

Instructional Leadership Vision Project #1

Carol Sparber



Gund School: Marilyn Mauck, principal

▶ **What is meant by instructional leadership?**

Instructional leadership is developing authentic relationships with staff, and teachers and staying focused on how decisions will impact the children. Marilyn stated that, “teachers are afraid of failure and repercussions from administration” so it is important to create a culture for ‘growing teachers’ by being REAL, admitting mistakes, and providing feedback in a timely manner. Leaders who develop coherence around shared values are likely to deepen the sense of community within an organization – a sense of being in relationship with others who are striving for the same goals (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p.119).

Gund School: Marilyn Mauck, principal

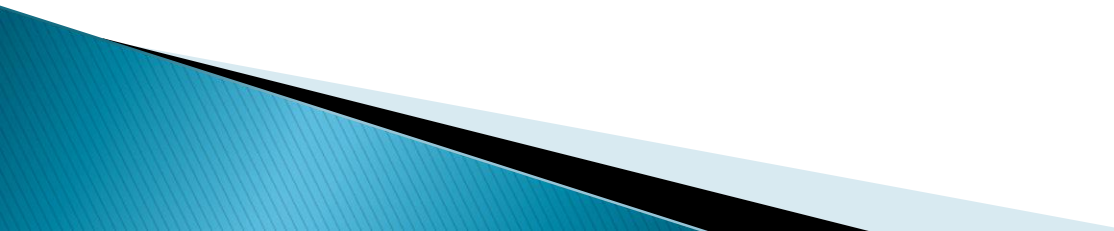
- ▶ **What is meant by instructional leadership?**

Marilyn is also a proponent of using on-going professional development and coaching to improve teacher performance and provide instructional strategies that will make a difference for students. The primary goal of instructional coaching is to enable teachers to implement scientifically proven instructional practices that respond directly to teacher issues (Knight, 2010, p.17).

Gund School: Marilyn Mauck, principal

▶ What I Learned

I learned that instructional leadership should embrace relationships that support staff by creating a culture for ‘growing teachers’. This can be accomplished by holding the bar high for achievement by embracing best practices and providing teachers with embedded and differentiated professional development to foster the academic development and achievement for all students.



Lawrence School: Cheryl Cook, Academic Dean

▶ What is meant by instructional leadership?

Instructional Leadership involves developing your own professional development – this means listening to others and developing trust. Good listening involves an active effort to understand the world from another’s perspective. It takes practice and patience but is necessary in establishing trust (Murphy, 1968, p.35). Cheryl also said, “It’s important to be involved with professional organizations”. Follow others online to learn and professionally develop yourself. Commit to lifelong learning by continually clarifying and deepening personal values (Senge, 1990, p.10).

Lawrence School: Cheryl Cook, Academic Dean

▶ What I Learned

An important piece of advice I learned from Cheryl is to write myself a letter – telling myself why I left the classroom to take a position of leadership... and to remember that adults/teachers learn differently so use leverage social media, learn to listen, and don't get in the way.

Waldorf School: Amy Hecky, Director of Admissions and Marketing

▶ **What is meant by instructional leadership?**

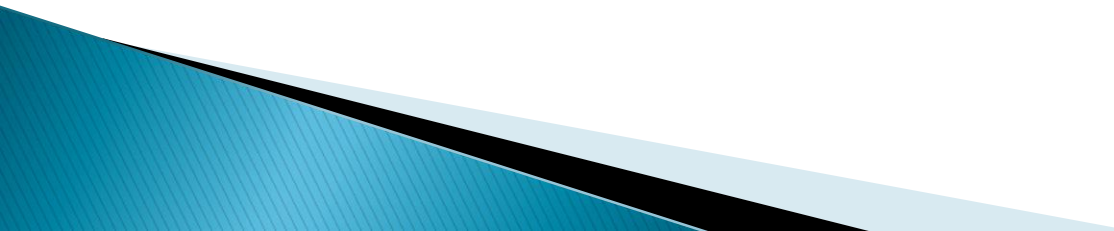
Instructional Leadership is like a “communication hub” of weekly meetings to allow for collaboration and exchange of ideas in order to help teachers instruct and understand development of the whole child in the Waldorf way. This requires presence, flexibility and the ability to self-reflect.

Our presence contributes to and enhances the human and natural energy in our surroundings. Our presence activates our authenticity and the authenticity of others – enabling healthy relationships to develop (Starratt, 2004, p.59). Additionally, it is important for leaders to reflect regularly on their words and actions (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p.45).

Waldorf School: Amy Hecky, Director of Admissions and Marketing

▶ What I Learned

An important piece of advice I learned be present, listen, and develop an understanding of self. Presence and listening are two fundamental ideas for establishing trust. An understanding of self is important in order to reflect on ideas, what I do, why I do them, and what can I do to change.



Firestone High School: Judith Harrison International Baccalaureate Program

▶ **What is meant by instructional leadership?**

Instructional Leadership involves flexibility, training, and wearing a lot of hats. The IB program was developed 19 years ago to attract top students to the school. Implementing the program required specific teacher training and choosing IB program courses. Effective curriculum never attempts to standardize students but must provide focus and connectivity without leading to mindless conformity (English, 2010, p.34). Training needs to be relevant regarding organizational performance and focused on building competence, commitment, and effectiveness in confronting and overcoming organizational obstacles in order to reach the system's mission and goals (Downey et al., 2009, p.170).

Firestone High School: Judith Harrison International Baccalaureate Program

- ▶ What I Learned

An important piece of advice I learned from Judith is to provide challenging but flexible curriculum opportunities to meet unique student needs.

(I also learned the difference between IBP classes and AP classes!)

Akron Public Schools: APS On-line

▶ **What is meant by instructional leadership?**

Instructional Leadership involves team work and perseverance to meet and exceed goals. It's important to always remember where you were and how far you've come. Celebrate every small success. Learning is a 'high risk' venture. To pursue it with confidence and conviction students must experience some degree of mastery. "In other words, learning derives from a basis of strength and capability, not weakness and failure (Gay, 2010, p.32). Students all have different needs and the online learning format provides another educational option for students.

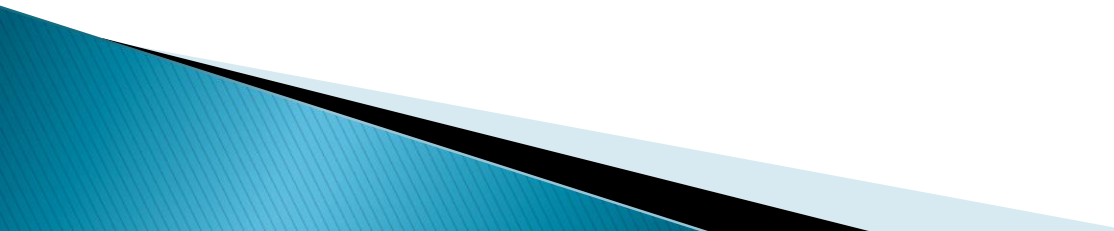
"Technology can become the force that equalizes the educational opportunities of all children regardless of location and social and economic circumstance (National Academy of Sciences & National Academy of Engineering, 1995).

Akron Public Schools: APS On-line

▶ What I Learned

An important piece of advice I learned is to write a personal mission statement and get to the core of WHY I want to do this work. Celebrate small successes!

2. My vision as an instructional leader?

- ▶ My vision of instructional leadership is to foster and facilitate trustful relationships within the learning community by providing coaching and sharing leadership in order to do what is best for the children by using data to make instructional decisions and monitoring curriculum and instruction in order to promote unique academic success for every student in a safe and supportive environment.
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3. To what extent does my vision align with national leadership standards?

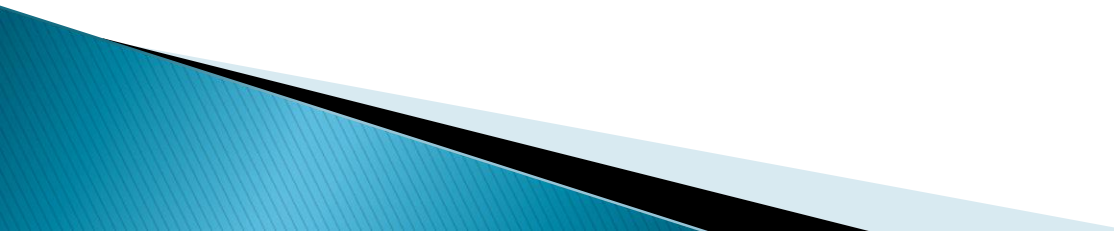
My vision aligns with part of every CCSSO standard. Alignment with my vision is listed in the table.

	CCSSO standards
#1	Promotes academic success
#2	Promotes ethical & professional behavior
#3	Recognize & respect student diversity
#4	Rigorous instruction to support academic success
#5	Safe supportive environment
#6	Support & develop teachers
#7	Promote professional development
#8	Collaborative relationships
#9	Promote vision and mission of the school
#10	Achieve vision, fulfill mission, & promote core values

3. To what extent does my vision align with national leadership standards?

▶ My Vision statement

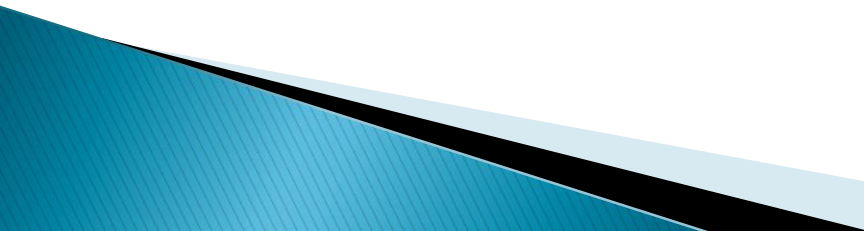
My vision of instructional leadership is to foster and facilitate trustful relationships within the learning community by providing coaching and sharing leadership in order to do what is best for the children by using data to make instructional decisions and monitoring curriculum and instruction in order to promote unique academic success for every student in a safe and supportive environment.



4. What research supports your vision? How do you understand your responsibility as an instructional leader? What challenges may you face?

- ▶ Sharing leadership helps to foster trustful relationships. By sharing power and asking for help, instructional leaders can tap into latent resources within the school. Furthermore, by relying on staff members, administrators promote a greater sense of efficacy, responsibility, and control which contributes to overall progress in meeting a school's vision and mission (Murphy, 1968, p.36).
- ▶ Coaching also contributes to developing a culture of trust. Helping staff move forward to reach their goals, demonstrates genuine concern for teachers and the immediate challenges (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p.45). Moreover, coaching is the 21st century leadership approach for empowering teachers to consistently implement scientifically proven instructional practices with fidelity in order to improve the academic success of all students (Knight, 2010, p.17).

4. What research supports your vision? How do you understand your responsibility as an instructional leader? What challenges may you face?

- ▶ My responsibility as an instructional leader will be to develop a team that does what is best for the children while embracing the vision and mission of the school. The task is large and includes a range of responsibilities from establishing goals and plans for improving student achievement to partnering with the community and families in order to development a unified partnership with the singular focus of promoting student success.
 - ▶ I know that leading for change will include myriad challenges because of the variety of personalities, personal educational philosophies and values that exist within a school. I realize that there is not one single approach to instructional leadership that will solve all challenges (Downey, et al., 2009, p.286).
 - ▶ I understand that there is much I do not know and I have much to learn. In order for me to be an effective leader, I know I will use coaching strategies in order to develop a culture of trust while empowering teachers to use their skills and knowledge to do what is best for the students.
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5. How did you understand the vision of each instructional leader you met? How did each instructional leader understand her/his responsibility to serve the school community as an instructional leader? What challenges do each of them face? To what extent, if any, is this aligned with research?

- ▶ A common theme across the vision of each instructional leader is to do what is best for the children by providing educational opportunities that best meet individual and unique learning needs. Not all students are alike so a flexible instructional approach provides diverse students the opportunity to maximize each student's growth and individual success (Downey et al., 2009, p.170).
- ▶ Instructional leaders understand that in order to meet the range of student educational needs, it is necessary to collaborate and provide professional development and coaching opportunities to improve teaching. Professional development must provide practices that are proven to work and that address real challenges facing teachers. Followed up with coaching, teachers can see what implementation of an intervention looks like. Furthermore, coaching is about building relationships with teachers as much as it is about instruction. It offers an emotional connection that can work through barriers resulting in meaningful collaborative partnerships (Knight, 2007, p.15).

5. How did you understand the vision of each instructional leader you met? How did each instructional leader understand her/his responsibility to serve the school community as an instructional leader? What challenges do each of them face? To what extent, if any, is this aligned with research?

- ▶ Each educational setting has unique challenges. Some challenges the instructional leaders face include: finding the right way to support staff at the same time, continuing high quality professional development, providing flexibility for staff and students, funding, finding qualified teachers, and dealing with families.
- ▶ There is no quick fix for the challenges that educational leaders face, “it all depends” on the interaction of teachers and students, actions and reactions to teaching, collaboration with families and communities, and the administrators approach to leadership. Balancing stability and change in an educational setting is no easy task (Downey et al., 2009, p.2).

6. When comparing your vision and understanding of what it means to be an instructional leader, how does this compare with those you met in the field? Be specific.

- ▶ Vision is personal for each instructional leader because it is based on individual beliefs, educational philosophies, and shaped by experience. Five different instructional leaders expressed five different personal visions of what it means to be an instructional leader however the overarching theme across each educational setting is ensuring successful student learning.

6. When comparing your vision and understanding of what it means to be an instructional leader, how does this compare with those you met in the field? Be specific.

- ▶ My vision and understanding of what it means to be an instructional leader contains elements of all of the instructional leaders that I met. My vision however, aligns most closely with Marilyn Mauck, the principal of the Gund School.
- ▶ I believe that effective instructional leadership has a direct impact on student learning. In order to be an effective administrator I will need to clearly convey my personal vision to the staff but I will use that as a springboard to engage collaborative discussion in order to give teachers a voice in determining our vision and goals. Giving teachers a voice and listening to their concerns will help foster authentic and trusting relationships. Through professional development and coaching, teachers will share responsibilities of leadership and develop high quality instruction using current research. Together we will collaborate to improve school effectiveness by examining, interpreting, and monitoring data to guide and improve instruction to promote academic success for every student.

Gund School

- ▶ Strength and support for each child



Gund School

Self expression promotes individualism



Gund School



stability and structure provides social and emotional support

Gund School



reminder to collaborate

Lawrence school

Strength to overcome difficulties



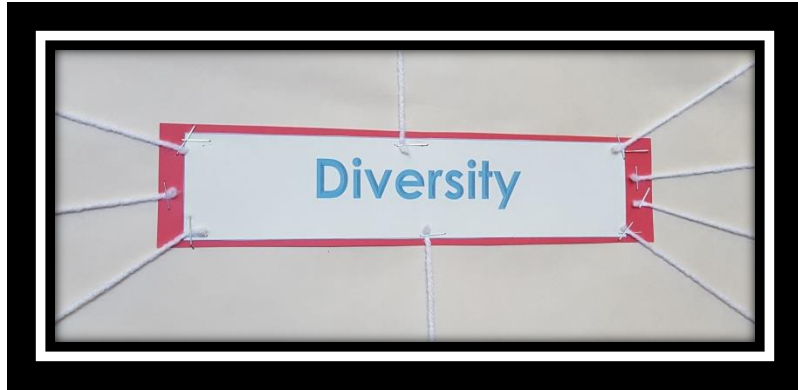
Lawrence School



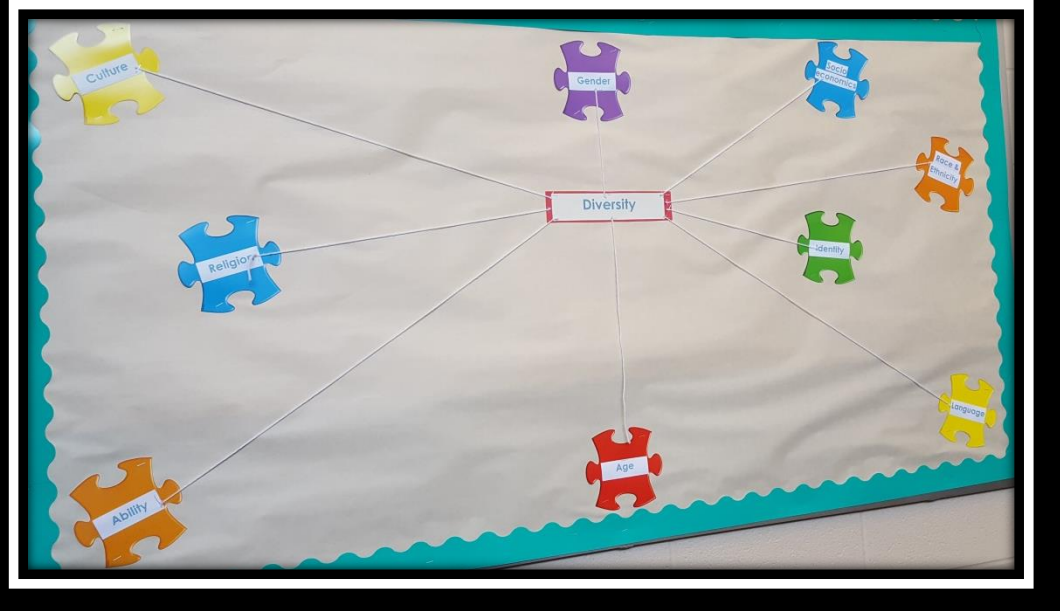
Meeting individual learning needs



Lawrence School



Embrace individuality



Lawrence School



Foster creative
expression



Waldorf School

Sensitivity of developmental needs



Waldorf School

Teamwork to build relationships



Waldorf School

A resting place for self-reflection



Waldorf School

Timeless throwback to a less complicated era of education



Firestone High School

representation of self-discovery



Firestone High School

Clear direction for the future



Firestone High School

embrace diversity



Love me

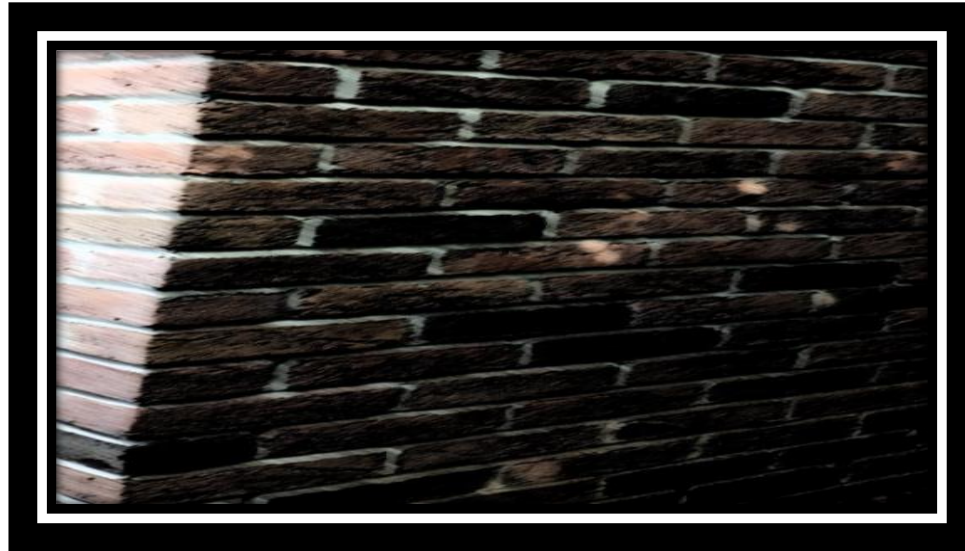
Firestone High School

unique educational opportunities



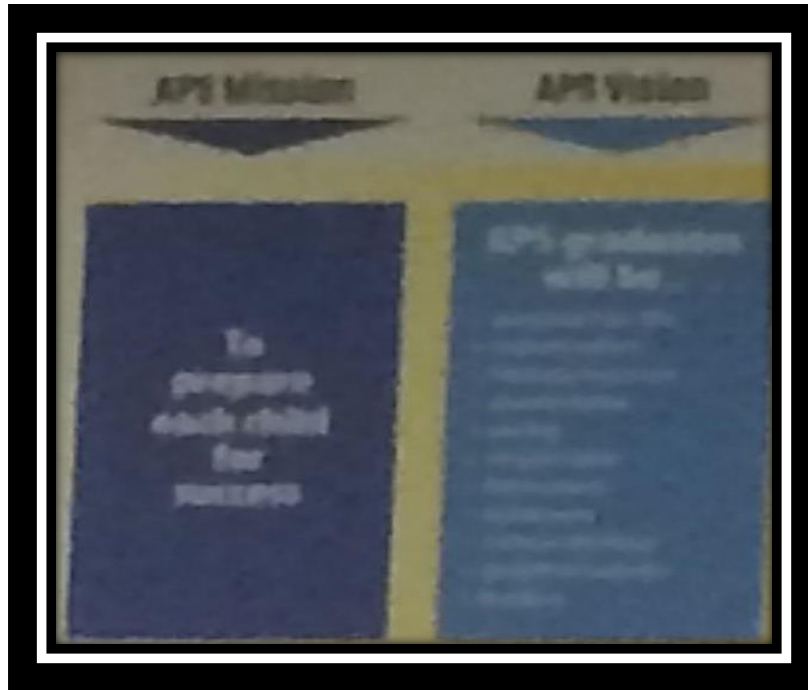
Akron Public Schools on-line

A brick and mortar building
embracing 21st century learning

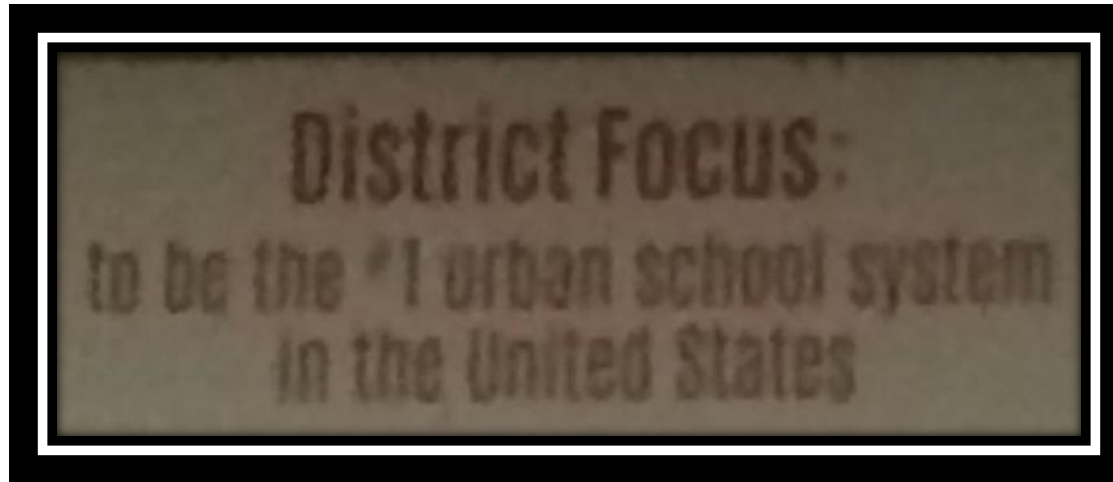


Akron Public Schools on-line

Visible vision/mission promotes a shared vision



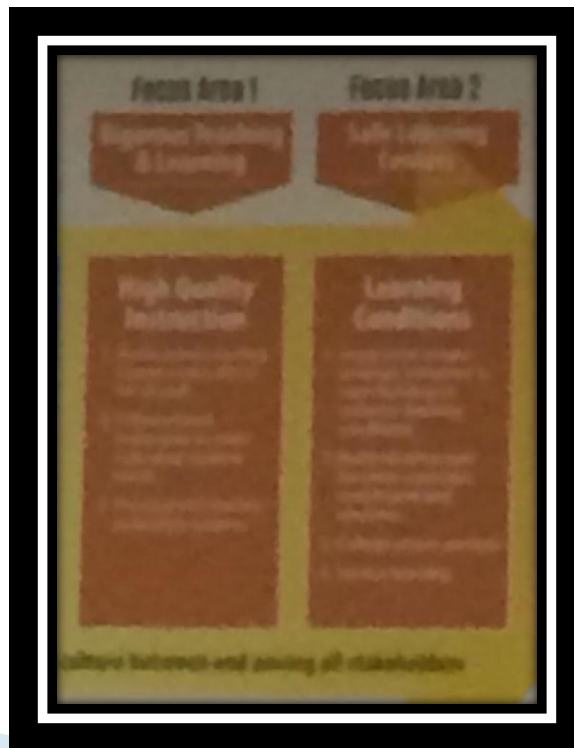
Akron Public Schools on-line



Connecting the shared vision to all stakeholders

Akron Public Schools on-line

Moving toward higher academic achievement for all students



8. Photographs that represent my values as an aspiring instructional leader.

- ▶ Promote unique academic success for every child



8. Photographs that represent my values as an aspiring instructional leader.

- ▶ Collaborative learning communities



8. Photographs that represent my values as an aspiring instructional leader

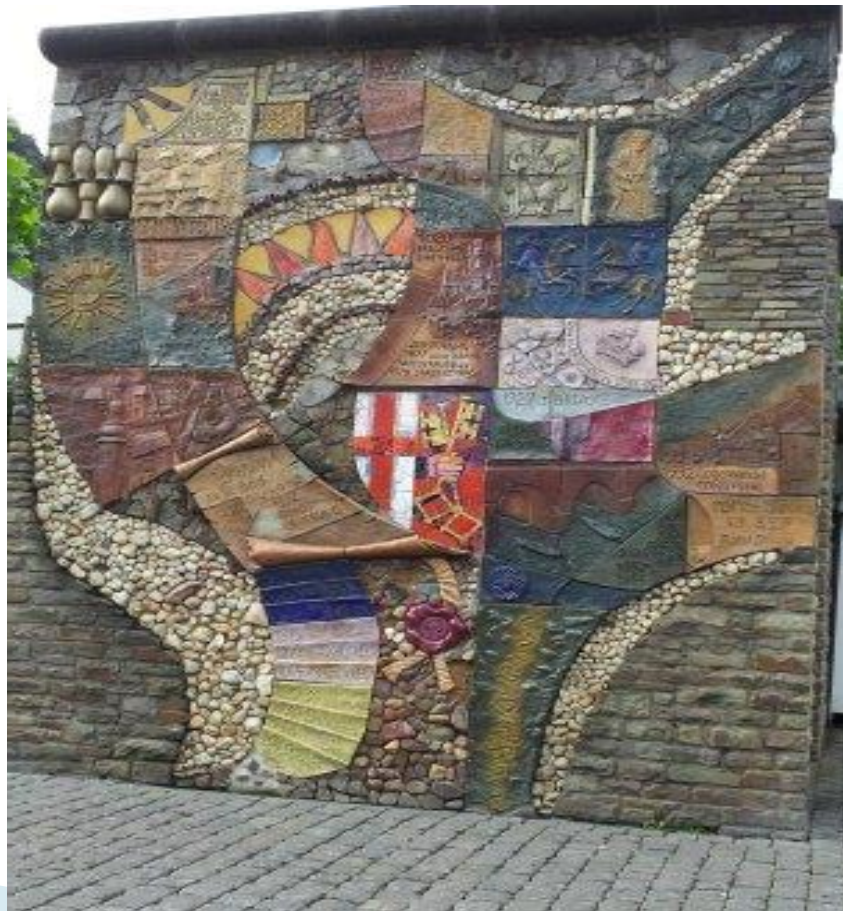
▶ Embrace differences



no they are not all the same – each has a different fold or wrinkle, like children they have unique differences!

8. Photographs that represent my values as an aspiring instructional leader

- ▶ We are different parts of the same team




8. Photographs that represent my values as an aspiring instructional leader

- ▶ **Interconnected authentic relationships**



Alignment of Poem & Vision

- ▶ I wrote an Acrostic poem wrapping words and phrases around the vertically embedded title, “Instructional Leader”.
 - ▶ I used the acrostic style because it is symbolic to the content of the poem. Instructional leader is the title and it is centered in the middle of the poem, wrapped with words and phrases that support the topic.
 - ▶ I chose phrases central to the title because I believe these are essential elements of an effective instructional leader. The phrases used in my poem were compiled from the sage advice offered by experienced administrators during our field excursion and from readings in our textbooks and they all align with my personal vision of what it means to be an instructional leader.
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Poem: Instructional Leader by Carol Sparber

Improving instruction with a clear
vision and a clear

Sense of purpose.

cultivate Trust and presence – two fundamental principles of

Relationship building

think ‘big picture’ – Understand the parts of the whole. Remember

Change takes time so

talk the Talk and walk the walk

If you don’t listen to others – they won’t listen to you so
coach others to move forward toward their goals. Facilitate

New ideas and be willing to delegate control to teacher leaders.

draw on strengths but Accept weaknesses – develop the capacity to cope

Let go and help others define and resolve problems

Reflect regularly – develop

Equity consciousness – understand that all children
can achieve Academic success. Be responsive while

Developing a sense of responsibility in others

foster a strong sense of trust with parents and the community so together we can

Raise student achievement

References

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