Student Learning Objective Five

Leadership

In the spring semester of 2008 I wrote a grant for teacher professional development in a program called “Project Lead the Way” in Dr. Berry’s SED 610 class. The assignment was to write a grant that would incorporate technology and address a need within the educational community. The grant had to present researched background that could justify the necessity for the amount of money being asked for. The grant also had to present well researched third party members that could support and contribute to the proposal and to its longevity.

The assignment exemplifies leadership because it places me, as a teacher, in the forefront of educational planning. The grant I proposed involved adopting a curriculum over a span of eight years that would supply hundreds of high school students with the opportunity to pursue education and careers in engineering. The assignment allows me to advocate for students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education, as well as in technical fields such as engineering. Project lead the way is a program in engineering that includes a host of elective courses that prepare and train high school students to enter numerous high skilled jobs or pursue highly technical degrees after graduating from high school. While the curriculum itself is free, the teacher training and supplies are not. The grant can provide needed funds to build a program that can shape the educational practice at Bernstein high school.

The assignment is a prime example of teachers trying to influence educational policy in their community. Project lead the way also has a middle school component. Where it to be successfully implanted at the high school level, I can easily expand it to the neighboring middle school where I currently teach because of the good relationships I have with the faculty and the staff. By first leading by example, I can show the middle school teachers and students that they too can be successful with such a program. If the engineering program is implemented at both the middle school and the high school it
feeds into, the changes in achievement and attitude could be amazing. The community around these two schools has never before experienced this type of program.

I learned a lot from the grant assignment. First, I learned that grantors need to be obliged to fund your grant by the hard data and facts that you present. I also learned to collaborate with my administrators while advocating for my students and fellow teachers. Much of the data I used in the assignment was found with the help of the administrators at the Bernstein high school. Because of my willingness to assume a leadership role, the program will be implemented next year and my students will have the opportunity to explore different engineering careers while still in high school. The grant provided me with the opportunity to assume a greater and more active role in implementing change school wide in science education, and not simply in my own classroom.

As a Master’s student, I have a greater appreciation for the effort and time that is required to finance many of the special programs that “good” teachers seem to be a part of. I have gained a better understanding of budgets and the tedious aspects of education that many teachers do not get involved with. However, I realize now that despite the fact that I have no wish to become an administrator, many of the leadership and technical skills that administrators possess are needed by teachers in order to implement change in the educational system. As a professional and Master’s student I am now ready and willing to pursue all available routes to improve the educational system, and will not confine myself to my classroom any longer.