

Kim Martini  
July 24, 2013  
EDU6510

### **Field Experience Interview**

Interview conducted on: Tuesday, July 23, 2013

Position of the person I interviewed: Superintendent of Taft School District 90

Location: Ballydoyle Irish Pub, Aurora, IL

Quote: "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." -Benjamin Franklin

Explanation of Quote: This is a quote that our superintendent has as part of their e-mail signature. The number one priority in the school are the students, and the more you invest in their knowledge and learning, the better the school will be in the long run. I follow and strongly agree with this quote because the more we invest now, the better the payout will be down the road.

I began my interview with my district superintendent by opening with the question of what his leadership traits and beliefs are. Throughout the entire interview, my superintendent kept referring back to "servant leadership." He defined this as giving ownership and empowerment to the stakeholders in the building to improve the school environment. The students in the building need to feel empowered in order to change the school climate and performance.

Communication is a huge key in operating a successful building. My superintendent stated that he strives to keep a sense of openness, heir of welcomeness, and encourages his staff to ask questions about pedagogical approach. This ties in with his style of leadership, which again he stated as servant leadership. He says that it is vitally important to identify the needs of stakeholders without undermining their responsibilities, while simultaneously supporting their roles.

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When asked about how leaders are shaped by their constituents, my superintendent responded by saying that effective leaders need to ascertain the needs of stakeholders, and the first concern is changing and implementing staff development. The staff has expressed the need for improving staff development days in our district and an effective leader will listen to this opinion and take action upon it. My superintendent is one that believes in putting the institutions' needs above his own, explaining that, "It's never about me. It's about the kids' needs that drive the institutions' needs. With this in place, it will ensure student success and learning and the success will eventually reflect upon me."

Long-term results are ones every district should focus on in education. My superintendent says that instead of focusing on goals, schools should focus on growth. Goals are too abstract. Growth is more measurable in a quantitative way. It is important that students understand what growth means, and in a perfect world students would be able to track their own growth over their years at Taft. I asked my superintendent about his perception of a leader that depends on others for help; he stated that there is a difference with balancing the need for help and empowering the stakeholders. People have strengths that he doesn't have, but he will support his stakeholder's weaknesses.

Every good leader is able to identify their weaknesses and find a way to overcome them. My superintendent identified his challenges as being too emotionally invested at times in certain areas of his job, and having no tolerance for stupidity. He works hard to model what it is he expects of people and gets frustrated when they don't perform to the same level. Finally, when asked about how to minimize some of the costly structures, systems and practices at our school, my superintendent said that that's a work in progress right now. He is actually working on that

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right now this summer, and because we are in such a deficit right now it is hard to figure out where to allocate funds, and prioritize the needs of the district.

Overall, I learned more in-depth about how my superintendent functions and what his vision as a leader is. I have known him now for eight years, both as a principal and a superintendent, so I have a pretty good idea of how he works. However, speaking with him about his personal beliefs and opinions proved to be both educating and informative, and gave me an even better idea of how he functions.