

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**  
**Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis**  
**ELPA 846 – The School Superintendency**

**Instructor**

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**Office Hours**

I am available by appointment. Please feel free to call my cell phone 608-444-5598 or email me at [alrainwater@wisc.edu](mailto:alrainwater@wisc.edu) anytime for an appointment.

**Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to explore the effects that effective school system leadership can have on student success. The need for a successful K-12 school experience for all students has become essential as the country has moved to a knowledge based economy and our social structure has become more diverse. Public education has been seen as the cornerstone of a free country from the time of our founding fathers. Academic proficiency leading to a high school diploma has become not an end before employment but only the required ticket to future education or training experiences. The lack of a high school diploma is an almost insurmountable barrier to life success.

The role of the Superintendent has evolved from one focusing primarily on the sound management of local educational resources to a role that demands successfully leading educational change in an increasingly political and accountable national educational environment. The Superintendent's first task is to focus the organization on student learning. Although the role demands that the leader must first be an educator, those who are successful must also be corporate leaders and community leaders.

This course will provide opportunities to explore and discuss multiple aspects of system leadership including the individual skills of leadership, leading systemic instructional change and managing the corporate aspects of a school system. One of the fundamental principles underlying the course is that leaders must lead within the culture of the existing organization. Leadership styles and administrative decisions are situational and must be made in the context of that culture.

Leadership in modern organizations is a social enterprise. Decisions generally are collaborative and require debate and discussion among a variety of stakeholders. The class will be in large part a series of conversations about the broad areas of system leadership. We can all learn from each other this semester by discussing together, debating openly and questioning our beliefs and decisions on every topic.

## **Course Objectives**

1. To better understand the role of the Superintendent as the district's "first" educational leader.
2. To explore the many roles and perspectives of the superintendency as educator, corporate leader and community leader.
3. To gain an understanding of the fundamental personal leadership skills necessary to lead an organization.
4. To understand the impact that local, state, national and international events/trends (both actual and perceived) have on the office of the Superintendent
5. To understand the difference between leadership and management.
6. Practice self reflection to strengthen identified weaknesses and increase professional capability.

## **Course Obligations and Grading**

1.	Class Participation	30%
2.	Op-Ed	10%
3.	Human Resources Director Interview	10%
4.	Comparison of Board/Supt. Relations	10%
5.	Diversity Paper	10%
6.	Statement of Beliefs	10%
7.	Participation in Budget Simulation	20%

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS**

### **January 20: Introduction to School District Leadership**

#### **Introductions**

**Organization of the class and course expectations**

**Review the Syllabus**

**Review assignments**

### **January 27 – Public Education as a National Interest**

**Presentation – The Historical Perspective of Public Education and Current Issues**

**Discussion of Individual Class Members Perspectives**

### **February 3 – Personal Qualities of Superintendent Leadership**

**Presentation – Qualities of Individual Leadership**  
**Case Study: Who Decides**

**February 10 - The Challenge**

**Presentation – Issues of Student Achievement for All Students**  
**Class Discussion**

**February 17 – How the School System Responds to the Challenge**

**Presentation – “A Systems Approach to meeting the Challenge”**  
***Scenario - Heterogeneous vs. Homogeneous Grouping***

**February 24 – Organizing to Implement the System**

**Presentation – Systems Level Organization and Communication**  
**Class Discussion**

**March 3 – Planning for Change**

**Presentation – “Good Things Happen Because You Plan for Good Things to Happen”**  
**Class Discussion**

**March 10 – Human Resources Management from the District Perspective**

**Presentation – Employment Systems**  
**Class Discussion**

**March 24 – Legal Aspects of Human Resources Management from the District Perspective**

**Guest Speaker - Evaluation and Collective Bargaining**  
***Case Study: Personnel Issue***

**March 31 – Legal Aspects of District Management**

**Guest Speaker – Public Records, Student Privacy and Open Meetings**  
**Class Discussion**

**April 7 - Understanding School Finance from the District Perspective**

**Guest Speaker – A District Perspective on School Finance**  
**Class Discussion**

**April 14 - Understanding School Budgets**

**Budget Cut Simulation**

**April 21 - Understanding School District Governance**

**Presentation - The political context of District Leadership  
Individual Presentations of Reactions to School Board Meetings**

**April 28 – Understanding Public Information and Media Relations**

**Guest Speaker - Coaching Session on Media Presence**

**May 5 – Where are you now?**

**Discussion of individual beliefs**

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**Assignment for January 27**

**Read – “The Need for Public Education”**

**Prepare your thoughts for discussion regarding Public Education and Democracy**

**Assignment for February 3**

**Prepare an Op-Ed piece of 500 words or less on 1 of these topics:**

- a. Contrast the positive and negative aspects of Charter Schools as a part of public education**
- b. Contrast the positive and negative aspects of Vouchers as a part of public education**
- c. Is Brown important in 2009 to a public education system? Why?**

**Assignment for February 10**

**Read – “The Challenge of Educating for the Future”**

**Write an article addressing the question: What does the increasing diversity of the populace of the United States require of public K-12 education?**

**Assignment for February 24**

**Provide one article to the class supporting your position re: Heterogeneous vs. Heterogeneous Grouping of students in classrooms.**

**Assignment for March 10**

**Interview the Human Resources Director of a School District. Prepare a description of the hiring process used in the district. Describe the strengths and weakness of the system for employing the best individual for principal's position in your district.**

**Assignment for April 7**

**Attend Board of Education meetings in two separate school districts and interview the Superintendent of the district. Based on your observations of the meeting and your interview with the Superintendent write a comparison of how they manage Superintendent/Board relations.**

**April 14**

**Prepare individual cut list for the budget scenario from the list of potential cuts provided on March 3.**

**Assignment for April 28**

**Prepare bullet points for discussion of the non-negotiable beliefs that you would communicate to your school board and staff if you were selected as a District Superintendent for next fall.**