

Case Studies for
**EDUCATIONAL
LEADERSHIP**

Solving Administrative Dilemmas

STEPHEN F. MIDLOCK

CASE STUDIES FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

SOLVING ADMINISTRATIVE DILEMMAS

Stephen F. Midlock

University of St. Francis



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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my family. First, to my wife, JoAnn, who has been at my side throughout my entire career as an educator. She has provided me with valuable inspiration, encouragement, and understanding. Secondly to my children, Noelle, a speech pathologist, and Jason, a social studies teacher. Not only have they made me proud of their choice of careers in education, including master's degrees in educational leadership, but they also have offered insight and advice to my case studies. Thirdly to my grandson, Alex, who teaches me so much about life through the eyes of a two-year-old.

PREFACE

Having taught courses in the educational leadership programs at two universities, I am convinced that case studies provide a valuable means for practical, hands-on education for tomorrow's educational leaders. There are two compelling reasons for writing this book: (1) to provide future educational leaders with as many realistic situations as we can, so as to prepare them for the myriad of leadership challenges that await them, and (2) to make sure that students are ready to assume leadership roles whenever those opportunities present themselves.

At an advisory group meeting of adjunct faculty consisting of present and former school administrators, the question was asked, "What is the most important thing we need to teach our future administrators?" The consensus among the group was that tomorrow's educational leaders need to be prepared for the unknown situations that will challenge them almost daily. These are the situations that can't always be anticipated but require good, sound judgment in addressing them. As the advisory group was probed more, the solution became obvious: Future leaders need hands-on experiences both through actual internships as well as through "what would you do if . . ." situations (case studies).

To further verify the advice of the advisory group, the students who field-tested the case studies commented on the faculty evaluation forms how much they appreciated the case studies. Not only have they grounded the students' learning in practical applications that have caused the students to project themselves into a decision-making mode, but they've also caused the students to analyze similar situations faced by their administrators. The students admitted having asked themselves what they would do if they were the administrator in their own schools. In some cases this kind of thinking has further fueled the students' desire to become administrators/leaders themselves.

Another compelling reason for writing this book of case studies is a concern that faces most professors: that of making the teaching and learning occurring in educational leadership programs meaningful enough that it will enter and stay in the students' long-term memory until they need to draw upon it. Although many students in educational leadership programs have aspirations to become educational leaders as soon as they complete their respective programs, the reality of the job market can stymie those plans.

Not all students who complete an educational leadership program will find administrative/leadership job opportunities in their own school districts, thus causing them to seek employment in other school districts. If this requires relocation, family issues might surface, such as reluctance to move one's children out of their current schools, or inability of one's spouse to find a job in another geographic region. As a result, future leaders will sometimes delay their administrative pursuits until their children grow older, or until an administrative vacancy opens in their school district of current employment.

Similarly, because of the time commitment required by administrative/leadership positions, prospective administrators sometimes wait until their families grow older, when everyone in the family is better able to handle the time considerations and they have the necessary balance in their lives. Also, some prospective administrators/leaders

realize that they love their teaching career so much that they're not in any hurry to move into administration and would rather wait for just the right position to open.

Because not all students in educational leadership programs pursue or acquire administrative positions immediately after completion of the program, it is imperative that such programs provide their students with learning that will transcend the limits of time and continue to be meaningful over a long period. Brain research tells us that one way to accomplish this task is to make sure that the learners are able to project themselves into their learning in a manner that becomes personally relevant and important to them. The use of case studies is an effective way to do this. Consequently, the case study approach is likely to ensure long-term learning and recall if the learners have projected themselves into the situations and have gleaned meaning from them.

This book is intended to help our future administrators as they prepare to lead our nation's schools in an ethical, compassionate, and caring manner.

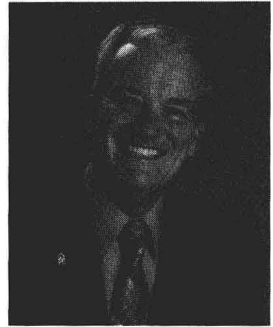
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Thanks to the support of other professionals in the field of education, I have been able to write this book as a practical resource for future educational leaders. I wish to express my gratitude to the following:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Midlock was born in Joliet, Illinois, and has earned all his degrees in Illinois. The most recent is an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Northern Illinois University. Prior to being a college faculty member, Steve served as an educational leader in four public school districts of varied demographics and size. His positions include English department chair, assistant principal, high school principal, and assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Steve is proud to have had a "balanced career" consisting of 16 years as a classroom teacher and 17 years as an administrator. During his service as an administrator, Steve also taught as an adjunct professor at Joliet Junior College in the English Department, and later as an adjunct professor at Aurora University in the College of Education. He presently is a tenure-track assistant professor in the College of Education at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois.



Steve's experience in a variety of administrative positions and in diverse school districts has given him a rich background from which the case studies of this book have grown. He originally wrote them as instructional aids in his educational leadership courses. After sharing them with his colleagues, he was encouraged to assemble them into a casebook that could be used in other universities.

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CHAPTER 1

Using Case Studies and ISLLC Standards to Teach Future Educational Leaders

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ISLLC STANDARDS

Master's degree programs in educational leadership across the nation follow a set of high-level policy standards adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. The intent of the standards is not only to provide consistency among the goals and outcomes of programs in educational leadership, but also to improve preparation, certification (licensure), and professional development of future educational leaders. These standards are known as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. They not only provide a sense of continuity among educational leadership programs, but they also allow flexibility in delivery systems. In other words, universities don't all have to offer the same courses in their respective programs, but they do have to address all the standards throughout the duration of the program. Different course structures and practicum experiences can be offered to students in an attempt to meet regional needs as well as to create unique delivery systems on the part of the universities.

The standards, then, have become very important in educational leadership programs, because they provide the backbone of what students are expected to learn and to demonstrate through mastery. Employers (school districts) can be assured that students who have master's degrees in educational leadership have learned a consistent set of knowledge and have demonstrated a consistent set of performances, all of which have led to the mastery of the ISLLC Standards. Needless to say, this provides a level of professionalism and credibility to educational leadership programs as well as confidence to school districts when they hire educational leaders.

There are six ISLLC Standards, and as previously stated, they comprise the backbone of educational leadership programs, helping to define the appropriate assessments and performance measures relative to educational leadership. National accreditation agencies such as the National Consortium of Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs (NCATE) and state departments of education alike recognize the significance of the ISLLC Standards by requiring universities to demonstrate how their

programs align with the standards and how their students master them. The standards are the result of leadership by the Council of Chief State School Officers, which is a non-partisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials representing various state departments of education, those of the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity. Additional information can be found on their website, www.ccsso.org. A free download of the standards is available to the public at www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/elps_isllc2008.pdf.

The ISLLC Standards, which were revised in 2008, are as follows:

Standard 1: An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

Standard 2: An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3: An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4: An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5: An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6: An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

These standards not only provide a framework for educational leadership programs, but they also capture the key elements and functions of such leadership. Most responsibilities and activities of educational leaders are represented by these standards. An understanding of them is key to the preparation of effective educational leaders who have a sense of vision, implementation, management, public relations, ethics, politics, and legalities of school activities and programs.

While it is beneficial for purposes of analysis and understanding to break educational leadership into the areas defined by these six standards, the reality is that most activities undertaken and decisions made by educational leaders span more than one of these standards simultaneously. The case studies in this book have been indexed to the standard that is most predominant in the resolution of the challenge presented. Readers are encouraged to examine the other possible standards addressed by the case studies. Not only will this give a better understanding of the standards, but it also will give a view of the bigger picture of educational leadership and its complexities and connections.

Organization of Case Studies by ISLLC Standard

The following case studies are listed by ISLLC Standard with the chapter in parentheses.

ISLLC Standard 1: Facilitating a Vision of Learning

- 2-2 Kindergarten and the Twins: What Is Our Vision for Learning? (Chapter 2)
- 2-3 The High School Math Department: Are We Serving All Stakeholders? (Chapter 2)
- 3-10 Office Politics: How Does a Conscientious Administrator Deal with Them and Still Maintain a Vision for Learning? (Chapter 3)
- 4-1 Evaluating the Reading Curriculum Revision (Chapter 4)
- 4-7 Selecting a New Reading Series: Let's Maintain a Focus! (Chapter 4)

ISLLC Standard 2: School Culture and Instructional Leadership

- 2-1 An All-Day Field Trip Impacts the Instructional Program (Chapter 2)
- 4-4 The Math Curriculum Council: Professional Advancement vs. What's Best for Kids (Chapter 4)
- 4-6 The Mosquito Unit: When Ownership Takes Precedence over Student Learning (Chapter 4)
- 4-8 Selling a New Assessment Initiative to Your Department (Chapter 4)
- 5-2 The Dynamic Reading Program Equals a Recipe for Success? (Chapter 5)
- 5-3 The First-Year Teacher and the Supervision Process (Chapter 5)
- 5-5 Jake's Classroom Management (Chapter 5)
- 7-2 The Blind ELL Student: Who's Responsible? (Chapter 7)

ISLLC Standard 3: Management of Operations, Resources, and the Learning Environment

- 2-4 Parents' Agreement: No Data Means "Get Rid of It!" (Chapter 2)
- 2-8 The Uncompromising Math Teacher (Chapter 2)
- 3-3 A Board Member's Son in a Fight (Chapter 3)
- 3-4 Cell Phones, a Bomb Threat, and a Building Evacuation (Chapter 3)
- 3-6 The Electricity Goes Out During the School Day: How to Manage This Situation (Chapter 3)
- 3-9 A Murder Occurs a Block Away from the School: Maintaining a Safe Environment (Chapter 3)
- 3-14 A Tornado Strikes at Night: Should I Leave My Family to Check on the Building? (Chapter 3)
- 3-15 Trying to Implement a "Zero-Based" Budget (Chapter 3)
- 4-2 Kindergarten Curriculum Revision: Promoting an Effective Learning Environment Amid Politics (Chapter 4)
- 4-3 The Life Skills Curriculum: Student Learning vs. Board Politics (Chapter 4)
- 4-5 Middle School Philosophy and Personal Beliefs Impact Student Learning Opportunities (Chapter 4)
- 4-9 The Speech Teacher's Personal Agenda vs. the Instructional Program Goals (Chapter 4)

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- 5-7 The Move from Associate Chair to Department Chair: How to Evaluate My Predecessor (Chapter 5)
- 5-8 A New Assistant Superintendent Is Chosen over an Internal Candidate (Chapter 5)
- 6-2 The Central Office Snitch (Chapter 6)
- 6-11 Students Against Drinking and Driving: A Good Idea Goes Bad (Chapter 6)
- 7-6 Placement in the Gifted Program? (Chapter 7)

ISLLC Standard 4: Collaboration with Families and Communities

- 3-12 The Principal Has Turned the Faculty Against You: An Internal Public Relations Situation (Chapter 3)
- 6-1 The Band Boosters and a Trailer: A School Community Relations Dilemma (Chapter 6)
- 6-5 Graduating Students' Families Get into a Fight in the School Parking Lot (Chapter 6)
- 6-7 Local Florist Complains About the Date of the Prom (Chapter 6)
- 6-8 Media Scoops and the School's Public Image (Chapter 6)
- 6-9 A Parent's Concerns About the Technology Curriculum (Chapter 6)
- 6-10 The Principal Bans the Local Newspaper Editor from the School (Chapter 6)
- 6-13 A Student Visa: A Neighboring District Charges Tuition (Chapter 6)
- 7-1 Bilingual Issues (Chapter 7)

ISLLC Standard 5: Acting with Integrity, Fairness, and in an Ethical Manner

- 2-5 The Physical Education Dress Code and Its Fairness to All Students (Chapter 2)
- 2-6 The Social Studies Teacher and Ethical Behavior (Chapter 2)
- 3-2 Another Assistant Superintendent Falsely Accuses One of Your Staff (Chapter 3)
- 3-5 Differing Philosophies About Discipline (Chapter 3)
- 3-7 Ethics and the Principal's Decision (Chapter 3)
- 3-13 The Superintendent Uses District Funds to Fix a District Car, Then Purchases It: What Is the Ethical Course of Action? (Chapter 3)
- 5-1 Assignment of Classrooms to Benefit a New Teacher (Chapter 5)
- 5-9 The Science Teacher's Seniority vs. the Instructional Program (Chapter 5)
- 6-6 Let My Son Graduate Even Though He Failed Two Courses (Chapter 6)
- 7-4 Faculty Issues Related to Gender (Chapter 7)
- 7-5 Homosexuality Issues and a Board Meeting (Chapter 7)
- 7-7 Pride and Snobbery Between School Districts (Chapter 7)

ISLLC Standard 6: Political, Social, Economic, Legal, and Cultural Context

- 2-7 State Tests and Ethics (Chapter 2)
- 2-9 The Walkout and Related Politics (Chapter 2)

- 3-1 An Alleged Steroid User (Chapter 3)
- 3-8 Misuse of the Rtl Initiative (Chapter 3)
- 3-11 Disposing of an Underground Storage Tank: Legalities and Politics (Chapter 3)
- 5-4 Four Internal Candidates Don't Get the Administrative Job (Chapter 5)
- 5-6 The Outdoor Education Program That Goes Bad (Chapter 5)
- 6-3 Crisis Management: A Student Fatality (Chapter 6)
- 6-4 The Dumpster Incident: Internal and External Public Relations (Chapter 6)
- 6-12 Students Drinking in Front of the School and the Political Implications (Chapter 6)
- 7-3 Communication with a Stubborn Superintendent (Chapter 7)

HOW TO USE THE CASE STUDIES IN THIS BOOK

Much has been written recently about the value of providing practical experiences to all students, but especially those in educational leadership programs. Having served as a public school administrator for 17 years, I can honestly say that our future administrators can't be too prepared for the many challenges that await them. Case studies can help students to project themselves into situations and to consider ways of solving them. The intent of the case studies in this book is to provide students with this opportunity. As they consider how they would solve the situations, they also can reflect on the ramifications of various solutions. In the future, they may not have that luxury as such challenges present themselves.

I have asked fellow administrators for advice in preparing our future leaders. The response most often heard is, "When I first became an administrator, I was most challenged by the situations that pop up and demand immediate solutions. If we somehow can provide students with the opportunity to analyze and solve these challenges, we would be doing our future administrators a great service." When using this book, professors are asked to keep this focus.

The case studies in this book can be used in a variety of ways: as homework, for spontaneous responses, as jigsaw activities, or for nonlinguistic activities.

Homework

Students can solve these cases individually as homework, which provides them the opportunity to carefully analyze solutions as well as to seek input from colleagues as to what they would do to solve the case studies. If the students were to seek input from practicing administrators such as assistant principals and principals, they would obtain a valuable perspective based on experience. From a technological perspective, it is helpful if the students e-mail their plan of action to solve the assigned case study to their professor prior to the next class meeting. That would not only provide the students with quick feedback, because the professor could review and grade the case studies for handing back at the beginning of the next class, but also the professor would be able to ascertain if the students need some additional explanation or teaching about how to handle the situation presented in the assigned case study. A rich discussion could ensue at the beginning of the class that would provide an opportunity for additional teaching

about how to manage the situation. The discussion also would serve as a review of what was taught and learned in the previous class, because the case study would reinforce the topics taught in that class.

Spontaneous Response

Another way of using the case studies is to have the students “think on their feet” and to develop solutions immediately, which is similar to what happens in the real world of administration. An interactive discussion or conversation can result as students present their solutions in class. For expedience as well as to make this realistic, students should be asked to present their solutions in a bulleted format. In my experience, I never have had to present a term paper to a board of education or a superintendent, but I have presented many bulleted plans to them. This approach closely approximates the real world of educational leadership as it relates to developing action plans intended to solve a problem. By using this approach the professor also can determine what “holes” or “gaps” need to be filled in the students’ understanding of educational leadership, as the students attempt to solve the case study.

Jigsaw Activity

Breaking students into groups of three or four members and assigning a different case study to each group is another way of using the case studies. Using a jigsaw approach of having each group explain their case study and their respective solutions, the class can add their ideas to the solutions of each case study. A variation of this approach would be to have each group solve the same case study and to present their plans to the whole class. A discussion about the similarities and differences of each group’s plan would demonstrate the differences that exist among future and practicing administrators. Groups can be determined in a variety of ways. A simple counting off by threes would put all the ones in a group, all the twos in another group, and all the threes in a third group. This would result in their having to solve problems with others who might not be in their respective comfort zones. This is based on the assumption that students tend to sit with other students who are in their comfort zone. Another way of grouping students would be to make sure that each group has at least one elementary teacher, one secondary teacher, one ELL teacher, and one special education teacher in it. That would provide for a variety of perspectives that have to be addressed as the group solves the problem presented by the case study. Obviously, this approach depends on the makeup of the cohort of students. Other ways of ensuring multiple perspectives would be to break up cliques of teachers who teach the same grade level or content area and to place them in different groups.

Nonlinguistic Activity

An enjoyable activity to address the right side or creative side of the brain would be to have each group present their solutions in a nonlinguistic manner on chart paper. Providing each group with colored markers and self-adhesive poster chart paper usually results in some very interesting products. By using creative/novel approaches to learning, the brain is more likely to move such learning to long-term memory. In order to retain the novelty, this approach should be used selectively and sparingly. Overuse