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A Summary of Experiences in an Administrative Internship with the West Ottawa Public School System

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A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCES IN AN ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNSHIP
WITH THE WEST OTTAWA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

by

Randal E. Busscher

A Project Report
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Specialist in Education
Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
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A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCES IN AN ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNSHIP
WITH THE WEST OTTAWA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Randal E. Busscher, Ed.S.

Western Michigan University, 1985

The objective of my internship was to become familiar with the role and duties of a K-12 school principal. I was exposed to a wide variety of experiences. Those experiences, through readings, personal interviews, and group meetings are the focus of my internship. My experiences included working with the Challenge Program, which is for the gifted and talented students, and helping to re-word some of the present job descriptions. I also assisted with the realignment of boundary lines and research on teacher evaluations. Absence policies and junior high level programs were also investigated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Lawrence B. Schlack, Professor of Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University, for his assistance and guidance throughout the course of my study.

Also, I wish to thank Mr. Robert De Vries, who directed me through my internship.

Randal E. Busscher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This major internship for the Specialist Project was served in West Ottawa Public Schools, Holland, Michigan. The supervisor of the internship was Mr. Robert De Vries, Director of Personnel.

Many aspects of school administration were experienced during the internship. The intern assisted in establishing a new teacher evaluation model and moving boundary lines to adjust for the overcrowding in some of the elementary buildings. The intern also got involved in the orientation of sixth grade students coming into the seventh grade, the Challenge Program, and Individual Educational Placement Committee meetings. The intern was also able to observe the new senior high attendance policy and numerous junior high activities. In addition, the intern had the opportunity to meet many people from other school systems and make use of their expertise.

The intern's goals were to increase his personal growth and knowledge in the field of administration. He wanted to become familiar with job descriptions of staff members and gain awareness of areas which require long or short term planning. He wanted to get a feel of the actual responsibilities of the administrative position and to develop the ability to handle increasingly complex matters. Confidence was hoped to be gained in the area of decision-making.

CHAPTER II

LOG OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES

This log is a weekly representation of activities experienced as an intern with West Ottawa Public Schools. The internship was served from January 22, 1985 to July 19, 1985.

Anyone interested in more specific information regarding any of the experiences in this internship may contact the author at: 3152 - 168th Avenue, Holland, Michigan, 49423, telephone (616) 399-0516.

The purpose of the log was to keep daily records of the internship experiences. In addition, notes and handouts were kept of the methods used for learning. For example, methods used included: personal interaction, observation, reading, viewing video tapes, and actual "hands on" tasks and assignments. Finally, a file was kept of ideas as generated by the experiences.

Week #1, January 21-25, 1985

The intern met with Mr. De Vries to discuss his goals and expectations of the internship. Mr. De Vries offered a number of possible activities and tasks that could be accomplished by the intern during the period of his internship. Some discussed were re-wording the job descriptions, Challenge program, retention program, Grasp program, orientation program, career planning, interviews, and contract negotiations. These were thought

over, then decided upon as to what would help accomplish the goals originally set for this internship. It was decided that week to work on re-wording the job descriptions for the hourly employees and look into the possibilities of getting involved with the Challenge Program at West Ottawa.

Week #2, January 28-31, 1985

The intern contacted Mrs. Jodi Mulder who was in charge of the Challenge Program. A time was set up for a meeting to discuss the Challenge Program.

The intern then went to Dr. John Graves, Superintendent of the Hamilton Community School System. Materials and books on job descriptions were received from Dr. Graves. These were studied and reviewed. The information on job descriptions was then given to Mr. De Vries.

Week #3, February 4-8, 1985

The intern met with Mrs. Mulder at Birchwood Elementary School to discuss and set up the Challenge Program.

A meeting was held between Mr. De Vries and the intern. Mr. De Vries expressed a desire to have the internship cover as wide a variety of activities as possible. This would allow the intern the maximum amount of exposure to the various responsibilities.

Mrs. Mulder, Mrs. Gloria Lewis, and the intern met at Point West in Holland to discuss the interviewing process for administrative openings.

Week #4, February 18-22, 1985

The intern met with Mr. De Vries and Wayne Nyboer, who was also in charge of the Challenge Program. Challenge and Grasp Programs were discussed in great detail.

Week #5, April 15-19, 1985

The intern sat in on five Individual Educational Placement Committee meetings. These were for sixth graders who would be coming into the Junior High School the following year.

Week #6, April 22-26, 1985

There were three more Individual Educational Placement Committee meetings for incoming seventh graders.

Week #7, May 6-10, 1985

The intern participated in the sixth grade orientation program at Hamilton Community Schools. The Junior High Counselor, Principal,

and intern went to the Bluestar, Sandyview, Bethiem, Burnips, and Hamilton Elementary Schools. At each school they introduced themselves to the sixth grade students and handed out an orientation booklet. This booklet informed the students of all the necessary information that they would have to know about the Junior High. The booklet was reviewed with the students. Questions were answered as they progressed through the booklets.

This was an excellent chance to meet the incoming sixth graders and become familiar with them. This program also helped to eliminate the wonderment and fears of coming into the Junior High building.

Week #8, June 3-7, 1985

The intern took over the duties of the Hamilton Assistant Principal in his absence. These responsibilities included hallway and lunch room supervision in addition to carrying out disciplinary action where necessary.

Mr. Gary Lucas, Assistant Senior High Principal, was contacted by the intern. A meeting was set to discuss and examine the new attendance policy at West Ottawa High School.

Week #9, June 10-14, 1985

The intern met with Mr. Peter Roon, Superintendent of West Ottawa Public Schools. Mr. Roon explained the problem of having too many

kindergarten and first grade students in two of the elementary buildings. It was decided to possibly move some of these students to nearby elementary schools if the student was an only child or last child of a family and lived near the border line.

The task of the intern was to go out to all of the elementary buildings, get their kindergarten and first grade official counts and find out which students would fit all of the criteria. These students would then be the ones who would be considered to transfer schools.

Appointments were made with all of the elementary school secretaries to visit their school and gather the needed information. A district map was received so that boundary lines and qualifying students could be pinpointed.

The intern visited the six elementary schools and with the help of the secretaries got all of the necessary information.

Mr. De Vries and the intern met and discussed more of the school systems functioning to become familiar with. Discussed were the upcoming interviews for two elementary principalship openings, boundary lines, junior high activities, teacher evaluation, and attendance policy.

The intern set up an appointment with Mr. Gary Lucas, Senior High Assistant Principal. Mr. Lucas explained the new attendance policy now used at West Ottawa Senior High. He pointed out numerous strengths and very few weaknesses in the skip and attendance policy.

He felt that it was extremely effective and showed great improvements over what was previously used.

The absence policy makes a very clear distinction between excused absences, unexcused, and skipping occurrences. To fulfill the attendance requirements and to qualify for credit in a class, a student must have been in attendance a minimum of 75 out of 90 days each semester. Absences of any type will result in a loss of class credit if this requirement has not been fulfilled. It also states that students will not be allowed credit in classes where they have skipped three times during a semester.

Mr. Lucas also explained and showed how the West Ottawa computer system worked. He showed how useful it has been in making the attendance policy more effective.

The intern also was involved with the interviewing process for the two elementary principalships. West Ottawa did a rather unique thing here. Included in the interview were the Superintendent, Curriculum Director, an elementary Principal, two teachers, two parent group leaders, and the intern. All of these people contributed three questions in advance. Mr. De Vries compiled and organized them. The interviewing process went very smoothly and was followed by a discussion of these members.

Week #10, June 17-21, 1985

The intern met with Mr. Roon and went over the findings on the student count and boundary line changes. Also discussed at this time was the possibility of expanding some schools, constructing a new building, and portable units.

The intern met with Mrs. Joan St. Clair who is in charge of teaching materials at the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District. Mrs. St. Clair provided the intern with numerous books, journals, and video tapes dealing with teacher evaluations. Mr. De Vries had instructed the intern to research Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) the Madeline Hunter Model for possible use in the West Ottawa Public Schools. Mrs. St. Clair was also able to give the names of people in other school districts who used the Madeline Hunter Model.

The intern read the books "Developing An Effective School Staff Evaluation Program" and "Effective Evaluation." In addition, numerous journals, video tapes, and reports were studied and evaluated by the intern.

From the research, it was found that ITIP is not specifically an evaluation model, it is an instructional improvement model. Supervisors or peers work with teachers to understand what is happening in the classroom, to discuss the theory behind teacher behavior, and to brainstorm what other approaches might be used. It is a generic teaching skills model. It has many names including the Madeline Hunter

Model. Madeline Hunter was instrumental in collecting and fitting much of what we now know about implementing teaching and learning theory into classroom use. The model provides teachers with the theory behind practices they are using and some new practices to match what we are discovering about how people learn.

Week #11, June 24-28, 1985

The intern contacted and met other people associated with teacher evaluation. One being Mrs. Janet Swenson, Coordinator at the Jenison Intermediate School District. Mrs. Swenson was very knowledgeable since she teaches workshops on ITIP.

The intern went to Spring Lake to talk with Mr. Thomas Hicks, Principal of Spring Lake Public Schools. Mr. Hicks was very experienced and respected in the field of teacher evaluation. He pointed out many of the advantages and disadvantages of the Madeline Hunter Model. He also explained his personal model which was put together from numerous models. Mr. Hicks also gives lectures on teacher evaluations.

The intern met with Mr. Gary Hodgson, West Ottawa Middle School Principal. The reason for his meeting was for the intern to become familiar with some of the projects and programs that are used in other middle school settings. This was especially useful since the intern will be starting a principalship at the junior high level in the fall and would like to make some improvements.

Mr. Hodgson started by showing the orientation video tape which is used for all incoming seventh graders or new students. He then went through a total list of all his duties and responsibilities. Those responsibilities, and programs which were of greatest interest to the intern, were gone into in great detail.

Week #12, July 1-5, 1985

The intern met with Mr. De Vries and reviewed the research on teacher evaluations, specifically the Madeline Hunter Model. No decision was made to implement this model in the coming school year.

Arrangements for the Challenge Program were finalized.

Week #13, July 8-12, 1985

The intern became involved in the Challenge Program which is a two week session held during the summer for the gifted and talented kindergarten through fifth grade students in the West Ottawa School District.

The intern monitored the program and facilitated the needs of the parents and teachers involved in the program.

Week #14, July 15-19, 1985

The intern continued with the Challenge Program. Parents were invited to an open house and were asked to evaluate the effectiveness

of the program. Very positive feedback was received. The staff members evaluated the total program and made some changes for next year.

All participated in clean up.

Mr. De Vries and the intern met and reviewed the internship.

The pros and cons were discussed.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION OF INTERNSHIP

The primary objective of the internship, which involved both study and practice, was the intern's personal growth and furtherance of his educational goals. This internship did indeed provide a meaningful experience in a position directly related to the ultimate goal of the intern. It did provide an on-the-job experience that enhanced the intern's knowledge of various administrative responsibilities and functions.

The intern was extremely impressed by the knowledge and helpfulness of those people interviewed and those that assisted him with gathering information. Their genuine concern for their profession was evident.

The internship provided experience in those areas where the intern was lacking in knowledge and experience. It is felt that a lot of confidence to carry out administrative duties was gained through these experiences.

The intern was glad that the internship could be extended over several months. This allowed necessary time to reflect back on and process the opportunities that were experienced.

The intern felt that he did indeed experience the actual responsibilities of the administrative position. He also was able to gain

valuable information on junior high level programs and projects. By interviewing the intern learned much about teacher evaluations and attendance policies. Ways of handling complex matters were also gained. The intern was also provided the opportunity to observe important decision-making. Much was learned about job descriptions of the various employees also. Most important was the confidence gained for the intern in his new upcoming position.

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