5. SLO: LEADERSHIP

Class: SED 610
Professor: Ken Berry
Assignment: Curriculum Funding Project

The purpose of this assignment was to have us “write a proposal to a funding source for educational improvement.” Our objective was to “write a convincing proposal for a project that will address an important problem and provide a potential solution to it.” Clearly, the identification of an “important problem” and then providing a “potential solution” to that problem is an example of educational leadership. In the process of writing the grant proposal I experienced several metacognitive insights: (1) the assignment forced me to look beyond my own classroom experience, (2) it made me recognized that I had become an expert in the area that was the focus of the grant, (3) and that the ideas that I had begun to implement in my classroom may have broader significance and value to science education.

I have been a science teacher for over twenty years. I have been content to be the master of this domain. This masters program has made me reflect on my practices, helped me to clarify my educational philosophy, while giving me the confidence that what I believe and do in my classroom may have value beyond the domain of my classroom. In writing the grant proposal I had to defend my beliefs and practices on the basis of not just what I do in my classroom but in the context of it having broader benefit
to the educational community. This is a paradigm shift in my thinking from being content with being a science teacher to taking a leadership role in science instruction.

The grant proposed an expansion of my Action Research thesis, *Teaching Science in the Context of Classical Aesthetics*. In writing the grant I had to argue for funding from the position of being an expert. This project provided me with the opportunity to discuss the grant with a couple of my colleagues. The grant asks for the names of Co-Investigators. I thought of two colleagues in the Visual and Performing Arts Academy at Reseda High School that I considered would be ideal partners for the project. When I discussed the proposed grant they were actually excited about the idea and were clearly impressed with the breadth and depth of my knowledge on the topic. This made me aware that I did indeed have the expertise necessary for leadership in this area of science education.

The recognition that I had gained expertise in an area of science education, a process that spanned the entire duration of my Master program, but clarified by the writing of the Grant Proposal, changed the way I perceived myself. I was no longer “just” a classroom teacher (I do not mean “just” in a pejorative sense because I believe there is nothing more important than what goes on in the classroom). I believed my expertise required that I not only educate students, but teachers as well—to make them aware that, as one of my students said in response to learning aesthetics and science, “Science is not just about finding answers—it’s about discovering the beauty in nature.” This I hope to share with other science teachers in a leadership capacity. The Curriculum Funding Project helped to clarify this understanding for me.