something new around every corner that must be dealt with head on. The day was different than I expected, but it was very insightful at the same time. It’s such a balancing act to try to juggle daily requirements with all the unscheduled mishaps that take place in any given day.

The job of an administrator is definitely not all that it is cracked up to be. One may think they have a plan for the day, but that plan rarely works out. No matter how prepared you may be the day will bring challenges that require you to think on your feet with little time to process the decisions made; I imagine this gets easier with experience. At the end of the day, the hope would be that one can go home knowing they preformed their job to the best of their abilities and hope that some of the decisions made have impacted students, staff and the community in a positive manner.

During my shadow study at Middle School 123, I was able to observe the head teacher, Ms. X. The school's student population consists of 25 middle school students. There are five 5th grade students, eight 6th grade student, seven 7th grade students, and five 8th grade students. Because of such small numbers some of these classes are combined. Ms. X's morning teaching schedule consists of 8th grade CMP Math, 7th grade CMP Math, a combination class of 5th & 6th grade Social Studies, and a combination class of 7th and 8th grade Social Studies. Her afternoon schedule consists of a combination 5th & 6th grade Spanish class and a combination 7th and 8th Spanish class.

Ms. X has a different job than most middle school principals. She is also a teacher. Along with all the duties of a principal, Ms. X teaches four classes in the morning and two afternoon classes. What I observed during my shadow study was one person trying to juggle two jobs. What I found is that doing this is very demanding and does not work very well. After taking phone calls and waiting for the buses to arrive, Ms. X goes up to her class to begin instruction. She is able to instruct for about half an hour before getting her first interruption, a phone call from central office. The rest of the morning is not so disruptive; Ms. X is able to get things done without interruption.

The afternoon though, is a different story. Ms. X was able to go to lunch and ate in the cafeteria. After lunch though, Ms. X's had meetings all afternoon. Since her students were working on project in other classroom she was able to attend her meetings. First, she meets with someone from Ride to Pride. Then, Ms. X meets with a student that was suspended. After that meeting she goes to the library and meets with a person from scholastics to order books. Throughout the afternoon, different faculty members and parents come to her with a variety of different questions.

This shadow study was truly an interesting experience. What I observed though is with all the interruptions the students are losing valuable instructional time. Ms. X is overloaded with things to do throughout the day. What I found humorous though was at the end of the day Ms. X told me that that day went good and was not as bad as other days. After hearing this I thought to myself, "Thank God I don't plan on being a principal and kudos to all principals, because being a principal is **not** an easy job."

The day I spent with my principal was informative and unexpected. As a teacher my expectation was that my day would be filled with meetings, phone calls, and paperwork... a position I would *never* be interested in. I am thankful I had an opportunity to shadow a very real and hardworking principal because my day was anything but ordinary!

The principal I shadowed runs a school of 800 plus students, in an established middle class neighborhood. She has an assistance principal and a very reliable secretary. Her day begins at 8:00 am; the school starts at 9:00 am.

Our day began with some chaos. The school was short on substitutes so she and the school secretary shifted some classes and called a list of possible subs. Fortunately a student teacher was able to take over the last class needing a sub.

Before the morning bell rang the principal was outside dancing with students, an event that occurs every Thursday and Friday morning. I was delighted to see her interacting with students in a fun and meaningful way.

Next, was coffee with the principal. Once a month, parents are invited to sit down and discuss any issues or concerns. On this day there were eight parents in attendance. During the next hour issues like the small parking lot, safety concerns, and lunch schedules were discussed.

The next part of the day took up most of the morning and afternoon. It was the Thanksgiving meal for families. The school and cafeteria was in a bit of a commotion. There was quite a bit of confusion about times and where the parents line up and buy tickets for their meal. The principal stepped right up and began helping in any she could. She began taking student numbers for the cafeteria manager who was needed elsewhere. From her radio she would announce when the next set of classes should come so there would not be a long line.

After the very busy afternoon, she retreated to her office for some solace. There she made phone calls and checked her email again. After each call she carefully logged detailed information about what took place during the phone call. I was impressed with her organization and attention to detail throughout the day.

For the final part of the day we went to observe a 3rd grade teacher. The principal carefully wrote down details about what she observed him doing. She walked around the room and spoke with students about their work. After about an hour the observation was complete.

I was thoroughly impressed with this principal. She attended to her daily business but she also managed to make time to spend with students and parents in a positive way. I was limited in my perspective prior to this shadow study. Before I saw a principal as a business person running a school, now I realize each principal can choose how involved they want to be in the school and in the community. Whether you are a teacher or a principal ultimately the goal is the same, to encourage young minds in a safe environment. I no longer see the division between principal and teachers. Ultimately we have the same goal in mind; we just choose to channel our efforts in different capacities.

Upon my arrival for the day of “Shadowing my Boss,” I felt a bit nervous. I had never experienced anything like this at this point in my education. I visited teacher classrooms, and had done student teaching, but nothing with administration. I did not know what to expect. The principal, however, seemed used to it, where my presence seemed not to bother or change her daily routines.

My notions of the morning events of individuals coming in and out of her office, with different issues for her to solve or comment seemed overwhelming. Yet, she handled each situation calmly and routinely. I felt privileged at some points to be part of some of the conversations that took place. I also wondered what other teachers thought as they entered the room as I sat in the administrator’s office. Some were straight forward and asked why. I had no hesitations describing what I was doing.

Every part of the day was a great experience. However, the most interesting to me was the Early Childhood meeting, for the reason most of the individuals in this meeting were principals from different schools. Each spoke so passionately about the interest of the little one’s education. In addition, being that I am a kindergarten teacher they welcomed my presence.

The overall experience is one that I will not forget. Most teachers really do not understand what a principal’s responsibilities are throughout the day. Most teachers (myself included) may perceive that the principal is not meeting demands fairly and in a timely manner. This may be true for some schools however our principal was and is in the process of opening a brand new school, along with the routine demands throughout the day. Granted teachers and staff also carry a great amount of responsibilities, but I feel that in order to truly understand one’s responsibilities and routines is to do an assignment such as shadowing. This can also include principals shadowing teachers, support staff, and custodians. If we could have a professional development field day similar to this shadow assignment, I truly think our administrators, educators, custodians would be more open minded in regards to their positions.

When reviewing the raw data collected during my observation I tried to follow the five New Mexico State Competencies for School Administrators, but found that the domains listed were too broad in content to accurately represent the task data I collected. After further review, I decided to identify the behaviors I observed and to categorize the raw data in the following five task categories: Site Management – 18%, Student Discipline – 14%, Personnel Supervision – 29%, Communication –29%, and Instructional Leadership – 10%. The identification of these five areas of responsibility made it easy to define and categorize the tasks I observed and provided the means by which I could analyze the data collected.

Prior to beginning my observation, I anticipated that most of the time I spent observing an assistant principal in a large suburban high school would involve student discipline. What I actually observed was a much more balanced distribution of tasks than I had anticipated. Disciplinary referrals are distributed among six assistant principals, each of whom are responsible for a specific academy. The assistant principal I observed spent most of her time performing Personnel Management and Communication duties. During our post-observation meeting she told me that the day that I observed was a “typical day” during this time of the school year. During other times of the year her time would most likely be dedicated to other tasks. During the spring a significant part of her duty day will be comprised of functioning in an Instructional Leadership capacity as the Program of Study is developed, class projections are made, and the preliminary master schedule is developed. She also said that her time during certain days of the week tends to be devoted more to specific tasks. For example, Fridays typically require much more student-centered tasks including processing student disciplinary referrals and student supervision.

The workday for a school administrator doesn't end with the release bell. On the day of my shadow observation, my administrator had to leave immediately after she completed duty to attend a meeting at district office. I've observed her at evening performances, athletic events, and district and community meetings. She is a very busy professional who actually thrives on the demands of her position and enjoys being involved in all aspects of school management. She explained that our school functions on a team leadership model. Assistant principals work in concert with the building principal to see that all bases are covered. This 'team concept' provides support on many different levels for the administrative team.

My shadow study was done at an elementary school where there is dual language is part of the program and a very strong program. At 7:30 we made sure everyone was on their duty stations watching the kids as they are coming to the lunch room for breakfast and after they eat they play inside until the bells rings to go to class. We checked rooms for heating and bath rooms to make sure everything was working, and clean. Check to see if all teachers are covered if out with a sub teacher. The principal made a phone call to send out some worn out New Mexico flags. We checked on the custodian's complaints on the carpet, letting the teachers know about the safety issues and making sure it will be resolved. Another issue that was spoken about to a lead teacher was the bus duties and how they could be resolved.

The Principal call the PED to start filling out the surveys online required by all school that didn't meet A.Y.P. example: SI school categories 1st level categories. 12-13 kids have to fill out a survey and the teacher, parents and the principle have different survey that have to be filled out. The secretary had to step out so he had to cover the office. He printed the school attendance law and requirements were making copy for all teachers. The success program with the attendance was to notify the parents tear one attendance referral, keeping track of students. About 3-5 day a form is sent to the parents and when there is enough absent the referral goes to truancy officer.

I sat in a meeting with the counselor mother and the principal on a student that was having a problem with his learning. There are many factors: one perhaps was learning two languages and was not strong enough in his mother language that it affected him in class. He also needs to wear his glasses and does not want to. I really like how the principal went and talk to the teacher about it in a positive manner and was going to have the teacher assistant assigned to help this student to progress his studies.

While watching students in the lunchroom, we even took a student to her class room to get her lunch bag. Then after lunch we did Administrator five minute walk though, making sure the teachers using standers and bench marks and are following and completing their lesson plans on time. Back in the office he spoke to the artist in residence for the school she explain all the projects that were finished and that are planning to complete it was very interesting that the student have that time to express themselves.

A Principal's Day

I spent my day shadowing my principal at an inner city high school located in a large city in the state of New Mexico and is considered the most diverse student population statewide. I found the day to be exciting, informative and exhausting. We started the day in the principal's office to check email, phone messages, or any concerns from the staff, faculty, district and parents. The principal also went over the days schedule and gave me an overview of possibilities that may occur throughout the day. After that we spent the morning in a principal/athletic directors meeting till about 11:30 which our school hosted. We then went back to the principal's office to check emails, phone messages and any concerns from staff, faculty, and parents. In the early afternoon, around 1:00, we met with the Math leadership team to create four strategies to help improve our AYP scores and the achievement gap amongst current students. We then finished the day with a staff meeting. The principal asked if I wanted to stay and help with the paperwork that was accumulating and I said "I am exhausted. I do not see how you can still be ready to work till 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock tonight". She responded by saying this, "I am just starting my day, Are you sure you do not want to stay and see what happens after school is over?" She then said "I understand. It takes a while to get used to the hours and workload."

Data was compiled and analyzed from recording what was happening at that moment during the day in 5 minute intervals. The data showed elements of a principal's duty throughout the day. Operational management was observed when the principal asked if I could escort guests to the weight room, by checking to make sure the staff meeting will have the needed materials and technologies ready and when scheduled appointments and duties were met. Instructional leadership was observed during the creation of a math plan, with four strategies, that was created based on data from the district. Communication was observed when the school hosted the district principals meeting and our principal made it a point to recognize every participant and asked if there was anything they may need to let her know. The communication with the secretary for messages, the signing of school related documents and updates on issues past and present was done in a systematic way. Professional development and responsibility was observed while creating the math strategies plan. The principal had brand new department heads, a brand new principal and I was a shadow with input. She gave instructions on how to read the data, how to develop the plan based on questions from the district, implement the plan and making sure all participants' input was valued. I was also given the task of working with the athletic director creating and posting gym rules. The indentified elements from the data were insightful and enlightening. They were different from my expectations for the day. My expectations for the day were minimal. I assumed I would witness some discipline issues, different type of meetings, and day to day operations. I was pleased with what I observed. I saw a different side of being a principal.

The member-check was not as long and in depth as the principal and myself would have liked. The principal is extremely busy this year with all the different directives from the district and the implementation of a new schedule. . This is one of the topics we have discussed since the shadow day. The district is making many changes this year and it has been challenging for principals. We have also discussed updates on the math plan and the gym rules. The principal and I serve on the schools leadership team and we have talked and discussed the events of the shadow day. I have even been offered to shadow the principal again to see other elements of being a principal. The principal gave me some advice; I need to be ready for the many different challenges that may happen in a day. It may seem taxing but the rewards are well worth it.

The shadow day was a great experience for me. I saw many different elements of being a principal and a few of the different areas that need addressed consistently. Being able to see the athletic side of a principal's responsibility was fascinating. A principal has to be willing to be flexible, hard working (long hours) and confidence in their decisions. The principal showed confidences in the staff by giving them decision making responsibilities, ownership on projects and other tasks. The small measurement of improvement I would suggest reviewing all sports information on the school, modify, and add new pertinent information and publish it to the schools website. I would also suggest creating a

media guide electronically that can be updated easily with current and past players, records, and the history and traditions of the school sports.

Shadow Study Date: September 28, 2009

The pre-internship shadow study provided me with great insight on the demanding roles this leader holds as both principal and teacher, at a rural elementary school. Her day began by unlocking doors to what seemed like the launching of endless responsibilities. Initially she attended to her administrative duties by communicating with staff and responding to messages. Changing roles she went on to take breakfast duty in the cafeteria. Amazingly she provided the students with undivided attention as they entered the cafeteria for breakfast. Although she was on duty as a teacher, it seemed as if the students were responding in respect to the principal.

On this particular day a specific concern was the fact that the computers were not operational. This meant that the teachers may not meet the target date in completing MAPS testing. As a result as class time began this was already one issue requiring attention. This was the start of what seemed like endless demands and flexibility on the principal's part. The principal dealt with phone calls regarding this particular issue along with other calls from parents. While providing instruction to students the secretary would interject and alert the principal to matters of urgency requiring her immediate attention. During the periods that the principal was away from the classroom the secretary would then watch the students, as they were instructed to continue working. In observing all of this there were times that the principal, as the teacher, would have to redirect and reengage the students upon our returning to the classroom.

During the course of the day the demands seemed endless as the principal dealt with a sick child because there is no nurse in the school, answered the phone as the secretary also has playground duty. The challenges were nonstop as the day also demanded for managing a fire drill. The principal's sit down lunch went from phone calls to addressing the concerns of teachers with frustration towards computers. While the principal attempted to bring order into her day by providing quality instructional time to the students it was not over, yet. The day did not come to an end without her having to resolve the issue of discipline on a bus and suspend the child.

In conclusion I would like to give credit to the principal and teacher that I observed. In a role like hers she was able to deal with the day-to-day problems the school was facing, yet at the end of the day she still gave a picture of enthusiasm towards what she was doing. She did not seem to become strained while having to quickly adapt to role reversals. In my view I'm not sure that I could have handled these stressful situations without becoming frustrated. This frustration would come from wondering if both of these roles received the best of my abilities. This teacher showed motivation in teaching and meeting the goals for the day, yet there were definite gaps throughout the day for the children. While there were designated time frames scheduled for instruction it seemed as the administrative role took precedence to the classroom. Day-to-day, a leader must deal with a tentative working agenda as well as to being sensitive to the demands of the day. This makes it difficult for another role, such as a teacher. This dual role of principal and teacher would not be to my interest because I believe that the school leader's responsibility sits with the school first, making it difficult to be effective in other areas.

Pre-Internship Shadow Study

Friday November 13, 2009 begins in the library of a small elementary school in a town with a population of approximately three thousand. Today is a staff in-service where the students have the day off and the staff has trainings or professionals collaboration. Promptly at 8:00 a.m. administrator takes a mental attendance then gets right to business. First on the agenda where will we all have lunch as a staff? The administrator requests that all the staff eats at the same restaurant even though it is Dutch he feels that this helps keep the staff close as we rarely get the chance to visit unofficially.

The staff appears at ease and has open professional communication about grade issues. December 16th is the Christmas program. It is brought up by a staff member who is also a band booster that the high school would like to join in playing a few songs. They would also like to have a concession stand and possibly charge \$1.00 per person to get into the Christmas program. These ideas are quickly vetoed.

The administrator a man in his mid fifties who has held this position for the last three years after his wife retired is surrounded by 23 female teachers and only 2 male teachers. The administrator finds himself and a few TMI (too much information) situations but holds his composure as he is a very modest upstanding citizen in the community. He begins to advise the staff of budget issues. The staff seems upset about the fact that they must cut back on all the copies being made in the office and each copy must be approved by him. The administrator will also be going through the rooms to make sure the computers are turned off and the heaters are turned off before we leave every day.

This year is bilingual and language arts adoption. The staff has a heavy debate over keeping the existing program or starting a new one. Instead of reaching a decision the administrator asks the staff to meet later on their own and decide what they want to do. So it appears to me that the dominate teachers will get their way.

The administrator congratulates the staff, as there have been few STAR reports in the office reflecting that school wide discipline is going well. This insight is great for the office personnel due to the fact that the main secretary has been out for two months due to a major illness. The office has been a busy and hectic place with one less secretary to handle the day to day comings and goings especially with the high absentee rate due to student illness.

Over all he seems to run a tight ship in a quaint little school where things flow nicely the kids seem happy and the staff knows what is expected of them. He appears to have lines drawn that are not challenged as the staff at times appears to just go with the flow as not to rock the boat. Staff opinion may be heard, but not acted upon unless deemed necessary by the administrator. One would say that things are his way or the highway. It is as if the staff is treated like the students. In this case adults with degrees who are treated like nine and ten year olds. However I must say that things seem work well for this school, so in ending if it's not broke don't fix it. After all academics first, equality for all and at the end of the day be thankful that we are employed in a stable and secure work place.

I began at 7:45 at a meeting for the testing committee (who handles the details of all district and state mandated standardized testing). I left at 4:00, so the principal could begin her email, paperwork, and other administrative obligations; she leaves at 6:00.

Our day was action-packed, with meetings, observations, student discipline, and quick checks with teachers and school leaders. I was taken with not only the sheer number of demands, but the depth and complexity involved in multiple issues. From IEP schedules to new student bullying to staff concerns, my principal is intentionally deeply involved in every issue. This helps her to know her students, know her staff, and protect them both.

I was able to categorize her activities into five themes: Meetings (pre-planned), face to face collaboration/ immediate concerns, observations, collaboration with the assistant principal, and student discipline. I looked at both how the principal's minutes were spent and how many occurrences happened. For example, although the principal and assistant principal only spoke twice throughout the day, the discussions were longer than most other activities. Graphing the data provided a somewhat surprising visual aid to help me better understand a typical day.

Nearly half of the day was spent in five pre-arranged meetings, but eleven on-the-spot meetings with teachers and other staff took up just over a quarter of her day. This included everything from summer custodial pay to student behavior. The remaining quarter of the day (about two hours) was divided among collaboration with the assistant principal, classroom observations, and student discipline. Student discipline, with just three occurrences, took up far less time than I expected. Not only were there few occurrences, but my principal clears up the issue quickly and effectively. Classroom observations, one of her favorite aspects of the job, had just four occurrences, with about ten minutes per observation.

Collaboration with the assistant principal, as I stated earlier, is a bit time-consuming, but essential to their work as a team. As parents often collaborate to present a united front to their children, the principal and assistant principal must also present a united front to the staff. Their mutual respect and support has been vital to the joining of two, once separate staffs, in one school. The district Behavior Intervention Program, is now integrated with most aspects of the neighborhood and general education programs. Without the principals' ongoing collaboration and support for one another, in addition to ownership of *all* students and *all* staff, this vision would never be a reality.

At the end of my day, I was tired, but the joy that emanated from my principal when discussing her job made me feel more confident that someday, this may be my place in the world of education.

Shadow Study

Principal L. of the Mountain Valley High School and Middle School begins each day with a one-hour commute up into the rural Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northern New Mexico. The small district of Mountain Valley with a total population of 509 is where Principal L. with her 32+ years of administrative experience oversees approximately 320 high and middle school students, teachers and staff whom each she knows by their first name.

Principal L. began her “shadow study” day at 7:30am by checking her email, telephone messages and schedule of meetings for the day. Ten minutes before the first bell rings for the day’s classes, while greeting students, Principal L. monitors the halls as she walks from her office to the student’s commons area. A smiling student stops her in the hallway to talk to her. When she gets to the locker area and notices several textbooks on the floor, picks them up and continues with her survey only to notice several over-crammed messy lockers that do not meet the clean locker school policy and a student wearing a short skirt. While Principal L. asks the security to call in the students so they can clean up and close their lockers, she politely reminds several students to get to class before the tardy bell. After the bell rings, with her pile of books she proceeds to the Middle School Office where she asks the secretary to call in a student for a one-on-one discussion reminder. After she drops off the books and when the student arrives she goes into the hallway for the short five minute talk. As she returns to her main office in the high school she comes across a locked-out class and their teacher in the hallway and opens up the classroom. When she gets back to her office she spends fifteen minutes checking and responding to messages, organizing papers and prepares for an in-classroom observation of the high school biology teacher.

During her half hour science classroom observation, Principal L. sits down at a table with three students and takes her notes. As the class quietly writes down their study guide information as dictated by the teacher for tomorrow’s test, Principal L. notes to herself that she needs to schedule a meeting with the teacher to discuss her concern of didactic teaching and lack of interaction with students. She knows that learning really occurs when teachers have more interaction with the students and that she also needs to assist teachers.

The principal and her assistant head off to an hour long meeting beginning at 9:30 am at the district office where they gather together with the Superintendent, district math teachers including elementary, other district administrators and a representative from an outside organization whose focus is on teaching exponential learning techniques. The Superintendent informs the group of a potential first in the State pilot project to improve the low math scores and the importance of having teacher *buy in* to avoid teachers feeling that the district was pushing another program. Each participant was asked by the representative to give examples of school successes and one challenge; Principal L. sees the counseling program as a success and is very concerned with apathy in the classrooms and notes that teachers are not performers. She would like to see more hands-on teaching and have students get more excited about learning and grades, *Ds are not satisfactory*. She listens to the representative describe the interconnectedness of literacy development in exponential learning; the teachers request to the rep for assist in their classrooms but leaves before she can see a video of the techniques in the classroom.

Upon return to her office, Principal L. prepares for the 11:00am 90-minute confidential meeting with the State Police to discuss child safety. Hopefully Principal L. will be able to have a quick fifteen minute lunch to sustain her for another intense half day of rural school administrative duties and her one-hour 60 mile commute back home.

My experience for my shadow day did not go as first expected when hearing the assignment. I observed my administrator on a professional development day for the district instead of a regular work day at the school. During this professional development day all staff from the district met for a general assembly for training in two specific areas. After the trainings were completed staff was dismissed to their assigned buildings for professional development there. At our assigned building most of what went on that day was a staff meeting. I observed our principal address the staff on issues that administration had and issues the staff had that needed clarification or needed to be addressed. The principal addressed all staff at the same time, asked for any input or concerns from the staff. All the while the principal listened, took notes, and replied to the staff's questions or concerns.

After the staff meeting the staff was able to go to their individual classrooms and catch up on work while I was allowed to shadow the principal and observe the duties more thoroughly. During the time in the office the principal went over e-mails and replied in a timely manner, reviewed leave forms and transportation requests, met with specific departments and received reports on programs and certain students. The staff had a member in the hospital and the principal took it upon themselves to call and check up on that member and also take up a collection from fellow staff members to help pay for hospital costs. Also during this time the principal advised me on topics such as Ell students, Sp. Ed. Departments, school size, and classroom size.

While this shadow day was still a learning experience it wasn't what I first expected. I was expecting listening in on student discipline problems, observing other teachers, and maybe also seeing what kind of paperwork and how much of it came in and out of the office a day.

The day began early and not even into the first five minutes a call was answered and our original task was changed. Luckily the safety pads were located in the same vicinity as the breakfast that was ordered for the hospitality room. It was a little nerve racking because we were pressed for time and had to wait for the High School athletic Director to open up the equipment room. Once we retrieved the items and picked up the food a little pressure was released. My Principle was laughing and has a great attitude. He loves music and uses that as an outlet.

When we arrived at the school it was like the time clock jumped on us again. Once he was informed that the team greeter was late he quickly and nicely approached a science teacher and asked if they could cover while the greeter arrived. The teacher was the Head High School Wrestling Coach they cracked a joke and he gladly obliged. Two teams were late.

The coaches meeting was extremely interesting. The coaches were given a welcome packet. The pool play rules were new for some. Each team played two mini games to 15. The point spread and the won loss record were posted on large tournament boards in each gym. To me it seemed pretty self explanatory but they still had questions about start and end times even though they were posted in the packet. They all agreed they liked the idea of pool play since it was their first middle school tournament that had it.

The referees were very friendly and helpful. Snacks were provided for all workers throughout the day as well as breaks. This was a good idea because the workers were pretty fresh and alert throughout the day which did not end until 6:30 at night.

My principle was called over the radio to report to the office to deal with the student caught ditching. The student was extremely nervous because they'd never had a referral. He calmly spoke to the young man and assigned him two days of in school suspension.

Finding rotating coverage for the workers was slightly troublesome. The inclusion students need to be excused every so often. It was nice for the student athletes as well as the parents see us get involved by working the clock and the book. My Principle was a head basketball coach. I am currently a Head volleyball coach for our school district.

We again had to leave the gym and go to the office to deal with two 6th graders who hit each other. They had to be sent to the counselor first and were given their consequence at a later time.

Tallying up the scores and won loss records for the official bracket was interesting. Again he was pressed for time to figure these out and rank them on a bracket.

The coaches eagerly waited while we were in the second gym. Finally he came out and explained the seeding and went over the game times again.

The radio was constantly on and irritating but needed to remain on. Many comments over the radio, I felt could have been dealt with on a personal level without announcing the message to everyone. Time had passed so quickly. So, when we finally sat down at almost two o'clock to eat lunch it made you really appreciate your few moments of down time. Because it all started again....

I will be the first to admit that the shadow study was not what I wanted to be doing for a day because in my mind I questioned why it was important to me as a C & I major to shadow a principal. I internally fought myself for weeks to get this assignment done. Over and over telling myself I don't want to be a principal why do I need to follow one. However, as I will be the first to admit I didn't want to do it I will also be the first to admit I was totally wrong about why the assignment was so important to me even as a C & I major. During my shadow study experience I learned that education is not leveled in a tier (for example students on one level, teachers on another and principals or administration on the top level) as we would all think but a collaboration of all parties to make one unit that makes up a "school".

We started our day at 7:30 with what Mr. B. called "rounds". This is where he would walk the campus making sure it was ready for the day ahead. Eventually we ended up in the back of the school where the bus pad was waiting for the kids to be dismissed from the busses. This process is almost methodical because the busses knew not to dismiss until all principals and security was in their places. Mr. B. said that this was so that they were able to better handle crowd control. Once the students were off the bus we then went back to his office to start the day. He showed me various things on his desk such as teacher lesson plans that were given to him every week and filed into a large notebook. Mr. B. was in charge of three different departments in the school, Hist., Vocational, and Math. While the other vice principal had English, SPED, and Science. Each teacher in their respective departments reported to the Vice-Principal. Later in the day we would get the opportunity to do a formal evaluation on a History teacher while teaching. However, during the week Mr. B. said he would pop in and out on informal observations two to three times a week. Even if it was just to stand outside and watch for two or three minutes. He stated that after doing an observation he would jot down a note about something that would give the teacher room to grow. A thought about what they were doing but never how they can do it better. He said that he likes for them to come up with the ways to do it better. Which I thought was excellent because it requires the teacher to do what we as educators ask of our students and that is a higher level of thinking.

Another part of Mr. B.'s day is to attend to his students. He is not only administration but in all essence he is an advisor. He is responsible for the freshman class as well as the Sr. class. Because of this he gets all discipline referrals for both levels on top of having to pay close attention to their attendance. Moriarty HS has an attendance policy of 15 days before reporting students to a truancy board and the student possibly losing credit for their class. It is Mr. B.'s job to see to it that the students as well as the parents are notified at least two times prior to the 15th absence. So in between discipline referrals he would call students in one by one and go over the policy as well as put them on contract and send letters home to be signed. We spent a lot of time during the day concentrating on this issue.

Up until Lunch I would say that a principal's job is a lot of paper work however, Mr. B. said that once lunch came it would really get busy with discipline referrals and he was right. About ten minutes into our lunch rounds he got a call over the radio that some of his girls were in trouble and we needed to report to the gym. Apparently three girls were caught smoking weed or so it seemed. As we walked over to the Gym Mr. B. explained the procedure for this type of behavior. The girls would be separated, they would write a statement of events, they would then be called into the office with the female vice principal where their things would be searched, they would be searched, and a school nurse would take their vitals. While this was going on Mr. B. would call parents to let them know what was happening and that he would be waiting for all the results and then would be able to talk to the girls. He did explain to me that this would be confidential and that I would not be allowed to observe. So because of the situation I spent the rest of the day observing from the front lobby. As it turned out the girls were smoking and the campus police were called in. One girl was charged with possession while the other two were just suspended. It amazed me that a situation like that basically shut down Mr. B.'s afternoon activities and tasks. But because of the severity of the situation it did. He did tell me after it was all done that things like that only happen every once in a while for the most part his discipline referrals are very minimal things like didn't show up to class on time, or foul language in class. I just happen to be there on an exciting day.

In conclusion, what I saw during the day was a Vice Principal that never talked down to his students, or staff, that was in all honesty inspiring to all those around him. He was regarded by his colleagues, and his student body with respect and dignity and he gave it back to them. In one incident he approached a gangster who was late to class and even said "Why are you late? Don't you know that is disrespectful to your teacher? You want respect right? Then you have to give it to the teacher to get it from them." He told me he uses the respect concept a lot because that is what kids really want so he tries to give it to them and in return they for the most part give it back. So, even though I still don't want to be a principal I did learn that to be a good principal you have to know not only how to manage your students and staff but to treat them with respect and to challenge them just as if you were a teacher that requires a higher level of thinking so that both the teachers and the students grow. I learned that as a principal you carry the weight of the school on your shoulders however, it's how you distribute that weight that makes your job either the greatest job in the world or the worst job in the world. But as Mr. B. said at the end of the day nothing else matters except when you ask yourself did I give respect today and the answer was yes and did I earn respect today and the answer was yes. Then he said that you know you did your job as a principal and even more so as a person.

In order to expose myself to the experiences of an educational leader as well as to fulfill my requirements for the Educational leadership degree program I participated in a shadow study at a large suburban high school from 7:00 Am to 3:45 PM in which I “shadowed” an assistant principal (AP). During my study I observed the AP in all of the activities in which she participated in relation to her job. I classified those activities into the following major groups along with the percentage of the day that she spent on each kind of activity: Discipline 41%, Teacher Evaluation 18%, Duty 11%, IEP 8%, Administrative meetings 13%, Misc./Other 9%, and Travel/Down Time 8%.

Before participating in this study I had several expectations with regard to the activities in which an AP participates. First, I expected that an AP would spend a great deal of time dealing with student discipline. Second, I predicted that an AP would not be able to spend a great deal of time with teachers. Third, I thought that I would find that an AP would find his/herself working on bureaucratic paperwork and phone calls for the a large portion of the day. Fourth, I expected that an AP would spend a great deal of time in meetings with other administrators.

After completing the study, I found that some of the predictions were supported by the data. For example, an AP does in fact spend a great deal of time on student discipline: 41% in my study. However, other predictions were not sustained by my data. One example of this is my prediction concerning the great amount of time that I thought a principal would spend on bureaucracy. My data presents such a small amount of time spent on this activity that it falls within the miscellaneous category. Also my data demonstrates that only 9% of the day was spent in administrative meetings and, further, my principal spent a great deal of time with teachers.

After reflecting on my predictions, conclusions, and surprises, I met with the AP that I “shadowed” to discuss my findings. She agreed that my classifications of activities and corresponding percentages reflected the day of the study. However, she did point out that although this data was correct for a particular day, each day as an AP varies greatly from the next. For example she pointed out that on this particular day she did spend a great deal of time with teachers (evaluating them while they taught) but that she does not get to do this very often. I mentioned to her that the teachers seemed glad to have her in the classroom and she pointed out that it was because she had established positive relationships with them. I also discussed with her the fact that she spent very little time on bureaucratic business but she reminded me again that her days vary greatly and that some days she spends a great deal of time, even most of her day on such. We also discussed the amount of time that spent on student discipline. The AP was not surprise that she spent a very large portion of her day on this activity because this is one of the main tasks that an AP must complete. The biggest point that I can take from the conversation is that no two days are alike for an administrator and a person aspiring to a position as an educational leader must be flexible had have a diverse skill set.

After reflecting upon my experience during the shadow study and being exposed to the literature related to educational leadership, I have determined one way that I can help to create a small measure of improvement at a school in which I would serve as an intern. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are extremely important to both my district and my school in particular. It is also important that administrators demonstrate to their staff that they find these PLCs to be important personally. With that in mind, as an intern I would be certain to attend and participate actively in individual PLCs. To further help in improvement with regard to PLCs I would make myself available to be present at PLCs in place of my administrator if he/she was unavailable to do so because of the large work load that is laid upon educational leaders. In this way at least some one involved in administration would be present at PLCs to demonstrate how valued they are.

In light of what I have been told about the principalship, I expected to find this shadow study to be very exhausting and an overall negative experience. However, I found it quite stimulating and encouraging. It has shown me that the work of a principal or assistant principal is work that I hope to someday enjoy.

The setting of the shadow study took place at a Title I, public school with 385 students, including ISP classes, Autism Specific, Emotionally Disturbed, and Regular Education classrooms, K - 5. Currently the school's AYP designation is: School In Need of Improvement. The principal was placed at the site in the middle of last school year and is in the process of adjusting to the new site. Categories observed ranged from communication to district officials and parents, to lost files, to some discipline issues, to budget issues, CYFD updates, a lockdown, and teacher observations, all in a day's work. After analyzing the data collected there were six categories that were repeated throughout the day. Based on these categories, the majority of time spent was on emails and phone calls with the minimal time spent on discipline and student interaction. Discipline was bestowed upon her because the assistant principal was off campus. Student interaction was the area in which she had minimal time, with a total of 57 minutes for the entire day.

Prior to beginning the shadow study I had preconceived notions of what my principal encountered within a given school day. After an hour of shadowing I realized there were more facets to the principal position than I had anticipated. I had much more respect for the various things that were thrown at our leader. Throughout the day, the realization set in that there are different types of principals with very different views of how to lead a school community.

I saw many parallels between the excess responsibilities that come at teachers, and at principals. At times I felt as though I had to ask questions to keep some communication open between us. This gave me a better view of her expectations for the community and school. Unexpectedly, we encountered a dangerous lockdown while I was shadowing which was an eye-opening experience. I was concerned with the lack of attention that was placed on students during the lockdown. The priority was placed on calling the appropriate authorities rather than ensuring student safety. One student followed the correct procedures for a lockdown, but was left in her classroom alone.

To ensure the understanding of the New Mexico Principal Competencies, I aligned them with the situations I observed throughout the day. This helped me, as a Curriculum and Instruction student to connect real situations to what has been covered in class. I noticed that there was not evidence, that day, of Instructional Leadership. There was some of the Domain of Professional Development covered as far as ethics and families were concerned. Operations Management and Communication were the domains that dominated the day, with all of the phone calls and emails, especially related to the construction occurring at our site. I am sure, as with teaching that not all competencies are covered each day.

Our principal is adjusting to our school culture; which is rituals, traditions, and beliefs. It has been difficult for her to adopt the same priorities as the staff and community members, seeing as how her last site was so different from ours. However, she is learning through her mistakes. What the community fails to realize is that principals do not step into a new situation 100% ready to take on all of the things they are presented with because it varies at each location. Principals have learning curves too. She has a tough school with a unique population, I am confident that she will learn how to adjust to our community- putting students' needs first.

My day of shadowing took place in a middle school. This school has been identified as a Title I school and as such all students at the school are eligible for free lunch. Approximately three hundred thirty students attend the 6-8th grade middle school. The school's population is predominately Hispanic. The school's principal is a male. This is his first year as a principal. He was the vice-principal at this middle school the previous year and he served as the vice principal at the feeder high school for four years. This is our vice-principal's first year as an administrator at this middle school.

I chose to shadow our vice-principal because that is the position that interests me the most. The vice-principal at our school is in charge of discipline. Her day begins with a pile of paperwork piled on her desk and ends, long after most teachers have gone home, with a pile of paperwork piled on her desk. I watched as she took care of five referrals only to have seven more placed in her inbox on the door.

The day started at 7:33. The VP turned on her walkie-talkie and walked from the office to the cafeteria. She spent the rest of the time until 8:00 talking to students, alternately greeting them and addressing dress code issues, mostly having to do with the tucking in of shirts. Once the bell rang she moved quickly down the 7th grade hall greeting students, ushering them to classes and addressing dress code. She talked to some students in front of the 7th grade science teacher's room and asked if they knew where their teacher was. She opened the room up. The 7th grade teacher moved quickly down the hall to her room. She was obviously flustered about the VP being at her door. Next she moved to the 8th grade hall and then the 6th grade hallway. About 9:00 the VP made it to her office and sorted through the discipline referrals that she had to address that day. Her office still wasn't completely unpacked. She said she had been too busy to finish. Until about 11:00 the VP met with about eight students. She started with why they had been called in and counseled them about making good choices. She never lost her temper with students even when students became upset or disrespectful. In between working with the referrals, students and staff popped in with questions and concerns that she addressed. She is a good listener and always made the person feel as if she was really listening and cared. Even when she disagreed with something, she was able to handle it in such a way that the student or faculty member left satisfied or at least placated.

A particularly long session with a student, which also included the mother, brother and cousin, ended with the student pledging to behave better in class. The mother and student cried and it was an emotional meeting. As the session was finishing up the principal popped his head into the room. He wanted the opinion of the VP about which logo to use on a polo shirt that was going to be purchased for the staff. He intoned that he had been walking around talking to teachers to show them the insignia. He then launched into a lecture to the student and the student's mother about behavior and how this school would not tolerate such behavior. It was a little strange since the VP had already taken care of the situation.

The afternoon proceeded in much the same way. The VP worked on referrals, often getting up to walk to the front office to call her students because the school secretaries wouldn't answer the phone or were away from their desks. She muttered that they needed to have a meeting to discuss their actions towards her. Our secretaries are strong willed ladies.

The VP worked hard throughout the day. She said that the principal thinks she takes too much time with each referral and while it might seem that way, I have observed that compared to last year students don't leave her office fuming. She is hard but fair and listens well. A large amount of the referrals come from dress code violations. She works hard at her job. I don't really write too many referrals throughout the year but since that shadowing day I have been loath to add to her pile.

Shadow Study

I was not really expecting to sit in on an Instructional Counsel meeting for my observation but the meeting was a must have in order to address some concerns about the school. When I started out my day with the principal, she explained to me that she needed to call this meeting due to a time sensitive required survey. I took it with stride and followed in her into a room of people that looked like they didn't want to be there.

I expected to walk into the room and see a group of people eager to address the issues and concerns that the school was facing. I expected to see a group of parents and teachers already engaging in conversations about what could possibly be done to help students/parents/teachers succeed.

What I saw were a group of people so exhausted they looked like they wanted to be somewhere else. The teachers and parent looked like they did not want to be there nor hear what was affecting the school. The principal kept her composure and started to address the group. During the conversation, I heard many comments about how things were ineffective for the school, how they were a waste of time, and how they didn't affect the students of this school. Teachers were going against everything the principal was trying to say and never showed an ounce of support for her.

What amazed me the most is the composure of the principal? She kept her calm and demeanor. She address every concern in a calm rational voice, listen and heard what everyone had said, commented on each and every idea, and thanked each person for their thoughts. She genuinely cared about what others had to say. At times, I watched her get caught off guard but she never showed it.

I have a new found respect for administrators that have a difficult group to work with. To be able to compose ones-self so gracefully is an accomplishment in itself. To enter a room knowing you are walking into the dragons den and come out with a sense of accomplishment by using random acts of kindness is amazing to me. I have learned from this administrator and hope that one day I can strive to be like her.

Ahhhh! Walking in the shoes of a principal. It is amazing how busy these groups of individuals are. This is my first real experience walking in their shoes. Sure, I have been to IEP meetings, staff meetings and conferences with students, but it is different actually being on the other side of the table. I was told by my principal to be at the building at seven in the morning. Well, with kids I had to make sure they were ready, they were not too happy. I arrived at school and immediately began to shadow my principal. He began by doing a walkthrough throughout the building. He checked classrooms, making sure the heaters were working properly.

From here on, he did things I would never learn in an educational leadership class. As he was doing his walkthrough in the halls, I noticed he would feel the doors of rooms that did not have any windows. He explained that he did this to ensure there was no fire in there. A sign of heat is telling you that there is something not right in there. After his walkthrough, he unlocked the building doors stating that the school needs to be safe before the students walk in. Next, we went into his office where he checked his mail and phone messages. He stated that this is the only time of the day he is allowed to do this. A while later, we attended an administration meeting with the other principals. It was nice to see that everyone was in good spirits. I noticed that throughout the meeting he was constantly interrupted by calls from his secretary and the truant officer.

At nine o'clock, we received a call that the drug dog was coming to the high school. We went to the high school and I was trained on the proper procedures when the dogs receive detection. After this, we escorted the dogs to the middle school to assist their principal. He is new and has never been through something like this. It seemed every time my principal gave him advice he did something different. Sometimes I was wondering why we were there. We finally came back to the high school and returned to his office. This was the first time we were back in the office in four hours. We were quickly debriefed by the secretary and found time to take a quick 15-minute lunch (an average for him). After our lunch, the student lunch bell rang.

During this time, we monitored the students to ensure that there would be no fights. Earlier in the day, two students almost got in a fight. Before the lunch period was over, he pulled one of these students to question him. During this questioning the fire alarm went off. After ensuring every student was accounted for, he found out that the alarm went off due to mist on the wires (how convenient since the fire marshal is due within the next week). After this he began to diffuse another fight between a group of girls. This took about an hour to do. Finally, during our last session he was called to the superintendent's office. As required, I went with him just to find out it was about personnel issues in which I was not allowed to attend. At 3:30, my principal came back and told me our day was over since he had to attend a soil conservation meeting.

Well that is my day in a very small nutshell. To write the entire experience would take up many pages. I am lucky to have the principal I have. Some may say he is a "safety freak" but he states his first priority is student safety. He checked and sprayed Lysol® to ensure that the school was safe for the kids when they entered. When I first found out about this job shadow study, I thought I was just going to observe him and write down notes. Well, he went beyond the call of duty and explained, in detail, everything he does and the reason why he does it that particular way.

The day went by quick; he stated that this was a typical day in the life of a principal. He stated that there is almost no time to catch up on paperwork, only on Sundays. I really learned a lot about him; by the way he talks to the students. He really knows how to solicit information by making them feel comfortable. He would talk to every student with a different tone of voice. He really knew his students. He used laughter and jokes on some students and other students he was serious and in every instance it worked.

All in all the day went very fast, faster than a typical day in the classroom. I asked if he had time just to sit back and soak things in and he stated that as a principal the only free time is an occasional free weekend. The one thing I know is that as a principal your day never goes as planned. He stated that we had plans to observe the budget and other operational procedures but were never able to do this due to interruptions. I really enjoyed this experience and am planning to shadow the superintendent next semester.

During the time that I have been a teacher I have had some conflict when dealing with principals. As a teacher I would address certain issues with the principal and sometimes I did not like his solution but I still followed their instruction because they were the principal. As a coach I also would approach the principal with an issue that concerned my teams and again I would leave my meeting with the principal usually not satisfied with the result of that meeting.

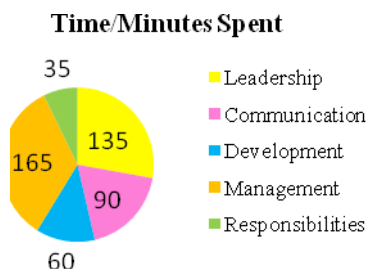
During the time that I followed our current principal at SRHS I came to understand many of the difficult decisions that they have to make not only in the educational process, but also with other aspects of school life including athletics and club sponsorships. From the time that I began shadowing the principal that morning issues came up that dealt with all of these aspects in some way. During the conversations that were conducted with staff and coaches the one thing that I noticed was that the principal was always in complete control of the discussion. He allowed the individuals the time to speak their piece and would give his input when they were done. As a coach I found myself wondering how I would feel if I had been the one that was addressed. Then I put myself in the position of the principal and I began to understand how all of his decisions are based on the overall good of the students first and then the school. As a coach it is sometimes hard to understand some of the administrative decisions, but after that day of shadowing I have a better understanding of how the decisions process works for the principal.

Later in the day I had the opportunity to sit down and visit with the principal and ask some questions concerning his job. His feelings about improving our school included several items. In his first year he wanted to establish and maintain discipline to improve the quality of education in the classroom. This year he is working on improving the overall school culture and attitudes toward pride in self and school. In order to achieve this goal he is making subtle changes the he feels will eventually have a positive effect not only on the students, but also the staff.

Mr. P. was very open and willing to share information with me through-out the day that I shadowed him. My view of administrators has changed as a result of this activity. We deal with the issues that only affect our classroom or programs and that is all. The principal has to deal with our issues as well as those of many others.

Shadow Study

On October 16th at 7:15 am I reported to local middle school to complete a shadow study of the principal. A total of 485 minutes which equals a little over eight hours was spent shadowing the principal. Below is a graph that indicates the amount of time the principal spent on each competency.



The observations that were made were sorted by which principal competency I believed it fell under. Each competency observation is described below:

- **Instructional Leadership:** 135 minutes were spent in this category. I observed the principal completing tasks such as checking on sick children, in meeting with the Vice Principal regarding teacher PDP's, dealing with student referrals, lunch duty, and visiting a classroom.
- **Communication:** 90 minutes were spent in this category. Meeting with teachers, phone calls and meetings with parents, and talking with students for various reasons fell under this competency.
- **Professional Development:** 60 minutes were spent in this category. The principal and teachers attended a presentation, meeting with a teacher on areas of improvement, and grade entry in school data base, were the observation noted for this category.
- **Management:** 165 minutes were spent in this category. This competency was where most of the time was spent. The principal completed task that dealt with referrals, paper work, schedules, aides, meetings, emails, secretary job, phone calls, and meetings with counselors.
- **Scope of Responsibilities:** 35 minutes were spent in this competency. A meeting with school psychologist regarding school and student behavior related issues, budget issues, and phone calls with PED were observed in this competency.

As a student who is not entering the field of the principalship I was anxious to see what a principal's day really encompassed. My biggest surprise was how quickly the day went and most of the time used was on student referrals and school management. What changes I could offer, none, I say this because I have only taken one course in the principalship and feel that a one day shadow could not possibly give me a true picture what the principal does daily. However, one thing that I noted was that on the day of the study the principal spent a lot of time with referrals on student's misbehavior and I would have liked to have seen the principal interaction with the other students.

Overall the study was very informative and has confirmed my decision to not become a principal. The principal I observed was very compassionate about her job, cares about her students, staff, and parents, and is also very organized. I observed a great working relationship with principal and her staff and it appeared the school ran effectively. An additional comment I would like to make is that my daughter is currently a 7th grader at this school and I can say that my daughter's education and future is under the guidance of a principal who is committed to excellence of her school, staff and students.

I arrived at the school at my normal arrival time around 7:20. School begins at 8:10. I arrived at the front office at the same time as my Principal at 8:00. He has a long commute to work, approximately 60 miles. He usually arrives well prepared and ready to start the day. After the tardy bell rings at 8:10 he gets on the intercom to do the pledge of allegiance with the help of some 4th grade students (every week is a different teacher). He also gives an update on events occurring throughout the week. After the morning announcements we went for a walk to all of the classrooms. He likes to go and visit all of the classrooms in the morning to check and make sure teachers are having a good start to the day. I think this is an excellent communication method. I think it shows that he cares about his teachers and is open to communication. It is also nice for the students to see him establish this relationship with the teachers. They always get so excited when he walks into the classroom and they all greet him happily. The teachers also seem very appreciative of his support. When we walked back to his office there was a stack of paper work that was awaiting his signature. He laughed about how he was given a stamp with his signature but is not “allowed” to use it. He signed about 20 documents including leave requests, purchase orders, transportation requests, and ISS discipline forms. He showed me the area where he keeps all of the files and explained how he organizes them. I am very impressed as to how organized he is. His office is always in immaculate condition (and it wasn’t just because he had a visitor). He does not have clutter everywhere and all of the files and cabinets are very organized. I think this is a very important characteristic in a Principal because of the paperwork that is entailed, and it also makes the school look good when everything is clean and well organized. Next, An IA comes into his office to show his some posters that she has made that list photographs and rules for the playground. There have been problems about what the kids can and can not do on the different apparatus located on the playground. These rules are going to be shared with the children and the staff so that everyone is on the same page. He also inquired about getting the rules and photos made into posters and hung out on the playground. There was also conversation about new equipment that should be purchased and how we can ensure accountability of the newly purchased equipment.

Every Friday district administrators are required to turn in a Superintendent’s report that details events that happen around the school. He was working on that and explains to me how this acts as a communication tool between main office and school sites.

A committee has been meeting to create a math rubric for teachers. We went around to all of the classrooms to pass out the rubrics. He asked for any feedback as he left it with the teachers. As we were walking though the hallway we passed by many students and he engaged in conversations with each one and even joked around with many of them. He has an excellent rapport with the students, and I think the students are grateful of this relationship and respect him for that.

While in his office we discussed some of his duties. He explained to me that he breaks his duties up into categories. The categories include, managerial, instructional leadership, curriculum, and public relations. He broke down each category and the duties entailed in each. He was very honest and noted how curriculum is the area in which he is the most uncomfortable with and that is because of his lack of knowledge in elementary curriculum. He spent most of his career in secondary education so he feels that we are more knowledgeable and educated about elementary curriculum.

One contribution I would make as a school leader would be to have a more knowledgeable base on alternate funding. Because our school is not a Title 1 school, we get no federal funding and have an annual budget of about 13,000 to operate with. Our school is lacking in technology and there are so many grants and business that I am sure would help fund our school, but no one has taken initiative to get additional funding into our school. I wish he would outreach more and tap into other resources that would support our school since we lack funds that would enrich the education of the children at our school.

The day began early and not even into the first five minutes a call was answered and our original task was changed. Luckily the safety pads were located in the same vicinity as the breakfast that was ordered for the hospitality room. It was a little nerve racking because we were pressed for time and had to wait for the High School athletic Director to open up the equipment room. Once we retrieved the items and picked up the food a little pressure was released. My Principle was laughing and has a great attitude. He loves music and uses that as an outlet.

When we arrived at the school it was like the time clock jumped on us again. Once he was informed that the team greeter was late he quickly and nicely approached a science teacher and asked if they could cover while the greeter arrived. The teacher was the Head High School Wrestling Coach they cracked a joke and he gladly helped. Two teams were late.

The coaches meeting was extremely interesting. The coaches were given a welcome packet. The pool play rules were new for some. Each team played two mini games to 15. The point spread and the won loss record were posted on large tournament boards in each gym. To me it seemed pretty self explanatory but they still had questions about start and end times even though they were posted in the packet. They all agreed they liked the idea of pool play since it was their first middle school tournament that had it.

The referees were very friendly and helpful. Snacks were provided for all workers throughout the day as well as breaks. This was a good idea because the workers were pretty fresh and alert through out the day which did not end until 6:30 at night.

My principle was called over the radio to report to the office to deal with the student caught ditching. The student was extremely nervous because they'd never had a referral. He calmly spoke to the young man and assigned him two days of in school suspension.

Finding rotating coverage for the workers was slightly troublesome. The inclusion students need to be excused every so often. It was nice for the student athletes as well as the parents see us get involved by working the clock and the book. My Principle was a head basketball coach. I am currently a Head volleyball coach for our school district.

We again had to leave the gym and go to the office to deal with two 6th graders who hit each other. They had to be sent to the counselor first and were given their consequence at a later time.

Tallying up the scores and won loss records for the official bracket was interesting. Again he was pressed for time to figure these out and rank them on a bracket.

The coaches eagerly waited while we were in the second gym. Finally he came out and explained the seatings and went over the game times again. The radio was constantly on and irritating but needed to remain on. Many comments over the radio, I felt it could have been delt with on a personal level without announcing the message to everyone. Time had passed so quickly. So, when we finally sat down at almost two o'clock to eat lunch it made you really appreciate your few moments of down time. Because it all started again.....