Internship Reflection Paper

Valarie Harris

Longwood University

**Internship Reflection Paper**

**Introduction**

Amelia County Public Schools (ACPS) is a small school division with three schools. The division has a total enrollment of 1,752 students, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Initially, I was very concerned about completing my internship hours. However, I quickly realized that there is an advantage to working in a small school system and I would have an easy time completing my hours. When you work in a small school system, you have easy access to more colleagues that are willing to help you achieve your goals. In addition, I am very fortunate to have access to dynamic administrators that have allowed me to occupy their space in an effort to help me become an administrator. Furthermore, my cooperating administrators have imparted valuable wisdom about my experiences and have exposed me to various aspects of administration. During the fall semester, I have been able to demonstrate leadership in many areas of my school division. These experiences have provided the framework for my future endeavors in administration. I experienced the most growth in the following areas:

1. Coaches Code of Conduct Manual Coordinator
2. Volleyball Team Mentor
3. Night of Excellence Coordinator
4. Community Partnership with Amelia Parks and Recreation

All the experiences have aligned with the Amelia County Public Schools mission statement. The statement reads, “With high expectations and equitable professional services, the Amelia County Public Schools will build positive relationships with students and community and assure attainment of high academic achievement, which exceeds all state and federal standards and provides all students with a foundation for the future,” (Amelia County Public Schools, 2016). In addition, this internship experience has afforded me the opportunity to understand the knowledge and expected skills required of an effective school leader. All internship hours were aligned with the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards for Building Level Leaders (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015).

**Coaches Code of Conduct Manual Coordinator**

In high school sports, coaches serve as role models for their athletes and school. At ACPS, coaches are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times when interacting with athletes, parents, and officials. Although the coaches understand these expectations, there was no written policy for coaches to follow. Therefore, the Coaches Code of Conduct Manual was developed to serve as a handbook to help the athletic departments adhere to the mission of ACPS. According to the International Council for Coaching Excellence (2016), a code of conduct manual must provide guiding principles for the professional behavior of coaches. In addition, they state that the primary purpose of a coaching code of conduct manual should be to address specific standards of coaching and to protect the well-being of athletes. Furthermore, the manual should provide guidelines as to how to handle difficult situations. Many coaches at ACPS have experienced difficult situations and did not have a guide to follow when addressing such situations.

As a guide, I obtained a copy of the Coaches’ Handbook for Appomattox County Public Schools. This handbook was very useful in modeling key components that should be included in the manual. In addition, other manuals and handbooks were uses to complete a final product that was specific to the needs of ACPS.

Initially, the concept of the Coaches’ Code of Conduct Manual for ACPS was received with a positive reaction. The principal at Amelia County High School, and Athletic Director felt that there was a need for the manual, and were willing to oversee the project process. In addition, the administrators and athletic director at Amelia County Middle School were eager to assist in this worthwhile project. Everyone provided valuable feedback and offered important suggestions so that the manual would accommodate the needs of ACPS.

In accommodating the needs of ACPS, scoring rubrics were added to the manual at the suggestion of the assistant principal at Amelia County Middle School. He felt that coaches should be held accountable when selecting athletes to participate in their sport. In addition, the scoring rubrics would serve as documentation for parents who questioned why their child did not get selected for a team. After many hours of research, I created scoring rubrics for each sport at ACPS. After many hours were spent on the rubric, the athletic director at Amelia County High School resisted the idea of scoring rubrics. He felt that this was too much work for his coaches and did not want them as part of the manual. Needless to say, this caused a great deal of friction between the athletic director and me. In this instance, I had to refer back to prior reading assignments regarding conflict management. According to Gorton and Alston (2012), conflict occurs in all organizations. The authors offer four methods to deal with conflict. To successfully complete this project, I chose the cooperative approach. In this method, the emphasis is on mutual group goals, understanding others’ views, and compromising to create a mutually useful solution (Gorton and Alston, 2012). I expressed to the athletic director that I understood his viewpoint, and I reminded him that the purpose of the manual was to serve as a guide for coaches. Therefore, we mutually decided that the rubrics would remain in the manual but the coaches could edit them to meet their needs.

During this project, I learned that administrators come from many different backgrounds, but must have extensive understanding of all aspects of the school system. Effective administrators must have working knowledge in the areas of instruction, school management, human resources, and athletics. For this project, I also learned that athletics play a major role in the functioning of a school system. Therefore, all school divisions should have a manual to serve as a guide for proper conduct and decision making for stakeholders (principals, athletic directors, and coaches). Additionally, I learned that you might face opposition when implementing a new policy. However, in the mist of the opposition you must learn to minimize the negative impact of the opposition (Groton and Alston, 2012). Events of this process taught me that in all instances administrators should always demonstrate professional integrity, collaboration, perseverance, and continuous improvement in their relationship with others (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015).

**Volleyball Team Mentor**

In any school division, parents are giving you the best they have to offer in their children, and they expect the best in return. Educators have the opportunity to affect the lives of many students. However, few educators have the opportunity to affect the lives of students more than a coach. The LA84 Foundation (2012) states that a successful coach should use their platform as an extended classroom where they motivate their athletes to achieve athletically and academically. In addition, coaches must provide high school athletes with quality leadership, and direction. Furthermore, they state that coaches must teach sportsmanship, teamwork, and camaraderie to provide young athletes with a foundation for future success.

During the fall semester, I worked with the junior varsity and varsity volleyball teams at Amelia County High School. When working with these teams, I served as a mentor to help resolve the conflicts that existed among the teams. My primary goal was to provide conflict resolution strategies that coincided with ACPS mission to build positive relationships (Amelia County Public Schools, 2016). This was a tremendous task for me given the numerous issues that existed among the teams. For this leadership task, I used the Blue Sky Coaching Tips for Successful Conflict Resolution (2010). They offer the following 10 tips:

1. mutual respect.
2. look for common ground.
3. redefine the problem or point of disagreement if necessary.
4. start with a goal acceptable to all parties-then work backwards.
5. focus on your goals.
6. create options.
7. keep an open mind.
8. be positive, not negative.
9. get on the same side.
10. work together to solve the problem.

During this mentorship process, I mainly used the strategies of mutual respect, look for common ground, create options, be positive, not negative and working together to solve the problem. I used these strategies during team building exercises, and individual meetings with the head coach and players. In my meetings with the head coach, I discussed creating workable options to meet the needs of the entire team (Blue Sky Coaching, 2010). In addition, we discussed how her role as the leader of the team has an impact on the emotional and personal growth of each athlete. According to the LA84 Foundation (2012), an effective high school coach serves as an inspirational leader and a suitable role model.

From this experience, I learned that a school’s mission not only applies to the classroom, but to all areas of the school division. As a mentor to the teams, I served as an advocate for ACPS mission of building relationships. This advocacy required me to articulate and model the core values that define our school division’s culture. In addition, during these extracurricular activities I had to demonstrate the ability to build and maintain social supports to meet the needs of all the stakeholders (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015).

**Night of Excellence Coordinator**

According to the National Education Association (2016), today’s students are doing amazing things in the classroom, and others should see the efforts of their hard work. This holds true for students at Amelia County Middle School (ACMS) as well. Our students work hard in the classroom to demonstrate their level of comprehension and understanding. To reward their efforts, I coordinated A Night of Excellence to highlight student work. Intel (2012) confirms that recognizing student work affirms that their effort is important, and students should have the opportunity to hear that they did a good job from someone other than their teacher. Various participates attended the Night of Excellence such as school board members, central office staff, ACMS faculty and staff, students, and parents.

According to Intel (2012), there are various ways to recognize student work. Those methods include holding a community night event for students, family, and community members to observe presentations, view student projects, and see performances. In addition, schools may hold Science Fairs, Art Showcases, Literature Nights, and History Fairs. For these events, student work from all subjects is shared with the community. For the Night of Excellence at ACMS, the core subjects of Civics, English, and Science were displayed for the community. In addition, arts education classes were represented during the Night of Excellence. During the event art portraits were displayed, the band ensemble performed, Spanish students read Dr. Seuss, and communication classes displayed the school newspaper.

To complete this project, I used NELP standards as a guide. First, I had to design the event to meet the full range of needs for students at ACMS. I had to make sure that I represented all areas of the curriculum. This required me to gather a wide range of student resources necessary for the success of the event. Secondly, I had to demonstrate the capability to acquire professional support, and community engagement. For professional support, I created a survey for the staff of ACMS regarding participating in the Night of Excellence. I used that data to establish the agenda for the event. Next, I acquired support from the community through inviting school board members, central office staff, and PTA members. Lastly, this project allowed me to develop a professional culture of engagement where the staff of ACMS recognized the importance of educating the whole child. I hope to sustain this engagement in future leadership capacities at ACMS.

**Community Partnership with Amelia Parks and Recreation**

Before this internship, I did not consider community partnerships essential to the success of a school. However, after completing my hours with Amelia County Parks and Recreation I see the need for establishing and sustaining community partnerships. Building productive partnerships with the community organizations can promote school improvement and student development (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). According to Gorton and Alston (2012), personal contact is the most effective method when communicating with the public. For my hours with Amelia County Parks and Recreation, I helped the organization supervise their youth football games. This gave me the opportunity to interact with community members who help to promote the well of being of the youth of Amelia. I witnessed how this organization developed our youth to achieve success on and off the field. The staff and coaches of the recreation department provided positive support and instruction for the players to develop into successful athletes as well as human beings. I found that their guidance and coaching directly aligned with the mission of Amelia County Public Schools. In addition, spending time with my students outside of the school setting is vital to student success. Students were excited to have their teacher see them on the football field, and they felt respected and valued as human beings. After this experience, I feel that all teachers and administrators should invest in building relationships with their students outside of the school building to enhance student achievement.

**Conclusion**

I am very fortunate to work in a small school system where current administrators see the need to mold future administrators. The present administrators are unique individuals that collectively support ACPS mission statement. They have imparted to me wisdom regarding setting high expectations for myself, building lasting positive relationships with colleagues, students and community members. In addition, the current administrators have stressed the need for a leader to provide equitable professional services with all stakeholders. I hope to continue to increase and enhance my leadership skills as a future administrator. In the future, I expect to continue to gain knowledge of the NELP standards and exhibit those principles as I support the mission statement for Amelia County Public Schools.

**References**

Amelia County Public Schools. (2016) *Mission statement*. Retrieved from <http://www.amelia.k12.va.us/home>

Blue Sky Coaching. (2010). *10 tips for successful conflict resolution.* Retrieved from www.blueskycoaching.com

Gorton & Alston. (2012). *School leadership and administration: Important concepts, case studies, & simulations.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

International Council for Coaching Excellence. (2016). *Codes of conduct for coaches*. Retrieved from www.icce.ws/\_assets/files/projects/Codes\_of\_Conduct\_2012\_study.pdf

Intel Teach Program. (2012). *Instructional strategies: Recognition of student work*. Retrieved from www.intel.com/content/dam/www/.../us/en/.../instructionalstrategies-recognition.pdf

LA84 Foundation. (2012). *LA84 foundation track and field coaching manual*. Retrieved from

<http://www.la84.org/coaching-manuals/>

National Education Association. (2016). *Showcasing student work.* Retrieved from

http://www.nea.org/tools/57917.htm

National Policy Board for Education Administration. (2015). *National educational leadership preparation standards for building level leaders.* Retrieved from <https://canvas.longwood.edu/courses/1281569/pages/nelp-> standards?module\_item\_id=12101088