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### Reflection #1

During the last seven months of transitioning into an administrator, my eyes have opened much wider and I am seeing all things from a different perspective. I have come to the realization that the concepts I learned from both my administration programs at CITE and Dowling, are more meaningful now that I am living them daily. After internalizing the “tattoos” over the last two years, I have transformed and reframed my own thinking and my ideas surrounding leadership. I am on the road to deep, lifelong change. As a new administrator, I need to take into account the “circle” and ensure that my teachers align with the vision and intention that every student will be successful and achieve mastery. From rereading the Reframing Organizations book by Bolman and Deal, I was reminded that effective leaders design for success, cultivate their teachers with the necessary training and skills, and student achievement and mastery for all will follow. “One person’s belief does not make a perfect school.” I also took to heart the idea that a successful and measurable mission should be written as an “if...then” statement. It is also important to reiterate the idea that data alone does not help students achieve. Achievement is about teacher effectiveness through professional development in providing interventions to meet the needs of all students. As a wake up call, I now realize how vital it is to build a “shared vision” within a PLC and assure that we are not only developing an organizational plan that is realistic, but attractive for the future of the organization. This then develops a culture among all staff and can be transitioned down from administration to teachers to maintain the integrity of the PLC.

Both the vision and mission statements are essential to laying a foundation to build a strong and collective partnership among teachers and staff. This is probably the most important factor because not only does it help develop the culture you desire in your building, but it sets the tone for your expectations of your teachers to follow the systems you are creating within your department. Culture wins every time. As a leader I need to lead my staff with a tangible focus in mind and need a way to assess progress as a whole, which will hold each member of the system

accountable. This, in turn, allows me, the administrator, to focus on the strengths of each of my staff and provide measurable points of feedback to ensure growth both individually and as a group. This “re-culturing” is the key to successful school improvement, and creating a PLC is the best hope for this “re-culturing.”

Another point that stuck out to me is the idea of creating a vision for my professional learning community. This can only be successfully accomplished by initiating a “collective sense of ownership and commitment to the future we are working together to create.” The idea of creating sound “Guiding Ideas” really struck a cord with me because it is vital to think ahead and plan in order to illicit change. I, the leader, need to assume all best and worst case scenarios, and think in the role of each stakeholder in order to ensure grounded guiding ideas to “sell” the vision and initiate buy-in from all. As a leader, I will develop a collective vision among my staff and strive to create that quintessential PLC in my science and technology departments.

Throughout the chapters of reading there was a common focus on leaders using systems thinking (Senge) to purpose a positive force of change in schools. As leaders, we have been ingrained to develop a strong vision that can be shared and embraced by all stakeholders with the sheer focus of “mastery for all.” This vision will not be successful unless the internal and external factors are taken into consideration and the plan to reach our goal is designed, taught and stewarded with measurable benchmarks and policies designed with purpose. This practice leads to systems thinking with communication as its core. Many schools end up not meeting success with one of the major reasons being a lack of communication. Successful leaders communicate effectively and live by all six ELCC standards.

Personally, I have core beliefs and non-negotiables that I carry with me within my teaching practice and personal life. Unfortunately, sometimes we have to go against our inner voice and follow policy, regardless of whether or not we agree. This is what Deborah Stone refers to as the “Policy Paradox.” I believe in treating others the way you would want to be treated, equitably and ethically like in ELCC V. I believe that all people should be treated with dignity, respect and received with an open mind. I also believe that children should come first, and for that to happen we need to ensure that the adults are taken care of so that they can put children first. It’s much like the airplane theory that you put on your oxygen mask first before your child’s, so that you can take care of them the best you can. I also believe in leading by

example, and walking the life of a genuinely good person. In turn, others will follow suit and watch the differences that I make in lives everyday sometimes by performing the smallest of tasks, even if it means that I don't always follow the rules.

When reflecting further, I really started to grasp a better idea for building a foundation through creating a strong learning organization. ELCC III focuses on this aspect of managing the structures necessary to run a successful organization. It is necessary to view a department as a system with a focus on all the parts working together. This starts with, again, a strong leader with a strong vision and I am that leader. I need to make sure that what I "say I do," is actually "what I do." With this in mind, I revisited the three-legged stool as a visual for a systematic learning organization. I realized that no matter how well two of the legs supported the stool, without that third leg, the stool would not support any weight and would collapse. We as leaders need to put this to the forefront of our thinking. We need to synch our school environment to foster those relationships that will transition the momentum needed to collaborate on a grander scale to purpose change one department at a time. This includes the concepts in ELCC IV, by collaborating with all stakeholders, like families and community members, because they are the driving force behind district wide change.

We must do this to change lives of students by changing the minds of those that follow our lead. We need to pioneer this change by using evidence to change our story and using evidence to achieve our goals. I cannot imagine a successful future for any of us, if we do not pave the way for our students' achievement by setting higher standards and goals. This means as administrators, we must also hold our staff and ourselves to high expectations and goals.

"If you want to be a butterfly, at some point you have to stop being a caterpillar" is a quote that resonates within me, because it encompasses this past year of evolution. This involves taking risks and making decisions. I know that becoming an administrator is not an easy feat. It involves many struggles both internal and external and I am confident that I am ready to become this butterfly. The same principles that I read about, I can actually apply to the struggles that I'm facing in my own current reality to effect change. Leaders need to get their own emotions under control while developing focused plans on how to move forward. Good leaders need to lead with a level head and have to plan ahead to reach individual and organizational goals.