

Statement of Educational Philosophy

In a completely rational society, the best of us would aspire to be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility anyone could have.

Lee Iacocca

I have been blessed in my lifetime to be a part of independent school education as a student, teacher, coach, and administrator for most of my life. Being an educator is both an honor and awesome responsibility. I believe that schools have a greater opportunity today than ever before to not only teach the academic basics, but to also instill core character values that are essential for true success in life. Having taught children from grades PK through twelve the past 25 years, I have come to appreciate the independent school model at every level and the opportunities and responsibilities we have to develop and nurture the whole child.

Independent and charter schools have the opportunity to not only teach the academic basics, but also to teach the core principles that emphasize strong moral and ethical values. Leadership starts at the top, and there are no shortcuts to being successful. One of greatest opportunities and responsibilities for an educational leader is to be a positive role model to every child and parent in the school and community. Character education must be an integral component of any successful independent school, and modeling ethical behavior for our children is a great testimony as a leader.

One of the fundamental purposes of a school is to nurture a child's love for learning and to teach values by word and deed. I have continually worked to be an educational leader that will ensure effective management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment. To that end, I always endeavor to create an atmosphere that is conducive to educating every child in our school. As an educational leader, I am responsible for ensuring that decisions about curriculum, instructional strategies, assessment, and professional development are based on sound research, the best contextual information from our local area, and the useful collaboration of this data to produce an optimal learning environment.

Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources are all immensely important to the success of any independent school. It is important for the educational leader to understand the community's relationship with the school and the steps necessary to reach out to business, community, political and religious leaders to involve them in the process of improving our school. The independent and charter school model calls for collaboration and communication among families, businesses, colleagues, students and faculty members in order to maximize your school's potential. My responsibility as the educational leader is to facilitate collaboration and communication among all constituents.

As an educational leader, I must act with integrity, fairness and with an ethical manner. Being an educational leader is an enormous job responsibility and lifestyle that is important for helping to mold young people. As leaders we must always respect the rights of others, be honest, honor confidentiality and be sensitive to all student and faculty concerns. I have always told the students I have taught and the players I have coached that I would not treat each of them equally, but I would always treat each of them fairly. A successful educator must understand and know the students to better understand how to reach, motivate and positively impact their character.

It is an educational leader's responsibility to constantly assess and improve all aspects of the learning experience and promote continuous school improvement. Whether the need is school facilities projects, continuing education classes for our faculty or increasing resources for needed projects, I will be the leader in advocating these new innovations. It is important to continue to evaluate the ongoing curriculum at every grade level and in every discipline of learning, and to provide collaborative opportunities for faculty and staff to help fill in the gaps that may be missing. Specifically, I will continue to help our graduates to be afforded the best opportunities for the college of their choice. I will also strive for our student body to be well rounded students and for our faculty to be the best at what they do.

As an educational leader it is important for me to have a willingness to continuously examine my assumptions, beliefs and practices. As a leader it is important to stay current on all issues concerning school governance and to understand the importance of being well informed. It is important for successful educators to be lifelong learners, to be willing to change and adapt and to look for guidance and inspiration from fellow colleagues. There is no greater responsibility or calling than to be an educational leader with the opportunity to positively shape young people's lives. Educational leadership is a lifestyle that is expected to lead not only adult teachers, but also students, members of the community and extended families. Henry Brooks Adams said it well, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Whoever dares to teach must never cease to learn.

It is important to work as hard as you can at whatever you are doing. My goal is to be the best educational leader I can possibly be while constantly learning something new each day to make me a better leader tomorrow. I have been in education as a Head of School, administrator, teacher, student or coach all of my life and have been fortunate to learn from teachers and coaches that I loved and respected as a student. My goal has always been to find a way to make a positive difference in students' lives. Through the years I have been an avid reader of books written by John Maxwell. After studying great leaders, Maxwell contends that everything rises and falls with leadership. If this is true, what an awesome challenge we have as educators. In his book *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, John Maxwell draws five conclusions which can be incorporated into the educational leadership model.

- Personnel determine the potential of the school.

- Relationships determine the morale of the school.
- Structure determines the size of the school.
- Vision determines the direction of the school.
- Leadership determines the success of the school.

Believing in people and empowering people are great motivators. John Maxwell stated it very eloquently in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. He wrote, “The people’s capacity to achieve is determined by their leader’s ability to empower.” Only empowered teachers and students can reach their full potential. Theodore Roosevelt realized this principle when he said, “the best executive is the one who has the sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and the self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.”

Today more than ever the need for character education and positive role models in our schools are at an all time high. The total child should be instilled with the values of respectfulness, responsibility and the passion to become life-long learners. Providing students the opportunity to achieve success and to develop leadership skills must be paramount goals for all educators. An independent school educational leader must also nurture the student’s spiritual, emotional, and academic needs.

Stacy and I are blessed to have three children in school, and we are dedicated to making sure that they are given the best educational opportunities possible. As a father, husband, and educational leader I am thankful for the great leaders and role models I have had the opportunity to learn from over the years. My goal is to continue to learn and promote the success of all students by providing leadership that is unwavering, strong, dependable and empowering.

Danny Howell
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