

What we get is what we model. This simple, yet powerful, statement embodies the essential elements of effective and empowering school administration. Successful schools require leaders who embody the vision, values, and beliefs that they seek within their school and community. Effective school leaders recognize the importance of building the capacity of others and seek to lead not from atop but from within by empowering shared teacher and student leadership through deliberate and visible practices.

Effective and empowering school administration is characterized by school leaders who are...

Visionary.

Visionary leaders are able to foster, articulate, and promote a clear vision for learning. Vision is more than words on the page; it is the guiding philosophical force that guides our work as a learning organization. Successful schools begin with “why” and develop ownership and purpose within their organization. Successful school leaders are able to articulate the vision through their actions while engaging staff, students, parents, and the community in shepherding the vision towards reality.

Student-Centered.

Student-centered leadership is understanding that students are more than data points; they are the individuals that schools are built upon and who deserve our best as educators each and every day. As such, school leadership decisions should always consider what is best for our students. Effective leadership requires empathy, understanding, consistency, and purpose.

Lead Learners.

School leaders are leaders of learning organizations. As such, it is essential that successful school leaders value their role as the lead learner – a model of continual learning and collaboration. They are connected to colleagues and always seeking to grow personally and professionally. Lead learners openly engage in and share their own continual learning while celebrating the learning of others.

Empowering.

Empowering administrators understand it is “people, not programs” and use their role to help others to lead and develop professionally. Teacher leadership and student voice are essential in building excellent schools. Empowering administrators find and promulgate opportunities for shared leadership within their school and community.

Instructional Leaders.

Leading a successful school requires an awareness that no technology, no tool, and no program can replace the necessity of quality instruction. Successful school leaders engage in conversations centered on quality instruction, seek to highlight instructional exemplars within their school, and engage parents as partners in the instructional process.

Effective Communicators.

Being an effective communicator means understanding that, as a school leader, you are responsible for shaping and sharing the story of your school. They are able to share the successes of their school and community as well as effectively articulate core information to multiple stakeholders. They seek diverse means of communication and continually find ways to foster authentic and honest communication.

Reflective.

Reflective leaders understand the importance of self-assessment and growth. They continually reflect on the impacts of decisions and actions and use these opportunities to develop and grow. Through modeling of reflective practices, school leaders also demonstrate the importance of learning as a process.

Embodying these seven elements is not an easy task, but it is one that, as lead learners, all school leaders should aspire to achieve.